

Spending Review: Unleash potential of the railways to help build back better

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The Railway Industry Association (RIA), the national trade body for the rail supply chain, has set out ‘six key actions’ for the Government in its submission to the Spending Review.

Ahead of the publication of the Review, alongside an Autumn Budget next week, RIA has highlighted the role that the railways can play in driving economic growth and providing clean connectivity right across the UK.

The six key actions include:

- Commit to at least an equal level of funding for Control Period 7 (CP7) than that provided in CP6;
- Spend the remaining £9.4bn of the enhancements budget by the end of CP6 (March 2024);
- Deliver previously committed to major projects, including HS2 in full, Northern Powerhouse Rail, Transpennine Route Upgrade, East West Rail and Midlands Rail Hub;
- Launch the rolling programme of rail electrification and fleet orders of hydrogen and battery trains promised in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan and today's Net Zero Strategy;
- Fund Network Rail's Long-term Deployment Plan for digital signalling, support TfL and HS1's digital signalling investment and ensure a steady ramping up of digital signalling work; and
- Support rail exporters seeking to market products and services overseas and ensure rail is a key part of our plans for global trade opportunities.

In the submission, RIA highlights the importance of visibility and certainty of funding for upcoming rail projects to enable businesses to build the skills and capability and deliver value for the taxpayer. It sets out the concerns in the supply chain over a hiatus in decision-making due to the pandemic, and as the industry undergoes major changes with the transition to Great British Railways (GBR).

The submission comes amid uncertainty over the status of High Speed 2's Eastern Leg, which is due to be clarified in the Integrated Rail Plan for the Midlands and North – now delayed by a year.

Darren Caplan, Chief Executive of the Railway Industry Association (RIA), commented: "Over the last 18 months, the railways have been vital in transporting goods and essential workers around the country and now we are seeing passenger numbers and freight returning. The railways stand ready to help drive the UK's recovery, by boosting economic growth, supporting skilled jobs and investment in every region of the country, providing clean transport for millions of people and boosting exports around the world.

"However, our members regularly tell us that uncertainty over upcoming projects and a lack of work pipeline visibility add costs and time to projects. For SMEs, this can even result in them going out of business. That is why we are urging the Government not to delay major decisions and to begin long-term investment plans now – we must not let the experience of the last 18 months affect the investment needed to support railway infrastructure and rolling stock decisions over the next 30 years.

"On major schemes, we are simply calling for the Government to deliver what it has promised. This includes building HS2 in full alongside Northern Powerhouse Rail, Transpennine Route Upgrade, East West Rail, the Midlands Rail Hub and others. It should not be 'either-or' when it comes to these schemes.

"So, we ask the Government to provide greater certainty to rail businesses to continue to invest in the UK, if it wants the railway industry to help build back better, build back greener, help its levelling-up agenda and boost Global Britain with higher rail exports.

"We now eagerly await the publication of the Spending Review, the Autumn Budget and the Integrated Rail Plan for the Midlands & North."

Read RIA's Spending Review submission [here](#).

Photo credit: Railway Industry Association