

Transport Decarbonisation Plan risks UK slipping behind EU on decarbonising freight

May 28, 2020



The Rail Freight Group (RFG) is urging the Government to include a target for increasing rail freight use in the forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan. Failure to do so risks rail freight's proven role in decarbonisation not being maximised and the UK falling behind the EU, [which stated in December](#) that as 'a matter of priority, a substantial part of the 75% of inland freight carried today by road should shift onto rail and inland waterways'.

The Rail Freight Group welcomes the positive comments the Government makes about rail freight but is urging it to go further and:

- ensure rail freight is represented on the new Net Zero Transport Council
- match the EU's commitment to encourage modal shift and include a target for increasing rail freight within the 'movement of goods' strategic priority
- create a formal process to take forwards the Government's commitment to 'consider how to make rail an even more attractive option for companies to move goods around the country'
- include rail freight in the freight portal being developed with the Energy Saving Trust and LowCVP
- consider how waste-derived fuels can play a role in decarbonising rail freight prior to electrification; and
- consider what actions other Government departments can take to aid transport decarbonisation. For example, ensuring planning policy supports decarbonised transport by favouring the development of large distribution hubs in sites with rail access.

Joe O'Donnell, Head of Policy, Rail Freight Group, said: "The transport decarbonisation plan should maximise rail freight's role in reducing carbon emissions, given these are around 76% less than HGVs. Yet rail freight doesn't feature in the plan's current strategic priorities. Missing this opportunity to reduce carbon emissions today could undermine our ability to reach net-zero by 2050. Using more rail freight makes significant carbon savings without waiting for the possible development of new technologies.

"As a minimum, the Government should match the EU's commitment to shift freight to more sustainable modes and go further by setting a target to drive change. This will place the UK in a truly world-leading position at the UN's annual climate change conference COP26 in Glasgow."

The comments are made following the Rail Freight Group's response to '[Decarbonising Transport Setting the Challenge](#)' which shapes what policies will be in the 2020 Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP). RFG's full response is available on the website [here](#).

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