

UK Very Light Rail Conference 2022

May 13, 2022



The UK's second Very Light Rail (VLR) Conference takes place on Thursday 16 June this year. The event is being held at the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology (IoT) in Dudley, neighbour and partnering educational establishment to the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC), a brand new £32m investment built to advance the growing VLR industry.

Construction of the VLRNIC has been enabled through funding from the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (BCLEP), the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP), and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The centre will officially open later this year, however the test track is already open for certain types of business, such as vehicle testing.

Very Light Rail (VLR) is a new mode of rail-based public transport, designed to open up new opportunities for rail-based travel. Attendees will hear from the teams involved in Coventry VLR, the breakthrough system designed to make urban light rail installation affordable for small to medium sized towns and cities, and Revolution VLR, a hybrid vehicle designed to make reopening disused rail lines a possibility, as well as from keynote speakers including Baroness Vere of Norbiton, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, and Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

The one-day event is being organised by the Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation

(BCIMO), the holding company set up to oversee the operation of the VLRNIC, together with its partner organisations; Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC), Coventry City Council (CCC), WMG, at the University of Warwick, and Rider Levett Bucknall (RLB), all of whom are pioneering VLR and the future of rail-based transport.

Nick Mallinson, Chief Executive Officer at the **BCIMO**, said: *"I am delighted that after a couple of unfortunate postponements due to COVID, the UK VLR Conference will proceed in June this year. Having been an advocate of VLR since 2014, it is extremely rewarding to witness its increasing recognition as an important future transport mode, and I believe that the Coventry and Revolution projects signify the start of a very exciting journey for the VLR industry."*

"Through the VLRNIC, our aim is to take a collaborative approach to support the development of the VLR market, together with the technologies, supply chains and future workforces required to support this."

Councillor Patrick Harley, leader elect at **Dudley Council**, said: *"The Very Light Rail National Innovation centre is putting Dudley at the cutting edge of transport innovation and development."*

"We are delighted to be a part of this conference and continue to work with BCIMO and our other partners to bang the drum for Dudley borough, which is becoming a global leader for rail innovation."

Councillor Jim O'Boyle, cabinet member for jobs, regeneration and climate change, and board member of CWLEP at **Coventry City Council**, said: *"I'm proud that Coventry is taking part in the UK Very Light Rail conference to showcase some of the incredible innovation going into Coventry VLR. This breakthrough technology could enable a real boost for British manufacturing, securing jobs in the region and giving the people of Coventry a new, clean and green form of public transport."*

"Alongside Coventry VLR, our work towards being the UK's first all-electric bus city, rolling out the UK's most comprehensive charge point network outside London and our plans for the West Midlands Gigafactory, put us firmly at the forefront of the green industrial revolution."

James Meridith, Project Manager – Very Light Rail at **WMG, at the University of Warwick**, said: *"Very Light Rail will be a fundamental part of the UK's future transport system and WMG is proud to be a part of this project working with the Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation and Coventry City Council. The VLR Conference will be a great opportunity for the thought leaders in UK VLR to discuss best practice and the future of this exciting new programme."*

Andy Stamps, National Head of Infrastructure at **RLB**, said: *"The event is an opportunity to bring together people who understand how infrastructure, and specifically Very Light Rail, can support the levelling up agenda, and foster the benefits that innovative transportation systems can provide for our communities."*

The conference will run from 9am to 4pm and will provide the answers to all your questions about VLR and the future of rail-based public transport, focusing on key topics such as:

- What is VLR and why is it important?
- What progress has been made to date? And by whom?
- What technologies have been developed and will be further developed in the future?
- What is BCIMO doing to develop the market, technologies, manufacturing supply chains and workforces?
- How do I find out more? Or get involved?

While physical attendance at the conference is limited, the event is also being live streamed for a virtual audience. To register as a virtual attendee please visit bcimo.co.uk/events/vlr-conference.