

# UKRRIN launches new Technology and Innovation Hub in Doncaster

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The UK Rail Research and Innovation Network (UKRRIN), the £92 million partnership between academia and industry, has launched a new Technology and Innovation Hub at Unipart Rail's Headquarters in Doncaster.

Led by Unipart Rail, the new Hub will support the sector in translating academic research and innovation to solve strategic industry challenges and to enable and develop the next generation of products and services. The Hub will have a particular focus in supporting SMEs, both those established and new to the industry.

The Hub features information and interactive displays on the UKRRIN Centres of Excellence, the Network Rail Research and Development Portfolio and a range of different innovations from across the industry. The Hub has been supported by leading universities including Huddersfield, Southampton and Birmingham and organisations including Network Rail, Unipart Rail, RSSB and the Railway Industry Association (RIA).

Neil McNicholas, Managing Director at Unipart Rail said: "Unipart Rail is extremely proud to be a founding member of UKRRIN and now the home of the UKRRIN technology hub. Our wealth of knowledge, expertise

and industry experience positions us as the ideal collaborative partner for SMEs, enabling them to revolutionise the delivery of innovative technology, whilst overcoming barriers to entry. This new facility will support the development of new technologies within academia and the supply chain and provide SMEs with guidance and support in order to establish a commercially viable proposition and a route to market."

Dr Steve Ingleton, Engineering Director at Unipart Rail, said: "The Technology and Innovation Hub is specifically aimed to bring academia, research and development and industry much closer together to work in partnership to deliver innovation into the sector. The Hub can play a key role in supporting new technology and digital solutions from inception through to market deployment and make a major contribution in the transformation and modernisation of the rail network."

Jo Binstead, Chair of the UK Rail Research and Innovation Network (UKRRIN), said: "The UKRRIN Technology and Innovation Hub demonstrates how the powerful collaboration between industry and academia has delivered on its promise to bring new technologies to market, accelerating the transformation of our railway, and confirms that the continued investment in Research, Development and Innovation with facilities and expertise for large and small companies to develop, test, validate and deploy innovations ensures the growth of companies in the rail supply chain, and delivers on the Government's levelling up agenda"

Prof Clive Roberts, Professor of Railway Systems, Head of School of Engineering, Director of the Birmingham Centre for Railway Research and Education and Lead for UKRRIN, said: "I am delighted that UKRRIN is continuing to grow its scope and physical presence with the addition of the new UKRRIN Technology and Innovation Hub. UKRRIN is a truly open network, which allows new industry and academic partners to add new capabilities. The new hub will both act as a location from which we can engage new participants, for example through our Sheffield City Region LEP funded SME-focussed DigiRail programme, and for outputs of UKRRIN to be demonstrated to stakeholders".

David Clarke, Technical Director of the Railway Industry Association (RIA), said: "I am really pleased to welcome this latest addition to the UKRRIN network. The whole network provides access to the best brains and facilities in UK rail and the new Technology and Innovation Hub is particularly welcome with its focus on supporting SMEs by helping get their products to market, thereby solving real rail industry challenges. All too often innovators underestimate what is needed to move from prototype to approvals and then sales, so the hub will be vital in helping them on that journey"

The Hub was launched at an event on Wednesday 22 September covering the theme of 'Where Great Ideas Converge' with a number of UK rail leaders' providing insights into innovation and digital transformation.

*Photo credit: UKRRIN*