

UKTram strategy to press the case for light rail

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A powerful strategy aimed at shaping a progressive future for the UK's light rail sector is set to be delivered to Government, industry leaders have been told.

James Hammett, Managing Director of UKTram, has revealed work to develop the comprehensive plan had been taking place over the last six months – even whilst the sector was grappling with the considerable impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic.

He told the organisation's Annual General Meeting: "Thanks to the efforts of a small working group of key figures from the industry we are close to being able to present the strategy to Government and press the case for the future expansion of light rail as an absolutely essential part of the UK's public transport infrastructure."

Outlining priorities for the year ahead, he said there was no doubt the sector could help to drive an effective and greener economic recovery following the coronavirus pandemic, an argument that would be put before Ministers.

Mr Hammett explained: "UKTram's links with Government have always been strong but they've been further cemented by the close working arrangements established during the Coronavirus crisis. 2020 has

perhaps been a year like no other in the modern era and thanks to our ability to supply the Department for Transport with key, up-to-date intelligence on services during the pandemic, we're well placed to set out the clear arguments in favour of light rail's future growth.

"Our dialogue with Government wouldn't have been possible without the support of our members who have continued to keep vital services running. Now we'll be asking them for their input to finalise the strategy document before we present it to ministers in the first half of 2021 as we hopefully emerge from the pandemic."

Mr Hammett told the meeting UKTram had been effective in helping to secure over a quarter of a billion pounds of support funding for UK light rail systems during the health emergency.

This was achieved while the organisation continued to work on a wide range of initiatives aimed at overcoming engineering and operational challenges, sharing best practice and promoting the sector.

Led by working groups of UKTram members with specialist expertise, these work streams are set to continue in the New Year alongside ongoing projects aimed at enhancing tram safety, in partnership with the Light Rail Safety and Standards Board.

During the AGM, which was held online due to current coronavirus restrictions, transport consultant Matthew Taylor was elected as a UKTram director, while legal expert Martin Fleetwood was co-opted to serve on the board for a further year.

Closing the meeting, George Lowder, UKTram Chairman added: "Members are at the heart of everything we do and 2020 proved what can be achieved when we put them front and centre of our operations. Thanks to their efforts, and the hard work of the UKTram team, the organisation is now ideally placed to influence future transport policy."

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