

PRESS RELEASE



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GB Railfreight calls for vital trans-Pennine track improvements ahead of electrification, to support the growth of rail freight

GB Railfreight today welcomes the Government's commitment to invest in east-west transport connectivity in the North and calls for the prioritisation of vital track improvements to support the growth of rail freight across the Pennines.

The Government's announcements, made as part of the Chancellor's Budget, followed the recommendations of the National Infrastructure Commission's report High Speed North.

In response GB Railfreight, which is the main freight operating company across the Pennines [1], is calling for the Government to ensure the right configuration of track is in place before proceeding with planned Trans-Pennine electrification. This includes prioritising the following investments:

Additional tracks along the Diggle route (Stalybridge-Huddersfield), using the old track formation and introducing three or four tracks where there are currently only two.

Gauge-clearing the east-west route to allow for intermodal freight.

In response to today's announcements John Smith, Managing Director of GB Railfreight, said:

"We welcome today's announcement by the Chancellor that the Government plans to invest in east-west connectivity in the North. However, there is currently suppressed demand to move freight by rail because we can't get enough paths across the Pennines.

"As part of the Government's commitment to HS3 it is vital that specific track investment is prioritised to support the growth of rail freight. This includes improvements along the Diggle route and gauge-clearing for intermodal traffic east-west. It is absolutely imperative that we invest in these schemes and get the correct configuration of track before we electrify the line.

"As the main freight operator across the Pennines we understand the challenges of the Trans-Pennine route and will continue to work closely and constructively with Transport for the North and the industry to ensure that the right improvements are prioritised in the medium-long term."