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GB Railfreight calls for an aligned electrification investment strategy to boost rail freight and the UK economy

Today (Monday 1st July) an electric locomotive will for the first time work the intermodal container service from Ipswich to Manchester for GB Railfreight.

The locomotive is a Class 92 and it will be sub-leased from sister company Europorte. Whilst the launch of the first GBRf electrically-hauled freight service is a good step forward in making rail more competitive in the intermodal market, the real need is for an aligned electrification investment strategy to boost freight.

GB Railfreight has consistently argued that:

- The rail freight industry needs an aligned growth strategy and investment plan for ports and rail as one system.
- As far as rail freight is concerned, the electrification of Network Rail infrastructure should be initially focused on the intermodal commodity.
- Such investment must be aimed at those ports currently investing private sector capital in their own rail facilities, such as the Port of Felixstowe and London Gateway.

The launch of this electrically-hauled locomotive service comes on the day that John Smith, Managing Director of GB Railfreight, is set to give evidence to the Transport Select Committee on its inquiry into "Access to Ports".

John Smith, said: *"Whilst there has been a lot of buzz around electrification of rail freight services in general and the "electric spine" in particular, from a practical perspective the only freight commodity that could be easily electrically hauled is the intermodal (container) market.*

"In this regard, the investment committed to an electric spine in relation to rail freight would be better focused on ensuring that the current gaps are filled in on the key corridors from Felixstowe and the new Thames Gateway development to the Midlands, North West and North East, along with the privately owned intermodal terminals not currently electrified.

"Without an aligned growth strategy and investment plan for ports and rail as one system, the freight industry and the UK economy will suffer."