

19 February 2020

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

Dear Secretary of State,

Open Letter: We need a rolling programme of electrification to decarbonise the rail network by 2040.

Congratulations on your recent reappointment as Secretary of State for Transport. We write to you on behalf of the organisations that build, enhance and operate on the UK railway network, and represent passengers and communities, to call on the Government to implement a rolling programme of electrification, to meet the goal of decarbonising rail by 2040.

In February 2018, the Government set a challenge to industry to see how it could take diesel-only trains off the railways. As the industry's Decarbonisation Taskforce found, this will require a rolling programme of electrification for intensively used lines, and for regional and rural lines the development of new technologies such as hydrogen, battery and the use of clean bimode and trimode trains, which the industry is ready to deliver.

Electrified railways:

- Are better for the environment, with carbon emissions 60% lower than diesel trains today and 80% less with the estimated 2040 grid mix, and are the only option for decarbonising intensively used lines;
- Produce no air pollutants at the point of use;
- Are quieter, reducing noise pollution for those living and working near the tracks and reduces noise and vibration for passengers;
- Have a strong economic and business case – compared with diesels, electric trains cost less in the long term when compared to the whole-life costs of diesel services, are cheaper to build, more reliable requiring less maintenance, and are cheaper to operate and longer-lasting;
- Are lighter weight, meaning less wear to the track and therefore less maintenance, and carry more passengers; also, acceleration is better and journey times shorter, even with relatively frequent stops;
- Reduce passenger delays, as electric trains are more reliable than diesel trains;
- Will be vital in decarbonising rail freight, which is already a low carbon mode of haulage and delivers benefits in excess of £1.7bn each year to the economy.

Now is a critical time for rail electrification. The industry recently finished electrifying the Great Western Mainline up to Cardiff and will soon complete the Midlands Mainline up to Market Harborough. Once these schemes are complete, there will be no electrification schemes taking place in the UK and, with no construction-ready schemes in the pipeline, there will likely be a significant hiatus before new projects are ready for construction. This could lead to a loss of capability and skills in the supply chain.

As the Railway Industry Association's (RIA) Electrification Cost Challenge Report shows, the stop-start nature of electrification is one of the key factors in cost increases. With a long-term rolling programme, that provides visibility and consistency to rail suppliers so they can build up and retain expertise, electrification could be delivered at up to half the cost of past projects. We believe delivery of electrification cannot wait until the next rail funding cycle 'Control Period 7', which starts in 2024, and that a ringfenced fund for an electrification programme should be provided immediately to allow work to continue.

We look forward to working with you, officials and Sub-National Transport Bodies around the country to deliver the decarbonisation of our rail system. And we would be happy to meet with you to discuss, if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Campaign for Better Transport



Campaign to Electrify Britain's Railways



Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA)



Electrical Contractors Association (ECA)



Northern Rail Industry Leaders (NRIL)



Rail Freight Group (RFG)



Rail Forum Midlands (RFM)



Railway Industry Association (RIA)