

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill CBE
Minister of State
Great Minster House,
33 Horseferry Rd
London
SW1P 4DR

14 July 2025

Re: Open Letter on Midland Mainline Electrification

Dear Lord Hendy,

You may recall we wrote to your colleague Chief Secretary to the Treasury, The Rt Hon Darren Jones MP, about the continuity of the Midland Main Line Electrification (MMLe) programme on 14 April and you replied on his behalf on 12 May. This is attached for ease of reference.

We acknowledge your comment in the letter that rail 'electrification plays an important role to ensure we achieve our Net Zero 2050 target'. We were further encouraged by your assertion that the Department for Transport was 'currently developing a strategic approach to deliver rail decarbonisation that considers both track and train and we will continue to invest in electrification projects that deliver value for money for the taxpayer, in addition to the use of other technologies such as battery trains.'

We appreciated your pledge that you and colleagues plan to 'engage with the industry soon and provide more clarity later this year'. Further, our trade associations welcome the Government's commitment to, and restatement of, the rail projects announced on 8 July particularly those with funding confirmed.

However, we are disappointed about the decision to 'pause' Phase 3 of MMLe, as we believe this demonstrates a concerning lack of whole-system thinking which will adversely impact the railway both today and in the future.

The immediate impact will be a significant loss of jobs across the UK rail supply chain which will undermine our capacity to undertake affordable and efficient rail electrification in the future. It will also impair the ability of East Midlands Railway (EMR) to replace its regional diesel multiple units which will exacerbate the challenges faced by rolling stock manufacturers and financiers and the supply chain which supports this part of the rail industry.

The choice to pause the project will mean that over 10,000 kilometres a day (see annex 1) will continue to be diesel-powered on the MMLe to Sheffield and Nottingham for the foreseeable future. The lack of charging infrastructure that the overhead wires would have provided also mitigates against the possibility of EMR replacing with battery electric multiple units (BEMU) the approximate 27,000 daily kilometres that its regional services currently operate.

As stated in our previous letter, electrification of the route to Derby, Nottingham and Sheffield is a hugely important upgrade for the Midlands region which could unlock over

£400m of economic benefits and create some 5,000 jobs. And it coheres with the Government's ambition to ensure there is rail investment in all parts of the UK and with the Government's growth mission.

Additionally, many experienced rail suppliers working on the scheme are now shovel-ready and on standby to progress delivery to the point that the next phase of work could begin immediately. The next phase of the programme is therefore ready to proceed and we believe it provides value for money for the taxpayer, at a time when the Government has made clear it wants to go for growth across the nations and regions of the UK.

The Rail Forum and Railway Industry Association note the observation in your letter that the 'Spending Review will ensure an affordable and credible network-wide programme of works' but we think it is fair to point out that the decision to 'pause' the MMLe work is not cost neutral.

Rail supply members working on the project have informed us that the abortive costs of the decision to keep the scheme 'under review' could be between £50mn and £70mn from an infrastructure perspective – and we ask the Treasury to consider the 'pounds in the ground' sunk costs. Operational impact is also likely to be adverse in terms of service levels and performance and will reduce the train operator's revenues. Any adjustment or changes to arrangements for the leasing of rolling stock will incur further costs too.

We would therefore urge you to consider how this decision to 'pause' can be shortened so that work can commence promptly within the next year.

We also of course remain concerned that the railway industry is still waiting for a strategy to deliver a rolling programme of electrification, both full and partial. Our associations restate our joint offer to convene a cross-industry group to develop a decarbonisation strategy and resourcing plan. This would confirm the minimum additional electrification to deliver Net Zero for passengers and freight by 2050.

Such a 'rail-plan' could be published to provide clarity to railway planners and investors; and it would support a resource plan for a core decarbonisation workforce, building on the existing skilled workforce and creating new high value jobs in the process.

We hope you can give urgent consideration to this letter, with a view to further dialogue to take forward MMLe as soon as possible. We would be happy to meet or to convene a roundtable to discuss, if this would be of assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely



Elaine Clarke OBE
Rail Forum, CEO



Darren Caplan
Railway Industry Association, Chief Executive

Annex 1

RIA's Traction Decarbonisation Data analysis tool has calculated the daily diesel/self-powered energy usage for operator East Midlands Railways

<https://www.riagb.org.uk/RIA/RIA/Rail-Insights/Decarbonisation-Strategy.aspx>

Home

Calculation of Daily Diesel/ Self powered energy for operator Route

Reset all Filters

Operator

Select all

☐ Avanti West Coast

☐ Caledonian Sleeper

☐ Chiltern

☐ Cross Country

☒ East Midlands Railway

☐ Grand Central

☐ Great Western

☐ Greater Anglia

Route	Overall Route Length (km)	Self Powered Length (km)	No of Daily Services	Diesel Burden (km/day)
Sheffield to St Pancras International	260	110	33	3630
St Pancras International to Sheffield	260	110	33	3630
Norwich to Liverpool Lime Street	399	329	11	3619
Liverpool Lime Street to Norwich	399	329	10	3290
Skegness to Nottingham	119	119	15	1785
St Pancras International to Nottingham	200	50	34	1700
Nottingham to Skegness	119	119	14	1666
Nottingham to St Pancras International	200	50	29	1450
Newark Castle to Crewe	136	112	12	1344
Total			387	37868

When activating the Route selection box below, use Ctrl Click to avoid re-sorting the data

EMR only – main line to Sheffield and Nottingham c10,400km

EMR in total – 387 services, 37,668km (note the image above does not show the full list of routes but the totals)