

PRESS RELEASE



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GB Railfreight New freight route opens with call for greater investment

A new rail chord that will create a more reliable railway for passengers and freight operators opened today with a call for more investment in the rail freight network from a senior industry figure.

Speaking at the opening of the Nuneaton North Chord - a 1.5km section of track linking routes from the east of England to the West Coast Main Line - John Smith, Managing Director of GB Railfreight urged the Government to create much-needed extra capacity by extending its route enhancement and electrification programmes.

"The opening of the Nuneaton Chord is a great and historic day for rail freight and the wider rail industry," said Mr Smith, *"and I am proud that GB Railfreight has played a part in the creation of history."*

"This investment, I believe, reflects an understanding by the Department of Transport of the importance of rail freight - a £1bn industry - to the economy of the country."

"However, it is important that we don't stop here. More capacity improvements are vital if we are to improve efficiency and make rail freight an attractive option for customers."

Mr Smith added: *"The Nuneaton North Chord is a very important element in creating a vital freight corridor from the Port of Felixstowe to the Midlands and the North West. The next stage must be more electrification - from Nuneaton to Birmingham and capacity enhancements together with electrification between Ipswich and Felixstowe - if we are to capitalize on this development. The private sector has shown faith in rail freight with investment in a new £40m terminal at Felixstowe. The time is now right for more public sector investment."*

The Nuneaton North Chord was officially opened when a GB Railfreight service used the line en-route to Manchester. The chord is part of a wider programme to create a route for larger 9'6" containers on the route from Felixstowe to the Midland, North West and Central Scotland. Carrying up to 12 freight trains a day in each direction it will cut around 275,000 lorry journeys a year.