

DELIVERING RAIL DECARBONISATION AND ROLLING STOCK NEEDS 2026

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Ahead of [Delivering Rail Decarbonisation and Rolling Stock Needs 2026](#), taking place on 11 February in London, we asked **Paul Long, Head of T&RS Engineering, Freightliner** shares his thoughts on the biggest barriers on delivering a more sustainable railway and the alternative traction technologies.



PAUL LONG
HEAD OF T&RS ENGINEERING
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WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO DELIVERING A MORE SUSTAINABLE RAILWAY? HOW CAN THESE BE ADDRESSED?

The biggest barrier to decarbonisation is the cost of conversion old or procuring new rolling stock in an extremely cost sensitive industry. Also, there are no off the shelf zero carbon options and all are 5 - 10 years from a market ready product. At present there are no government incentives or grants in the same way we have seen in the roll out of road charging points or hydrogen production. Freight companies therefore need to make some difficult decisions to determine the optimum time and technology to invest in to meet decarbonisation targets.

WHAT ALTERNATIVE TRACTION TECHNOLOGIES ARE EMERGING TO ENABLE GREENER RAILWAY OPERATIONS?

The most promising technologies are related to synthetic fuels as they provide an avenue for a sustainable supply of carbon neutral fuels which require no changes to current rolling stock and operations. The rate at which these fuels can be developed and productionised though will be key to their ability to make a change to rail decarbonisation.

HOW CAN EXISTING RAIL ASSETS AND ROLLING STOCK BE ADAPTED TO ACHIEVE DECARBONISATION?

Existing rolling stock can be converted to any of the proposed technologies as they offer a robust platform which has existing grandfather rights to use the network. In the case of new energy technologies like battery and hydrogen though they would not have the storage capacity to fit solely within existing locomotives and would require some form of support vehicle or tender to provide energy storage.

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