



Department for Transport

Freight Council Meeting

Date and Time – 07 April 2025, 14:15-15:45

Location – Ministerial Board Room (GMH) & Microsoft Teams

Chairs

Representative	Role	Organisation	Initials
Iain Forbes	Director, Freight and Borders	Department for Transport	IF
Isabel Dedring	Global Transport Leader	Arup	ID

Freight Council Members

Representative	Role	Organisation	Initials
Clare Bottle (online)	Chief Executive Officer	UK Warehousing Association	CB
Geraint Evans (online)	Chief Executive Officer	UK Major Ports Group	GE
Amanda Francis	Chief Executive Officer	Association of International Courier and Express Services	AF
Maggie Simpson OBE	Director General	Rail Freight Group	MS
Richard Smith	Managing Director	Road Haulage Association	RS
David Wells (online)	Chief Executive Officer	Logistics UK	DW
Sarah Bell, UK	Director of Public Affairs	UPS	SB
David Alec Hart (online)	Logistics and Supply Chain Director	Cemex	DAH
Fiona Hamilton	Head of Public Affairs	Royal Mail	FH
Chris Welch	Managing Director	Welch Group	CW
Nick Potter (apologies for this first meeting)	Transport Director	Tesco	NP
Stephen Carr (apologies for this meeting)	Commercial Director	Peel Ports	SC

Government Representatives



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Representative	Role	Organisation	Initials
Laura Marquis (online)	Deputy Director, Multimodal Freight Division	Department for Transport	LM
Widad Chhibi	Freight Council Secretariat, Multimodal Freight Division	Department for Transport	WC
Daryl Ogbeifun	Team Leader, Freight & Logistics Strategy, Multimodal Freight Policy Division	Department for Transport	DO
Alex Hart (online)	Team Leader, Data & Insights and Infrastructure Optimisation, Multimodal Freight Policy Division	Department for Transport	AH
Janna Nayeem	Freight & Logistics Workforce and Skills Policy, Multimodal Freight Division	Department for Transport	JM
Wendy Richards	Logistics Lead, Construction, Infrastructure & Energy	Department for Business and Trade	WW

Industry

Representative	Role	Organisation	Initials
Edwin Morgan	Policy & Public Affairs Director	UK Warehousing Association	EM

Minutes

Overview:

The meeting was convened to launch the reconfigured Freight Council with its refreshed membership, collectively consider the current challenges within the freight logistics sector and discuss strategic areas for government and industry collaboration. A key focus was developing a new, forward-looking plan for freight and logistics that not only supports decarbonisation but also aligns with broader government policy across economic growth, infrastructure development, and resilience. The reconstituted Freight Council was recognised as a critical step toward pivoting the group to a phase of focussed impact.

1. Welcome and introductions

The chair (IF) welcomed the group and made the following introductory remarks:



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- Relayed the Minister's apologies for being unable to chair the meeting due to urgent Parliamentary business.
- Confirmed this meeting marks the group's first opportunity to get to know one another under the Council's refreshed format and formulation.
- Acknowledged the rapid changes in the trading environment, highlighting the critical challenges faced by the freight sector.
- Emphasised the importance of strong partnerships between the government and industry to address economic, infrastructure, and environmental issues.

Isabel Dedring:

- Expressed support for the decision to continue with the meeting despite the Minister being unable to chair.
- Reflected on where the Council had got to prior to the change in government and reincarnation of the group, with efforts made to move the group into the next phase of making an impact across government to move the agenda forward.
- Stated that the group is well placed to bring out the role of the sector in delivering the government's priorities.
- Indicated that a good outcome would be a list of 3-5 key areas to channel efforts into.

IF thanked ID for her comments, ran through some housekeeping and asked members to briefly introduce themselves and outline their interest in the Council.

2. Freight Council Purpose and Objective

Iain Forbes:

- Highlighted that it was clear that the live themes for the agenda would be decarbonisation and trading environments based on members' introductions.
- Echoed Isabel's comments around increasing the group's impact through more targeted selection of where efforts are concentrated.
- Highlighted the call for comments on the terms of reference, noting that time will not be spent considering them in detail during the meeting.
- **[ACTION 1.1]:** Members were asked to provide comments to the secretariat via email.
- Provided context on the group's reform and the DfT's objectives. A decision to bring in operators was made to inject direct experiences of what the challenges are in day-to-day logistics operations in the current climate. This is to complement the valuable input provided by trade associations.
- Called on members to share reflections on how the group can enhance its impact, e.g. by sharing best practice from involvement with other, similar forums.
- Reiterated that efforts have been made to tighten the group with the intention to bring in wider perspectives through other means, whilst maintaining a strong core strategic group which can get under the surface of the priority areas of concern.
- Encouraged members to provide thoughts on whether a key voice was missing from the identified group.
- Emphasised that one of the key objectives of the forum was to ensure the sector can influence the wide array of activity taking place across government, including



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the development of the Integrated National Transport Strategy (INTS), rail reform and Industrial Strategy.

- Noted that the value of the forum would be to bring coherence and provide a home to issues which are cross-modal and therefore not captured by workstreams which focus on individual transport modes and policies.
- Set out that meetings will take place on a quarterly basis, with the expectation that members work together in between meetings to accelerate progress, and the strong preference for members to attend in person so far as possible.

ACTION 1.2: ID agreed with IF's remarks and added that it would be helpful to have a list of future dates to maximise the group's ability to join in person.

Isabel Dedring:

- Expressed support for the move to involve operators and noted it will be important to facilitate an efficient means to bring other voices in without creating more meetings.
- Suggested that the sector needs to be more proactive and assertive to help overcome the "neglect" it feels it has experienced in policy and investment decisions, noting the proactive approaches of the automotive and aviation sectors.
- Suggested that the sector needs to be clearer on the changes it needs from government and the areas it would like to collaborate on.

Richard Smith (RHA):

- Expressed support for the structure of the meeting and continued collaboration.
- Suggested that there is a need for more activity outside of the Council to drive forward change and increase impact.
- Welcomed DBT's attendance, adding that it would be good to see more departments involved even if not through attending the meetings.
- Pointed out that sub-groups will be important, and even more important is choosing a good selection of people to drive activity within them. They can naturally go into more in depth detail and capture wider perspective (e.g. freight carriers and rail operators) to cover the broad range of issues and gaps pertaining to freight.
- Suggested that once the key 3 or 4 focus areas are agreed, it will be important to agree on who will be involved with driving each area outside of the meetings and deciding on leaders for each key activity.

Maggie Simpson (RFG):

- Stated that the sector needs to improve its ability to come together to drive the government's ambitions. It continues to be resilient, and goods will reach end customers no matter what, but more coordinated effort is required to engineer the delivery of government priorities in the process.
- Emphasised continuing challenge of bringing out the comprehensive role of freight and logistics in responses to government consultations/calls for evidence etc to inform policy direction. Noted Steel Strategy as an example of key document that does not reference freight.



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- Specified that poor quality decision making and inadequate infrastructure at local, regional and national level is preventing delivery of key government objectives, such as the delivery 1.5 million homes.
- Suggested that the Freight Council should play a brokering role in helping secure freight consideration in key government publications and helping join up government thinking.

Amanda Francis (AICES):

- Indicated strong support for the need to assign freight and logistics foundational status in the Industrial Strategy.
- Suggested that all identified growth industries sectors rely on express services.
- AICES have engaged with the relevant team to make the case for more freight consideration in the Trade Strategy, and more broadly consideration of the entire end-to-end journey in key policy documents.
- Reiterated MS's comments on omission of freight in key strategies and consultations.
- Made a case for 15 minutes of networking ahead of future Council meetings to permit members to catch up.

[ACTION 1.3]: *IF supported Amanda's point regarding 15 minutes for networking and confirmed that the secretariat will action that for future meetings.*

Geraint Evans (UKMPG):

- Reaffirmed comments made by MS.
- Suggested that in investor conversations, clarification is being sought regarding planning, grid connections, and freight road and rail connection.
- Stated that greater clarity around the government's role and the sector's role at a strategic and tactical level is needed.
- Endorsed the comments made by others, reiterating the need for freight and logistics to get its fair share of coverage in the array of documents being developed by the government.

Clare Bottle (UKWA):

- **[Action 1.4]:** Suggested that the terms of reference should include an agreed definition of freight to give greater sense of scope, e.g. some people do not consider warehousing as a key component. Offered to work with Isabel and the secretariat to prepare a draft.
- Highlighted the 10 Year Infrastructure Strategy as a key document which needs to factor in freight.
- Posed a question to the wider group on whether the Industrial Strategy should be considered as the "mother" of all publications, and if efforts should be concentrated on making the case for freight and logistics to be a foundational sector.
- Built on the above by suggestion the Industrial Strategy be the starting point for getting the level of recognition needed across various different strategic pieces of work being developed.



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Isabel Dedring:

- Suggested that the group map out a list of the 4 or 5 key documents and strategies being developed by the government and set out concisely how the Council would want them to speak to freight and logistics needs.

Iain Forbes:

- In response to ID's suggestion, highlighted that this document could provide a basis for DfT officials to promulgate with relevant teams and help improve consideration of, and reference to the sector in key overarching strategies.
- Suggested that this exercise will help translate the opportunities and challenges that exist within the sector into language that will mesh with policy activity across government and help increase the sector's influence.

[ACTION 1.5]: *MS offered to hold the pen on a two-pager of relevant publications and government activity, with support from DfT via the provision of an initial iteration of relevant strategies and publications.*

[ACTION 1.6]: *MS called on other members of the Council to provide bullet points to support development of the two-pager (requesting a list of their email addresses to aid collaboration). The group also agreed to discuss the final list at the next scheduled meeting to determine what endorsement should look like.*

Isabel Dedring:

- Expanded on her comments by giving some background on her experience in politics and as the Deputy Mayor for Transport and Deputy Chair of Transport for London.
- Set out that in her experience, the freight industry has historically not had a compelling enough case to make when lobbying for their desired outcomes.
- Clearer articulation of the sector's positive impact on the economy is needed, for example how it is increasing the UK's competitiveness and supporting UK plc. For too long, focus has been too narrow (e.g. on road and rail).

3. Plan for Freight

IF moved the discussion on to formally announce the Department's intention to work with the sector to develop a new Plan for Freight. He then drew attention to the Secretary of State's steer for the Plan to articulate how the sector can contribute to the government's growth and decarbonisation agenda, before passing on to Laura Marquis to provide an overview of how the Plan is being scoped and developed.

Laura Marquis:

- Provided an overview of the Council's role in the previous Future of Freight Plan and its strong performance when operating in the co-development stage alongside government.
- Indicated that whilst the previous Plan has been influential and effective in raising the status of freight across government, Ministers are keen for a reset



Department for Transport

and refresh given that the political, economic and technology landscapes have evolved significantly. The sector has new challenges to adapt to, as well as new opportunities to get excited about.

- Highlighted that the aim is for a punchy document, developed and published this year. Pointed to the need to capitalise on the window of opportunity and backdrop of Plan for Change, government missions and Transport SoS's priorities, which provide perfect opportunity for the sector to position and itself in alignment.
- Determining the role for government and the role for industry in this space will be key, action must come from both sides.
- Stated that conversations will also need to take place on the role of freight and logistics in the INTS and how the new plan will sit in the wider strategy landscape.
- Set out that the plan provides an opportunity to be bold and decisive on what the world of freight will look like in the next 10 years. Engagement will be undertaken across the sector as a whole in the next few months to influence development, in addition to collaboration with the Council.
- Drew attention to the slide pack circulated to attendees in advance of the meeting before opening the floor for comments on the proposed vision and scope of the new freight plan.

Iain Forbes:

- Highlighted that under the previous administration, lots of work went into Future of Freight. The end product ended up being a substantial analytical and policy document. This represented the first time the government and the sector have come together this way.
- Suggested that this is an option for delivering such work, but it takes a considerable length of time and requires identifying many objectives and generating activity under each of those.
- Indicated that such documents can sometimes struggle to achieve desired impact. The Council is likely to increase its impact by being more selective.

Isabel Dedring:

- Reiterated LM's remarks on the need for a short, punchy and action-orientated Plan, more aligned with an action plan than a strategy.
- Suggested that the Plan should be framed through the lens of the sector's economic contribution both in its own right and as an enabler, and for consideration to be given to economic negatives the sector should avoid or mitigate.
- A system wide approach is beneficial – consideration of what needs to change in the system to make it operate more effectively as a whole/shift the dial.

David Wells (LUK):

- Expressed disappointment in the government's decision to not fund another year of Generation Logistics (GL), and requested this comment be passed on to the Minister. Described GL as a good example of a multimodal initiative.



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Clare Bottle (UKWA):

- Supported DW's comments. Suggested resource and output could be considered a public good, e.g. for promotion within job centres and schools. UKWA have engaged DWP on this.

Iain Forbes:

- **[ACTION 1.7]:** Confirmed that these comments will be passed on to the Minister.
- Set out that the government is fiscally constrained. One of the overarching drivers for the Prime Minister and the Chancellor is to get the public finances in a better position, which does mean small amounts of funding are a lot more difficult now.
- Outlined that justification for funding has to be really strong. This does not mean government funding is not on the table for discussion to enable support, but rather that the answers should not be sought in funding, so far as possible.
- Emphasised that the intention is not to dampen or constrain the discussion, but the reality is that we have to think beyond funding when identifying how we can make an impact.

Richard Smith (RHA):

- Agreed with what's been said so far.
- Noted down 5 words during the earlier discussion: 1) Net Zero; 2) Infrastructure across all modes; 3) Technology/AI, 4) Borders/Cost; and 5) Regulation (particularly in relation to weights).
- Pointed to the wide variety of groups across government, suggesting that the Council will need to consider how it engages with those, as well as how it lands its messages in Europe.

Edwin Morgan (UKWA)

- Agreed with the points raised by RS.
- Stated that UKWA members are particularly interested in developing a roadmap to net zero; exploring low-carbon technologies; and understanding related regulations.
- Stated that in warehousing, there are key intersections with logistics, particularly regarding opportunities for vehicle charging.
- Noted potential missed opportunities in the current system, such as using warehouse distribution centres for charging electric trucks during loading/unloading.
- Suggested that this raises practical questions about infrastructure, like whether warehouses have sufficient power capacity.
- Suggested there is a need to think beyond just EV charging for cars, highlighting broader, more complex interconnections worth exploring.

Amanda Francis (AICES):

- Agreed with the broad process proposed.



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- Emphasised that another key area is resilience. This is especially key given the multi modal nature of the forum. A number of the Council members are involved in the Freight Energy Forum and looking at energy resilience as well.

David Wells (LUK):

- Stated that resilience is interlinked with infrastructure, and that the multimodal network could be considered economic infrastructure, which is supported by physical infrastructure.
- Stated that LUK currently focussed on trade, and the consequences emerging from USA tariffs. Concerns specifically around the decline of world trade, in addition to border friction and complexities around Northern Ireland and Europe.
- Suggested that the sector could become a victim if international trade reduces, due to a consequent reduction in the demand for movement of goods in such scenario.

Andrew Malcom (Malcolm Transport):

- Stated that as a private sector, industry must turn the government's theory into a practical reality. Currently doing it in affordable and resilient fashion.
- Set out that concern is many sessions such as these take place where encouraging conversations are had, but it never gets high enough up the agenda, in Westminster and beyond.

Isabel Dedring:

- Indicated that she is keen to shorten the list identified in the next discussion as it is arguably extensive.
- Suggested that the group also need to also better frame the important issues to illustrate how they support, or are connected to things that are politically important and priorities for Ministers. For example, what is the risk to UK PLC from the issues identified? And how can these issues be mitigated by industry? What action can the industry take?
- For longevity, suggested it is also worth identifying strong connections with future government priorities.

Iain Forbes:

- Acknowledged the uncertainty, suggesting that the Department cannot promise a stable, unchanging roadmap due to the fast-paced and dynamic nature of the current political and policy environment.
- Encouraged members to actively shape how the group operates, ensuring it doesn't become just a "talking shop."
- Suggested that some of the discussed topics already align with ongoing government initiatives. Leading officials can be invited to present to the group, to provide the Council with the opportunity to influence existing workstreams rather than risk starting duplicative new strands of work.
- There's a need to think strategically about how this group communicates with and involves the wider sector.



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- **[ACTION 1.8]:** The secretariat will integrate the long list identified by the group into the work programme, and update at the next Council meeting for the group's input and consensus.

Fiona Hamilton (Royal Mail):

- Stated that the government has an ambitious agenda across a host of policy areas (e.g. planning reform, employment law reform, net zero and diesel phase out dates).
- Expressed support for Richard's 5 points plus Amanda's resilience point, indicating that they speak to a whole host of government activity.
- Suggested that a narrower approach could risk doing the sector a disservice, because the issues collectively make up what businesses need to run effectively.
- Stated that focusing on just one issue, like planning, would be short-sighted. The sector's needs are interconnected — workforce (e.g. apprenticeship levy reform), infrastructure (e.g. road network), and multimodal transport all matter for an efficient system.
- Highlighted that neglecting any of these areas risks undermining the whole system, especially given the government's wide-ranging and ambitious agenda.

Maggie Simison (RFG):

- Indicated that a distinction can be made between:
 - A strategic agenda for the group — identifying key themes or "centres of gravity" to work on consistently.
 - And the need for focused priorities — choosing two or three specific issues to emphasise when the government releases major plans, like the freight strategy.
- Without that focus, there's a risk of the group being spread too thin.
- Suggested that while the government faces financial constraints, business has capital that is currently underutilised due to lack of certainty and infrastructure issues. There's potential in exploring how to unlock private investment.

Clare Bottle (UKWA):

- Indicated that there is an important distinction between the story told and the changes the group aim to make.
- Argued that when crafting strategic documents like the freight plan, it is crucial to present the full complexity of modern supply chains — including how warehouses operate, how planning permission works, and how goods flow — because policymakers often lack this understanding.
- Suggested that while the narrative should be broad and informative, the group must focus its efforts on a few specific, actionable changes, such as in planning, business rates, or skills.

Isabel Dedring:



Department for Transport

- Suggested that there are three key layers to how the group should frame its work:
 - 1) The Full Picture: Communicate the complexity of the sector and how it operates, helping policymakers understand the broader context.
 - 2) Alignment with Government Missions: Show how the sector can help government achieve its strategic goals (e.g., planning), and highlight how lack of support could hinder those missions.
 - 3) The Existential Context: Recognise the larger challenges of our era — such as deglobalisation and systemic uncertainty — and emphasise the need for industry resilience and agility over rigid plans. Government collaboration with the sector should facilitate this adaptability.
- Suggested that the group needs to move fluidly between these layers, tailoring the message depending on the audience and timing. Critically, it still needs to clearly articulate why the sector matters at a fundamental level, integrating all three layers into a coherent narrative.

IF thanked members for the contributions, summarised the actions agreed (see below) and drew the meeting to a close.

Key Decisions and Outcomes:

- **Strengthening Collaborative Governance:**
The refined, smaller Freight Council is endorsed to facilitate focused discussions. At the same time, mechanisms such as subgroups will be considered to broaden industry input without compromising meeting efficiency.
- **Development of two pager on key strategies to influence:**
Members will work together to agree the strategies they'd most like to influence, captured in a document with bullets on what they would like these strategies to cover.
- **Freight Plan Development:**
It was agreed that the Council should spearhead the creation of a short, punchy action plan outlining critical areas for collective action from government and industry.
- **Generation Logistics Funding Decision (feedback):**
There was a clear expression of disappointment regarding the defunding of Generation Logistics. Government officials agreed to pass these concerns on to the Minister.
- **Prioritisation of Strategic Areas:**
Members will work to consolidate key areas of interest in the next meeting (e.g., planning obstacles, resilience, trade challenges).



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Actions Table

Notes: Items raised in this current meeting and marked as complete will note feature in the next meeting minute.

Ref.	Date Raised	Action	Who	Updates	Status
1.1	07/04/25	Members to send comments on Terms of Reference to the secretariat.	All Members	Some comments received on Member biographies and organisation descriptions within Terms of Reference. These have been reflected.	Complete.
1.2	07/04/25	DfT to provide members with a list of future meeting dates to help secure in person attendance.	Freight Council Secretariat	DfT Secretariat has worked with the Minister's PO to explore this. This is challenging due to the Minister's diary, instead prompt communication of future meeting dates will be adopted to help maximise attendance.	Complete.
1.3	07/04/25	Future meetings to be scheduled with 15 minutes of networking ahead of start time.	Freight Council Secretariat	This will be incorporated into future meetings.	Complete.
1.4	07/04/25	Clare Bottle to work with Isabel Dedring and the Secretariat to draft agreed definition of freight and logistics (which includes warehousing) for incorporation into the terms of reference.	UKWA, ID and Freight Council Secretariat	Secretariat will reach out to Clare in advance of the second meeting to discuss.	Ongoing.
1.5	07/04/25	Maggie Simpson (RFG) to compile a list of relevant strategies and publications of interest to the sector.	RFG and Freight Council Secretariat	DfT Secretariat circulated an initial list to Members alongside meeting minutes.	Complete.
1.6	07/04/25	Call on other Members to provide bullet points to support development of the paper	RFG and Freight	DfT Secretariat circulated a list of members' email addresses alongside meeting minutes.	Ongoing.



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Ref.	Date Raised	Action	Who	Updates	Status
		outlined above, so it can be discussed at the next scheduled meeting to determine what endorsement should look like. Secretariat to circulate list of Members' email addresses to permit communication and collaboration outside of the meeting.	Council Secretariat		
1.7	07/04/25	DfT officials to relay comments from members on defunding of GL to Ministers.	DfT Officials	Comments reflected in a tactical update to Minister Greenwood.	Complete.
1.8	07/04/25	Integration of the long list identified by the group into the Freight Plan work programme, and update at the next Council meeting for the group's input and consensus.	DfT Officials	Following review, DfT officials have taken action to ensure the long list of proposals are suitably integrated into the plan's work programme. As a result, each proposal will be reflected in either the vision and objectives of the plan, or in the themes through which policy development will be structured.	Complete.