

Centre for Excellence in Rail Economics, Policy and Operations
Launch event on 17 November 2026
At RSSB Offices, 25 Fenchurch Avenue, London, EC3M 5AD

UKRRIN was established in 2018 as a collaboration between academia and industry to accelerate innovation in rail. It comprises 20 universities plus 20 industrial partners with four railway engineering centres of excellence.

The industry has changed dramatically in recent years and UKRRIN plans to evolve with the creation of Great British Railways. In particular, UKRRIN aims to provide a more coordinated approach to research, development and innovation and has launched a pilot for the new arrangements with RSSB and Network Rail.

A new Centre of Excellence in Rail Economics, Policy and Operations (CEREPO) has also been established. This new centre extends UKRRIN's scope into rail economics, policy and operations as well as providing further focus for UKRRIN research and innovation relating to rail operations. Committed funding in this area will enable enhanced academic capability to support the challenges facing today's railway. The centre is led by University of Leeds with support from the University of Birmingham and University of Southampton as well as being open to other universities.

The key areas of focus for CEREPO have been identified as follows:

- Rail policy, strategic business planning & customer experience
- Organisational structure, regulation & incentives
- Enabling innovation
- Cost modelling and benchmarking
- Investment appraisal & evaluation
- Demand forecasting & scenarios
- Fares & ticketing
- Operations research

The CEREPO launch event is being hosted by RSSB and supported by Network Rail and DFTO (ahead of Great British Railways being formally established), Department for Transport, Office of Rail and Road, Railway Industry Association, Rail Freight Group and other industry stakeholders. Its purpose is to:

- **Identify** the gap which CEREPO aims to fill and the support to make it happen
- **Understand** existing capability and projects within CEREPO scope
- **Explore** challenges opportunities where academic partnerships can help
- **Initiate** pilot projects within the scope of the centre of excellence
- **Network** with the UKRRIN community to explore collaboration opportunities

CEREPO Launch event draft programme		
0930	Arrival and registration	
1000	Welcome	Introduction to the event: • Luisa Moio, RSSB • Prof Paul Plummer, UKRRIN
1010	CEREPO - why, what and how?	Keynote by Prof Andrew Smith, University of Leeds ITS, CEREPO lead
1030	Industry perspective on how CEREPO can help enable long term industry planning?	Keynote by Paul McMahon, Network Rail, Director of Planning and Regulation
1050	Government perspective on how CEREPO can help enable industry reform and innovation?	Keynote by Ian Mulheirn, Department for Transport, Chief Analyst
1110	Coffee	
1140	What capability is there in CEREPO academic members and what successes have there been within CEREPO scope? • Leeds ITS • Southampton • Birmingham • Other universities	Presentations from lead universities: • Prof John Preston, University of Southampton • Prof Richard Batley, University of Leeds ITS • Prof Simon Blainey, University of Birmingham Open discussion of capabilities elsewhere
1220	What are the further economic, policy and operational challenges and opportunities where collaboration with academia can support the industry? • System operation • Supply chain • Regulation • Freight and open access • Devolution	Open discussion facilitated by Prof Paul Plummer with: • Robert Cook, Railway Industry Association • Will Godfrey, Office of Rail and Road • Maggie Simpson, Rail Freight Group • Rebecca Cheung, West Yorkshire Combined Authority
1250	What happens next?	Discussion led by Prof Andrew Smith
1300	Lunch and networking	