

**Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit (TIPU)**

Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

19<sup>th</sup> December 2025

To whom it may concern,

**Letter of support – Network Rail Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements Order**

On behalf of Drax Power Limited, I am writing to offer our strong support for the Network Rail Transport and Works Act Order (TWAo) for the Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU) between Stalybridge and Diggle (Saddleworth).

As a freight user operating across the North of England, and the UK's largest single source of renewable electricity we recognise the TRU as a transformational long-awaited investment in one of the North's most strategically important rail corridors. The scheme will deliver the modern high-performing infrastructure needed to improve reliability, support future growth in rail freight and strengthen the region's economic competitiveness.

The upgrade enhancements including full electrification, modern signalling, higher line speeds, provision for longer trains, expanded sidings and additional capacity is vital to unlocking modal shift from road to rail and support the UK's wider decarbonisation goals. Importantly, the works between Stalybridge and Diggle address long-standing constraints that have limited both freight and passenger operations for decades.

For too long the Trans-Pennine corridor has operated on ageing infrastructure not designed for today's mixed traffic demands. Congestion, operational bottlenecks and uncertain investment timelines have hampered journey times, restricted freight paths and created challenges for businesses like ours seeking reliable, resilient connections across the North. The clarity and ambition now being shown through TRU marks a turning point.

The TRU upgrade, and this order will unlock new growth by modernising the corridor, building confidence in future business decisions for rail freight and supply chain users, and helping meet our sustainability targets.

We therefore strongly welcome the order and in particular:

- The focus on resolving freight capacity constraints between Stalybridge and Diggle (Saddleworth) and the demonstrable progress delivered by TRU and Network Rail have already made in this area.
- The programme's commitment to full electrification, higher speeds, modern signalling, increased line speeds and accessibility improvements, enabling growth in existing and emerging markets.
- Planned interventions such as W12 gauge clearance, grade separation and improved layouts at key junctions and stations that will remove operational bottlenecks and support more efficient, sustainable operations.

Drax Power Limited also recognises the need for alignment with future infrastructure investment programmes, including Northern Powerhouse Rail and integration with the Bee Network. Coordinated delivery will maximise long-term benefits and secure seamless, sustainable freight paths and legacy benefits across the region.

We urge the timely approval of this TWAO, and from our perspective we can see how these upgrades represent a catalyst for future economic growth, increased productivity, enhanced freight performance and improved access for our staff, customers and the communities we serve.

Please feel free to contact our Head of Logistics Mark Gibbens ([mark.gibbens@drax.com](mailto:mark.gibbens@drax.com)) should you wish to discuss this letter or our freight ambitions in greater detail.

Your sincerely,



Chloe Drew

Biomass Trading & Logistics Director