

# Concerns raised over hundreds of jobs at Hitachi plant in County Durham

Concerns have been raised over hundreds of jobs at the Hitachi Rail plant in [County Durham](#) due to a growing crisis in the rail industry.

Shadow Transport Secretary Louise Haigh used a House of Commons debate to highlight the lack of future orders at the plant in Newton Aycliffe, as well as another plant in the sector. Concerns were also raised by Sedgefield MP Paul Howell, who said that the Hitachi plant in his constituency had “significant short-term challenges”.

Fears over the future of UK train building sector first emerged last year when French firm Alstom, which has a major plant at Derby, said it was consulting on hundreds of redundancies because of a lack of new orders.

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Alstom and Hitachi had previously won a contract to provide trains of the [HS2](#) link, though the companies’ current problems are not thought to be linked to the Government’s decision to abandon the Northern leg of that scheme.

Ms Haigh told the Commons: “The minister will have seen reports this week of 3,000 jobs at risk at Alstom’s rail factory in Derby. The Government told us they were doing everything in their power to prevent these job losses but they appear to be failing.

“And it gets worse: this morning I have received correspondence from Hitachi Rail warning that despite years of

representation to ministers no solution has been found to keep their order books full to safeguard the future of 700 staff at its factory in Newton Aycliffe.

“The Secretary of State has it in his power to vary their contracts and commission the necessary orders. When is he going to do it and protect these jobs?”

Transport minister Huw Merriman said there was a “lag with the order book” as most of the train fleet was under the age at which it needed replacing.

He added: “We are doing everything we can to work with all four train manufacturers to bring more tenders through. Those will be for TransPennine Express, for Northern, for South-Eastern and, as the Secretary of State mentioned, for Chiltern, but the work goes in partnership between the train manufacturers, and the Secretary of State and the department to find a resolution. We hope to do so.”

At the end of last year, Hitachi highlighted a range of challenges it was facing at Newton Aycliffe and said that had resulted in it reducing its valuation of the plant by nearly £65m. But it stressed that did not mean that the future of the plant was at threat.

Speaking later at an event in Newcastle, Ms Haigh said: “It would mean potentially hundreds of job losses if they can’t fill the order book and they have a gap in production. It will also mean standing down the supply chain, so there would be massive consequences for the supply chain and the wider region.

“It would be a total dereliction of duty from the Government because they have the ability at the moment to vary their contract. Hitachi are not asking for public money, they are asking for that contract to be released and allowed by the Department for Transport. It is mind-boggling to me that the secretary of state is so far refusing to do it.”