

Modal Shift Programme (MSP) Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Modal Shift Programme?

Introduced on 1st September 2023, the Modal Shift Programme (MSP) encourages import cargo owners to move containers by rail instead of road from DP World Southampton, reducing carbon emissions and supporting net-zero goals. Participants benefit from financial incentives for each import container transported by rail within the MSP Incentive Zone, which covers key intermodal railheads across the UK. The programme helps prevent thousands of truck journeys, lowering road congestion and cutting supply chain CO₂ emissions.

Why are you continuing the Modal Shift Programme at DP World Southampton?

Following the success of the MSP Trial at DP World Southampton, we continue to refine the incentive model to support sustainable logistics and encourage greater rail modal shift. DP World Southampton can help connect transport modes and provide customers with choice on inland shipment routing. The programme will help cargo owners and UK industry meet net zero carbon reduction aspirations.

What are the environmental benefits and savings?

A typical import container from Southampton to Birmingham could save as much as 250 kgs of CO₂ routed by rail/road, rather than road alone.

By moving containers by rail through the MSP, cargo owners can significantly reduce scope 3 emissions, avoid road congestion, and achieve measurable environmental impact. From September 2023 to March 2026, our programme helped transfer over 190,600 truck journeys to rail, removed over 15 million road miles, reducing 44,800 tonnes of CO₂e and enabling more sustainable logistics. Financial incentives, combined with access to DP World's intermodal rail services, make rail a cost-effective, low-carbon alternative to road transport.

How will the MSP benefit cargo owners and supply chain partners?

The MSP will provide a financial incentive for using rail to move cargo within the MSP Incentive Zone (within a radius of approximately 140 miles from Southampton). If rail can be made a more attractive choice for cargo owners and supply chain partners, then increased demand for rail/road import nominations will mean that UK businesses and consumers benefit from imported goods with a lower carbon footprint, and another step towards net zero. The lower carbon routing can also be reported against companies' scope 3 emissions for carbon reduction.

Clearing agents will receive the modal shift programme incentive (MSPI) if railed within 140 miles of DP World Southampton.



From October 2025 rail freight terminal operators (RFTOs) will receive performance-based disbursements (PBD) per import laden container moved by rail within the MSP incentive zone if individual railed container targets are met in the quarter.

What change do you expect to see?

Customers who already utilise rail within the MSP Incentive Zone will immediately benefit. The intent is that routing nominators, who do not maximise rail/road routings, can use the MSP Incentive to drive more import container volume towards intermodal rail.

Will I have to pay £10 MSP fee even if I can't rail my container?

Yes. We recognise that not every destination will be able to be serviced by rail even with the MSP in place. We are keeping the MSP Fee relatively low to limit the impact for cargo which cannot utilise rail, while still being able to offer a sufficiently large incentive to influence the flows where rail is an option.

Customers who have cargo flows which have previously been un-economic to rail can increase the proportion of rail across their UK import requirements through the apportionment of the MSP Incentive. The intent is for the MSP incentive to bridge the gap to nominate rail for import container transport and eventually grow the number of destinations which can be serviced by rail. Growing the share of rail brings economic and climate benefits to the British economy.

My road vehicles comply to the latest emission standards, why am I being penalised?

Road transport is very competitive and has over time increased the share of road moves from the port, which unfortunately has also increased the emissions per container moved. By introducing the MSP, we want to encourage supply chain partners to choose rail for their import containers, increase the share of rail moves and reduce the amount of emissions per container moved.

Why is the MSP Incentive Zone limited to approx. 140 miles from Southampton port?

The market economics for intermodal rail beyond the MSP Incentive Zone already makes financial sense because rail generally is more economic for such distances. For import container deliveries within the MSP Incentive Zone, there is often not a clear economic difference between road and rail/road for deliveries. By applying the MSP incentive within the MSP Incentive Zone, we aim to amplify the likelihood of modal shift to rail.

Are there restrictions on the use of the MSP Incentive?

No. The intent is that import routing nominators, either importers, forwarders or the import customs agents will use the MSP incentive to increase rail nominations. Essentially by using it to bridge any economic gap between road and rail/road (for example rail costs, intermodal administration or final mile delivery costs, etc). The incentive will only apply for containers which have been physically moved by rail.



Is there a restriction on the use of the PBD?

No, the PBD is to be used to encourage consistent rail share utilisation.

I already rail my containers, why do I have to pay the MSP Fee?

So as not to reduce the attractiveness of rail beyond the 140-mile radius, the MSP Fee will be refunded to those import laden containers connecting by rail to railheads outside of this zone. This means that effectively the MSP Fee is nil for rail containers outside the 140-mile radius while the MSP Incentive ensures a positive incentive for rail containers within the 140-mile radius.

Which railheads are in the MSP Incentive Zone?

(as at May 2026)

Avonmouth;
Barry Dock;
Birmingham Hams Hall;
Birmingham (BIFT);
Birch Coppice;
Birmingham Landor Street;
Bristol;
Cardiff;
Daventry;
East Midlands Gateway (EMG);
London Gateway;
Northampton;
Portbury.

Why are you applying the MSP Fee and MSP Incentive to customs agents?

There is an existing charging infrastructure in place with the clearance agents of import containers. We believe that by applying this programme to the customs agent community there is the best chance of routing nominators actively making the choice to instruct supply chain providers to nominate rail as the import connection transport mode.

A demand led approach from the import supply chain routing nominator is the most powerful route to achieve sustainable modal shift.

Why can you not incentivise rail at DP World Southampton without an MSP Fee?

We have actively been looking to encourage rail for a number of years at DP World. We have invested heavily in providing world class infrastructure and operational capability to provide rail choices to our port users, but this has unfortunately not increased the rail share of intermodal transport. In order to encourage the use of rail, we have had to implement the MSP



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Fee in order to be able to offer the incentive. Since the implementation of the MSP, the rail share is still not at the level we would like it to be at and therefore further incentivisation is required.

We will continue to support rail developments so that we can maximise the attractiveness of rail. For example, we are encouraging early nomination of imports for rail, prior to import discharge, so that we can efficiently expedite the flow of rail containers through the port.

Why is the MSP Fee not applied to export containers?

Import laden containers are the dominant flow for the UK economy and therefore drive operational requirements for our container terminals in the UK. If our supply chain partners choose to increase the proportion of imports that move by rail, then as a direct benefit of this behaviour change, more options will exist for export customers to route by rail with potential new routings and pricing levels which are enabled by a more utilised intermodal rail provision.

How is the MSP Incentive calculated?

The MSP Incentive is calculated based on the total proportion of import laden containers estimated to connect by rail to railheads within a 140-mile radius of DP World Southampton. The available revenue from the MSP fees is then distributed over the amount of laden import rail containers within this 140-mile radius.

As the intent of the MSP is to increase the attractiveness of rail, the MSP Incentive is recalculated on a regular basis to adjust for increased uptake (or reduction) in the proportion of import laden containers connecting by rail to railheads within a 140-mile radius.

The incentive amount is subject to change during the MSP trial period. The actual sum may be a higher or lower amount than the initial MSP Incentive sum stated. The MSP Incentive amount is dependent on the results of the modal shift and will vary on a quarterly basis.

How is the MSP PBD calculated?

Performance-based disbursement (PBD) for Rail Freight Terminal Operators (RFTOs) is conditional upon achieving the quarterly rail volume targets set during the current incentive period and calculated at the current rate per import laden container moved by rail within the incentive zone.

The PBD amount is subject to change during the MSP trial period. The actual sum may be a higher or lower amount than the initial PBD sum stated. The PBD amount is dependent on the results of the modal shift and will vary on a quarterly basis.

How often will the MSP Incentives be reviewed?

The MSP Fee, MSPI and PBD will be reviewed quarterly.



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What about the agents / declarants cost incurred in collecting the MSP Fee and distributing the MSP Incentive?

Invoices will show a reduction of 50p as an administration fee per container to reflect the additional administrative costs associated with the transaction. The net invoice charge to the agent / declarant will be £9.50 per import laden container for the MSP Fee (from 1st September 2023).

How long is the MSP trial at DP World Southampton?

The initial trial was 12 months from 1st September 2023, however, due to the trial's success, the trial has been extended until 31st December 2026 and will continue further if it continues to be effective.

Will the MSP continue beyond the trial period?

Should the MSP be deemed as being effective, the programme may be maintained and potentially rolled out further.

Why has DP World in the UK not introduced the Modal Shift Programme at DP World London Gateway?

We started with the Modal Shift Programme at DP World Southampton to validate the belief that the MSP Incentive will be of a sufficient scale for routing nominators within the supply chain to increase the uptake of rail/road and drive more sustainable behaviour for the UK economy and our planet. On the basis that the MSP is a success, we will review our findings and potentially look to increase the scale and scope of the initiative and implement into London Gateway in the near future.

How do I learn more about rail options for my import shipments through DP World Southampton?

Details of rail services from DP World Southampton can be found on our website at: <https://www.dpworld.com/southampton/supply-chain>

Here you will also find information about the intermodal rail providers who will be able to provide service options and prices.

How do I book my import container on rail?

There are many options to use intermodal rail from DP World Southampton. Details of rail services from DP World Southampton can be found on our website at: <https://www.dpworld.com/en/sustainability/united-kingdom/modal-shift-programme#bookings>

<https://www.dpworld.com/southampton/supply-chain>

Rail bookings can be made through a variety of options:



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- Shipping Line – contact the import customer service team for the shipping line operating your import container.
- Rail Operating Company – we service intermodal rail services for all the major UK operators.
- Freight Forwarder – many freight forwarders have the ability to book import containers by rail. Contact your freight forwarder to review options.

Is there enough rail capacity available to cope with increased rail volumes at DP World Southampton?

Yes. There are sufficient available paths on the network, sufficient rail wagons for containers, and engine traction to handle significantly higher volumes of containers by rail. We expect the utilisation of the current scheduled train services to increase and over time more rail services to be added.

When is the MSP Fee charged?

The MSP Fee will be applied for all laden import containers leaving DP World Southampton and will be invoiced to the clearing agent no later than 1 week after the end of the month.

When will the MSP Incentive be credited to import customs agents?

The MSP incentive will be applied for all eligible rail containers on trains departing from DP World Southampton which have incurred an MSP Fee.

The MSP Incentive will be calculated monthly and will be credited to import customs agents no later than 6 weeks after the end of the month.

For example, an import container qualifying for the MSP incentive in September will be included in the monthly invoice run at the start of November.

If the monthly invoice for the import customs agent is a net payment to DP World, then the MSP credit is applied immediately. If the MSP incentive triggers a net payment to the import customs agent any balance will be paid by DP World on a quarterly basis.

When will the PBD be credited to RFTOs?

The PBD will be credited to RFTOS at the end of the month following the prior quarter if targets are achieved. If the period was guaranteed, but the targets were not met the PBD will still be credited, however, as the target was not met future periods may not be guaranteed.

What if I believe that the MSP Incentive should apply for a container, but has not been credited?

DP World will have visibility on the containers connecting from DP World Southampton to the train services from the port. However, should you need to enquire about a specific container



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or have any other question we can support you by email at: modalshift.uk@dpworld.com or by contacting the CNS customer helpdesk at 02380 799 600.

How does DP World benefit from the Modal Shift Programme?

DP World will not generate any direct revenue from the Modal Shift Programme. DP World will manage and administer the MSP with an administration allocation of maximum 5% of MSP Fee income to cover direct administration costs. Data will be available to the Department for Transport to review upon request.

How do you know which import laden containers travel by rail?

We have visibility on the containers connecting through DP World Southampton to the two railheads which service the intermodal rail containers into the UK.

Will the MSP Fee apply to all container types?

The MSP Fee will apply to all import laden containers discharged into DP World Southampton, regardless of equipment type.

When do I need to rail my container?

The MSP incentive will be earned for all containers connecting to an import intermodal train within the MSP Incentive Zone within 72 hours of departing the DP World Southampton terminal as a gate out.