

News from Department for Transport

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Passengers set to benefit from new £200m electrification programme for North West

'Two-thirds of national passenger rail travel will be on electrified routes'

Rail passengers will benefit from greener, more comfortable and reliable rail journeys as Transport Secretary Andrew Adonis announced details of plans to electrify three major rail routes in the North West today.

The £200m electrification programme, combined with other improvements to track and signalling on the lines, will improve journeys between several of the key towns and cities in the North-West.

Along with the £1.1bn electrification plans involving London to Swansea and Liverpool to Manchester lines announced in July, this will mean two thirds of all national passenger rail travel will be on electrified routes.

The programme announced today includes electrifying:

- The 15 mile line between Huyton and Wigan, allowing electric trains to operate between Liverpool and Wigan via St Helens;
- The 25 mile route between Manchester and Euxton Junction, allowing electric trains to operate between Manchester and Preston, via Bolton; and.
- The 17 mile route between Blackpool North and Preston, allowing electric trains to operate to Blackpool North from Liverpool and Manchester.

Government investment in electrification, totalling up to £1.3bn, will boost travel, the economy and the environment and help create a more modern railway. The combined impact of all these new electrification programmes will be to increase the proportion of all electric train journeys in the UK from 60% of journeys to 67%.

Andrew Adonis said:

"These improvements will be of great benefit to passengers in the North West. Electric trains are not only quicker, but quieter, smoother and more reliable than diesels.

"Electrification creates the opportunity to carry more passengers thanks to longer trains on these busy routes and to allow some 30 year old 'Pacer' diesel trains to be retired. It also allows existing diesels to be re-deployed to provide longer trains on busy routes elsewhere.

"It is essential that we invest in our railways now and over the longer term. This is a further step in the biggest electrification programme in a generation and it's a vital part of our rail investment and carbon reduction strategies. By 2017 over two-thirds of passenger rail will be on electrified routes.

"The Government continues to assess the case for other electrification projects, notably the Midland Main Line from London to Derby, Nottingham and Sheffield."

Electric trains are not only faster, more reliable and more comfortable, but they generate less carbon than their diesel counterparts. Electrification can help to lower the costs of operating the railway since electric trains are generally cheaper to run than diesels and inflict less wear on tracks. The electric trains will be cleaner, producing no emissions at their point of use and lower carbon emissions overall. Replacing existing diesel trains with longer electric trains will also deliver much needed extra capacity.

Notes to editors

1. Today's announcement builds on £1.1bn plans - announced in July - for the most ambitious programme of electrification in a generation, which will see the 200 mile London to Swansea line and the 32 mile line from Liverpool to Manchester via Huyton and Newton-le-Willows electrified. A further £200m will be provided for this additional electrification in the North-West.

2. Benefits of "going electric" not diesel

Electrified lines help to get maximum efficiency and capacity from a modern railway. Compared to equivalent diesels, electric trains are generally:

- Faster;
- Quieter;
- Greener as they produce less CO₂ and emit no air pollution at the trackside;
- More reliable;
- Lighter and cause less wear and tear on the tracks;

- More cost-effective for carrying freight loads;
- Provide more seats; and
- Cheaper to buy, operate and maintain.

3. Benefits for the passenger

Electrification will make rail more reliable for commuters, reducing the potential cost to the economy of workers getting in late.

4. Greener journeys

Rail electrification is an important part of the Department's carbon strategy. Typically an electric train emits between 20% and 35% less carbon per passenger mile than a diesel train. This benefit will only improve as the electricity generation industry reduces its carbon levels. Electric trains have zero emissions at the point of use, of particular benefit for air quality in pollution hot spots like city centres and mainline stations.

5. Rail renaissance

Today's announcement is part of a wider Government rail strategy to meet future increases in demand, promote a move from other transport modes to rail and ensure Britain has the world-class infrastructure it needs.

6. Minimising disruption

Electric trains are more reliable than diesel. On average an electric intercity train will travel 40% further than an equivalent diesel train before a technical failure and an electric commuter train will travel well over twice as far.

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