



Warm welcome for Midland Main Line electrification

Rail campaigners have given a warm welcome to the widely anticipated announcement of electrification of the Midland Main Line.

Railfuture's chair of network development Ian McDonald said "This is something that we've been pushing for for a long time, and it's long overdue. Britain has one of the lowest levels of electrification in Europe, so we have a lot of catching up to do. Electric trains will mean passengers get a faster, more reliable service, and the long-term cost savings could benefit passengers too. We hope that this means that we won't need to buy any diesel trains again, and we feel that the case is now even stronger for infill electrification of the remaining gaps in the network.

"However, this investment should not be used as an excuse to further increase ticket prices. Rail improvements have an excellent business case and this project will be more than paid back in the long-term. The government recently backed down on increases in fuel duty for motorists, and it's only fair that rail passengers get the same benefits, and that we don't see inflation-busting fare rises in January."

"It's also important that the time savings achieved by electrification are passed on to the passengers. There's a risk that train operators and Network Rail could be tempted to pad out the timetable so that punctuality targets can be met."

Roger Bacon from Railfuture's East Midlands branch said:

"We welcome the announcement that electrification of the Midland Main Line from Bedford to Nottingham Derby and Sheffield is at last to go ahead. This will reduce the costs of running the line by £60 million a year because electric trains are lighter and more efficient to run and will therefore see the capital costs repaid in around 10 years. Additionally it will help cut carbon emissions and is imperative for economic growth in the region with projections of £450m in wider economic benefits."

"However, the devil is in the detail. Will we get the associated line-speed improvements at Market Harborough, Leicester, Derby, Sheffield? It makes an awful lot of sense to do them at the same time, and if approved, they will mean that train speeds on the Midland Main Line will increase and become closer to those on other main line routes from London. We think it's possible to reach Nottingham in 90 minutes giving an average speed of 84mph."

Notes to editors:

Railfuture is the UK's leading independent organisation campaigning for better rail services for both passengers and freight.

Railfuture's website can be found at: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk>

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