

Railwatch

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Tilt trains are now operating services along the North Wales coast line. But the electric Pendolinos have to be hauled from Crewe to Holyhead by a diesel locomotive.

From London to Crewe the Pendolinos will be able to operate under their own power. This is far from ideal although Virgin Trains have been working hard, running test trains, to ensure the operation is a success.

Railfuture believes the North Wales coast line – and the Midland and Great Western main lines – should be electrified.

After the oil crisis in the 1970s, British Rail was allowed to carry out a programme of electrification but the Treasury put a stop to it all by changing the rules to require a greater return on investment. Instead huge amounts of money were spent over many years upgrading roads like the A55 in North Wales while the parallel rail line was starved of funds.

As Railfuture's *Case for Rail* makes clear, a twin-track railway has the carrying capacity of a six-lane motorway but the motorway requires six times the land. (See Page 19)

It would be interesting to know how many people have been killed on the "upgraded" road and compare it with the death rate on the rail line but it is unlikely the Department for Transport would be either willing or able to produce the figures.

Mile for mile, railways out-perform roads, are less environmentally damaging, consume less energy and are demonstrably safer. With another oil crisis now looming, and global warming threatening us all, the time is now ripe for more electrification in Britain.

Picture: Milepost 9212