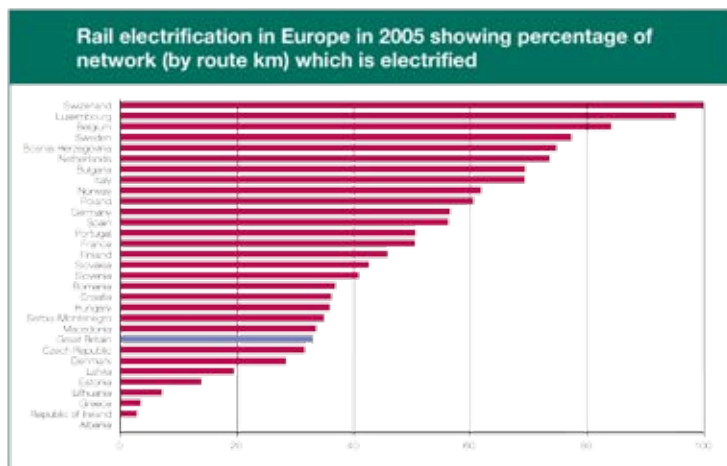


# Sharp shock for UK



Source: UIC

Britain seems to be waking up at last to how much it has dropped behind its international rivals.

After years of hearing railway "experts" insist that electrification is not necessary, it is rewarding to see the Department for Transport announce in July that £1.1 billion worth of work will start immediately.

However, as the chart above shows, it will take some time before we can move further away from the bottom of the chart.

For Wales, the picture is even bleaker than the chart suggests with no electrified routes at all at present.

Rail campaigners are hoping that the decision to electrify the Great Western route as far as Swansea by 2017, will help to make the case for electrification of the Valleys network and other lines too.

Network Rail will have to borrow the money on the open market and the Government will pay the £20 million cost of borrowing until 2014.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown said: "This electrification programme is vital to building a 21st century transport system."

Transport Secretary Lord Adonis said electrification will be self-financing in the medium term through lower train maintenance, leasing and operating costs, and as a result it can be undertaken without reducing planned infrastructure enhancement up to 2014.

Train leasing costs will be 20% lower and operating costs 35% lower.

Design work has already started, but actual work could start next year on the £100 million scheme to electrify the 32-mile long Liverpool-Manchester route, which was the world's first inter-city line.

The Windsor link in Manchester between Piccadilly and Victoria will also be wired so that electric trains can run from Manchester Airport to Scotland.

"This should have happened years ago," said Roger Jones of the North West Rail Campaign. But Network Rail has not been given the

go-ahead to electrify the Midland main line. "This is a good start but there is much further to go," said chief executive Iain Coucher.

South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive said it was disappointed by the decision.

"Electrification of the line to Sheffield and then on to Leeds is vital to improve Yorkshire's link to London and we will be working with the Department for Transport to ensure that there is a good business case for this project," said SYPTC director general David Brown.

The Rail Freight Group should be urged that all the electrified routes are cleared to W12 gauge as part of the construction works to accommodate freight trains.

It also called for power supplies to be designed for future freight use. It said: "There are 3,000 tonne freight trains operating from the Mendips to London, so there must be adequate power available in the wires to cover this future use."

"Let us hope that the Government has learned the lesson of the botched Southern power supply, upgraded at vast expense five years ago and now having to be done again to cater for the extra power requirements of Thameslink trains."

Most rail campaigners know that there has always been a strong case for electrification and have been puzzled by the Government's indifference to this vital issue which is now impossible to ignore because of climate change and the increasing threat to future fuel supplies.

As a nation, we have wasted enormous supplies of fuel by implementing a road and air-based transport policy.

Now the three main political parties have issued press releases supporting electrification.

## North East

By Peter Kenyon

peterkenyon@yahoo.com

### ■ ■ Consultations

Branch representatives have attended consultation meetings with Serconed and DB Regio/Chiltern, two of the bidders for the Tyne and Wear Metro management contract. The successful bidder will be announced later in the year. Representatives also attended a Stakeholder consultation with National Express East Coast after the announcement of its withdrawal from the franchise.



The branch committee sent responses to the Association of Train Operators' document *Connecting Communities* and the Network Rail consultation paper on electrification strategy. It is also preparing a response to the House of Commons transport select committee inquiry into *Priorities for Investment in the Railways*. Links with the Durham Transport Forum enable the branch to support the lobbying for the proposed high-speed rail route to pass through the North East. It also has links with the North East Economic Forum.

### ■ ■ More rail links for Sunderland

The Coastliners users group has been encouraged by the Grand Central plans to introduce a fourth train on the Sunderland-King's Cross Service. The naming of one of the Class 180 units *James Herriot* has been a popular move. The inclusion in the ATOC document of suggestions for new stations has sparked particular interest in the future provision of a park-and-ride station at Horden which would serve the Peterlee and Easington districts. Liaison with local interest groups and Durham County Council is under way. Northern Rail has provided help in producing a publicity leaflet *Coastliners - a Voice for Durham Coast Rail Users*, in addition to mentioning the group in local timetables.

### ■ ■ Give us a chance to buy a ticket

The Tyne Valley Users' Group is still campaigning for adequate ticket sales facilities on the line. Morning commuter trains are so packed that conductors cannot move along the carriages to sell tickets to passengers joining at unstaffed stations. The proposed introduction of gates at Newcastle Central by the main line operator in the near future will produce difficulties and possible excess charges for travellers on local lines with inadequate ticketing facilities. Notice boards have been provided in many lineside communities, and similar displays on the stations should follow soon.

### ■ ■ Funding priorities set to change in the North East

The Department for Transport funding of schemes to develop an integrated transport system in the North East announced late in July marks a significant move away from the stress on road schemes and bus transport of recent years. The following rail schemes are included among the road developments and proposals for improvements to bus services: Darlington station upgrade, Middlesbrough Wilton international station, Stockton/Hartlepool/Middlesbrough Tees Valley station upgrades, Middlesbrough James Cook Hospital station, Durham Tees Valley airport station, and NexusMetro ticketing and gating.

Nick Brown, Minister for the North East, said: "I'm delighted that the transport advice submitted by the region has been accepted by the Department for Transport."

"I was particularly concerned as region minister to ensure that the funding available was fully allocated to worthwhile projects and that early wins could be secured to provide an immediate response to the current economic downturn."

"I am also encouraged by the increased priority afforded in the Region to public transport improvements that will pave the way for a more sustainable future - a contribution to addressing the climate change challenges that face us."

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