

Briefing Note relating to Network Rail's Proposals to Electrify the Great Western Main Line.

1. The Scheme

Network Rail's overall project is to electrify the existing Great Western Main between London and Bristol including Bath as well as Newbury and Oxford Maidenhead in the east, through to Cardiff in the west and on to Swansea. No new railway will be constructed. The Scheme also includes the electrification of the Didcot to Chester Line (DCL) as far as Oxford and the Berkshire and Hampshire Line (BHL) as far as Newbury.

2. Why electrify?

The project will enable the route for a new fleet of Intercity Express Trains. The project promises more seats and more reliable trains. Network Rail indicate that electrification will also deliver a reduction in emissions and carbon locally. The project has been designed to stimulate economic growth across the region with improved connectivity between towns and cities. Network Rail indicate that when the project is delivered it will improve reliability and lower maintenance and operating costs.

Network Rail have pointed out that this project will enable Great Britain to catch up with the rest of Europe. Network Rail suggest that in 2005 Great Britain only exceeded the Czech Republic, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Greece, the Republic of Ireland and Albania in its percentage of the network which was electrified.

3 Other related projects

Network Rail suggest that the electrification project relates well to other investments. These include Reading Area Station, Bristol Area Re-Signalling, Filton Four Tracking, Maidenhead to Paddington station enhancements and Access for All enhancements.

4. Key Objectives for Bath and North East Somerset

Network Rail's stated key objectives for Bath and North East Somerset are as follows:-

- Respect the sensitivity of the Great Western railway through the Bath World Heritage Site.
- Respect Residents, Businesses and all Stakeholders impacted by the project – work closely with BANES Environmental Health Officers.
- Respond to the landscape character of the city by careful consideration of the location of the overhead line equipment.
- Achieve the necessary electrical clearances and safety requirements to protect the Public from overhead line equipment in ways that minimise the physical and visual impacts on sensitive listed structures.
- Treat Sydney Gardens as a 21st century electrification set- piece worthy of Brunel's theatre of railway.

5. Planning and other statutory consents

Network Rail as a railway operator is able to carry out significant development without the need for planning permission. This is by virtue of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order. This allows railway operators to carry out development “on their operational land, required in connection with the movement of traffic by rail.” However this “permitted development” right does not extend to work involving listed buildings. B&NES has the largest concentration of Listed structures on the route. Your Officers have been liaising with Network Rail as they prepare their submissions for Listed Building Consent.

There may be the need for some planning permissions if any of the work relates to non-operational railway land. Network Rail have agreed that the scale of the work requires the submission of an Environmental Impact Statement. This is due to be submitted shortly. The implementation of the project will also be likely to require temporary road closures and night work where the advice of the Council’s public protection officers will be needed.

6. Work Programme.

Network Rail’s anticipated sees work associated with this project commencing in August this year and continuing until April 2016. Within that period the work will involve service alterations anticipated between 19th July 2015 and 31st August 2015. It is understood that these service alterations will include the provision of alternative and bus/coach services. Network Rail have committed to undertake advance communication with First Great Western and this Council regarding this work. They have also agreed to undertake public consultation in conjunction with this Council. Officers will be working with Network Rail as the project progresses.

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