

Briefing Note: North of England Electrification Task Force

What is it?

- The Secretary of State for Transport announced the creation of an independent Task Force in December 2013. The Task Force first met in July 2014 and subsequently on three occasions through to late January 2015. All these sessions took place in London.
- The Task Force was chaired by Andrew Jones MP. Julie Hilling MP and Ian Swales MP were nominated by the All-Party Parliamentary Rail in the North Group. Rail North was represented by two Leaders; Cllr Dave Green (City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council) and Cllr Terry O'Neill (Warrington Borough Council).
- The Task Force's remit was to identify a priority list for the electrification of all non-electrified lines across the North of England.
- The process has been fully inclusive and wide-ranging. There is a clearly documented approach that shows how the Task Force reached its conclusions, supported by a sound evidence base.

Priorities for electrification

- Thirty two routes were examined and the prioritisation criteria were applied to rank them with scores ranging from 84 down to 7. A more detailed consideration of these routes by the Task Force led to them being grouped into three distinct tiers. There are twelve routes in Tier One which the Task Force is recommending be progressed through outline base case work to feed into the initial industry plan / HLOS for Control Period 6 (2019-2024).
- The second tier contains eight routes, including the South TransPennine route from Sheffield to Manchester, together with the associated local network in South East Manchester. Other routes build on the completion of tier one infrastructure to give a virtually 100% electric network within and to the city regions of Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield. Tram-train operation might be an alternative on some routes in the Sheffield and Manchester city regions.
- The third tier features twelve routes which are predominantly rural in nature, have very limited services or depend (in the Humber area) on completion of earlier tiers. The business case for these routes is likely to improve considerably as earlier tiers of electrification are implemented and the Northern and TPE services grow as part of the agreed 'Transformational package' set out in the Invitation to Tender published in February 2015. In the interim these routes will benefit from the cascade of modern, high-quality diesel rolling stock.
- Network Rail will shortly publish its Electrification RUS refresh document for consultation. This mainly focuses on conversion of longer distance passenger (and freight routes) using conventional WEBTag analysis. Member authorities may wish to use the Task Force report in formulating their responses.

Methodology

- The Task Force was advised by a Rail North Stakeholder Working Group. The SWG included extensive representation from LTAs; Network Rail, the DfT, TOCs and Freightliner, supported by staff from the Systra consultancy. This group met on seven occasions at a range of venues across the North of England.

- The Task Force decided early on that economic growth and connectivity should be at the heart of its considerations, as part of the emerging 'Northern Powerhouse' concept.
- Accordingly three core criteria were agreed:
 1. Economic Benefits
 2. Impact on services, costs and environment
 3. Providing capacity and quality (rolling stock)
- The Task Force asked for these to be weighted with 50% of scoring allocated to economic benefits; 20% for service impact with 30% for rolling stock.

Rail North's role

- Rail North, on behalf of its 29 Local Transport Authority members, has assisted the Task Force in preparing a comprehensive, robust report that argues for prioritised investment in electrification to help deliver the enhanced rail network that the Long-Term Rail Strategy envisages for the North, and which will inform on-going dialogue with the DfT and the wider rail industry.
- It benefits from substantial technical support and stakeholder engagement provided by Rail North. We have proactively engaged with a wider group, including operators and the North Wales Councils / Welsh Government.
- The main Task Force report and associated technical documentation, route proformas, Q&A sheets and Task Force Terms of Reference / minutes can be accessed on the Rail North website at www.railnorth.org/electrification.