

HOOKING UP HULL: THE HULL ELECTRIFICATION PROJECT



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Last March the Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin, announced Government support – by way of a £2.4m grant – for the electrification of 33 miles of railway between Hull and Selby. Welcomed by all, this was testament to the Department for Transport’s prioritisation of railway electrification for 2014 to 2019.

What makes the Hull Electrification Project (HEP) stand out from almost all other electrification schemes is that it is intended that the initial development and construction costs will be almost entirely privately funded, with FirstGroup securing major funding from infrastructure group Amey.

As well as delivering a better service to users of the railway – and the wider economic benefits that it will bring to Hull – the HEP is therefore good for the UK taxpayer, protected from the up-front capital expense and financial risk involved with such a project.

WHY HULL?

Until the conception of the Hull Electrification Project, Hull was the only major city in the north of England for which there was no plan to electrify its main railway line. What made this more significant was that the diesel services running to and from Hull would be incompatible with the lines being electrified across the wider north, between Selby and Liverpool and York, via Manchester and Leeds. Far from benefiting Hull, this inequality of infrastructure would have had a negative impact on the city’s economy.

First Hull Trains, which currently operates on the line between Hull and London King’s Cross, is already one of the highest-ranked operators in terms of customer satisfaction. The addition of electrification will enable First Hull Trains to make major improvements on its excellent service.

WHAT ELECTRIFICATION WILL BRING

Electrification will bring the opportunity to run more efficient electric rolling stock with higher passenger capacity. It will link up the new line to other parts of the ‘electric spine’, improving journeys between Hull and the capital, as well as to Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool – and even more so once HS2 and TransPennine electrification come into force.

As well as the long term benefits of both temporary (construction) workers and permanent job creation that would come with an expanded Hull to London service, electrification will also help attract investment, and can be an important driver of growth to the Hull and Humber Region. Already enjoying a greater profile as the host of the 2017 City of Culture, Hull is undergoing an economic and cultural renaissance, something that FirstGroup – through First Hull Trains and the HEP – is proud to be a part of.

In order for the city to realise its potential, modern railway infrastructure is needed. The speedy delivery of the HEP can only further the ambitions of the city and its businesses.

URGENCY: MAKING ELECTRIFICATION HAPPEN

Patrick McLoughlin’s announcement last March represented a milestone for the HEP.

With Government support, it meant FirstGroup’s work to secure nearly £100m of private funding can be released to progress the Project through the feasibility phases, construction

and, ultimately, the delivery of services.

It is essential that the momentum of the Hull Electrification Project is maintained so that it can be delivered as soon as possible.

The HEP team is committed to an ambitious timetable and is working with its stakeholders, including MPs along the route, and partners in Network Rail, to meet this. But it is also incumbent upon the Government to agree a guaranteed price with the HEP before the end of this Parliament.

A commitment from the Chancellor of the Exchequer to electrify the Hull to Selby line in the Budget on 18 March would ensure the Project’s long-term progress and help mitigate against political risks involved with any major infrastructure scheme that coincides with a general election and a change in government.

WIN-WIN

The electrification of the Hull to Selby railway line is a win-win for the tax-payer, the Government, the rail passenger, and the city of Hull; its residents and businesses, as well as those who live and work throughout the Humber region.

It is essential that the Project progresses as swiftly as possible to ensure benefits are delivered without any unnecessary delay.

FirstGroup prides itself on the way it works with its partners and stakeholders. Our Hull Electrification Project team will continue to work in partnership in order to make Hull electrification a reality.