

Green light given for Wigan to Bolton electrification

- government approves £78 million investment to electrify key rail infrastructure in the north
- upgrade to enable longer electric trains with more capacity by 2025, building a greener rail network

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris has today (1 September 2021) announced that a major upgrade to the railway line between Wigan and Bolton has been given the green light, focused on providing passengers with a greener and more reliable railway.

The track between Wigan North Western station and Lostock Junction near Bolton will receive a £78 million upgrade, targeted to complete in 2024/2025.

Through electrifying almost 13 miles of infrastructure and lengthening platforms, this investment will ensure that CO₂ emitting diesel trains are replaced by electric rolling stock. As longer trains with additional capacity, these will provide passengers with greener, more comfortable and more reliable journeys.

Chris Heaton-Harris, Rail Minister, said:

As we build back better and create a railway that truly works for passengers, I am delighted to give this rail upgrade the go-ahead.

This significant investment will provide a service around Greater Manchester that is better for both passengers and the environment, ensuring our railway plays its part in meeting our ambitious net zero ambitions.

Phil James, North West route director at Network Rail, said:

To help the region recover from the pandemic, we're turning over a new leaf thanks to the £78 million investment to electrify the railway between Wigan and Lostock junction.

This environmentally and passenger-centric scheme will be a game changer for Greater Manchester's railway as more electric trains mean better air quality, less railway noise and more reliable and spacious journeys for rail travellers.

Nick Donovan, Managing Director at Northern, said:

The electrification of the line between Wigan and Bolton will make a really positive impact for the North and will help us give our customers better journeys on greener trains.

In the past 18 months we have made significant improvements to the Northern network with a fleet of 101 new trains, refurbishment of our older trains and enhancements at stations. Today's announcement provides further evidence of the rail industry's commitment to improve and modernise our services and infrastructure to benefit passengers and the environment.

The upgrade project will provide 450 new overhead line equipment stanchions, and modifications to 17 bridges and two-level crossings. Platforms will also be extended at Hindley, Westhoughton and Ince stations to reduce overcrowding at peak times and cater for six-carriage trains in the future.

The project provides train operators with more operational flexibility to deploy trains to these parts of Wigan and Bolton from the recently upgraded train maintenance facility at Wigan Springs Branch.