

More broadband for the railways and the rest of us

The railway network contains some great routes that run straight into the centres of our busiest towns and cities. There is spare land adjacent to the track that would take fibre optic cables as well as other utility systems.

The railway needs better wi fi for passengers. All too often on a train the wi fi cuts out in a cutting or tunnel, if you have been able to log into what are still often unfriendly and complex systems. A comprehensive fibre network with communication points with trains would greatly improve reception and access.

More importantly such fibre would also empower a new generation of digital signals which we need to increase train capacities as I have discussed before. With more real time information about where every train is on the system and the speed at which it is travelling it will be possibly to safely deploy more trains on the same tracks to deal with capacity shortages that are common and chronic at peak times. This is a much cheaper answer to the capacity issues than building new track.

These fibre networks can also have sufficient capability to assist the spread of ultrafast broadband to homes and businesses across the country. There can be cabinets alongside the track at intervals to enable adjacent housing and industrial estates to link their local fibre connections to a larger trunk network alongside the railway.

We need to make more intelligent use of these fabulous routes into our main centres. Carrying modern fibre would help a lot as we build the infrastructure for a truly modern economy. I Am pressing Ministers to get on with this scheme. I am also urging them to find other additional routes for fibre cable beyond these track side ones that do not involved putting the fibre under roads. It is high time we got our infrastructure into more accessible places and stopped digging up roads every time we needed to mend or improve.