

## How Green is My Railway?

### **Industry bosses called for battery, hydrogen and electric-powered trains to help meet environmental targets**



*The industry wants to make rail transport greener (PA)*

Britain's railways need electric, hydrogen and battery-powered trains to cut carbon emissions, MPs have been warned. Rail chiefs told the Commons Transport Select Committee that investment in new technology was required to help slash harmful gases being released by existing services but travel bosses said the weight of batteries currently made it difficult to use them on long-distance and freight trains. Committee chairman and Conservative MP Huw Merriman stepped-up calls to “decarbonise” 15,400km (9,569 miles) of single track which is not electrified, thereby cutting emissions.

He was backed by Network Rail chief Andrew Haines, who said: “Electrification is going to be the answer given the current knowledge of hydrogen and battery – and that's principally because much of the network needs to operate freight traffic and there is not on the horizon a battery or hydrogen solution for freight. While we think there is a real place for battery and hydrogen, they have real weight limitations. Therefore, it's a mixed economy predominantly focused on electrification – and that means we have to start soon to meet the targets of getting rid of diesel trains by 2040 and net-zero carbon by 2050.”

NR's strategy and planning director Helen McAllister said, : “I can understand the desire to wait for better technology to come along before major decisions were made on how best to cut rail emissions, but we don't need to set out the next 30 years in stone right now, we just have to be confident about what the next steps are that take us towards 2050. Hydrogen and battery

technology are currently constrained by the quantity you can carry on a train to carry it around the network. You need much less diesel to get a train a certain distance at a certain speed than you do hydrogen or battery power in volume or weight.”

Rail Industry Decarbonisation Taskforce chairman Malcolm Brown admitted: “There is no silver bullet out there, but I believe that a combination of hydrogen, battery and electrification is the most pragmatic, sensible and cost-effective solution. We must make a start. We cannot leave it until 10 or 15 years out in the hope that something new comes along.”

Transport Minister Chris Heaton-Harris insisted the Government was extremely ambitious when it comes to hydrogen. He said:” It’s bound to play a part, but I honestly couldn’t tell you how much at this time. Our ambition is to do a lot more electrification, but there are costs to this. We want to get to that point where transport and rail is playing its key part in decarbonisation and the Government’s overall strategy. There’s a lot to be done and we are going to do a lot.”