

Chamber welcomes extension to Midland Main Line electrification

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Reports that Midland Main Line electrification will be extended to Market Harborough have been welcomed by the East Midlands Chamber.

The Chamber supports electrification of the whole line. It has consistently argued that electrifying only the southern end is a false economy.

It claims that having a fully electrified railway would mean quicker, quieter, cleaner and lighter trains could operate all the way from London to Sheffield and beyond.

Scott Knowles, Chief Executive at the Chamber, said: “Extending electrification to Market Harborough makes some sense given that it will be powered from there.

“Under the current plan, though, we’ll have 85 miles of clean, green, quiet, electrified line, 65 miles of diesel-running and then switch back to electricity for 22 miles north of Alfreton, where HS2 will cut in to serve Chesterfield and Sheffield.

“Why not electrify the entire line, as recommended by the Transport Select Committee and originally

planned before Transport Secretary Chris Grayling pulled the plug, instead of having to build heavier, twin-engined, bi-mode trains that have to run under slower, dirtier diesel power to serve Leicester, Nottingham and Derby.

“Derby, Nottingham and Leicester all have clean air targets but won’t be getting the help they need from Government to meet them with this latest announcement.

“And, in the long run, the heavier, bi-mode trains cause more wear and tear to the tracks so more repairs will be necessary.

“The whole concept of partial electrification is flawed and a false economy in the long term, especially as so much work has been done already to accommodate electrification along the entire route.

“This is a very good example of where Government is failing the East Midlands despite our being one of the major contributors to the national economy and the spine of the nation’s manufacturing sector.

“By the Government’s own figures, we receive only 60% per head in infrastructure investment compared with the rest of the country. Electrifying the Midland Main Line, as we have been promised so many times, would go some way to redressing the imbalance.”