

HRH The Prince of Wales steps aboard Britain's green trains of the future in Glasgow during COP26

November 5, 2021



His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales has met with teams from Network Rail and train companies Vivarail and Porterbrook this afternoon to learn more about alternative-fuel trains and the technology which will play a major part in powering Britain's green rail revolution.

The Prince toured two trains - a Vivarail battery train and the Porterbrook HydroFLEX, a hydrogen-ready hybrid capable of being powered by hydrogen, battery or the overhead electric wires. Both are being showcased by Network Rail at COP26 to demonstrate the rail industry's commitment to further decarbonising Britain's railway and supporting the UK and Scottish Governments net zero targets.

The Prince was welcomed to Glasgow Central station by Network Rail's station manager, Drew Burns; engineering and safety director Martin Frobisher OBE and Scotland's Railway managing director Alex Hynes, who spoke with The Prince about Network Rail's Environmental Sustainability Plan and the measures needed to decarbonise the railway to make a broader contribution to sustainability.

Last year, Network Rail announced that it had become the first railway in the world to set the most ambitious level of science-based targets for reducing carbon emissions, and released the interim Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy, outlining the further electrification of the mainline rail network and use of alternative fuel trains needed to meet those targets.

Martin Frobisher OBE, engineering and safety director at Network Rail, said: “We were honoured to welcome His Royal Highness to Glasgow Central today to discuss our commitment to making our green railway even greener and to see these superb feats of engineering which will play an important role in helping us meet our decarbonisation ambitions.

“Rail’s role in tackling climate change should not be understated. We already play a key role in taking cars and lorries off the road, moving millions of passengers and a huge quantity of goods around the country in a more environmentally-friendly way, and our sights are firmly set on using the best of British technology to make our railway even greener for the future.”

Alex Hynes, managing director of Scotland’s Railway, said: “With seventy-five percent of our customers in Scotland already travelling on zero emission trains, we are fully committed to making rail even more environmentally friendly.

“We have ambitious plans to decarbonise all of our passengers’ journeys by 2035 and we were delighted to welcome His Royal Highness to Scotland’s busiest station to see how the industry is pioneering the use of new technologies to fight climate change.”

Vivarail managing director Steve McBride spoke with The Prince about the Warwickshire-based company’s work to design and manufacture pure battery and battery hybrid trains, their commitment to repurposing older diesel units or using battery technology to bring additional flexibility to electric trains, and gave him a first-hand experience of their state-of-the-art battery train, powered by their ground-breaking charging technology.

Steve McBride, managing director of Vivarail, said: “The opportunity to show our next-generation battery train to His Royal Highness was a great privilege. Introducing new technologies to decarbonise rail travel will be vital both now and in the future, and Vivarail are leading the way in the development of battery traction and fast charging innovations in Britain and around the world.

“We were also delighted to inform His Royal Highness about the sale of our trains to the United States, and the work we are doing with our global partners to help their communities introduce new emission-free rail services to benefit people and the environment.”

Managing director of Porterbrook, Mary Grant, welcomed His Royal Highness on board the Derby-based company’s HydroFLEX train for a unique preview inside the HydroChamber, to see how the latest fuel-cell technology can combine hydrogen with oxygen to power the train. The technology behind the train has been developed through a partnership with the University of Birmingham and was built in just 10 months using upcycled rolling stock from a 30-year-old train.

Mary Grant, managing director of Porterbrook, said: “We were delighted to be able to show His Royal

Highness how, in just 10 months, we have stripped back and upcycled a 30-year-old train using the latest green technology.

“The HydroFLEX showcases how British engineering and innovation can play a vital part in decarbonising Britain’s railway.”

Both trains will run during the conference as part of Network Rail’s Green Trains @COP26 event; showcasing the range of green ways to power trains including batteries, hydrogen and electricity.

The DfT’s First of a Kind competition provided funding for the development of the technology used on board both trains.