

# Northern rail businesses call for decarbonisation of the North's rail network to play key part in 'levelling up' agenda

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Northern Rail Industry Leaders (NRIL), a group of around 150 rail businesses located in the North of England, have published a White Paper setting out how the region can decarbonise its railways.

The report highlights that:

- The railway network should play a key role in the Government's 'levelling up' agenda and the decarbonisation of the railway can play a crucial part;
- Railways in the North of England are heavily dependent on diesel traction, so alternatives like electrification, battery and hydrogen will need to be implemented;
- Train operators will need to deliver rail decarbonisation strategies for their routes; and
- Early deployment of schemes and development of low cost solutions will be essential.

The decarbonisation report builds upon NRIL's *Build the North's New Railways*, a paper published last year, setting out the opportunity from rail investment in the North of England.

Justin Moss and Mike Hulme, Co-Chairs of Northern Rail Industry Leaders (NRIL), said: “The Government has set an ambition to remove all diesel-only trains from the rail network by 2040, and to reach net zero carbon by 2050. In the North of England, a number of routes use diesel traction which will need to be placed with alternatives like electrification or battery and hydrogen power. There is a big opportunity here – the North has many rail businesses ready to help support decarbonisation, providing jobs and investment in the process. Developing new technologies like hydrogen and batteries could also give the UK a competitive edge which it could use to export even more abroad.

“We’re delighted that Northern Rail Industry Leaders (NRIL) are now able to publish our new White Paper, specifically around decarbonisation which is one of the workstreams we highlighted on our white paper, “Building the North’s new Railways”. This work provides a timely and useful contribution to the debate around how we ‘build back better’ in regions across the North, whilst continuing to invest in green technologies that reduce our impact on the planet.”

Report author David Westcough said: “Decarbonisation of the UK rail network is one of the greatest challenges facing the industry today. I am delighted to be able to share what we’ve learned at Northern through our experience working on the Tees Valley Hydrogen Trains and Windermere Alternative Energy Trains projects. It is our hope that this paper will go along way in supporting the industry in formulating strategies to decarbonise, not just the railways in the North of England, but throughout the country.”

NRIL Decarbonisation Workstream Lead Julie Carrier, said: “It has been a pleasure to work with David and a cross-industry team of professionals who are genuinely committed to achieving a greener railway. As people with families living and working across the North, we feel strongly it is our duty to deliver a net zero railway as efficiently and quickly as possible, connecting our cities as part of the Government’s levelling up pledge.”

*Photo credit: NRIL*

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