

For immediate distribution

Peninsula Rail Task Force

Going electric could give £6 billion boost to South West Peninsula

Electrifying mainline rail services to the South West Peninsula could deliver a £6 billion boost to the region's economy, says a new report published today.

The economic study into the electrification of rail services to Plymouth and Cornwall says the return to the South West economy could be £100 million a year -- £6 billion over a 60-year appraisal period for new infrastructure – with faster journey times for passengers.

The study for the Peninsula Rail Task Force says electric trains are cheaper, faster and more reliable to operate than diesel. Going electric would save at least £1 billion in operating costs over 60 years and coupled with enhanced services could generate as much as £20 million a year in additional revenue for the train companies.

Going electric is a key element in the Task Force's 3-Point Plan for a great South West Peninsula railway. There is concern that the Peninsula will suffer because the Government and Network Rail have no plans to extend electrification beyond the current planned roll-out to Bristol and South Wales.

Councillor Andrew Leadbetter, Chair of the Task Force, said: "By 2017 the South West Peninsula will be the only region without the big benefits from mainline electrification. We need a firm commitment from the Government and Network Rail that the Peninsula will go electric and when.

"The cost of inaction is huge. As the only region left out of the plans for electrification, rail travellers to and from the Peninsula face the real risk that they will be travelling on obsolete diesels while the rest of the country enjoys an upgrade. It could cost the Peninsula economy £73 million a year.

"Today's independent research report shows that going electric will be a fantastic boost to the Peninsula economy and deliver better services for passengers. That's why the Task Force is calling on the Government to extend the electrification roll-out beyond Bristol to the Peninsula. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Department for Transport and Network Rail to make that ambition a reality."

A copy of the report has been submitted to the DfT and circulated to Peninsula MPs.

Note to News Editors: For more information, please contact Coast Communications:

Liz Waugh 07966 388921 / Emma Parker Reynolds 07944 360631 /emma@coastmarcoms.co.uk The Peninsula Rail Task Force is a campaign partnership dedicated to improving the quality of connectivity and transport networks throughout the South West Peninsula. Our members are Cornwall Council, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP, Devon County Council, Heart of the South West LEP, Plymouth City Council, Somerset County Council, Torbay Council, Devon and Cornwall Business Council, University of Plymouth and the Chambers of Commerce.

The full study can be downloaded here: <http://resiliencesouthwest.co.uk/documents-2/>

The study was researched by consulting engineers, WSP. The Peninsula Rail Task Force 3-Point Plan for a great South West Peninsula railway can be downloaded here <http://bit.ly/1FaalYt>