

## GWR Looks to Tri-Mode Long-Distance Trains

Long-distance trains are set to run on battery power for the first time in the UK. Manufacturer Hitachi Rail has announced plans to test the trains on a 300-mile route from London Paddington to Penzance in Cornwall in 2022. It is teaming up with Great Western Railway to operate services through a combination of electricity, diesel and batteries. The line is currently only partially electrified, with most of it requiring diesel power.



Thirty-six express trains on the route are 'bi-modes', which switch between electric and diesel power. Tri-mode trains will be developed with batteries.

Britain has previously had successful trials of battery trains on shorter routes. Hitachi said using battery power will help reduce fuel consumption on the route by more than 20%, improve air quality and cut noise levels. It hopes to develop a fully battery-powered intercity train by the late 2040s.

Rail minister Chris Heaton-Harris said: 'Battery-powered trains will support us in our battle against climate change.'

Jim Brewin, who leads the firm in the UK and Ireland, said: 'This partnership is an exciting opportunity to unlock new greener trains for passengers, reduce running costs for operators and cut carbon.'

'At Hitachi Rail, we share the UK's ambition for a net-zero emission future. Britain is in a unique position to become a global leader in battery trains. We want support the UK's green economic recovery and levelling-up.'

Eversholt Rail chief executive Mary Kenny said: 'We are delighted to continue working in partnership with Hitachi to investigate the conversion of our Class 802 fleet to tri-mode by introducing battery technology. Eversholt Rail is committed to ensuring our fleets meet the UK railway's decarbonisation commitments.'

Only around 38% of Britain's railway is electrified, according to latest Office of Rail and Road data. Electrification work - which generally involves putting up electric wires - has been limited due to the cost. Projects in South Wales, the Midlands and the Lake District were axed or downgraded in July 2017 by then-transport secretary Chris Grayling. The decision came amid cost overruns on electrification schemes such as the Great Western route, where the original budget was exceeded by around £2billion.