



NEWS RELEASE

Regional Transport Partnerships Welcome Business Case for HSR

The three statutory Regional Transport Partnerships covering the northern half of mainland Scotland, Hitrans, Nestrans and Tactran, have joined together to welcome today's announcement (Wednesday) by the Scottish Transport Minister Keith Brown, confirming there is a strong Scottish business case for High Speed Rail.

Ian Yuill, Chair of Nestrans commented. "We strongly welcome the business case being put forward on behalf of Scotland, which recognises that there are differing requirements north of the Central Belt.

"It is clear that the business case for a UK High Speed Rail network extending to Edinburgh and Glasgow is significantly stronger than for London to Birmingham and the North West of England only. Connecting Scotland as part of the full High Speed network will provide significant benefits to London and other regions of England as well to Scotland.

"We accept that extending HSR further north than the central belt is not financially viable, therefore HSR in Scotland must be accompanied by protection for, and improvements to, our key regional air links to London and other rail connections. HSR will help bring about a transport infrastructure fit for purpose for the 21st century in this country. We must ensure though that the benefits are enjoyed by all parts of the country and not just those areas closest to the new line."



Duncan McIntyre, Chair of Hitrans added “The RTP’s collectively agree that any major capital investment such as High Speed Rail must if possible benefit all areas of Scotland. That is why it is absolutely crucial our current air links between Aberdeen and Inverness and Heathrow/Gatwick, and between Dundee and London City Airport, need to be protected both now and also after the implementation of HSR.

“It is important to recognise that for the regions of Scotland where surface journey times to London will remain over the recognised three hours threshold for significant modal shift in favour of High Speed Rail, which includes all of the major population centres in the Hitrans, Nestrans and Tactran regions, alternative arrangements must be made to maintain our relative connectivity. For air, this requires securing access for existing landing slots at London’s airports, in particular the Heathrow/Gatwick hubs where pressure is on regional services to give way to long haul routes. “

Will Dawson, Chair of Tactran commented “It is vital that the northern regions of Scotland share in and gain maximum economic benefit from the improved connectivity that High Speed Rail to the Central Belt will bring. We would urge the Scottish Government to bring forward the additional planned improvements to the existing Scottish rail network, outlined in their Strategic Transport Projects Review.

“Specific measures are improvements to the Highland Main Line from Inverness to Perth, improvements to rail connectivity between Aberdeen and the Central Belt, and acceleration of proposals for further extension of electrification of the Scottish rail network to include the routes northwards from Glasgow and Edinburgh to Aberdeen and Inverness. These improvements to the national rail network are a necessary complement to, and should ideally precede, construction of High Speed Rail, to ensure that the more peripheral regions of Scotland share in the economic growth and benefits which High Speed Rail will undoubtedly bring”.

Ends

14th December 2011