



GREENGAUGE 21

22h00 28th September 2008

Greengauge 21 Welcomes Conservative Party Commitment to High-Speed Rail

Greengauge 21 welcomes the Conservative Party's commitment to High-Speed Rail, to be announced tonight by shadow Secretary of State for Transport, Theresa Villiers.

Greengauge 21 Director Jim Steer said that: "High-Speed Rail is the key national transport investment needed for the century ahead. It will reduce carbon emissions, reduce oil dependency and provide a huge stimulus to regional economies. High-Speed Rail will add capacity to our national transport network."

Just ten days ago, Greengauge 21 launched a programme to take forward the strategic planning of High-Speed Rail, funded by a Public Interest Group. "This announcement will be a tremendous spur to that programme of work", Jim Steer added. "Our aim is to carry out the early work and consultation that is needed to ensure good progress through the early planning stage. High-Speed Rail (HSR) has no natural enemies, and is supported by environmental groups and by business interests. This is reflected in the wide ranging support behind the Public Interest Group."

Commenting specifically on the plans announced tonight by Theresa Villiers, Jim Steer said: "While these are difficult times for the economy, it is most welcome to see political leadership that recognises the need for serious long term investment. The Conservative Party's announcement recognises that we need a strategic network of high-speed lines. With careful planning, its benefits can extend beyond the regions where new lines would be built to ensure that north-east England, Scotland, Wales and the south-west also benefit from new high-speed services."

"New High-Speed Rail has the great advantage of freeing up capacity on our congested main line railways such as the West and East Coast Main Lines, since longer distance non-stop services over these routes will naturally be superseded by high-speed services on the new lines. That means lots more track capacity on existing lines for commuter services into London and other major cities, and for increased freight on rail," he added.

"Of course the question of funding this strategy has to be addressed, and today's announcement clearly recognises that such an investment cannot be achieved without public sector commitment over a significant number of years", Jim Steer said.

Notes to Editors



1. Greengauge 21 is a company limited by guarantee established to promote the case for high-speed rail and foster debate. It has an Advisory Panel comprising: Chris Green (Chair), Richard Brown CBE, Richard Bowker CBE, Lord Faulkner and Sir Peter Hall. Greengauge 21 Directors are Jim Steer and Julie Mills.
2. It launched with a Prospectus in January 2006, and subsequently pointed out (through research available on its web-site www.greengauge21.net) that HSR at Heathrow would bring as much additional capacity as is on offer from a third runway. In June 2007, it published the report 'High Speed Two', which identified a priority for the new network, a line from St Pancras in central London (for connection via HS1 and the Channel Tunnel to Europe) to Heathrow, Birmingham and on to north-west England.
3. The 2008/09 High Speed Rail Development Programme is being funded by a Public Interest Group, formally launched at York, on September 19th 2008. Its aim is to develop a long term high speed rail network strategy for Great Britain. It will address the key questions:
 - What kind of HSR network should be developed, which destinations should it serve, how should it be developed?
 - What would such a network cost and what benefits will it bring, including at city and regional levels?
 - What would be the carbon/energy impacts?
 - What are the financial implications for the public sector and how can private sector skills, resources and finance be best used?
4. The organisations signing up as members of the Public Interest Group comprise:

Advantage West Midlands (leading for EEDA, EMDA, SEEDA and SWRDA)
Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC)
BAA
Birmingham City Council
Channel Tunnel Initiative <i>associate members</i>
City of London Corporation
The City of Edinburgh Council
Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive
Network Rail
Newcastle City Council
North East Assembly
The Northern Way (the partnership led by the three northern RDAs)
Passenger Transport Executive Group (covers all six PTEs)
Railway Industry Association
South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran)
Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
Sheffield City Region
Transport for London



5. The budget for Greengauge 21's 2008/09 high-speed rail development programme is £0.75 million. To date, two thirds of this budget has been committed and it is estimated that the budget will be fully met by the organisations listed above. However, further organisations are considering membership and there is provision for 'late joiners'. The Department for Transport, Office of Rail Regulation and Transport Scotland have an observer status' role on the development programme's Steering Group.
6. The consultants appointed to deliver the work programme following a competitive tendering process are:

Principal Consultant	SYSTRA with MVA Consultancy
Consultation Adviser	Bircham Dyson Bell
Funding Adviser (selected but not yet appointed)	PricewaterhouseCoopers

7. In addition, Denton Wilde Sapte is acting as legal adviser to Greengauge 21.
8. Greengauge 21's consultants are inviting all of those who have formulated initial plans for High-Speed Rail to bring them forward for consideration under the development programme on a confidential basis.
9. In parallel with Greengauge 21's 2008/09 development programme, the British Chambers of Commerce are carrying out a consultation of their members on high-speed rail issues, supported by Greengauge 21 and their advisers.

Contact

For more information please contact
 Jim Steer
 07785 242506

Figure 1 – Potential High Speed Rail corridors

