

25th February 1999

Consultation on the development of Rail Service starts in March

At today's National Rail Summit, Dr John Reid, Minister of Transport, announced that the Franchising Director is taking forward a wide ranging consultation on the future development of rail services.

The consultation will address the type and level of services the rail network should provide, consistent with the Government's objectives for integrated transport policy, value for money and affordability. It will listen to the views of both passengers and freight users. The consultation will focus on establishing priorities for rail, at national, regional and local level. It will seek views on how local government can develop land use strategies which fully exploit the economic potential of rail to meet future integrated transport needs. A key question is how the rail industry and its stakeholders should be working together to achieve improvements in the rail network.

Rail Users' Consultative Committees, local authorities, regional groupings, train operators and others will be asked for their views. Arrangements are being developed jointly with the Scottish and Welsh Offices, and DETR. The consultation will kick off with a series of seminars in Scotland, Wales and the English regions next month. Local authorities, consumer representatives, train operators and Railtrack will be invited.

The results of the consultation will feed into the development of the Shadow Strategic Rail Authority's plans for the rail network. It will also assist the evaluation of Railtrack's 1999 Network Management Statement (due to be published in March) and help in forming a view on the outputs which the Shadow Strategic Rail Authority will want Railtrack to provide.