

**19th March 2001**

## **SRA Boost for Isle of Wight**

Britain's best performing railway has been granted a two year franchise extension by the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA). Agreement has been reached to extend the existing Island Line franchise with the present operator - Stagecoach Holdings plc - for a further two years to 27th September 2003. Originally the franchise had been due to expire on 12 October 2001.

Under the new contract, all existing service patterns will remain the same and improvements have been made to the Passenger's Charter. Under the new terms, a full refund will be available for delays of 30 minutes or more and for two consecutive train cancellations. The refund would include the ferry and mainland train service portions of the fare.

The punctuality benchmark for Charter claims has been changed, resulting in a lower trigger for refunds for season ticket holders.

This extension will guarantee rail services on the Island, while an independent study is completed to determine the future means by which rail services can be provided. Gibb Consultancy has been commissioned on behalf of the SRA to examine options for provision of future rail services, looking at the level of use and likely growth.

SRA Chief Executive, Mike Grant commented.....

"I am delighted we have secured this deal with Stagecoach, particularly the benefits we have agreed under the Passenger's Charter. I am sure they will continue to deliver a good service for passengers on the Island until the end of the franchise in September 2003.

The study we have commissioned will help inform our consideration of the long term future for the Island Line and we will also draw on the views of those who attended the recent Rail Passengers Committee conference held at Ryde. The SRA will review the options in consultation with the Isle of Wight Council and the Rail Passengers Committee to ensure a quality rail transport system is available."

### **Notes to Editors**

1. Island Line operates trains on the Isle of Wight between Ryde Pier Head and Shanklin, and links with the rest of the national rail network via the ferries to Portsmouth.
2. Island Line is Britain's best performing railway - achieving 95.4% punctuality for the three month period between 15 October to 6 January 2001.

3. The franchise was originally awarded on 13 October 1996 for a five year term.
4. Uniquely, the Island Line franchise is responsible for running trains and maintaining the infrastructure, even though the latter is owned by Railtrack.

**For further details contact the Department for Transport Rail Press desk:  
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