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The SRA Launches Out

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At a conference in London today, Sir Alastair Morton and Mike Grant marked the end of the Shadow Strategic Rail Authority. Under the terms of the Transport Act 2000, the SRA comes formally into existence tomorrow, 1 February. Its Board members will meet to review an advanced draft of its "Strategic Agenda".

Sir Alastair, Chairman of the new Authority, drew attention today to the term Strategic Agenda.

"It is not our task to be out there bounding down the track giving orders.....it is the structural implications and medium-term consequence that concern us. How best does the industry go forward?"

"The Strategic Agenda will spell out what we see has to be done.....and point in the direction we ought to go". He himself will chair the Rail Industry Group which will focus the ongoing dialogue between the SRA and industry leaders. "The industry has to work together."

His messages to the industry today were clear:

"the purpose of the rail system is to provide a public transport service; which

"requires, substantial public funding and investment for at least a while to come.

and.....

"we will not get public funding simply to run trains

"we will get funded to deliver the service the public want, at the time and place the public wants it, and in the form and to the standard wanted!"

In his conference speech, Sir Alastair talked about "Bettering" the railway "because that is the precondition of "Expanding" it," citing eight "commandments" and inviting his audience to suggest two more.

Mike Grant, now Chief Executive of the Authority, spoke of how the SRA will deliver its part in both, in particular the Project Development Groups the SRA and Railtrack will set up together to develop investment projects to the point where funding can be committed and work begin.

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