

22nd December 2003

National Express Group Announced as Preferred Bidder for new Greater Anglia Franchise

The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) today announced that it has selected National Express Group PLC as Preferred Bidder for the new Greater Anglia franchise.

The new franchise will combine Anglia, Great Eastern, and West Anglia rail services from April 2004.

This is the first franchise to be awarded under the SRA's new policy, which sets clearer requirements for the services to be delivered to passengers.

The franchise will run from April 2004 for seven years, with specified performance targets and an additional three years if they are met.

The announcement follows a rigorous competition. Subject to its requirements being met, the SRA will sign an agreement with National Express Group PLC in the New Year at which point further details of the new franchise will be announced.

Nicola Shaw, SRA Managing Director, Operations, said:

"We said at the beginning of the year that we would select a new operator by the end of the year and we have. This is the first contract to be awarded under the new SRA franchising policy. The contract will deliver certainty for passengers, clarity for operators, and stability for investors. Benefits for passengers will include better information, security and cleanliness. This deal should also bring about an overall improvement in punctuality, newer rolling stock and additional benefits including improvements at stations."

Notes to Editors

1. On the 1 April 2003 the SRA announced that three parties had qualified as bidders - Arriva Trains Ltd, GB Railways Plc and National Express Group PLC.
2. All three current franchises (Anglia Railways, First Great Eastern and West Anglia) are due to expire on 31 March 2004. The SRA has also previously announced its intention to extend, for two years, the franchise for Great Northern services, which are currently part of the WAGN franchise.

3. The new franchise will operate all the regular services out of London Liverpool Street including Stansted Express, as well as local services within East Anglia. It will be the first to result from the SRA's policy of one operator for each major London terminal.
4. The SRA's new franchising policy for the passenger rail industry was announced in November 2002. The new franchise policy provides train companies with clear guidelines and incentives on customer service and on business priorities such as containing short and long-term costs. It incorporates rewards and penalties for key indicators like train and station cleanliness, security and passenger information.
5. The SRA also made announcements today: on the Thames Trains Franchise; confirming the bidders for the Integrated Kent Franchise and confirming that it is proceeding with plans for domestic services for Kent on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL).

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