

**14th June 2004**

## **SRA Launches Connections 2004 – a Major Rail and Cycling Award**

The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) is calling on cyclists throughout the country to nominate the best examples of integrated rail and cycling initiatives for a major new award scheme.

Launched today during national Bike Week, the Connections 2004 Awards will recognise the best stations, people, services and facilities for cyclists at or around railway stations in Britain.

The awards, due to be presented in late October, are supported by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC), the National Cycling Strategy Board, and CTC, the national cyclists' organisation.

Expert judges will consider nominations in five categories: the station of the year, the best on-train experience, top customer service, the most outstanding individual service and the best integrated rail and cycling innovation.

The awards are open to train companies, local authorities, cycle groups, individual users and any other person or organisation involved in or affected by integrated cycling and train travel.

SRA Managing Director, Strategic Planning, Jim Steer, said:

"The SRA is committed to making it easier for cyclists to use train services. As we stated recently in our draft Cycling Policy, we want to ensure that the rail industry plays a key role in promoting cycle use within an integrated transport system.

"I am delighted we are involved in sponsoring the new awards, which will recognise the people and ideas that are making this integration happen."

CTC Director Kevin Mayne said:

"Connections is important because it demonstrates what can be achieved in cycle and rail integration and sets standards for others to aspire to. I encourage cyclists to get involved in the awards and I am looking forward to seeing some excellent nominations."

George Muir, Director General of ATOC, sponsors of the customer service award, said:

"Cycling is a fast-growing sport with many more people using their bike for leisure or commuting purposes. Train operators welcome cyclists on their

services but we also want to encourage and reward good service for cyclists, which is why ATOC is pleased to support these awards."

He added: "I take my bike on the train - it's great!"

Acting Chairman of the National Cycling Strategy Board for England, Phillip Darnton, said:

"The NCS Board is highly appreciative of this initiative from the SRA. By identifying good examples, it will be influential in raising awareness of opportunities for combined journeys by bike and rail - a significant aspect in delivering the National Cycling Strategy. We are pleased to offer our endorsement by means of the first national use of our new marketing motif 'bike for a change'."

**Notes to editors:**

Questions about the awards should be put to Paul Lawson at Woodhouse Communications 01444 473588 or email to:

[connections2004@woodhousecommunications.co.uk](mailto:connections2004@woodhousecommunications.co.uk)

Questions about the Strategic Rail Authority's Cycle Policy should be put to Pete Barnao at the SRA on 020 7654 6387.

Details for cyclists on how to travel by rail are contained in the ATOC leaflet, "Cycling by Train", which is available at stations. Further information is available on the National Rail website:

[www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk), and by calling National Rail Enquiries on 08457 48 49 50.