

**24th August 2004**

## **Nuneaton to Birmingham Corridor Open for Big Box Business**

The SRA and Network Rail today announced that the key rail freight corridor between Nuneaton and Birmingham is now open for 9' 6" high container traffic on standard wagons.

The £2.25 million project - specified and funded by the SRA and delivered by Network Rail - opens up the key terminals of Hams Hall (operated by ABP Connect) and Lawley Street (operated by Freightliner), to the market for bigger, 9' 6" high rather than 8' 6" high boxes. The project will enhance the competitiveness of these terminals and the region, safeguarding jobs and attracting new business. Traffic is anticipated to begin running on the upgraded route by October this year.

The work, which has involved reconstruction of Station Road bridge at Whitacre Heath and the lowering of track through Shustoke Road bridge, is the second completed element of the £40 million Felixstowe to Nuneaton (F2N) project, which will connect a number of east coast ports to terminals along the West Coast Main Line by the end of 2004.

Further gauge enhancement work is being carried out between Felixstowe and Ipswich, Ipswich/Harwich and London, and Crewe and Manchester, allowing ports and terminals such as Felixstowe, Daventry and Manchester Trafford Park to handle more of these bigger boxes by the end of 2004.

Jonathan Riley, SRA Executive Director, Freight, said:

"Exploiting the market for 9' 6" high boxes is a priority for rail freight in the UK. The completion of work on the Nuneaton-Birmingham corridor further increases the capability of the railway and the competitiveness of rail freight, benefiting customers now and in the future."

### **Notes to Editors**

1. Currently, one in four containers passing through UK ports are 9' 6" high - by 2010 this is projected to double to one in two containers. Gauge enhancement between Nuneaton and Birmingham and elsewhere on the West Coast Main Line will double the market of boxes which can be carried by rail freight.
2. Hams Hall and Lawley Street rail terminals between them currently handle over 150,000 containers per annum that would otherwise require long-distance lorry journeys. As a result of the SRA's investment, Freightliner, EWS and GB Railfreight will now be able to

optimise services for customers looking to convey 9' 6" containers from the key ports of Felixstowe and Tilbury to the Midlands.

3. The first element of the F2N project - gauge enhancement for traffic using the Port of Tilbury - was completed in June 2004. This work has permitted the handling of 9' 6" containers on standard wagons between Tilbury and Garston (Merseyside) and Coatbridge (Lanarkshire).

For further details contact the Department for Transport Rail Press desk: 020 7944 3108