

**22nd March 2005**

## **Biggest Deal in European Rail History Marks East Coast Franchise Announcement**

The Strategic Rail Authority today announced that GNER has won the new franchise to operate InterCity East Coast Main Line services.

In terms of a pure railway concession it represents the biggest financial transaction in European railway history.

The franchise replacement was completed in record time, ensuring that the new franchise starts operations on the target date of May 1st 2005.

Under the new franchise contract, GNER will pay £1.3bn over the life of the franchise, in premium, to the government for reinvestment in the rail network, and will deliver specific and demonstrable commitments which will underpin high levels of customer care and service quality.

Secretary of State for Transport, Alistair Darling said: "The Government wants to see improvement in the quality of service to passengers as well as a good deal for taxpayers.

"GNER is committed to improving punctuality and reliability of its services along the entire East Coast route. It will refurbish carriages and invest in stations, as well as maintaining the high levels of on board service. Extra staff will also be recruited to provide added passenger security.

"Improvements like this will encourage more and more people to travel by train along the route."

SRA Chairman, David Quarmby said:

"It was vitally important to ensure that this new franchise was signed and delivered for a 1 May start date. Congratulations to all concerned - it ensures continuity in the delivery of this important intercity service, with benefits for passengers and taxpayers alike".

The benefits for passengers will be:

- £75m of new investment in the High Speed Trains, including the complete interior, and exterior refurbishment of all the diesel HST's and the re-engining of the power cars to improve their reliability and performance;
- £25m of new investment in stations;
- 18 new Special Constables along the line of route;

£3m of investment in customer security measures both at stations, car parks and on-trains;  
£5m of investment in depot facilities;  
New half hourly London-Leeds services throughout the day;  
A commitment to develop a newly electrified stretch of track south of Leeds, providing greater Leeds to London capacity;  
A contractual commitment to restore operational performance to better than pre-Hatfield levels, culminating in a PPM of 90% by 2010 and staying there or above;  
Up to £5m investment over the franchise term in improving access to franchise facilities for the disabled;  
900 new car parking spaces along the line of route, focusing on known areas of under capacity;  
50 new FastTicket machines along the line of route at key stations;  
60 additional revenue protection staff.

### **Notes to Editors:**

1. The franchise is for 7 years from May 1st 2005 with an automatic 3 year extension subject to agreed performance targets being met.
2. The franchising team was led by Nicola Shaw, Managing Director, Operations at the Strategic Rail Authority and the contract was negotiated by Peter Wilkinson.
3. Additional benefits to taxpayers and passengers are:
  - A new early morning-peak service from Peterborough to London;
  - Establishment of a new staff 'University' for the development of leadership, management and customer service skills and culture across the franchise;
  - The extension of current wi-fi facilities across the fleet;
  - Web and internet retailing of tickets;
  - Ticket barriers at Peterborough, Durham and Newcastle;
  - A new website detailing all aspects of the franchise services including facilities for cycles;
  - Improved conditions for the carriage of cycles on trains;
  - Covered cycle facilities at stations;
  - Through-bus tickets at key destinations along the line of route;
  - Investment in Taxi-Bus facilities for easy access to and from key stations for GNER customers.

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