



## ASLEF – Political Update – February 2008

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## **Transport for London (Long-term Funding)**

On 6<sup>th</sup> of February Ruth Kelly made a statement on the funding settlement with Transport for London (TfL) through to 2017-18 and covered the details of funding for Crossrail and provision for costs relating to Metronet in the light of its move into administration.

The government will make available to the GLA a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 of £1.7 billion specifically for the use of LUL. Ruth Kelly added that ‘the settlement gives London Underground the resources needed to manage Metronet’s administration, and to support moving toward a more stable long term footing and to continue the work to maintain, renew and upgrade the Underground.’

## **British Railways Board**

Lib Dem MP Norman Baker asked on 6<sup>th</sup> February if Ruth Kelly would wind up the British Rail Board (Residuary) and transfer its assets to Network Rail.

Railways Minister Tom Harris declined to do so and said that ‘BRB (Residuary) Ltd. is responsible for the management of the residual liabilities and assets of the British Railways Board. These include the management and administration of employee health claims from former employees as well as a property portfolio. Proceeds from its disposals of land are available to the department for funding the current railway.’

## **British Railway Board: Finance**

On February 20<sup>th</sup> Norman Baker asked the DfT what the annual budget of BRB (Residuary) Ltd. was for each year since 1997 and what functions it discharged.

Tom Harris replied that the BRB (Residuary) Ltd. (BRBR) was formally created in February 2001 when the assets and liabilities of the British Railways Board (BRB) were transferred to the Strategic Rail Authority. Prior to 2001, the functions of BRBR were discharged by BRB and details of the budget and financial results during this period can be found in BRB’s historic accounts. Between 2001 and 2005 BRBR was a subsidiary of the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) and details of its income and expenditure budget are published in the SRA’s annual report and accounts, copies of which are in the House of Commons Library.

In October 2005, ownership of BRBR formally transferred from the SRA to the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to a Transfer Scheme under the 2005 Railways Act. The latest results for the company which include its budget are available on BRBR’s website at: [www.brbr.gov.uk](http://www.brbr.gov.uk) The function of the company is to manage and discharge the residual rights and liabilities of BRB. Full details are available on BRBR’s website.

## Rolling Stock

Norman Baker asked what the average weight of a two-car train was in (a) 1985, (b) 1997 and (c) 2006. The following table formulated the Minister's response.

Build year	Class of DMU	Weight of two car units (tonnes)
1985	Class 156	74
1997	Class 170	90
2005	Class 171	92

Build year	Class of EMU	Weight of two car units (tonnes)
1991	Class 456	72
1995	Class 466	71

Elsewhere Tory MP Teresa Villiers asked on February 20<sup>th</sup> how many of the 1,300 extra carriages referred to in the White Paper, Delivering a Sustainable Railway, will be new rolling stock and a re-deployment of existing rolling stock.

Tom Harris replied that there would be a net increase of 1,300 new train carriages. He added that the rolling stock plan, published on 30 January, details indicative figures for the number of additional carriages each train operating company will receive. Some of these train carriages will be new; some will be freed up from other train operating companies (TOCs). Some TOCs will order more trains so that they can move some of their existing carriages to other TOCs. The table at appendix B of the Rolling Stock Plan shows how many extra carriages each TOC will receive as a result of these moves. The final mix between new and cascaded stock will be determined after detailed discussions with individual TOCs.

### Rolling Stock: Safety

Lib Dem John Pugh asked on Feb 7<sup>th</sup> what assessment the government had made of the Health and Safety Executive's report on the safety of type 142 carriages; what assessment it made of the suitability of type 142 stock for use on the Manchester-Southport line; what reports it has received of (a) safety and (b) overcrowding issues on this service.

Minister Tom Harris said that following the publication of the Health and Safety Executive report into the train accident at Winsford South Junction on 23 June 1999, the rail industry has taken forward a programme to make improvements to the crashworthiness of class 142 vehicles. The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has been monitoring industry progress on implementing this programme.

Harris added that train operating companies are responsible for deploying appropriate rolling stock to meet the capacity demands for the train services they operate. The ORR

has received six complaints about safety and crowding issues on Northern Rail services generally since April 2007.

### **Eurostar North Pole Depot: Greater London**

Rail Minister Tom Harris made a statement on February 7<sup>th</sup> on the transfer of the North Pole Depot to BRB (Residuary) Ltd which was completed on 31 January. He said BRB was asked to provide a valuation and to dispose of the site. Prior to any disposal, there will be a further check with relevant stakeholders to confirm the government's initial assessment that there is no further rail use for this site.

The Minister said that BRB would be asked to follow established and published guidance in consulting with relevant stakeholders on the disposal of the former Eurostar depot at North Pole. The latest guidance was announced to Parliament on 26 July 2007. Copies of that guidance are available in the Library of the House and on the BRB (Residuary) Ltd. website at [www.brbr.gov.uk](http://www.brbr.gov.uk).

### **Eurostar North Pole Depot: Finance**

Adrian Sanders asked the DfT how much funding from the public purse was spent on the Eurostar North Pole depot. Tom Harris replied that the depot was originally built by European Passenger Services Ltd (EPSL), a subsidiary of British Rail, in 1991-02 for £75 million. The facility was built to service what is now known as the Eurostar train fleet.

Under the arrangements for the government to fund the provision of the new Eurostar maintenance depot at Temple Mills, Eurostar (UK) Limited agreed to relinquish its interests in North Pole Depot for zero cost. The depot transfer to BRBR ownership was completed on 31 January 2008. The asset transferred from Eurostar (UK) Limited to BRB (Residuary) Limited on 31 January 2008, under the arrangements for providing Eurostar (UK) Limited with a new depot at Temple Mills. This transfer involved no costs to the public purse. BRB (Residuary) Ltd is now responsible for managing all the costs and benefits of North Pole depot.

### **Railways for All Programme**

In response to questions on 7<sup>th</sup> February from Tory Mark Harper on the Railways for All programme Tom Harris said that Network Rail planned to complete step free routes at around 45 stations up to 2009, a further 45 between 2009 and 2011 and at least 40 between 2012 and 2015. He added that the consultation behind the strategy identified that over two thirds of the country's 2,500 stations, many of which date from the 19th century, could benefit from a range of access improvements including new customer information systems, lifts and ramps. 132 stations in England and Wales, and eight in Scotland have so far been identified to receive obstacle free, accessible routes. To date, three have been completed with 45 targeted by 2009. In addition, the Railways for All Small Scheme Programme is currently part funding smaller scale access enhancements at over 500 stations.

## **Railway Stations: Greater London**

On February 7<sup>th</sup> Denis MacShane asked what the DfT's policy was on changing the names of London railway stations to which the Minister replied that any proposal to change a station name is 'primarily a matter for train operators, Network Rail and London Underground as appropriate.' He added that name changes have, though, happened only infrequently in the past and that is likely to continue to be the case in future.

## **Railway Stations: Safety Measures**

On February 20<sup>th</sup> Labour MP Sian James asked the DfT what progress has been made by the Office of Rail Regulation with train operating companies on reducing the number of accidents on station platforms to which the Minister replied that the ORR undertakes inspection programmes with mainline train operating companies which, where appropriate, include assessing the company's health and safety arrangements for managing the risk on station platforms. Recently ORR has also worked with some of the major owning groups on strategies to reduce accidents. Industry statistics show signs of a reduction in the number of accidents at stations.

## **Railways**

Ben Chapman asked on February 7<sup>th</sup> what steps the DfT were taking to encourage people to use rail transport and if it would consider introducing financial incentives to encourage people to travel by rail. Rail Minister Tom Harris replied that 'marketing of rail services is primarily a matter for train operators. They do this in a variety of ways, many of which involve offering financial incentives through discounted fares.' He added that unprecedented investment in the railways since 1997 has resulted in an increase in patronage of around 40 per cent.

## **Railways: Safety**

On February 20<sup>th</sup> Sian James asked the DfT Transport what steps it had taken with train operating companies to improve passenger safety on late-night services. Tom Harris said that over a third of the 2,500 stations on the network now have CCTV, as do an increasing number of trains. Over 600 stations are accredited under the Secure Stations scheme which was launched in 1998 to improve security at overground and underground stations for both passengers and staff.

He added that more remains to be done, but the most recent National Passenger Survey showed only 8% of passengers were dissatisfied about their personal security while at the station and 6% were dissatisfied about their security while on the train.

## **Silverlink: Compensation**

Milton Keynes MP Mark Lancaster asked what compensation was made available to season ticket holders as a result of the October/November 2007 strike action that affected Silverlink services on February 22nd. Minister Tom Harris replied that the entitlement to compensation for season ticket holders was determined by the Silverlink Passenger's Charter. This did not contain any obligation on Silverlink to provide compensation under these circumstances. Any compensation provided by Silverlink would have been at its own discretion and not a matter for the Department.

## **First Great Western Franchise**

On 26<sup>th</sup> February Ruth Kelly made a statement in which she said the performance of First Great Western had 'persistently fallen short of its customers' expectations and has been unacceptable to both passengers and Government.' She added that FGW had breached its franchise agreement by exceeding the limits on cancellations, and also by misreporting those cancellations.

The Secretary of State announced a remedial plan notice for FGW's exceeding the threshold on cancellations in response to which FGW will submit a remedial plan for addressing this level of cancellations. She emphasised that discussions are at an advanced stage on what the plan will contain. In addition she issued FGW with a breach notice for misreporting its cancellations and announced the agreement of a substantial package of additional benefits for passengers amounting to £29 million. FGW previously revealed that it has doubled passenger compensation for this year.

**ASLEF Policy and Communications**  
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