



## ASLEF Political Update – March 2008

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**4<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

### **Train Operating Companies**

Tory James Gray asked which train operating company had (a) the worst operational record and (b) the highest recorded level of passenger dissatisfaction in the latest period for which figures are available. Ruth Kelly replied that First Great Western has been in breach of its franchise agreement and recorded the highest level of passenger dissatisfaction, as measured by the national passenger survey for autumn 2007. She believes that the package she set out on 26 February was not just a 'technical statement about the franchise, because it will bring real benefits to passengers.' She added that First Great Western must 'get a grip', and said that Moir Lockhead, the First chief executive, had assured her that he will do 'everything he can to improve services for passengers.'

### **Rail Capacity**

Tory John Penrose asked what recent assessment she had made of the adequacy of the capacity of the rail network to which Rail Minister Tom Harris replied that the government has committed itself to arranging the procurement of 1,300 new carriages. Under the indicative proposals in the rolling stock plan, First Great Western is already going to receive more than 50 new carriages; that will be a major increase in the capacity available to passengers.

Mr Harris went on to make the following points on capacity: 'there may well be a case for new high-speed lines—certainly for increased physical capacity—on many of our major railway routes at the beginning of the next decade, starting in 2020. However, I do not believe that such decisions should, or have to, be taken earlier than 2012, which year will see the publication of the high level output specification phase 2'; 'we remain committed to extending Pendolinos by two carriages at some point at the very beginning of the next franchise'; 'I do accept that when car park capacity is enhanced, more people use the railways; clearly, that is a way of facilitating higher demand. However car parking facilities are a matter not for the Government but for local authorities, Network Rail and, occasionally, the train operating companies.'

Clive Efford asked if the government would consider using the £14 million taken in fines from Network Rail to bring forward the purchase of new rolling stock, as set out in the 30-year plan and ensure that capacity exists in the manufacturing industry to deliver rolling stock on time.

Harris replied that the 'money needed to buy the 1,300 new carriages has been banked, as it were, and has been committed. We are not facing any kind of shortfall in respect of the 1,300 new carriages that we are committed to buy. He might be aware that the Office of Rail Regulation has embarked on a consultation about how the £14 million fine levied on Network Rail will be imposed—whether it will be a fine coming back to central Government, or whether it can be quantified as passenger benefits for those who suffered the most during the new year overruns.'

## **Channel Tunnel**

Kelvin Hopkins asked how many vacant train paths there had been through the channel tunnel in the last 12 months. Harris replied that 'the precise number that have been unused, are matters for Eurotunnel.' Hopkins responded that 'less than a quarter of the tunnel's train capacity is currently used, and only a massive increase in rail freight traffic could close that gap' and suggested that 'heavy investment in rail freight lines between the major economic regions of Britain and the tunnel is vital if we are to make use of the tunnel properly.' Harris retorted that the Government intervened at the end of 2006 in order to create an open-access regime in the channel tunnel that allowed EWS and other operators to continue to run freight through it adding that £200 million has been committed under the high level output specifications to develop the strategic freight network.

## **Swansea Station**

Siân James asked how much had been allocated for capital spending at Swansea railway station over the next five years. Harris replied that 'Swansea was included in the industry's initial list of candidate stations for the national stations improvement programme. An updated list of candidate stations will be published as part of the April 2008 refresh of Network Rail's strategic business plan.' Mrs James re-emphasised the need for capital investment at Swansea railway station, which is 'the gateway to west Wales and an important mainline terminus.' Harris replied 'she will be aware that one of the criteria for deciding which stations should be on the list of candidate stations is how successful Network Rail can expect to be in leveraging private sector money. I have no information about whether Swansea will remain on the list in April 2008, but she is doing exactly the right thing in making the case for Swansea, and I wish her every success in that.

## **Wrexham Station**

Ian Lucas asked about the role of capital investment in ensuring a functioning and improving railway service. Tom Harris replied that Wrexham station had been allocated money under the Access for All programme, which has had a budget of £370 million over 10 years for improving accessibility at stations.

## **5<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

### **Railways: Pensions**

Gwyneth Dunwoody asked about the Railway Pensions Commission's final report. Tom Harris replied: 'I welcome the Railway Pensions Commission's final report and appreciate the work they have done. This report raises some important and complex issues. It is initially for the rail employers and unions to take these forward, and they will be entering into detailed discussions shortly. The Department for Transport is also considering the Commission's findings, but it is too early for me to comment on them.'

### **Trains: Carbon Emissions**

Norman Baker asked about the potential advantages in carbon reduction terms from the use of hybrid diesel and battery trains to which Harris replied that the DfT had commissioned a study, to be published in March, which identifies potential carbon savings through the use of hybrid diesel high speed trains. He added that further work is being commissioned to identify the benefits of hybrid technology for trains operating urban and rural services.

### **Great Western Trains: Rolling Stock**

Norman Baker asked how many carriages First Great Western is running; how many the franchise requires them to run from April 2008; and how many they will run from April 2008.

Harris confirmed that additional carriages will be added to trains operating the First Great Western Portsmouth to Cardiff route from this summer and that the franchise agreement will be changed specifically to commit First Great Western to implementing the passenger benefits package, including the additional carriages for the Cardiff to Portsmouth route. These will comprise 10 extra carriages.

### **Intercity Express**

Norman Baker when the DfT expects a prototype of the new Intercity Express to be available for testing on the network to which Tom Harris that prototypes for the new trains are scheduled for on-track testing in 2012 with the first trains due to enter operational service in 2013.

### **Intercity Express: Consultants**

Norman Baker asked how much the DfT had spent on consultants on the specification for the new Intercity Express programme and why it wasn't deemed a matter for the rolling stock companies. Harris said that the DfT has spent £7.9 million on the project since 2005. He added that it 'has taken the lead in developing the specification, to ensure we achieve maximum benefits for passengers and value for money for taxpayers for what is expected to be one of the largest rolling stock orders ever placed in the UK. He added that the procurement process for the new train was open to all interested parties within the industry, including rolling stock companies. Tenders are due to be returned in May.

### **Network Rail: Fines**

Clive Efford asked the DfT if they would ensure that revenue from the fine imposed on Network Rail for delays in December 2007 and January 2008 is spent on the rail network. Harris responded by saying that it was a matter for the independent Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) and said that NR was in discussions with passenger and freight operators and user representatives the option of funding a package of customer

improvements worth £14 million. He added that if agreement can be reached by the end of the month (March), the ORR could decide to endorse this rather than imposing its proposed penalty on Network Rail for breaching its licence.

## **10<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

### **London Underground and the PPP Debate**

A full and frank exchange of views on the Transport Select Committee's report on London Underground and PPP took place at the end of which the he Minister for Transport Rosie Winterton made the following points.

She assured the House that it was of great importance to the Government that they understand why Metronet has failed in order to learn the appropriate lessons for the future and emphasised that Government recognised that Metronet's failure has had a very real impact on the underground network and on passengers emphasising that the fault lay with the corporate failings of Metronet and not failings of the PPP model as a whole

Ms Winterton asked Parliament to remember that the London Underground PPPs were delivering performance benefits against the background of continuing growth in demand with 247 stations programmed for modernisation or refurbishment by 2010-11, and work on 91 stations has been completed.

She added that Tube Lines successfully delivered 47 stations by the end of August 2007 and renewed more than 115 km of track with delivery on some lines ahead of schedule. She cited the Waterloo and City line where a fifth train is in service on the line during peak period while a £40 million upgrade has improved reliability and reduced journey times. The forthcoming extension of the Piccadilly line to Heathrow terminal 5, she said, has been completed and work on a new signaling system on the Northern line is ahead of the contract date.

The Minister highlighted the fact that at least three of Metronet's shareholding companies have already written off more than £300 million due to company's failure and conceded that they had clearly failed to motivate Metronet's shareholders to address the shortcomings sufficiently early, earnestly or effectively. She assured Parliament that in future the Government will want to ensure that risk transfer is 'appropriate, meaningful and effective in future contracting arrangements.'

In addition she said a joint steering committee, with officials from Transport for London, London Underground, the Treasury and Partnerships UK, has been set up to develop options for the long-term structure of the former Metronet businesses. It will report to the Secretary of State for Transport and the Mayor of London by summer 2008.

**11<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

### **Woodhead Tunnel Debate**

Angela Smith, MP for Sheffield Hillsborough instigated a debate on the Woodhead Tunnel. Minister of State Rosie Winterton acknowledged the short and long term importance of maintaining adequate rail capacity on trans-Pennine routes to the economy of northern England.

Winterton reassured MPs that National Grid's plans would not jeopardise the possibility that the Woodhead tunnel route will reopen to rail traffic at some future date but highlighted that no Government or rail industry strategy or planning document has identified a need for additional rail capacity across the Pennines that would require the reopening of the Woodhead route. She said the Government's view was that the need for additional capacity should be met by longer trains to accompany reduced journey time on the Manchester-Leeds route via Huddersfield. She said that on the south trans-Pennine route between Sheffield and Manchester, the East Midlands Trains franchise will deliver longer trains on the route between Liverpool and Nottingham via Sheffield.

Winterton reasserted that 'neither the White Paper nor the Yorkshire and Humber regional planning assessment identified a long-term need for substantial increases in freight capacity across the Pennines. Consequently, it has not been suggested that the Woodhead route was needed for the purpose.'

### **East Midlands Trains**

Tory MP for West Derbyshire Patrick McLoughlin raised the issue of the downgrading of services provided by East Midlands Trains in the wake of the company's award of the franchise just four months previously. He highlighted the planned investment programme over the period of the franchise of £90 million.

His complaint was that for more than three months, Sunday trains are to be diverted around Manton, after they leave Leicester, which will add an hour to the journey. In addition he referred to an incident on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March and his investigations discovered that there were 100 alterations to service with 13 train cancellations and 11 partial train cancellations. Delays were worsened because, apparently, there was a theft of some 60 m of cable on the line.

Minister Jim Fitzpatrick replied by saying that the delay on March 2<sup>nd</sup> was as a result of scheduled major engineering works and the adding that the diversionary route south of Corby towards Kettering is single line, which severely restricts capacity and increases journey times. He said that 'disruption is an unfortunate and unavoidable consequence of maintenance work that is essential for the continuing drive to deliver a safer, faster and more reliable rail network.'

He said: ‘Increasing demand for travel has brought a growth in passenger services on the network and the introduction of newer, faster trains—Class 222s on the midland main line—has resulted in increased maintenance work across the network. Maintenance and renewal work is specifically programmed to avoid impacting on peak commuter travel periods when many more people use the trains. The alternative to major engineering work would be temporary speed restrictions, which would affect many more passengers commuting and travelling every working day.’

The Minister said a joint Network Rail and East Midlands Trains control centre due to open in May is being created in Derby, which will enable the sharing of information and allow people to work together to manage any incidents, including providing timely and accurate communications to staff and passengers.

He drew attention to the cross-industry possessions review led by the independent Office of Rail Regulation has been examining how to address best the growing mismatch between the increasing demand for travel and the service availability of the rail network and said that it had produced a ‘new cross-industry consensus and a determination to develop ways to enable major reductions in the disruption that arises from engineering works.’ He added that the strategy includes initiatives to reduce the typical duration of renewals works to track and bridges from 54 hours over a weekend to eight hours or less overnight. The Minister cited the chief constable of British Transport Police who has described line side cable theft as “one of the biggest challenges after terrorism.”

## **12<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

### **Great Western Trains**

Liberal MP Jenny Willott asked what further steps the DfT will take in the event of a failure by First Great Western to fulfil its obligations under the remedial plan notice issued on 26 February 2008. Tom Harris replied that ‘material non-compliance with the Remedial Agreement would be a default of the franchise agreement, which could lead to the Government terminating First Great Western’s franchise.’

### **Great Western Trains: Portsmouth**

Liberal Mike Hancock asked what performance levels were achieved by First Great Western for the Portsmouth to Cardiff rail service in each year from 1997 and what plans the DfT review the operation of this franchise; and if she will make a statement. Tom Harris said that in the year to November 2007, Network Rail figures showed that FGW achieved an average punctuality of 82.3 per cent. across the franchise as a whole and 79.6 per cent. during the preceding four week period.

### **Railways: First Great Western**

In the House of Lords Lord Bradshaw asked whether the depots and platforms in the First Great Western area are long enough to accommodate any lengthening of trains which

may be necessary by the end of the high-level output statement period in 2013. Transport Minister Lord Bassam of Brighton replied that Network Rail was assessing platform lengths and other infrastructure issues relating to capacity enhancements required by the high-level output specification as part of the development of its strategic business plan.

**13<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

**Railways: West Coast Main Line**

Lord Bradshaw asked how long the DfT estimated that the current levels of overcrowding on peak-hour trains on the west coast main line would continue. Lord Bassam replied that a significant increase in west coast route capacity will be achieved in the new timetable to be introduced in December 2008 which will use the existing fleet of Pendolino trains and extra tilting Voyager trains to give a 50% increase in long-distance trains to and from Euston.

Lord Bradshaw said that the Minister told him there would be a 30% increase in capacity from December and on inquiry to the train operator, he discovered that 29% is off peak and 1 per cent is during the peak. He asked what the Government and their negotiators going to do to secure a better deal for the taxpayer, the passenger and the train operating company?

Lord Bassam said the government has been in discussions with the operators and have put in place significant plans to improve the quality of passenger experience on the route through new Pendolino carriages around 106 new ones and a further 92 additional carriages on the London Midland route. He added that they were undertaking a whole programme of capacity enhancement, including platform lengthening on significant parts of the west coast main line.

Lord Faulkner of Worcester asked if the Minister had seen the Atkins consulting group report which said the economic benefits of high speed rail would be around £60 bn over a lengthy lifespan and whether or not the government would implement its findings. Lord Bassam said the DfT would continue to refine its plans for the future development of the rail network.

Lord Berkeley suggested that nine or 10 Adelante five-car trains are going into storage quite soon, and could assist with overcrowding around the Bristol area and in Wales and asked if the DfT would consider using them sure rather than fester in a depot somewhere?

Lord Bassam said the Government worked closely with train operators, particularly South West Trains to ensure that carriages are released. He added that a refurbishment of class 455 units on South West Trains is currently being undertaken.

## **Railways: North Wales**

Lord Roberts of Llandudno asked what records they had of levels of overcrowding on Virgin Trains services between Chester and Holyhead and whether the levels of overcrowding would be affected by Virgin Trains sending half the train from Chester to Wrexham and the other half from Chester to Holyhead.

Lord Bassam replied that there was little evidence of crowding on West Coast Trains' services between Chester and Holyhead. Availability of train path and resource, as well as passenger loadings, are factors in determining whether additional services between Chester and Wrexham can be provided. He added that from December 2008, West Coast Trains was planning to operate an additional 0705 Wrexham General to Chester and 2020 Chester to Wrexham General service, subject to obtaining track access rights. These services would form through trains to and from London Euston.

## **14<sup>th</sup> March**

### **Rolling Stock**

Norman Baker asked how many new train carriages entered and were removed from service in each year since 2004; and how many are expected to (i) enter and (ii) be removed from service in (A) 2008, (B) 2009, (C) 2010 and (D) 2011.

Tom Harris replied that the number of vehicles which have entered service since 2004 were as follows:

|      | <i>Number</i> |
|------|---------------|
| 2004 | 1,360         |
| 2005 | 710           |
| 2006 | 210           |
| 2007 | 15            |

He added that the DfT does not hold the numbers which were removed from service as this number constantly changes depending on the commercial deals made by the Train Operating Companies (TOCs). He emphasised that there was very little useable stock available and the Department's High Level Output Specification (HLOS) is intended to grow the capacity of the network and that the numbers which are expected to enter service will depend on the vehicle delivery profile which is agreed with the manufacturer at contract signature.

**17<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

### **Birmingham New Street Station**

Teresa Villiers asked how many members of departmental staff worked on the redevelopment of Birmingham New Street in each year since 2000 to which Tom Harris replied 14 in 2005-06; 24 in 2006-07; and 28 in 2007-08.

Mrs. Villiers asked how much the DfT spent on legal advice, banking and financial consultants and other consultants related to the redevelopment of Birmingham New Street in each year since 2000. Tom Harris said Department spent £225,000 in 2005-06; £47,000 in 2006-07; and £5,000 in 2007-08.

Graham Stringer asked the DfT what estimate it had made of the maximum number of train services able to call at Birmingham New Street Station per day (*a*) at present and (*b*) on completion of its redevelopment. Tom Harris said the redevelopment of New Street station would improve passenger handling capacity and facilities within the station itself and that growth would be achieved primarily via longer trains and that following the completion of work the station would not constrain passenger growth over the West Midlands network.

### **Hope Valley Railway Line: Freight**

High Peak MP asked what assessment the DfT had made of the capacity of the Hope Valley railway line to carry freight now and in the future. Tom Harris replied that Network Rail has assessed the capacity of the Hope Valley railway line in its Freight Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS), published in 2007 and set out a detailed analysis of freight issues, requirements and proposals for accommodating growth. He added that the Freight RUS identified, over the next 10 years, a possible need for extra capacity on the Hope Valley route between Sheffield and Manchester arising from a forecast growth in aggregate and construction materials originating in this area and that NR's Yorkshire and Humber RUS, which is being worked on at present, was also considering capacity needs on this and the two other rail routes across the Pennines.

### **Railways: Kent**

Norman Baker asked how many daily train paths will be available to freight traffic on the high-speed line through Kent once high-speed domestic services have begun to which Tom Harris replied that there would be spare paths available on High Speed 1 when the high-speed domestic services commence in 2009. He said the precise number of paths available to freight and further passenger services would become clearer when the timetable for the high-speed domestic services is finalised.

**18<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

### **Great Western Trains**

Teresa Villiers asked how often the DfT would assess First Great Western's Remedial Plan once it is agreed to which Tom Harris replied that the Department would assess progress on the First Great Western Remedial Plan every four weeks. Material non-compliance with the Remedial Agreement would be a default of the franchise agreement, which could lead to the Government terminating First Great Western's franchise.

Teresa Villiers asked which parliamentary constituencies contain stations through which First Great Western provide services. Tom Harris said the following constituencies contain stations through which First Great Western currently provide services:

Aberavon; Aldershot; Arundel and South Downs; Banbury; Basingstoke; Bath; Bracknell; Brentford and Isleworth; Bridgend; Bridgwater; Brighton and Kemp Town; Bristol East; Bristol North West; Bristol West; Cardiff Central; Carmarthen East and Dinefwr; Carmarthen West and Pembrokeshire South; Cheltenham; Chichester; Cities of London and Westminster; Cotswold; Crawley; Daventry; Devizes; Devon East; Dorset East; Dorset South; Ealing, Acton and Shepherd's Bush; Ealing, Southall; Exeter; Falmouth and Camborne; Fareham; Gloucester; Guildford; Havant; Hayes and Harlington; Henley; Hereford; Leominster; Llanelli; Maidenhead; Mid Worcestershire; Mole Valley; Monmouth; Neath; Newbury; New Forest East; Newport East; Newport West; Northavon; North Cornwall; North Devon; North Swindon; North Wiltshire; Oxford West and Abingdon; Plymouth, Devonport; Plymouth, Sutton; Portsmouth North; Portsmouth South; Reading East; Reading West; Reigate; Romsey; St. Ives; Salisbury; Slough; Somerton and Frome; Southampton Itchen; South East Cornwall; South West Devon; Stroud; Surrey Heath; Swansea West; Taunton; Teignbridge; Tewkesbury; Tiverton and Honiton; Torbay; Torridge and West Devon; Totnes; Truro and St. Austell; Uxbridge; Wansdyke; Wantage; Westbury; Weston-Super-Mare; West Worcestershire; Windsor; Witney; Woking; Wokingham; Woodspring; Worcester; Worthing East and Shoreham; Yeovil.

Teresa Villiers asked whether First Great Western will continue to report every month to her on its 40-point Recovery Plan and if FGW would report every month to the DfT Department on its Joint Improvement Plan. Mr. Tom Harris said FGW would continue to report each four-week period on the outcomes of its performance improvement activities and that all franchised train operating companies provide a four-weekly report on the outcomes of their Joint Performance Improvement Plans.

### **Great Western Trains: Passengers**

Teresa Villiers asked for the DfT's assessment of passenger satisfaction on the First Great Western line to which Tom Harris said that it recorded the highest level of passenger dissatisfaction as measured by the National Passenger Survey for autumn 2007.

## **Railways: Franchises**

Teresa Villiers asked when the DfT intends to publish the results of its consultation on Enforcement policy: rail franchise agreements and closure conditions. Tom Harris replied that the Enforcement Policy: Rail Franchise Agreements and Closure Conditions was presently being updated following responses to the consultation and in light of the recent enforcement activity concerning First Great Western. He added that the results and the updated policy would be published in due course.

## **Railways: West Coast Main Line**

Lord Roberts of Llandudno asked how much subsidy Virgin Trains would be paid for train services operating under the west coast main line franchise in 2007-08 and 2008-09. The Minister replied that the subsidy at franchise award was set at £274.5 million in 2007-08 and £294.6 million in 2008-09.

**19<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

### **Statement on Pendolino train fleet**

The DfT announced that work to bring new trains into service on the West Coast Main Line is to be overseen by a rival train operator to current franchise holder Virgin Trains.

According to the strategy, the Department intends to appoint a 'shadow' train operator which will be responsible for taking delivery of new carriages from manufacturer Alstom and liaising with rolling stock leasing company Angel Trains, which will finance and own the new vehicles. The successful bidder would be responsible for testing the trains on the National Rail network in order to secure safety acceptance certificates and would oversee enhancements to train depots and work to extend station platforms to support 11-car services. Responsibility for introducing the new trains would transfer to the new West Coast franchise in 2012 at which point the shadow operator contract would end.

In order to be able to test the new rolling stock, the successful bidder would have to be cleared by Network Rail and the Office of Rail Regulation to run trains on the National Rail network. This means the contract is likely to go to an existing train operator that currently runs passenger or freight services.

**19<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

### **Crossrail: Consultants**

Teresa Villiers: the DfT had spent on legal advice, banking and financial consultants and other consultants for work on Crossrail to which Tom Harris as follows: The amount spent by the Department on legal, banking and financial consultants and other consultants in support of Crossrail is shown in the following table. The figures include spend incurred since financial year 2003-04. They represent actual costs to date.

| <i>Type of consultancy</i> | <i>Amount (£)</i> |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Legal                      | 8,598,195         |
| Finance/Banking            | 1,287,265         |
| Other                      | 2,775,904         |

### **Railways: South East**

Norman Baker asked for what reasons the DfT had decided that bidders for the next South-Central franchise will be required to bid in accordance with a train operating timetable constructed by her Department. Tom Harris replied that the DfT would not be constructing any timetables for the South Central franchise. He added that Network Rail was engaged in a process of developing timetables to facilitate the delivery of the East London line extension in mid 2010, and the construction of the Thameslink project, particularly works at London Bridge, from 2012. These industry developed timetables will be provided to bidders. He also suggested that given the complexity of the South London network and the fact that the East London Line timetable will come into force around six to nine months after the new franchise starts that it would be prudent to plan for such events in advance of the new franchise.

### **20<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

#### **Railways: Freight**

Gordon Prentice asked the DfT what reports they had received on whether the corner locks were engaged on the containers blown off the trains at Milton Keynes and Tebay on 8 March. Tom Harris responded by saying that the five empty containers which were blown off a freight train near Tebay and the two empty containers blown off another freight train near Milton Keynes on 1 March 2008 were located on “UIC 517 type” spigots fitted to the freight wagons. Evidence indicated that each container was correctly located on four spigots. The spigots do not have any form of manually operated twist lock as fitted to some other types of rail wagons and road container carriers; instead they have a “mushroom” shaped head designed to provide vertical retention. However, in both incidents, preliminary findings indicate the spigots did not function as intended. The reasons for this and other factors which may have contributed to the incidents are currently under investigation by the RAIB.

He added that regarding the history of similar incidents, it has been reported to the RAIB that there have not been any previous incidents in the UK since the introduction of the spigots to the UK in the early 1990s. Reports of similar incidents involving containers blowing off trains in continental Europe are emerging but the circumstances of these incidents are not yet clear. He went on to say that on completion of its investigation, the RAIB's report will be published on its website. During its investigation, urgent safety advice can be issued by the RAIB to the industry in the UK and other member states to bring any safety matter to their attention.

### **Southern Railway: Rolling Stock**

Sir Malcolm Rifkind asked what assessment the DfT had made of the effect of the decision by Southern Railway to introduce 44 new dual-voltage carriages to the Thameslink service on the future of the Watford to Brighton service. Tom Harris said that all newly procured dual-voltage trains will be deployed on the Thameslink route and that from December 2008, journeys between Brighton and Watford, avoiding the London Underground, will still be possible, albeit with a change of trains at Clapham Junction, as happens in the morning peak today.

### **Transport: Policy**

Teresa Villiers asked if the DfT would place in the House of Commons Library the assessment made of the impact of transport policies on different groups in society for each year since 1998. Rosie Winterton replied that the Department sponsors a wide range of research and consultation to help us to monitor the effectiveness of our policies. For example, we have recently completed research on the assessment of accessibility standards for disabled people in land based public transport vehicles. This research looks at the effectiveness of accessibility regulations made under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and a copy has been placed in the Library.

### **West Coast Main Line: Repairs and Maintenance**

Geraldine Smith asked what recent progress has been made on the refurbishment of the West Coast Main Line to which Tom Harris said the Government was providing £8.125 billion to renew and upgrade the west coast main line that runs between London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. He added that on completion, the investment will deliver a 30 per cent. increase in capacity, significantly faster journeys such as those from the north west to London falling by around 30 minutes, more frequent trains and a seven day railway.

### **25.3.08**

### **Ruth Kelly Statement on the Railways Act**

‘I have today laid before Parliament a policy statement on the exercise of my powers in relation to passenger rail franchising under section 26(1) of the Railways Act 1993. Amendments to that Act made by the Railways Act 2005, which transferred certain franchising functions of the Strategic Rail Authority to the Secretary of State, require me to publish a statement of policy about how I propose to exercise my powers under section 26(1). The statement sets out how I intend to award rail franchises in future, which is by means of competitive tender wherever possible. The statement also sets out those circumstances in which it is likely that an invitation to tender will not be issued, and clarifies those circumstances where a franchise agreement may be extended. Copies of the statement have been made available in the Libraries of the House.’

### **31.3.08**

#### **Railways**

Mark Lancaster asked what the criteria are used to decide whether a train service should be non-stop between two specified stations to which Tom Harris replied that ‘decisions on calling patterns are based on a number of considerations. These include existing and future demand at the stations concerned; the amount of on-train capacity available to accommodate boarding passengers; the effect of stopping on other passengers’ travel times; the impact of the call on resources such as line capacity and overall train fleet size; and the availability of alternative services.’

**ASLEF Policy and Communications  
April 2008**