

CENTRAL RAILWAY

7 November 2003

STRONG SUPPORT FOR UK-CONTINENTAL RAIL FREIGHT LINK Lorries-on-trains project 'ready to go forward'

Central Railway is continuing discussions with government to enable the development of a new lorries-on-trains freight line linking Britain's industrial heartland with continental Europe. The company is seeking planning permission through the introduction of a hybrid Bill in late 2004, the successful passage of which would provide necessary approvals for the construction of a railway from Liverpool via the Channel Tunnel to northern France.

Extensive discussions with existing and potential stakeholders during the past two years have yielded encouraging progress in political support as well as confirming the technical and financial feasibility of the project.

Central Railway wrote to government in early 2001 seeking support for the introduction of legislation.

Strategic Rail Authority consultants concluded in April 2001 that there were no technical 'showstoppers.' In March 2002, government asked the SRA to conduct a further review, which was submitted at the end of 2002. The Minister for Transport subsequently asked the company to look at SRA concerns on a number of issues that focused on the interaction between Central Railway and existing rail services. Central Railway understands that these issues were all satisfactorily addressed.

In March this year the Secretary of State for Transport asked for further information on the ability of the financial markets to finance the project, and for a satisfactory outcome of further discussions with the Highways Agency, Network Rail and a number of environmental bodies. In July the company submitted its report on these issues, together with letters of support from a number of global financial institutions and potential strategic partners.

A further meeting with government in late September confirmed that there were no technical 'showstoppers,' and the company believes that, in the light of the series of discussions, there are no technical issues standing in the way of a government decision.

Central Railway chairman Andrew Gritten said today that, after passing a number of tests, the project was ready to go forward. "We have a project of the type that is commercially tried and tested in North America, but is unique in the UK because the existing railway cannot carry HGV lorries and trailers. Central Railway is offering what we know the customers want. We believe government has all the information it needs to make a decision and that the time has come for this project to go ahead."

For further details and points of contact, see the website,
www.central-railway.co.uk and the attached Fact Sheet.