

**Briefing Notes on visit of the Minister of State for Transport
to the Newquay Branch Line on Tuesday 14th April 2009**

Those present:

Lord Adonis	Minister of State for Transport
Dan Rogerson MP	Lib Dem North Cornwall
Stephen Gilbert	Lib Dem Parliamentary Candidate for St Austell and Newquay
Sandra Rothwell	South West Regional Development Agency
Roger Webster	Chairman, The Focal group
Alan Nicholson-Florence	Vice Chairman Future Developments, The Focal group
Geoff Mason Brown	P.R. and Marketing Manager, The Focal group

Background

At the start of his six day rail voyage across Britain, Lord Adonis travelled today (14th April) on the 9.19am local service from Par on the Newquay Branch Line, as a guest of Dan Rogerson MP, to meet with The Focal group who are lobbying for improvements to make the Branch Line better suited to meet customer demands in the short, medium and longer term. This meeting followed The Focal group's presentation to the Department for Transport officials on 17th March.

On arrival at Par, the Minister first visited Par signal box before taking his seat on the Type 153 single coach rail unit to Newquay. The train was well filled with passengers from young surfers with their surf boards to senior citizens going shopping in Newquay. The Minister took time to speak to several passengers en route. At Newquay a photo shoot and interview with the Minister was held with the local press. A BBC Spotlight team filmed the party at Par, on the train to Newquay and held interviews.

Minister's briefing

Whilst on the journey to and from Newquay the Minister was briefed on:

Firstly, the pivotal importance of Cornwall's rail network to the local economy and to improving Cornwall's connectivity to the rest of the country.

Secondly, the growing importance of rail transport to Newquay to support the developments in local housing including the potential Eco-Town, growing tourism and Newquay Airport expansion.

Thirdly, The Focal group's objectives for the Newquay Branch Line, which are:

In the short term to continue to increase passenger usage on the recently improved local service of 7 trains a day through PR and marketing activities to gain market confidence in using the local rail service for customer and First Great Western/ Network Rail.

In the medium term

- to turn the local service into a key inter urban rail link to meet the future transport needs of the two regeneration centres of St Austell and Newquay, our local communities and visitors,
- to reduce journey times through removal where possible of current speed restrictions on the branch line and
- to gain a two hourly timetable seven days a week all year.

In the longer term to allow an expected increase in Inter-City services to operate on the branch line together with a one hourly local service, seven days a week all year.

Fourthly, the key issues affecting The Focal group's objectives namely:

Increasing Branch Line capacity. The current infrastructure of the Branch Line of only one passing loop on the single track limits capacity on the line. For example there is currently no local service on a Saturday in the high season when the Inter-City services take priority. To increase line capacity it is proposed that Newquay Railway Station be developed to allow more than one service to be in the station at the same time. Longer term an additional passing loop will be required.

Rolling stock. To support the demand for additional capacity through ensuring that as new rail vehicles enter service, existing vehicles are cascaded to services in the South West including the Newquay Branch Line.

Government Contracted Service Level Commitment. To request that the increased number of local services on the branch line or any further increases decide by First Great Western is embodied in the Service Level Commitment and franchise renewal documents.

Conclusion

The Minister was very receptive to the briefing and sought more detail through many questions regarding our objectives for the line and how they could be achieved. He requested a letter be sent to him outlining the issues that need to be addressed and that he can be expected to help resolve in particular the issues of line speed restrictions, creating an inter-urban rail link from St Austell to Newquay, increasing line capacity through development of Newquay Railway Station and rolling stock.

The visit was considered by all concerned to have been a considerable success and will have hopefully projected the Newquay Branch Line into future development planning within the Department for Transport and the Regional Development Agency.

Alan Nicholson-Florence
Vice Chairman Future Developments, The Focal group
14th April 2009