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PRESS RELEASE

23 March 2011

RAIL PASSENGERS GIVE GUARDED WELCOME TO THE BUDGET

Railfuture, the national voluntary body representing rail users, gave a guarded welcome to the decisions on rail investment announced in the budget, but expressed disappointment at the lack of relief for passengers from planned fare increases.

Chairman Mike Crowhurst said "We welcome the approval given to two rail infrastructure investment schemes: the Ordsall curve in Manchester - one element of the Manchester Hub proposals, and doubling of the Swindon-Kemble line, one of a dozen or so places where singling schemes in the past have left us with bottlenecks in today's climate of expansion. And while electrification of the Great Western mainline is welcome, we're disappointed that wires will not reach either Swindon or Sheffield in the foreseeable future. We want to see both the Great Western and Midland mainlines wired in full within this decade.

While the Chancellor has scrapped the fuel duty escalator of RPI plus 1%, rail passengers are facing a rail fare escalator of RPI plus 3% from next year. The budget contained a number of welcome "green" measures, so surely deferring this rate of increase for year or two would have been a greener way of helping people's pockets than giving it all to road users"

Notes for editors:

Railfuture is the campaigning name of the Railway Development Society Ltd (a not for profit) Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No. 5011634. Reg. Office: 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND

Railfuture is Britain's only completely independent voice on railway development. We are not affiliated to or sponsored by any political party, trade union, or private industry. We are funded almost entirely by our members.

Rail is a vital part of an integrated efficient transport system serving a modern, vibrant, environmentally sustainable economy. We are pro-rail but not anti-road. Railfuture maintains that investment in rail travel and rail freight is vital to the future of the UK economy and environment.

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