



Dismay over West Coast rail fiasco

Railfuture, the national Rail campaigning organisation, has reacted with dismay to the latest announcements regarding the West Coast mainline franchising fiasco. Virgin will run the service for a short period until an interim franchise can be agreed. Then there will be another competition for the long-term franchise. "This is a real dog's dinner which will only add costs to both the industry and government, and ultimately to the passenger and taxpayer" said Bruce Williamson, Railfuture's national press spokesman.

"The government assures us that the service won't be affected, but this actually means that it won't be improved at all in the medium term. Both First and Virgin promised us improvements to the service, new and refurbished trains, and in First's case a 15% reduction in walk-on fares. Now we learn that the new franchise will not come into effect for possibly three years. This sort of stagnation is not acceptable whilst passenger numbers continue to rise and overcrowding worsens, which is why we need a better timetable and new trains as soon as possible"

"We hope that the forthcoming enquiry by Richard Brown will come up with some fresh thinking, rather than merely tweaking what is obviously a very expensive, flawed and inefficient franchising system. We think there is scope for moving to a concession model, which seems to work so well for TfL"

Notes to editors:

Railfuture is the UK's leading independent organisation campaigning for better rail services for both passengers and freight.

Railfuture's website can be found at: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk>

For further information and comment please contact:

Bruce Williamson, media spokesman
Tel: 0117 927 2954 Mobile: 07759 557389
media@railfuture.org.uk