

Chamber welcomes East Coast announcement

The leaders of Harrogate's campaign for more direct rail services to London have welcomed the news that the Office for Road and Rail has finally approved Virgin Trains East Coast's bid for pathway allocations to bring those plans to reality.

Brian Dunsby, leader of the Harrogate Line Supporters Group and former Chief Executive of Harrogate Chamber, said:

"This announcement is a great relief to everyone who has been involved in the campaign for more direct rail services between Harrogate and London. These new services with new high speed trains every two hours each way will be of great benefit to Harrogate District's businesses, residents and visitors for many years to come.

"On behalf of the business community, Harrogate Chamber put a great deal of time and effort into creating report to show the many benefits that such services could bring to our town. We are very grateful for the continued support of the Dept for Transport, our MP Andrew Jones, North Yorkshire County Council, Harrogate Borough Council, Rail Future Yorkshire Branch and many other local organisations

Brian also acknowledged the significant technical and commercial contribution from Mark Leving, the former Managing Director of Hull Trains, who first proposed running direct Harrogate-London Trains in 2008, but at that time the ORR declined to allocate any paths.

"So we were pleased to win the support of Virgin Trains East Coast which, when it won the franchise, immediately announced it would include a two-hourly return service to and from London in its plans for the coming years. The decision by the ORR to allocate the required pathways is the final step in confirming that these services will be introduced, and our aspirations set out in 2008 will finally become reality.

"It was particularly heartening to see the ORR refer to the benefit to communities being a key part of its decision. The needs of the Harrogate community and economy have always been at the heart of our campaign and we believe this final decision is recognition that those needs must be met."

"Now we need more car parking spaces at Harrogate to enable more passengers to use the new trains!

For more details, or to speak to Brian Dunsby, Harrogate Chamber's Traffic & Transport Spokesman call 01423 879208 or 07836 537512.

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Notes for Editors:

Harrogate Chamber was established in 1896 and organises monthly meetings for businesses of all sizes from across the Harrogate district. It passes on information about relevant planning applications, transport news and other developments, as well as upcoming events and seminars for businesses. It also acts as the voice of businesses in Harrogate, representing local businesses at the highest levels.

For more information, visit www.harrogatechamber.co.uk, call the office on 01423 501988 or contact Harrogate Chamber via Facebook (www.facebook.com/HarrogateChamberTC) or Twitter (@HGchamber).