



3rd May 2013

Mayor of Durham to welcome railway heavyweights

The Mayor of Durham, Councillor John Wilkinson, will welcome important "heavyweights" from across the railway industry when he opens this year's Railfuture National Conference and AGM at Durham Town Hall on Saturday (11th May).

Among them will be writer and commentator Christian Wolmar, local man Alex Nelson whose unique travel and ticket company has won huge acclaim, and Andy Rogers, the person responsible for bringing Britain's next generation of inter-city passenger trains into being from the new Hitachi factory at Aycliffe.

"This promises to be a really great Conference" said Railfuture spokesperson Tony Walker. "Christian is arguably Britain's number one rail watcher; Alex has a fantastic story to tell about his Chester-le-Track enterprise whilst Andy, who is overall project manager with Hitachi Rail, will describe how his company's trains will set fresh standards for future passenger travel. And we have other contributions as well", added Mr Walker, "including an update from campaign expert Dennis Fancett on plans to reintroduce passenger services to Ashington".

Sponsorship for the Conference has come from Business Durham, the organisation charged with bringing new investment into the County. Its Managing Director, Stewart Watkins, said: "We are sponsoring the event in recognition of the strategic importance of the rail industry and manufacturing to our local economy. The coming of Hitachi will create 700 new jobs and that will give an enormous stimulus to Durham's economy".

The Mayor, who will join Railfuture's national Chairman Dr David Berman in greeting delegates, is expected to refer to the region's extensive railway history. Among invited guests will be Fiona Hall, one of the North East's MEP's who takes a keen interest in European transport issues.

Chairman of Railfuture's North East Branch, Trevor Watson said: "This is the first national conference Railfuture has held in Durham City. I believe it comes at a significant time in railway development. As passenger numbers grow and freight volume increases, more trains and more line capacity are needed which presents a real challenge to the rail industry".

Mr Watson, a former track engineer, continued: "Our own area cries out for route upgrades such as between Newcastle and Carlisle, between Newcastle and Middlesbrough and from Northallerton to Teesport. A station to serve Peterlee is long overdue. And close to Durham itself reinstatement of the Leamside Line could bring big improvements to transport links between Ferryhill, Washington and Tyneside."

Members of the public are welcome to attend the conference session. Admission is free. Email enquiries to: anthony.walker@railfuture.org.uk

Notes for editors:-

- Conference date – Saturday 11 May, 2013.
- Venue - The Town Hall, Market Place, Durham DH1 3NJ. Commences 11am. Admission free.
- The 2013 annual conference & AGM is sponsored by Business Durham.
- The outline programme is listed below.
- Media attendance at the conference session would be welcome. Photographic opportunities can be arranged.
- Railfuture is an independent (non-political) body which campaigns for a better passenger and freight network in Great Britain. The organisation comprises fourteen regional branches one of which serves the North East of England.

For further information and comment please contact:

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Outline programme

1000 – 1100hrs	Registration
	Conference Session
1100	Introduction: David Berman, Chairman of Railfuture Welcome: Councillor John Wilkinson, Mayor of Durham
1115	The Chester-le-Track Story. Alex Nelson, Stationmaster at Chester-le-Street Ashington, Blyth & Tyne – campaign for passenger service Dennis Fancett, Chairman South East Northumberland Rail Users Group. Inter-City Express Programme (IEP) Andy Rogers, Project Manager, Hitachi Rail Ltd
1225	Panel: Alex Nelson, Andy Rogers, Dennis Fancett and Christian Wolmar. Chair – Peter Wood
1245 – 1330	Lunch
1330 – 1600	Afternoon AGM session for Railfuture members/proxies only