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PRESS RELEASE

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RAIL FARES UP AGAIN – BUT WORSE TO COME

January 2nd 2011 sees rail fares go up by 1% above inflation, but rail campaigners are warning that it will be much worse than this figure for some. "Inflation plus 1% is only an average fare rise, some fares will definitely rise much more than this" said Mike Crowhurst of the pressure group Railfuture. "And from 2012 to 2014, rail fares will go up 3% above inflation every year, which we think is hugely unfair. I don't think motorists or airline passengers will be suffering price hikes like this."

"Rail fares in Britain are already amongst the highest in Europe, and we think this will just drive even more people on to the roads, which will result in even more congestion and pollution. So this will have an impact on car drivers too. The government claims to have a green agenda, so it must not discourage people from using the greenest form of transport. During the election, they said they would end the war on the motorist. Now it looks like they're declaring war on the rail passenger. You can't cure overcrowding by pricing off demand."

The group is calling for some changes to the way transport is taxed. "We need a level playing field. For instance, why is air travel exempt from fuel duty when rail isn't? The rail industry pays a huge amount back in tax to the government, at least £1.4 billion, which only contributes to the high cost of rail fares. Also, the government uses the RPI inflation figure instead of the lower CPI, which further increases fares."

The forthcoming McNulty report will identify efficiency savings in the region of £1 billion. "It's important that these savings are passed on to the passenger, not the Treasury. We know that the government is trying to reduce the taxpayer's contribution to the running of the railways, which is understandable, but we think they're going too far. There are many reasons why the wider community benefits from a decent rail network, and it's in everyone's interest that passengers are not priced off the railway."

Notes for editors:

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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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