

Light Rail (UK)

All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group

House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
Ref: LR Applrg Parliamentary Tea v. 2012



"The past we inherit, the future we build"

this message out as hard and as fast as we can. Hearing from Norman today about the LTBs, we need a list of the LTBs and we need to go and bang on all of their doors and do it as a group and say choose a light rail solution, choose a tram solution, choose something that is good for this country. And that is what I wanted to say: a call to battle. Thank you.

John Leech thanked Stuart. He reminded the audience that there would be a call for evidence for the APPLRG's forthcoming inquiry. Also, that there would be sessions at the three main party conferences and that the next APPLRG meeting would be in November. The formal part of the meeting then closed.

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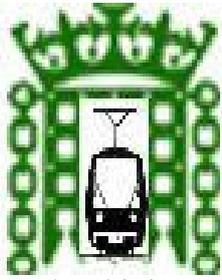
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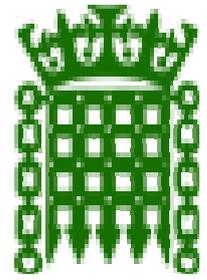


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John Leech then introduced Stuart Kerr from the Group sponsors, Vossloh.

Stuart Kerr (Vossloh): Thank you very much John. Thank you very much Jim. Thank you all for coming today and thank you for inviting me to stand up here and say a few words. Unfortunately, Norman said a lot of what I was going to say today and then John said a lot of what I was going to say today. I think all of us here being part of the industry, understand and know the benefits - environmental, in terms of health, getting away from dependence on carbon-based fuels that are strategically not good for our country and finally economic – of putting in light rail lines. We all know they work. We all know when they are in they work. And so we really have to bang that drum as hard as we can and make sure people understand that they are doing the best thing that they can do in terms of generating infrastructure and regeneration in the UK. Something that we have been a little remiss on in the last thirty years is keeping our infrastructure up to date. We are not the only country; Germany has said today in the press that they have not been looking after their infrastructure for the last twenty years. Not just rails, roads as well. So we have to say: how do we want to invest in the future of Great Britain plc? And the way to do it is to reactivate our city centres. Stephen Joseph [Campaign for Better Transport] said a few months ago that 60% of GDP is generated in cities and that will increase with the growth of China and their cities. So we have to activate and enable our cities to move people, products and services and generate a dynamic environment for our cities and the tram does that, that is exactly what it does. We have to move forward and push all of our politicians and push all of our journalists and get the stories out there, saying this is what we should be doing.

We are investing £30 billion in High Speed 2. It is a brilliant concept, it is all about generating growth and jobs and looking at the economy and looking at the future. So when we have all these high speed stations we will need to move people to and from the stations and we really need to be focussing on that and generating our energy and saying how are we going to do that, how are we going to be effective, how are we, as a group, going to come and generate that interest now. It has to be done now, because these processes take time. We have to be in position now. We have to start pushing as soon as we can Whereas we as a group understand the benefits, we have to transmit this knowledge and understanding to everybody that we can. My call today is that we, together, find a way to communicate what we know and export it. Let us not be bound by business case economics, but look at the environment, the reduction in carbon emissions and particulates, the strategic political requirement.

I read a study from Denver which said that people are prepared to walk 4.5 minutes extra to catch a tram. So in the measured catchment area they have seen a reduction in obesity. We have to consider all these things in the message we put out and there is lots of information out there on the benefits of light rail. We really need to get out and we really need to push it. I would like the industry to get together more and put

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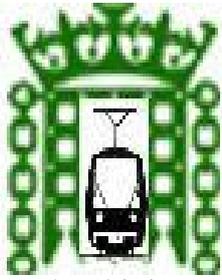
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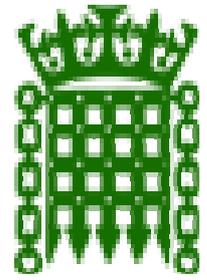


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John Leech: thank you to Norman, who in his time as Minister has been very good to the Light Rail Group and has always come to our events if he possibly can. A big thank you to everybody for coming this afternoon and a big thank you to all of you who have supported the Light Rail Group over the last twelve months and the last few years since it came into being in 2005.

A big thank you to Jim [Harkins] for his work in providing the secretarial support and for constantly badgering me to get things sorted out for meetings. Also a big thank you to our sponsors, Vossloh, and Stuart [Kerr], whom I will invite to say a few words in a minute. We have had a number of sponsors over the years who have supported us financially to allow us to do the work that we do and to promote light rail in Parliament and outside.

We are in the process of beginning another inquiry. We did an inquiry a few year's ago [2009] when my colleague Paul Rowen, former MP for Rochdale, was Chairman of the all-Party Group. We are going to be doing another inquiry about trams for growth. I think that one of the real challenges that we have now is pushing forward lots of new schemes to ensure that light rail gets its fair share of the available cash from government. One of the strongest arguments that we can make is the impact on economic growth in areas where light rail is introduced. In Manchester the second line out to Eccles probably would not have been many people's first choice as the second line for a Manchester tram scheme. Certainly, as representing South Manchester, we would have liked South Manchester to have come much sooner but, thankfully, only last month the line through my constituency opened. Since the Eccles line was built the impact it has had on regeneration and growth has been phenomenal and has been a real success story. It started off slowly but the number of passengers has steadily grown over a long period of time and while it certainly had an impact in terms of modal shift, it had a much bigger impact, in my view, on the economic growth and regeneration of that part of Greater Manchester. What we want to do through our forthcoming inquiry is to make sure we are setting out the case that trams can lead to an enormous amount of regeneration and economic growth. At a time when the economy is still not doing great – there are, I hesitate to say, some signs of green shoots of economic recovery but the economy is still bumping along the bottom - I think light rail could make a big impact in terms of supporting economic growth in our towns and cities. Hopefully the report that we will be doing over the next twelve months will help to argue the case for light rail and to encourage local authorities and transport authorities to come forward with some innovative schemes. The government has splashed the cash for some heavy rail schemes, so why not for light rail?

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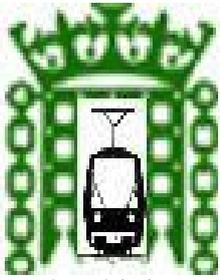
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about corridor approach, the ability to combine light rail with the example that was given last month in Tramways and Urban Transit of a couple in Manchester. As soon as the tram got to St Werburgh's, they sold two cars, pocketed £15,000 and they saved £7,500 a year overall on the running costs of the cars and probably spent about £2,000 on trams. So you could tell your colleagues Mr Cable and Mr Osborne that we could unlock spending power if we could get people to give up car ownership and integrate with tram and light rail systems.

Minister: I am always happy to push the idea of modal shift to light rail, heavy rail, bus or anything else because it is better socially and environmentally. So rest assured, we do make those cases and the Department of Transport has proven that it is not just words but actions and we have invested heavily in public transport since 2010. In terms of the renewals, ultimately each area is responsible for its own network and under localism we would expect each area to plan properly and put money aside to be able to deal with renewals as and when they arise. I accept there are historic challenges, which is why we made a lot of money available to Nexus in the northeast to try to help with the renewals and we also recognise the case of Sheffield has put.

There being no more questions, the Minister left the meeting at this point.

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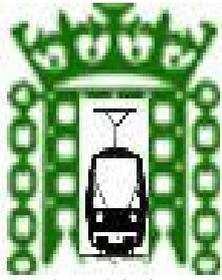
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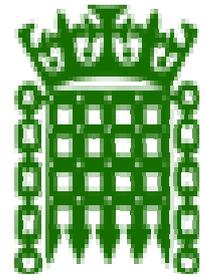


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John Leech invited questions from the floor.

Charles Cotton (LRTA member): Can I ask about the state of the London Cross-River project?

Minister: You can do but I am not particularly sighted on that because in our new world of devolution that is a matter for the Mayor to take forward. I know there are plans for light rail all over the place in London, including Sutton and the good work that my colleagues down there are doing to work out the plan for that. What I would say is that London's funding arrangements, like everybody else's, are subject to discussion at the moment between DfT and the Treasury and the Mayor of London as to what the settlement will be for the years ahead particularly 2015-2016 and I am also cognisant of the fact that many people from other cities tell me that London gets too much money as opposed to other parts of the country. So no doubt that particular point of view will be factored into the discussions taking place and at the end of that, clearly, the Mayor of London will have to take a view on what his priorities are for capital and revenue, based on the settlement that he has got.

Nigel Phillips (High Wycombe Transport Group): This initiative of which you have spoken, in order to lobby our local transport authority, what is it called, has it got a name?

Minister: These are the local transport bodies which are in the process of being established. Your local authority, county council or unitary authority, should have full details of how to make sure your voice is heard. They will be a conduit and they will be represented of course on the local transport body. The local economic partnership will have a co-chairman as representative on the local transport body and they will also have an influence and will be in the picture as to where they are going.

Nigel Phillips: Are these taking over from the existing LTAs and county councils?

Minister: Rather, taking over some of the functions of county councils, because county councils will share some of their responsibilities and they will be particularly interested in what used to be called LE Majors, which were funds allocated by central government for the delivery of local schemes, and have a major role in determining what those schemes are, rather than the government doing it as it has done in the past.

Dave Holladay (Transportation Management Solutions): We have noticed that some of the earlier schemes, Croydon, Sheffield etc are now coming round to renewals. In Croydon and Newcastle, for example, you had track which was worn out for heavy rail, was taken over for light rail with a minimum of work and now is coming round for renewal. Newcastle has a major programme for getting it up to scratch for the next forty years. What are you thinking about for renewals and the speed of that? Also, you talked

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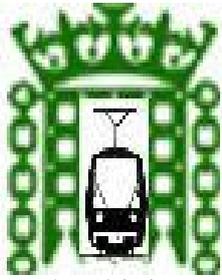
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On a couple of other things, very quickly, some of you may have been disappointed about the St Albans Abbey line position. This is something Andrew Adonis mentioned as something he wanted to take forward in the last parliament and of course there is an issue about the frequency and quality of service on that line. Extensive work, a great deal of work at some cost, was undertaken by DfT, Network Rail and Hertfordshire County Council, but frankly it was not cost-effective and the gains to be made by conversion were way outweighed by the down-side. There were a whole number of down-sides which I will not bore you with this afternoon but including ticketing, the connection with the main line and everything else it was actually going to be a bit of a nightmare So I have concluded that, in the short term at least, the sensible course of action for the people that use that line is to try to persuade London Midland to improve the present service along the line, which frankly does leave something to be desired. I have communicated that to local MPs in Watford and St Albans and to my LibDem colleague Dorothy Thornhill, Mayor of Watford, and we will see what we can do to improve the existing service but I do not think that for that particular line at the moment light rail is the answer

However, that is different of course to the TramTrain project between Sheffield and Rotherham about which I am much more excited and St Albans – Watford is a separate line which would have been self-contained. The exciting thing about Sheffield – Rotherham is that it links in with the existing network and allows both light rail vehicles and heavy rail vehicles to use the same track. I am pleased that the various players are working together well on that, sorting out the various technical and legal issues and making generally good progress. I do not want to say anything more about that today but I expect to say something even more positive very shortly about that particular TramTrain trial.

John, thank you again for inviting me along, thank you for what you do and I look forward to joining you again on future occasions, reshuffles permitting.

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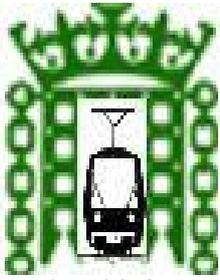
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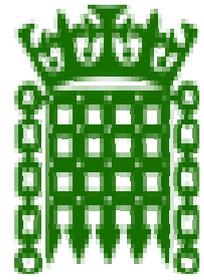


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time for light rail to get in there and to make that case. So I strongly urge you to do that. They are publishing their programmes up to 2019 so you need to get in there now otherwise you may have missed the boat

We are also of course having the spending review announcement which is scheduled for the 26th June and the government will publish at that point further details of the single local growth fund in response to Lord Heseltine's report This will merge the funds for local schemes into a larger pot of money of growth-related funding from a wide range of government departments. So again there is an opportunity and a threat. The opportunity is that this is a huge conglomeration of money without strings attached, which local people can decide how to spend. The threat is that they will spend it on something which does not benefit light rail and therefore again you have to be there and live to that. The scenario is there, you have to take advantage of the landscape changing but you have to be fleet of foot otherwise you will find that the bus has gone - now if that is not a mixed metaphor I do not know what is. So it is up to you to take advantage of this and pursue this joint working arrangement.

Opportunities are there – let me give one which I saw the other day, which I was very pleased to note, at Heathrow Terminal 5 with the personal rapid transit system. Here is someone who picked up an opportunity to do something very valuable down there – a system designed by a British company, Ultra Global PRT, with 21 battery-powered, driverless, zero-emission vehicles which will eliminate more than 50,000 bus journeys on Heathrow's roads between Terminal 5 and the business car park. They are already taking 30,000 passengers every month and the innovative technology has sparked wide interest both in the UK and globally, creating growth, cutting carbon, hitting the Department of Transport's key objectives. Due to good marketing the company has now signed a commercial deal with a company in India to deliver a system ten times the size of Heathrow's in the northern city of Amritsar. I was very pleased to visit that, sitting there with a fellow parliamentarian – two MPs in a pod - enjoying this particular form of transit. And, of course it has won the London Transport Award for Innovative Transport. So, this time, as well as a localism challenge and opportunity you have also got to be sure that your voice is heard in as cohesive, constructive and organised way possible.

We have UKTram which is doing quite a good job in my view, but if you start splitting off into different bits and pieces your influence will diminish so you have to ensure UKTram works and works well for this sector in the same way as other bodies work for their sectors in transport. I have been quite keen to make sure that UKTram does work as far as we can help and also to ensure that the recommendations in "Green light for light rail" are followed through and to that end I want to invite you to come along and join me for a second high-level summit next month to measure the progress on the action on the report. We had our meeting last year and I was very pleased at the progress being made and I hope we can all be collectively equally pleased with the progress made next month. The invitations have not gone out – Steve Berry will send them out very shortly. So please do come along and I hope that is good news.

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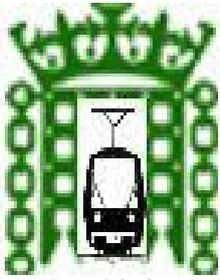
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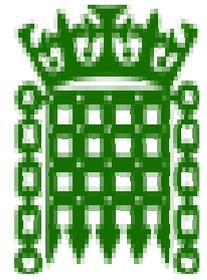
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**Report of a Parliamentary Tea held at the House of Commons on Wednesday
12th June 2013**

Chairman: John Leech MP (Chairman APPLRG)

The formal part of the proceedings was delayed until after a 16:30 vote in the House of Commons. The Chairman, John Leech MP, then introduced Norman Baker MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport.

Norman Baker

Thank you John and thank you [the audience] for all you do for light rail over many years. I hope even Manchester appreciates that they would not have the system they have now if it had not been for your lobbying, harassing me, haranguing me and generally making sure you stand up for your city and area.

We are in a good place, as always, with light rail and that is good to know. The one thing I wanted to talk about today particularly is the new arrangements which exist with the local transport bodies which are coming on stream. We are at the stage now where I am busy signing off their assurance packages to ensure they are operating to the proper standards of public life, they are accountable, they are open, they run an audit trail etc. Shortly they will be publishing their provisional arrangements for the schemes that they want to take forward. They will be public as well and there will be an opportunity for people to contact those local transport bodies and say what they think of the provisional schemes. I have to say, having looked at some of them, some of them look a bit road-heavy and some of them appear to be resurrecting schemes which have been rejected by the Department for Transport over many years as not being sensible but that is localism for you. Nevertheless there is an opportunity and one you should be taking to engage with your local bodies now to ensure that they do not see this as just a traditional way of building roads but as an opportunity to do something rather better on corridor solutions. That is what I have said to them, however it would need to be reinforced locally to have some effect. Bear in mind that these people who are on local county councils and unitary authorities have had powers to build roads but not to do very much else. There is a mind set change which is necessary for them to understand that they are operating for a bigger area with a bigger budget and they can cooperate with the local transport body next door - they do not have to come up with these small road schemes but go for something else. You need to be in there making those points otherwise there is an opportunity missed for effectively the next four or five years. This is a very important

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