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BROWN SUPPORTS HIGH-SPEED RAIL PLANS

Gordon Brown's newly found support for plans to build a high-speed rail line from London to the Midlands has been welcomed by Britpave, the transport infrastructure group.

The Prime Minister had been reluctant to back the scheme due to the huge costs involved, however in the foreword of a new pamphlet to be launched at the forthcoming Labour Party conference, 'Fast Forwards: Labour's Case for High Speed Rail', he says: "I am excited by the role that high-speed rail could play in a low-carbon future... It is telling that those countries that have built high-speed rail are now building more of it. As a country we need to now move further faster. We must show how we are going to be part of the high-speed rail revolution sweeping across the world".

The need for investment in high-speed rail has long been advocated by the Transport Secretary Lord Adonis who is understood to have been pressurising the Prime Minister for his support although it is yet to be seen if plans for a high-speed rail line would be included Labour's next manifesto.

Welcoming the Prime Minister's support, David Jones, Britpave's Director, said: "This is a move in the right direction. At last it seems that government is to have the vision necessary for Britain to have a reliable high-speed rail network. However, this vision will prove to be short-sighted if the rail line is built of 19th century ballast track rather than 21st century concrete slab track."

Jones believes that concrete slab track, as used by the highly successful Japanese rail network and now increasingly throughout Europe, is the way forward. In these countries, slab track has been proven to provide a rail track that has maximised operating efficiency by eliminating unplanned maintenance, provided high levels of safety and comfort and given impressive long-term performance and whole life cost savings.

“Concrete slab track has been used for limited sections of track in the UK”, said Jones, “Now is the time for the UK to invest in its potential for a fast and reliable rail network that will ensure that we are not left on the slow sidings of Europe.”

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Notes to editors

1. Britpave, the British In-situ Concrete Paving Association, promotes the better and greater use of concrete for transportation solutions. Its members include major contractors, specialist equipment and material suppliers, consulting engineers and interested trade associations. Together they provide a single voice for the in-situ concrete paving industry. For further information see: www.britpave-bus-rail.org.uk

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