



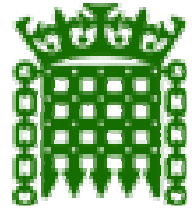
Light Rail (UK)

All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group

House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

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Light Rail & Trams, Affordable & Sustainable Transport



“Low cost affordable Trams”

Light Rail Awards

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Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen – distinguished guests. It's an absolute pleasure to be here to make a small contribution to a big event.

This awards ceremony is now in its 5th year and it is clear that the audience is getting bigger every year.

I am pleased to see that there is a strong overseas contingent here tonight. I do hope they will enjoy their stay and find some time in their schedules to travel on a couple of our light rail systems.

I'm also delighted to be sharing the stage with Nick Owen.

Nick is, of course, one of the most familiar faces on TV.

Over the years his journalistic skills have graced ITN, Channel 4 and the BBC.

He has also danced his way across our screens as a contestant on 'Strictly Come Dancing'.

I'm not going to be drawn on whether he was better than my fellow Lib Dem Minister Vince Cable.

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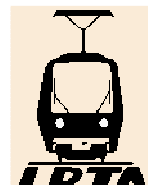
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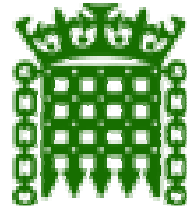


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Light Rail – a good news story

Nick doesn't only have an interest in "tripping the light fantastic" - he's also a big fan of light rail.

So much so, that he is actually the voice of the Croydon Tramlink, where his dulcet tones announce each stop.

Regular users of that service will be relieved to know there is no truth whatsoever in the rumour that I'm about to replace him.

What is true though is that, just like Nick, I am a fully paid up member of the light rail supporters club.

Which is a very happy coincidence, seeing as I'm also the Minister responsible for this particular mode of travel?

I'm proud to say that I have been a champion of light rail in and out of Ministerial office - and for two main reasons.

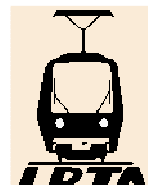
First, because I know that this is a transport system with a long and successful history – in fact, it has over a century of development and experience behind it.

But second, because I believe it's also a transport system with a bright future – and that's something we can see for ourselves right here in Britain, from Croydon to Sheffield, from the Midlands to Tyne & Wear.

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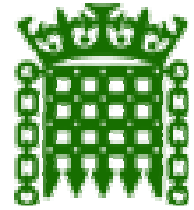


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Just think about the advantages, the benefits and the sheer potential of this mode of travel:

- **Light rail is a flexible, adaptable and comfortable way of moving large numbers of passengers along busy routes. Indeed recent statistics show that passenger journeys in England for light rail and tram systems have increased by 5.5% between 2009/10 and 2010/11 representing the highest number of passenger journeys to date.**
- **It boasts a track record which shows that it is safe, fast and reliable.**
- **And it's also one of the greenest and cleanest forms of transport - no emissions at source, very little noise and, with the right scheme in the right place, the potential to encourage people out of their cars and on to public transport.**

For me that makes light rail a good news story for passengers, for business and for our environment.

I was also very pleased to see how quickly the teams at Croydon restored services to Tramlink following the disturbances over the summer period.

That is precisely why this Government is backing light rail

Backing light rail

Since May 2010 we have supported a number of proposed extensions to existing light rail systems, including:

- **confirmed funding of over £120m for the Manchester Metrolink extensions to Ashton and to East Didsbury which are currently under construction;**
- **announced our intention to support an extension to Midland Metro through Birmingham city centre to New Street Station; and**
- **will hopefully be announcing shortly final approval for the extensions to the Nottingham tram system.**

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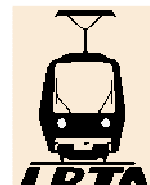
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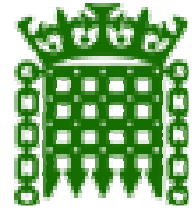


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I also published a report entitled 'Green Light for Light Rail', which follows a review undertaken on how we can make light rail more cost effective.

In addition, it explicitly acknowledges the importance of tram-train. Again, I am a big supporter of tram-trains – I really do believe they have a future role to play in our transport system.

The review has considered, amongst other issues, a number of specific areas which I know have been highlighted in the past as a cause of concern. These include

- *utilities,*
- *standardisation,*
- *and planning issues.*

The review has also looked at where and how we can adopt, replicate and spread back practice.

I hope that you have had the opportunity to digest the report and I am anxious to ensure that we ALL move forward quickly in considering and implementing the recommendations.

And let me briefly highlight some of the key areas where we are asking questions and looking for your help to devise the solutions:

Implementing a new project design for light rail systems – one that's uniform across the industry. In this way we can ensure that systems are not over-designed and project budgets are not over-spent

Setting up a 'centre of procurement excellence' – an innovation that would enable future promoters to get advice on the best procurement options for their project. Potentially this would make scheme procurement more efficient and less costly

And commencing a consultation inviting views from all the key players and stakeholders about the crucially important relationship between utilities and light rail.

So those are some of the issues and questions facing us.

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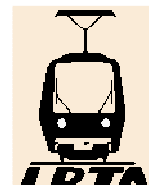
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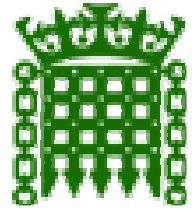


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But what is the next step?

Well all of us - Government, operators, manufacturers, investors, and constructors - have to make sure that light rail has a bright and progressive future in this country.

And that's precisely is why I will be chairing a high level 'tram summit' of all interested parties in early November to discuss the issues and recommendations in order to develop a sector-led implementation plan for getting light rail on the right track.

I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Paying tribute to the nominees

Now turning to the main event of the evening which I know is a celebration of excellence and achievement.

It's an opportunity to pay tribute to all those who have led the way, set the pace and made a real difference to the light rail sector.

Just making the awards shortlist is quite an achievement.

But I happen to know that the judging panel has been especially impressed by the sheer quality of this year's entries.

There are nominees who have developed innovations in everything from customer service to passenger safety.

Others have focused on innovations that can help make light rail even more eco-friendly

Some nominees have worked hard to enhance cross industry partnership and strengthen the supply chain.

And there are even nominees who have developed fresh approaches to campaigning on behalf of the light rail sector.

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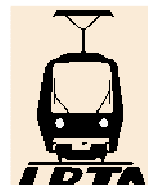
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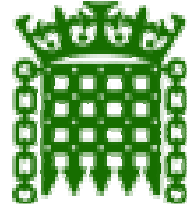


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Individuals and teams, employees and operators, small projects and big projects - all very different but with one thing in common, they have all shown the power and potential of new ways of working and new ways of thinking.

No wonder the judges had to ponder so long and so hard.

Concluding remarks

Okay - I've always believed that less is more - especially when it comes to public speaking.

Indeed, that point of view has been reinforced since I became a Minister.

Because that's when I discovered that Whitehall is the only place on Earth where a 10,000 word document can be described as a "brief".

So, with that in mind, it simply remains for me to thank you for listening and to wish you an enjoyable evening.

This speech represented existing departmental policy but the words may not have been the same as those used by the Minister.

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