



## **PRESS RELEASE PRESS RELEASE PRESS RELEASE**

### **Quicker rail journey from Caithness**

*22.02.06 For immediate use*

The fastest train journey from Wick to Inverness will be clawed back to the four hour mark later this year with the introduction of a new, fourth train from Caithness to Inverness. The journey time from Thurso will be three and a half hours.

The new train, which starts in December, will be a limited stop service cutting 15 minutes off the current journey time. The announcement was made by Bill Reeve, Transport Scotland's Director of Rail Delivery at the Highland Rail Partnership's (HRP) AGM in Perth on Tuesday.

The news was welcomed by Orkney Councillor Bob Sclater, Chairman of Transportation and Infrastructure, who said, "This new service will give an excellent connection between the 0600 ferry from Stromness and the train at Thurso, and will allow a midday arrival in Inverness. This should prove to be a useful opportunity for travellers from both Orkney and Caithness. It also demonstrates improved integration of transport modes across the HITRANS area."

HRP's Rail Development Manager Frank Roach said: "We welcome this new service, and the shorter journey time. It is true that it more or less brings the fastest timetabled service back to where it was some time ago, but it is a step in the right direction. We are also exploring other options which could bring about more widely applicable journey time reductions on the Far North Line."

The new service also creates two new traincrew jobs in the Wick depot.

The HRP meeting also heard from Rupert Walker, Programme Director for ERTMS, the new in-cab signalling system being trialled in Wales which is planned to replace the radio signalling system currently used on the West Highland and North Lines.

**Ends**

#### **Note to editors:**

The rail journey time between Inverness and Wick/Thurso was extended in 2005. This reflected longer running times caused by the installation of train protection warning system across the network, and some request stops becoming fixed stops due to greater usage.

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