



POLITEIA

**22 Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0QP E mail: info@politeia.co.uk Telephone: 0207 240 5070
www.politeia.co.uk**

PRESS RELEASE PRESS RELEASE PRESS RELEASE PRESS RELEASE

Publication Date: Friday 22nd February 2008

High Speed Plan and Increased Capacity Vital for Rail Expansion, says Network leader in Politeia pamphlet. New thinking on fares, growth and smaller networks are needed.

Transport systems today in the UK are often unreliable and crowded; their costs are rising; and they have consequences for the environment. Politeia's new series *On Track...?* debates the questions. What structure is now needed? Who should bear the costs? What direction should policy take?

Chris Green, a Non-Executive Director of Network Rail concentrates on rail in Politeia's next pamphlet, *Reviving Rail: What Strategy for Success?** Despite recent failings, the present structure, he says, is best placed to meet immediate problems and for future expansion. Rail use in the last decade has expanded - up by 40 per cent for passengers and 50 per cent for freight. For the short term, the 2007 White Paper includes a five-year plan to combat existing weaknesses, especially reliability and capacity.

But the White Paper is less convincing for the longer term. Green explains that its strategy for future development (2009-'39) 'is short on solutions'. In particular:

- It offers no solution to the potential crisis of capacity.
- It fails to show how rail might respond to environmental or energy problems.
- It leaves undecided questions such as railway electrification, the new high speed lines and power sources. Whereas the Swiss network is 95 per cent electric, the French 50 per cent, the UK is only 39 per cent electrified. No additional electrification is proposed for the next thirty years.

Green proposes a clear set of priorities for future rail travel on the four central issues:

- *Capacity.* Planning for the new high speed line must begin now. A ten year planning period is needed before work can start.
- *Costs* can be reduced through new technology, with lighter trains which are more efficient causing less damage to track and new radio signalling technology.
- *Structure.* The rail network can decentralise its operational activities returning to its eight regions over time.
- *Funding.* Choices must be made about fares. Who should pay what proportion? The UK taxpayer now pays half the cost of travel but the Government intends this should be cut to 25 percent. This means fare increases for passengers. Is that the right course for transport policy as a whole?

Chris Green served as a Chairman of the Railway Forum (2005-2007), he is a Non-Executive Director of Network Rail and was Chief Executive Officer of Virgin Trains (1999-2004).

**Reviving Rail – What Strategy for Success?* is published by Politeia on Friday 22nd February. For an E-version please click http://www.politeia.co.uk/Portals/0/Final_Green.pdf. Hard copies are available to journalist on request from secretary@politeia.co.uk