



GOVIA SCORES £1 BILLION HAT TRICK

Govia today announced a £1 billion hat trick by signing a new contract for its South Central franchise, confirming a massive investment for South Central's depots and a new order for the supply of more new trains.

The South Central franchise will operate for a minimum period of five years and will expire in December 2009. It includes an investment of £115 million in upgrading work to be undertaken at six depots - Selhurst, Streatham Hill, Bognor Regis, Brighton, Littlehampton and Eastbourne. Additionally the company has confirmed a £50 million order for 42 new diesel powered Class 170 vehicles with Bombardier Transportation Limited. This commitment follows the £856 million order placed for 700 new vehicles prior to the completion of the new franchise agreement.

Keith Ludeman, Chief Executive of Govia said: "This is terrific news for everyone. South Central's future is now secure, which allows us to go forward and seize the challenge of delivering a modern and reliable train service. Over the coming months and years we will build on the achievements already started since purchasing the remainder of the existing franchise from Connex Transport Ltd in August 2001.

"The £115 million depot investment programme is crucial. It will allow for refurbishment of buildings, the upgrading of access tracks, the installation of computers and diagnostic equipment for the new train fleets, improved general facilities and accommodation for the larger fleet that we have procured.

"The new train order follows our original £856 million order for 700 Electrostars placed with Bombardier last March - at the time the biggest new train order placed with a British based manufacturer. I am pleased to report that we are already taking delivery of Electrostars and that they are coming into service. Eighty per cent of services on the East Coastway route between Brighton - Portsmouth are operated with Electrostars and within the last month the Secretary of State for Transport, Alistair Darling, kindly inaugurated the all day Electrostar Brighton Express service from Victoria.

"The £50 million order for new Class 170 diesel units will bring welcome relief to the hard pressed passengers on the Uckfield and Ashford lines. These sleek new trains will replace very old slam door stock. The first trains will appear on the Uckfield line as early as October this year and 'like for like' replacement of 36 vehicles will be completed in 2004. An additional six vehicles will be delivered by April 2005. These six units will allow us to introduce a new hourly through service between Uckfield - London Bridge and Brighton - Ashford.

“Within the new franchise we are also undertaking to look for opportunities to further improve transport integration, maintain and improve station environments to ensure the cleanliness of our trains and improve performance.

“We will continue to develop programmes for communicating with our passengers, staff and Stakeholders. This is the key for us to understand fully what our passengers want and in turn for them to understand fully what we are able to deliver. In that regard the establishment of our Stakeholder Advisory Board at the beginning of this year will play a crucial role.

“We also wish to make things simpler for our passengers, by introducing systems which will ensure that the information we display about our services is easy to read and accessible. Also by investing in modern equipment designed to make buying a ticket easier - coupled with the introduction of sleek new trains - we will be far better placed to provide an ‘effortless service’ which will help to ensure passengers travelling needs are met”.

The new franchise becomes effective on 25th May 2003.

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