

22 January 2007

## Highland rail passengers benefit from station improvements

Highland rail passengers have received a boost thanks to a waiting shelter programme being completed at nine stations through a £232,000 investment.

The upgrade work to improve the passenger experience for local people and tourists has been delivered through First ScotRail's Station Investment Plan and was complete with the Elgin installation at the end of last year.

Stations to benefit are: (North Highland line) Georgemas Junction, Rogart, Fearn, Brora, Kinbrace, Elgin, Scotsalder, (West Highland line) Tyndrum Lower and Connel Ferry.

This is part of a £1.4m national spend that will see stations across Scotland benefit from shelter installation through the seven-year First ScotRail franchise.

It builds on work delivered in 2005 where Hitrans contributed £100,000 in partnership with First ScotRail, who funded £33,250, to install new or replacement waiting shelters at Achnasheen, Aness, Corpach, Golspie, Kildonan, Loch Awe, Newtonmore, Roy Bridge, Spean Bridge and Tain.

Heather Battson, Rail Quality Improvement Manager, said: "This substantial investment in local stations is delivering quality improvements across the Highland network and demonstrated excellent partnership working. The new shelters will give passengers using these stations a better travel experience. Transport Scotland is pleased to have secured these and many more nationwide rail improvements through the First ScotRail franchise."

Peter Williams, Commercial Director of First ScotRail said: "These station facility enhancements are part of our ongoing investment programme to raise the overall quality of service we are providing our customers. I am sure these shelters will be a particularly welcome addition during the current weather conditions and we look forward to bringing further enhancements to the area over the course of the franchise."

Howard Brindley HITRANS Co-ordinator said: "These improvements fit well with our Draft Regional Transport Strategy which suggests an action programme for the period up to 2012 to enhance the quality of facilities for passengers at all our railway stations and other transport terminals and interchanges. HITRANS has developed a close working relationship with First ScotRail which will help deliver a better experience for our rail users and we hope will contribute to continuing growth in patronage of our rail network."

A total investment of £10m was secured by Transport Scotland for Scottish stations through the First ScotRail franchise.

Note to News Editors:

1) Transport Scotland is the national transport agency responsible for trunk roads, rail and national concessionary travel. It is an Executive agency directly accountable to Scottish Ministers and came into effect on 1 January 2006. For further information visit [www.transportscotland.gov.uk](http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk)

2) Following the transfer of rail powers in October 2005, Scottish Ministers manage and monitor the performance of the rail franchise and ensure services meet passenger needs.

For further information contact:

Lisa McIntyre, Press Officer, Transport Scotland on 0141 272 7199.

Ranald Robertson, Transport Development Officer, HITRANS on 01667 460464.