

STATEMENT

CHAMBER WELCOMES EAST COAST ANNOUNCEMENT

The announcement of Virgin Trains and Stagecoach as the winner of the franchise to run the East Coast mainline rail service has been welcomed by Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

The Chamber, which has campaigned actively to get a two-hourly service to the capital, said the winning bid will bring significant benefits to the North Yorkshire spa town

Chamber Chief Executive Brian Dunsby said: "This is exactly what we have been working towards for five years and we are absolutely delighted that it looks like we have been successful.

"We were successful in getting one direct service per day between Harrogate and London in 2011, but we were always clear that that number needed to be significantly increased. We met with all of the bidders for the franchise to emphasise the need for a strong link between Harrogate and London and it seems our hard work has paid off.

"The six new direct services will make an enormous difference to the Harrogate economy. As a town which relies heavily on the visitor economy, both through tourism and the conference trade, strong links to London are absolutely vital.

"On top of that, we have a very high number of service businesses in Harrogate and they need to be able to get to and from the capital with ease in order to grow and operate successfully. This announcement will make that ambition a reality.

"We are very pleased with this news and look forward to working closely with Virgin and Stagecoach in the future to ensure Harrogate remains a key consideration in their East Coast operations."

ENDS

Notes to editors:

For further enquiries, please contact Vicky Carr (press officer) on 07867 538634 / Vicky@vervewords.co.uk.

Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce has been established for over 118 years to promote business activity in the area. The Chamber keeps members informed of significant local issues and developments, lobbies national and local government and other local service providers for improved conditions and services and thus represents and furthers the wider interests of the business community.