

**For release: 3 September 2007**

## **New direct rail service gets go-ahead**

Wrexham & Shropshire today welcomed the Office of the Rail Regulation's (ORR) decision to approve the company's proposals to run new direct rail services between North Wales, Shropshire and London Marylebone.

The ORR has announced that it has approved in principle Wrexham & Shropshire's Track Access Agreement with Network Rail, which will allow the company to finalise plans to run trains from spring 2008.

Andy Hamilton, Managing Director of Wrexham & Shropshire, said: "We are delighted to have received the go-ahead to run this new direct rail service. Though there is much to do, we are well prepared - staff recruitment has been underway for some time and we are delighted that we can now confirm employment contracts and start training our team."

The evaluation process leading to this positive outcome has been thorough and demanding, stretching back over a year since the Wrexham & Shropshire Board first presented its proposals to the ORR. Wrexham & Shropshire believes that the ORR's decision is a vindication not only of the company's own efforts but of those made on its behalf by its many supporters throughout the West Midlands, Shropshire and Wales.

Andy Hamilton continued: "We have been working hard for some time now to get to this point and we would like to thank everyone who has supported our proposals so enthusiastically from the start. The Board would also like to publicly acknowledge the hard and sustained work undertaken by Network Rail in helping to bring about this welcome result. We now look forward to working in partnership with other train companies to provide a fast, reliable and comfortable rail service for our passengers."

Passenger services are currently expected to start in spring 2008, once the company has completed the refurbishment of its trains. Further details of Wrexham & Shropshire's new service will be announced over the coming months, with confirmation of the launch date expected in the New Year.

ENDS

**For more information or to make an interview bid please contact the Wrexham & Shropshire press office on 020 7025 7522 or [press@wrexhamandshropshire.co.uk](mailto:press@wrexhamandshropshire.co.uk)**

## NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Visit: [www.wrexhamandshropshire.co.uk](http://www.wrexhamandshropshire.co.uk) for further information on the Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone Railway Company, including a route map and the proposed timetable
2. The Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone Railway Company is a joint venture between the shareholders of Renaissance Trains Limited and Laing Rail
3. The shareholders of Renaissance Trains Limited are Mike Jones (a management consultant in railways, a Director of Hull Trains and formerly a senior director within British Rail), John Nelson (a director of several rail companies and a former Managing Director of British Rail's Network South East), Peter Wilkinson (Managing Director of the railway consultancy, First Class Partnerships) and Mary Bonar, a leading railway lawyer
4. Laing Rail, which will provide the main operating expertise, is a subsidiary of John Laing plc whose other rail interests include the acclaimed Chiltern Railways franchise and a 50% share in the new London Overground Concession. Laing Rail has close ties with the West Midlands where it has restored much of the former Great Western Railway infrastructure at Birmingham Moor Street station
5. Fuller details of the ORR's announcement can be found on their website: <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.8899>