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HITACHI CELEBRATES SUCCESSFUL FIRST ANNIVERSARY FOR ASHFORD TMC

ASHFORD, 1 OCTOBER 2008 – Hitachi Rail Group (Hitachi) today celebrates the first anniversary of its state-of-the-art Ashford Train Maintenance Centre (TMC), which was opened 12 months ago by Ruth Kelly, the Secretary of State for Transport. Over the past year the TMC has attracted over 3,500 visitors from the UK, Europe and Japan's rail industry and has so far created 47 jobs for local employees.

Ashford will be the home of the Class 395, the new high-speed Hitachi trains. Operating on HS1 (formerly known as the Channel Tunnel Rail Link) between Kent and London St Pancras, the new Hitachi trains will cut current journey times by as much as one hour when passenger services begin in December 2009.

The 12-month milestone marks a very successful year for Ashford and a programme of testing and maintenance is well underway for four Class 395 units. A total of 31,000 miles of testing has been completed to date on a combination of HS1 and domestic rail track.

In addition to the high speed trains, Hitachi also won the traction replacement for the Class 465 trains. This project is going ahead as planned. The prototype unit is currently undergoing testing, with full production scheduled to start in early 2009.

Ashford was awarded ISO 9001 accreditation in May this year and has an exemplary safety track record, with 41,500 work hours completed without any lost time or accidents.

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Alistair Dormer, General Manager at Hitachi Rail Group London, said: “In addition to looking after the Class 395’s, for the past 12 months Ashford has also been servicing up to 5,000 Class 375 and 465 vehicles per month for Southeastern

“Our maintenance operation at Ashford combines best practice from both the UK and Japan and investment into our workforce is a key issue. Our team leaders have all spent time in our factory and gained first hand knowledge of the Class 395 trains by working on the production line.

“Our apprentice scheme is another example of our investment into developing a skilled workforce for the future. In July 2007, two apprentices were employed in Ashford. After completing the first year of the Network Rail Maintenance Apprentice course, they have now returned to the Hitachi depot to complete their studies. We decided to extend the scheme, and in July this year, two further apprentices were employed.

“Hitachi Rail Group is committed to the UK rail market and our state-of-art facility in Ashford represents a first step for us. Our intention is clear - we are here to grow our rail business in the UK.”

In addition to pushing ahead with plans for the new high speed trains, Hitachi’s Ashford TMC has also been involved in several local community initiatives. A number of local schools have benefited from work experience opportunities, and the depot has also supported local charities, such as Demelza House, a local children’s hospice.

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- **Website**

More information about Hitachi's Rail Systems Industrial Group can be found at www.hitachi-rail.com

- **Inquiries**

For further information, please contact:

Mac Motraghi

Hitachi Rail Systems

020 7970 2700

or: Patrick Evans / Ewan Robertson

Citigate Dewe Rogerson

020 7638 9571

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