POETS' response to the consultation on OxRAIL 2040

POETS welcome the publication of the rail strategy as a step in the right direction of giving more prominence to public transport. As the county council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan recognises, this is essential in terms of responding to the climate emergency, as well as addressing issues such as unsustainable levels of car use with all the associated health and other problems.

However, there are two key aspects where POETS consider that the rail strategy needs to be improved.

First, it should form part of an integrated land use and transport strategy. This should entail new development being concentrated only at excellent public transport nodes, with significant funds secured from developers and prioritised for public transport. and refused elsewhere. Such a strategy could feed in to the Growth Commission's work for the Oxford region.

Second, any strategy for rail should be part of a comprehensive and integrated strategy for public transport and active travel. This would mean all rail stations having full integration with bus services and timetables. It would also involve providing excellent facilities for cyclists at all stations: at the very least, secure covered cycle parking and charging facilities for electric bikes, and at most stations cycle hire and repair services – as happens routinely at stations in the Netherlands. All stations should of course have excellent pedestrian and disabled access.

In helping to guide the identification of major new development areas, in addition to the conventional rail element, the strategy should also explore the feasibility and costs of operating frequent and economical light rail/trams/guided bus on existing railway routes and on new routes such as Oxford - Witney/ Carterton.