

Council leader urges moves on high speed rail link

Councillor Jenny Dawe, Leader of the City of Edinburgh Council, has urged Edinburgh and Lothian politicians to put their weight behind proposals to bring a high-speed rail link as far as the capital.

At a briefing this morning for MPs, MSPs and MEPs, Councillor Dawe said a failure to include Edinburgh could pose serious risks to the city's competitiveness.

Speaking after the event, she said: "The maximum economic and environmental benefits can only be delivered if Scotland is included in the network at an early stage. I'm pleased to say that our local parliamentarians are fully supportive of our case and it was helpful to talk to them this morning about the issue.

"The evidence suggests that the modal shift from air to rail travel will only become significant once journey times are reduced to under three hours, which is what we stressed to the UK Transport Minister last week when we met him. Failure to achieve that shift will damage not just our ability to compete internationally but also our ability to compete with those other regions of the UK that will be included in the network"

Councillor Dawe added: "The Minister's focus at the moment is on getting the London- Birmingham proposal through. There are a lot of people in England who do not want it and I felt he saw it as quite a daunting task he has ahead. We said we could help with that argument because if you look at it from more of a UK perspective, the business case suggests the returns are much greater if you include going further north."

As well as discussing high-speed rail and, by extension, the merits of closer collaboration between Scotland's six cities,

the Council's new Chief Executive, Sue Bruce, was present to meet parliamentarians. They were also updated on the Council's current budget position, which is due to be discussed at the Policy and Strategy committee tomorrow.

The briefing was part of a regular series of meetings that the Council has with MPs, MSPs and MEPs representing Edinburgh and the Lothians.