

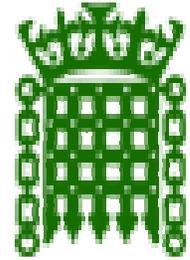


Light Rail (UK)

All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group

House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
Ref: LR Apping Winter 09 v.1

Light Rail & Trams, Affordable & Sustainable Transport



Draft Report of

All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group Fact Finding visit to Alicante FGV



1. Mr Greg Mulholland MP - Lib/Dem Leeds,
2. Lord Methuen - House of Lords
3. Mr John Leech MP, - Lib/Dem Chairman,
- 4 Mr James Harkins - Secretariat/Organiser

The party consisted of:-

1. Mr John Leech MP, - Lib/Dem Chairman,
2. Mr James Harkins - Secretariat/Organiser
3. Lord Methuen - House of Lords
4. Mr Greg Mulholland MP - Lib/Dem Leeds,
5. Mr Iain Mac Donald, - Secretariat/Scribe
6. Mr Andrew Rynham - Secretariat/Translator
7. Mr Stuart Kerr - Industry – Vossloh
8. Snr Antonio Alamar - Industry - Vossloh
9. Mr Mike Flynn - Mike Flynn Associates
10. Mr Paul Griffiths - UK Tram (Centro)

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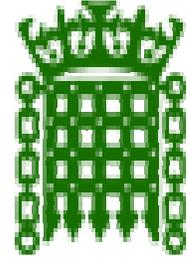




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Purpose of visit

Funding of transport schemes – who, how etc Local/regional/national

Integration of services – Train, bus services

Public or private

What do they do with utilities – move them or access

Planning process – how does it work?

To explore & understand the legislation, methodology and practical applications of Tram-train, construction, costs & methods.

There are other secondary questions in terms of fare box costs.

Tuesday 23rd May 2012

Evening Briefing by Embassy Staff



Ms Quentin Reveille,

Labour Attaché British Embassy

Members of the APPLRG delegation met Mr Fernando Pons Senior Trade & Investment Adviser UK Trade & Investment British Embassy Madrid and Ms Quentin Reveille, Labour Attaché British Embassy. Mr John Leech MP Chair of the APPLRG thanked the Trade and Embassy staff for coming to meet the party and outlined the reason for the visit.

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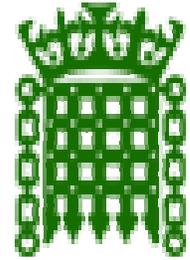
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The group hoped to learn of the initiatives undertaken by the Valencia region in transportation and hear of the successes and the pitfalls they encountered.

Mr Pons gave an overview of the Trade and investment situation in Spain in regard to the economical situation (see attached briefing documents) Ms Quentin Reveille, Labour Attaché British Embassy gave an overview of the Labour and economical situation. She concentrated first on the government and the seventeen regional structures. Central government had devolved a very large amount of power and finance to the regions this had included the ability to initiate local taxes. Financial deficits by the Regions had not worried Central Government until recently. The election of a new Government committed to cutting deficits and introducing an austerity programme had meant less autonomy for the regions that were expected to balance their budgets. The medical and social services in Spain had been particularly generous and these had suffered as a result of the austerity packages.

However Spain and its regions had used the EU grant monies to great effect, building a large number of infrastructure projects in health education and transport. Thus Spain's investment in infrastructure legacy is a rich heritage and one that will stand it in good stead in exiting recession The regional Governments had control over 50 % vat and tax income to dispense the social, health and education systems along with central government. They have a margin of tax they can add to the national rate. The amount spending that of the regions was not apparent when looking at an overview of the Spanish National Finances. Spain had overshoot its national GDP target of 6% by 2.5% because Regional Governments had not declared all their spending. The New Government had taken an opportunity to clean up the national budget and placed an austerity budget which stopped a range of projects in regions and placed a GDP target of 5.3%

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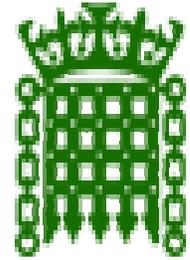
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The conservative government which had been elected by an electorate much of the view that something had to be done to meet the financial crisis and therefore has an absolute majority in National Government and nearly in all regional governments. Whereas the previous Government had tried to spend its way out the crisis by maintaining construction project, the present government had cut projects, indeed the withdrawal of external finance from outside Spain had been a factor in this The government has imposed a pay freeze on civil servants and started sacking workers. The new conservative government was recognised as the austerity party and Spaniards had realised that things had to change.

Spain is a bi- party democracy, but still has a lot of relics of the Franco legacy which people recognise as part of Spain's historical and political development. The government has closed down public companies and cut back on education and health. Regions have introduced a varied range of higher education fees. In terms transport there appears to be a range of finance and operations. Some are private financed but public, some have been publicly financed and run by private operators and some have been public financed and publicly operated. The question was asked about who took the decisions on this variety of operations. Big projects such as high speed rail tend to be financed by national government. Regional government surpluses tended to be pushed towards constructional projects within their boundaries.

The Ministry of public works has gone from, "Spend, Spend, Spend" to "Cut, Cut, Cut". However, some projects will go ahead e.g. high speed rail project to Galicia but the roads projects and high speed rail project to Portugal has been frozen.

In Britain the political consensus had ensured that the HS2 line would be a y shaped in the north Manchester and Leeds. It was noted that while the infrastructure in the UK was in need of renewal, whereas in Spain infrastructure was in very good state for example a large number of regional airports and high -speed rail lines showed a remarkable level of investment.

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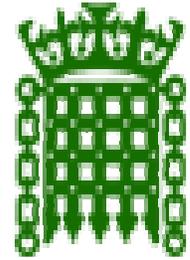
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Spain has undertaken pension and banking reforms and looks to be on target with its economical programme as long as external market influences don't overtake it. Banking reform will create a "bad bank" to siphon off bad debts Spanish banks now have to hold a larger amount of reserves. In reply to the question of why has there not been social unrest.

It was noted that the Spanish culture ensures that people have tendency to keep their mortgage payments up to date even though over 50 % of unemployed have not worked for a year. Spain has a large number of poorly qualified young people and "black market economy/industry" which could be between 22 or 30% of the economy. A culture of the mature offspring remaining in the family home also exists. Unions have had a large number of their initiatives financed by the government and are therefore fairly compliant. The last element is the good climate and strong social network it is not, "A rally together and let's take to the streets population". With a large growing young population democratic, protest tends to be civilised and polite. In Spanish culture there is a different relationship with alcohol. A recent trend has been young Spaniards going abroad to find work.

Questions were raised regarding investment for infrastructure projects were they necessary and had the finance come mainly from the EU? In reply it was noted that a large amount of EU grant monies had dried up and Spain had tried to have the EU funding rules changed to allow the project momentum to continue as it will still be a net receptor of funds until 2014. The Spanish perception of the EU is changing as the EU funding slows down- as they become more of a contributor. UK residents still remain large purchasers of property and a large amount of UK residents claiming British benefits. A small embassy team assists former UK residents and claimants.

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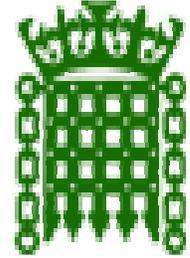
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Spain's national government has placed controls on spending of the regional governments but the economy is very much at the mercy of external markets. This is a very large European economy quite different from Greece or Ireland. In 2007, Spain was the largest investor in British companies.

Mr Leech MP thanked the Embassy staff for the briefing and discussion. He looked forward to tomorrow's events.

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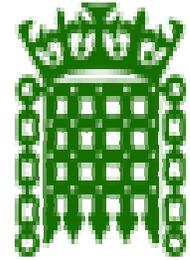


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Wednesday 23rd May 2012

1000h Institutional meeting at “La Casa de Las Brujas” (Avda. Doctor Gadea 10, Alicante)

The delegation walked to the Regional Offices at “La Casa de Las Brujas” (Avda. Doctor Gadea 10, Alicante) where the delegation supported by Fernando Pons of the British Embassy were welcomed by Isabel Bonig, Minister for Infrastructures, Valencia Regional government and Marisa Gracia, Managing Director, FGV (Valencia rail public company) Marisa Gracia, Managing director, FGV (Valencia rail public company) in welcoming the party prior to the minister’s arrival said she hoped to explain what this big Tram Project was about plus take any questions and of course say, “Welcome to Alicante”



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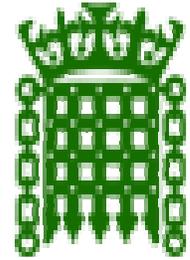


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Ms Gracia stated that Alicante is the fourth largest province of inhabitants in Spain. It doesn't have main population centre which can be regarded as a metropolitan area. For instance Alicante the capital has only some 300,000 inhabitants the nearest similar town is Altea which has a similar size of population. The next area of population is Benidorm mainly providing an area for the tourist trade. Of course this means we have to have an efficient form of transport and communication to link them all. It was important to have a modern form of transport that would link all the areas and make it nice and comfortable to travel, be attractive to use and would be reliable, dependable and quick. The populations are big enough to have some means of transport in urban transport/tramway inside the towns and suburban/interurban transport/tramway to link them all. From that concept we came to have the idea of having the train-tram in Alicante. The train-tram had to go through nineteen towns and villages that link with our network. The shape of the vehicle its capabilities, size, performance and comfort made it very convenient for the kind of vehicle we were looking for. The building of the new line and refurbishing of the old line also allowed us to be generous with the surrounding area making it better (improving public realm) for nearby inhabitants. The tram service had been running for ten years but it's still in development with many projects. We want to reach the airport. We also have built a line to San Vicente and the University. This line is about to enter service. Although we want it reach more areas the tram has become an important part of people's lives in Alicante.

As you probably know the tram has been built on infrastructure that already existed which was a single narrow gauge track railway. The people in the area used to know it as the "Little train" Although it sounded romantic it was not the efficient form of infrastructure we wanted

The tram is always a point of interest to people everybody wants to know what the tram is doing where it is going and it often appears in the newspapers. We need to consolidate what we have achieved and keep growing. Some the infrastructure is already there for extensions. The funding of the Project comes from the Regional government and fare box subsidy on the system comes from the regional government. The line development and modernisation has been supported by all the local towns and villages Marisa Gracia then engaged in a question and answer session with the delegation.

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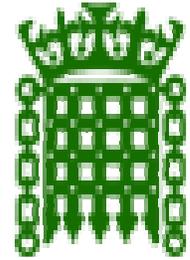
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Mr. John Leech, Chair of the APPLRG thanked Marisa Gracia for agreeing to meet with them. He explained the role of the APPRG and how it had raised the profile of light rail in the United Kingdom. He asked the Managing Director of FGV whether there was EU funding to the project and was this a crucial factor in the success of the Project? The Director stated that there was no EU funding. There was no free money given –the Region had supplied credits EU had given monies over the last five years to the Valencia community for certain infrastructure developments and housing. Mr Leech noted that the EU monies would lessen as Spain became a net contributor to the EU rather benefactor. He asked if she thought infrastructure schemes such light rail would suffer because of this. The Director stated that the international crisis was already affecting the development of the light rail programme.

Mr Leech understood the construction to airport had stopped due to lack funds. In reply it was stated that the line to the airport had not started yet but was line that the region and the city saw as very important in developing the transport and tourist structure of the area. There were two projects one that affected the metropolitan centre. The first one was an extension in the metropolitan area to the railway station and a tunnel to double the single track to the west of the city which had to be completed. The other was Line Two which had been completed and was yet to open. The new line would run from Alicante through important areas of Alicante such as the Hospital and university not yet covered out by the tram out to San Vicente. Test running had been undertaken. The financial crisis had stopped everything but there was a plan to reach the airport. Mr Leech hoped that the next time everybody visited Alicante they would be able to board a tram to take them to the centre of the town The Director agreed that tourists would be able to go from the Airport to Benidorm without changing transport The Airport Project had been started four years ago but the crisis meant the regional government did not have the funds. Central Government too had stopped finance for nearly all local projects. They had also sought private funding without success. Mr Leech asked how blame was apportioned when Projects weren't completed. Ms Gracia in reply stated Central Government was usually blamed but now it's the International Crisis. Mr Leech asked how the schemes began –were they inspired by the local community councils –was it to boost tourism or was it because Money was available for infrastructure projects?

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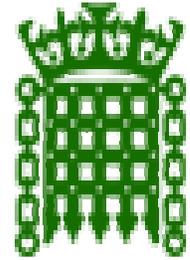


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In response the Director observed that railway line was already there linking communities. It had been there for a 100 years this was an opportunity to improve and make it better and more efficient and provide connection to as much of the surrounding territory. The first experimental of 500 metres of the tramway was laid at the beach in Alicante was paid for by the people of Alicante and local sponsors (Line 4L). The success of this line and the favourable public and political reaction led to the development of the city system and the electrification to Benidorm. A question on the running time to Luceros from Benidorm was raised of 30 minutes for 26 miles that seemed a long running time -was it quicker than before? In the UK service frequency has always improved after conversion to light rail –here it appears unchanged.

In reply it was stated that once track doubling and improvements have been made the journey times will improve. FGV stated that the main improvement to start with was the new vehicles. The reason the service frequency has not increased greatly at the moment is because FGV had to adapt the existing system. For example there are still sections of single track and a tunnel is currently being constructed just outside Alicante to allow more double track running.

They have also built new lines such as Line 4 to reach areas where the tram never reached before. FGV have also managed to reintroduce the tram into the very heart of Alicante after thirty years.

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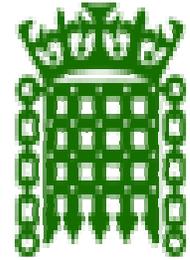


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In the presence of local media and television Minister Bonig welcomed Mr John Leech MP Chair of the APPLRG delegation and the rest of the party.



The Region was very proud that its infrastructure initiatives were of interest to an international audience. The Minister was proud to announce to her honoured guests and the wider public that Line 2 of the TRAM FGV system to the University and San Vicente would open in September 2012. The Minister was very proud of the achievements made by the new light rail systems in Valencia and Alicante and the interest it had developed throughout Europe. There have been many criticisms in the region about the way the tram systems have been built but opposite appears from outside the region where people are interested in what has been achieved. The Minister loved Britain a lot and hoped to visit the country. Mr Leech said that the APPLRG hoped they could reciprocate the excellent hospitality they had enjoyed in Alicante. Mr Leech thanked the minister for such a warm welcome and noted the excellent weather. He was pleasantly surprised at the opportunity to appear on Local TV with the Minister.

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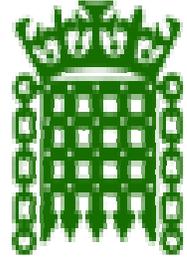


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