

## Positive trolleybus meeting with Minister

City leaders describe discussion with Transport Minister Norman Baker as constructive.

Leeds council leaders and transport bosses have described an all-party meeting organised by Pudsey MP Stuart Andrew with Transport Minister Norman Baker as constructive.

Primarily the meeting was an opportunity to reiterate to Mr Baker the significant, economic, environmental and social benefits the planned NGT will bring to Leeds and the City Region, said Stuart Andrew.

We reminded the Minister that NGT will help to create 4,000 new jobs locally and generate a £160m per annum boost for the City Region as part of the new Government's priority of putting an emphasis on more sustainable, low carbon transport initiatives.

### Additional costs of delay

Today's meeting was also an opportunity to alert Mr Baker to the consequences of not going ahead with the scheme and also the additional costs generated by any significant delay in taking it forward, said Metro Deputy Chairman Cllr Ryk Downes.

A lot of work has already been carried out and money spent to prepare the scheme proposals for acceptance by the Department for Transport this year and some of that work and money would be wasted if we were forced to do it all over again.

And this would add to the overall cost of the scheme.

During the meeting we also showed Mr Baker how a trolleybus network such as NGT could deliver many of the benefits of trams but at around only half the cost, continued Cllr Downes. We also made the point that it is easier to extend a trolleybus network and that it would be possible to upgrade the routes to trams in the future.

The Leeds team also took the opportunity to discuss other key local transport projects caught in the current spending review such as planned new rail stations at Kirkstall Forge and Apperley Bridge and the new southern entrance at Leeds station.

### Innovation and jobs

We fully understand the Government's need to review major schemes as it explores measures to tackle the current economic situation but the NGT Trolleybus would have a major impact on innovation and jobs and provide a significant economic return to the country, said Cllr Andrew.

Investing in them would also show that this Government intends to end decades of underspending on public transport in our region, he continued.

And it would be in line with statements made by Transport Minister Theresa Villiers and Chancellor George Osborne in Manchester recently that investment in transport systems is part of the Government's commitment to growth in the north.

We got a positive and sympathetic reception from Mr Baker today and we look forward to welcoming him to Leeds in the next few weeks and discussing with him in more detail, the economic and environmental benefits of NGT and the other schemes, concluded Cllr Downes.