

First Minister Opens Highland Spring Group's New Rail Freight Facility in Blackford

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The First Minister of Scotland, Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP, has officially opened Highland Spring Group's new rail freight facility in Blackford, Perthshire.

The development is a major milestone for the UK's producer of natural source waters, enabling them to transport goods sustainably and supporting their ambition to reach net zero by 2040.

The new facility, adjacent to Highland Spring Group's main bottling plant in Blackford, has been planned in partnership with Transport Scotland, Network Rail, and the Scottish Government. It will offer long-term environmental benefits through the removal of 8,000 HGV movements from the road, saving 3,200 tonnes of CO₂ every year.

The project has been 10 years in development and is part of the businesses' long-term strategy to invest in and develop innovative solutions to provide healthy hydration in an environmentally sustainable way.

The First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon MSP said: "Getting the Highland Spring Rail Freight Facility to the point of opening and operating has been a complex task and everyone involved should be

immensely proud of their achievements, including Network Rail who played a key role in developing the infrastructure to support this project.

“Rail freight is intrinsic to the Scottish economy, it supports the supply chain and serves a broad range of sectors, and is good for society and our environment. That’s why the Scottish Government invested £4.47 million in this project through a Freight Facilities Grant.

“Removing more than ten million lorry miles from Scotland’s roads in the first ten years of operation will go a long way to improving the environment and lives of those close by as well as helping the country as a whole achieve net zero. I am confident other businesses will now follow suit.”

Simon Oldham and Mark Steven, Joint Managing Directors of Highland Spring Group said: “Environmental sustainability has been at the heart of our business for over 40 years, and the rail freight facility is a critical part of our commitment to tackling climate change and being a considerate neighbour to the local community.

“We believe this project is an excellent example of the power of partnership working between the rail industry, government and business which will provide wider benefits to the Scottish environment and economy.”

Alex Hynes, Managing Director, Scotland’s Railway said: “The opening of this new facility is an exciting and important milestone for rail freight in Scotland.

“It’s an excellent example of the public and private sectors working closely with government to fight climate change head-on. To achieve net zero, we are working hard to ensure that rail freight becomes the primary logistics choice for businesses in Scotland by 2035.”

Photo credit: Highland Spring Group