

Update

CONNECTING
COMMUNITIES
AND CITIES
ACROSS THE
NORTH



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Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership

Update is just what it says on the can: a brief outline of the rationale for SELRAP's long-running campaign for the reopening of the former rail line linking Skipton, North Yorkshire, with Colne, Lancashire and progress towards that aim

But first, a reminder re what we're about:



A DIRECT LINK

..... between Pennine Lancashire and Leeds, & vice versa, that complements existing routes. Much already electrified. More planned

FOR YOU TO PONDER:

Juxtaposition of major economic centres, East & West Coast Main Lines & ports

Originally opened throughout in 1849 when trains couldn't go up hills: was the most easily-graded trans-Pennine route.

So is the relatively simple re-build of the 11½ mile Skipton-Colne line essentially a local scheme?

Or is there more to it?

YOU DECIDE

LAST YEAR

1.6 billion rail passenger journeys were made in the UK more than at any [peace] time since their 1920s peak on a rail network less than half the size it was then and reverting roughly to that of 1860.

But history has a habit of rearing up in our faces. And whilst, with the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that many of the lines that were built should not have been built as demands on the nation's downsized, less-flexible and hard-pressed network mount year on year, it is increasingly clear that some lines that were closed should not have been closed.

Wholesale re-opening of lines lost to closure is clearly not an option, but re-building a small number of short stretches of strategically-situated lines could impact on the whole network to a far greater extent than their length and/or potential cost[s] would suggest.

Considered by many to be a precursor to total closure, the seemingly-cynical removal of short [but critical] sections of a number of former through-routes linking major economic centres, followed by the downgrading of what

was left, has led [in some cases] to services that are not fit for purpose.

Stir into the mix a parallel loss of staple industries with the consequent need for access to regional economic drivers for new employment opportunities and the "all regions are equal" philosophy we would all like to believe in no longer applies. 'Cos, in the [supposedly] joined-up 21st century, some regions, it seems, are more equal than others.

The loss of Pennine Lancashire's cotton industry was paralleled by the removal and/or downgrading of its rail links to both Manchester & Leeds. The consequences are with us yet.

But, thanks to joined up thinking by Burnley Borough and Lancashire County Councils, the soon-to-be reopened Todmorden Curve means that attractive journey times from Burnley to Manchester will be on offer for the first time in almost fifty years.

THE NEED FOR IMPROVED RAIL CONNECTIVITY

.... is not confined to the North West. Indeed, 6 million tourists visit the Craven (Skipton & Dales) area of North Yorkshire annually. Their annual spend in the region exceeds £240 million supporting 5,000 jobs there. Many of those tourists use the excellent services offered by the Airedale line. But, with no direct rail link to the North West [yet!], the number of visitors arriving in Skipton by rail from the latter clearly has to be near-nil.

Check out the map: Then there's the bit about the potential for a shorter route [via the Todmorden Curve] to Manchester [and its airport] for much of the population of Airedale. And extension of the labour pool for Leeds' expanding jobs market.

And, beyond a raft of diverting idioms hinting at speed and power [and the rest], there are other factors to consider best suggested by the closing comment from the ARUP study published in 2014:

Additional use of the [Skipton to Colne] line beyond local journeys, including long distance and inter-regional services could increase the [1.52*] BCR further. The use of the line for freight may be an additional benefit. There are also wider economic and social arguments for the new service.

*Benefit Cost Ratio could exceed 6.5 with 30% greater passenger demand than that anticipated.

SO WHAT HAS SELRAP BEEN UP TO

A whole heap, as it happens. Following publication of the Arup report in Spring 2014, SELRAP's main thrust moved towards further-progressing the *GRIP study process.

GRIP: eight distinct stages:

1. Output definition
2. Feasibility
3. Option selection
4. Single option development
5. Detailed design
6. Construction test and commission
7. Scheme hand back
8. Project close out

Pendle Borough Council and others, SELRAP would hope to be party to the GRIP process as it unfolds.

In addition to monthly Executive Committee meetings and bi-monthly Open Members' Meetings in Skipton, Colne & Earby, SELRAP's also had:

- Regular meetings with Lancashire Council Cabinet Members and has met with:
- [Consultants] Jacobs & Arup
- Craven District Council Planning Authority
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority
- Transport for Greater Manchester
- Northern Rail
- 3 x bidders for the Northern franchise

that fledgling group became operational, events were

OVERTAKEN:

Over many years of campaigning, SELRAP has had a series of high profile meetings with the Department for Transport. And, in response to an invitation from SELRAP, in Summer 2014 a senior representative from the DfT travelled north to meet with the group, to take a tour of the former Skipton-Colne rail line, and to see for himself the contrast in standards of service on offer in Pennine Lancashire and North Yorkshire, and what reopening proposals might involve.

More than 150 businesses and trade organisations nationwide have written to SELRAP to tell us that they want the Skipton-Colne rail line reopened. As have over 500 Councils within the wider corridor of the route, together with 191 sitting MPs, 80 Peers and 22 MEPs.

Following that meeting, a further senior DfT representative took time out to spend a day with SELRAP, to take a tour of the Skipton-Colne line, and to meet with both Lancashire and North Yorkshire County Councils. And the result:

A DAY-LONG FORUM

NB Information re the following was confidential until it was made public via a webcast debate at a recent meeting of Lancashire County Council, and subsequent media reports.

Brokered by the DfT, and hosted by SELRAP in Skipton in January 2015, senior representatives from Lancashire and North Yorkshire County Councils, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive attended, alongside those from Network Rail and Northern Rail. There is no other way to say it: this was a crunch meeting to consider whether there was to be a future for the Skipton to Colne rail line. And the outcome:

A WORKING GROUP

Led by Lancashire County Council and made up of representatives from all the agencies outlined above [inc DfT & SELRAP] and tasked with fleshing out the scope of the whatever project [if any] finally features on Network Rail's "to do" list, the group will work to complete the project by

*Governance for Railway Investment Projects: an eight-stage process that describes how projects are controlled & managed

Managing and funding the next steps in this crucial series of costly studies is beyond the resources of a voluntary group, and will require coordinated input from professional bodies and organisations. As outlined below, the later stages of the GRIP process are several junctions down the line, so to speak. But, mindful of the significant sum of monies kindly donated by SELRAP members, and further substantial funding promised by

REGULAR FOLLOWERS

..... of SELRAP's convoluted journey will remember that in Spring 2014 Lancashire County Council initiated the formation of a consortium to oversee the Skipton-Colne rail line scheme with SELRAP in the frame in a consultative and advisory capacity to the group. But before

the end of 2015. The work will consider the best ways of improving connectivity in order to promote economic growth, sustainable tourism, access to employment, and education & training opportunities. Findings from this no holds barred in-depth analysis are on cue to be fed into the North of England rail review to be carried out by Network Rail in 2016. The outcome from that review could be a crucial factor in determining whether the Skipton-Colne scheme features within the DfT's Long Term Planning Process for construction in Network Rail's Control Period 6 between 2019 and 2024.

WHAT ELSE



In December 2014 SELRAP patrons Andrew Stephenson MP for Pendle and Julian Smith MP for Skipton & Ripon met on the county boundary at Thornton in Craven and shook hands across a red & white ribbon representing the roses of Lancashire and Yorkshire then in a symbolic removal of the barriers to reopening the rail line, cut it.

STEPPING DOWN

Speaking at SELRAP's recent Annual General Meeting, Derek Jennings announced that he was stepping down as Chairman. Derek is pictured in classic 1963 Beeching [closures] report pose but with the 2014 Arup report that examines the case for reopening "our" rail line!



"It has been my pleasure and privilege to serve as Chairman of SELRAP for the past 9 years. I thank my loyal committee most sincerely for their hard work and perseverance.

I will soon be 80 years old and think it fitting that, as SELRAP moves into a new phase, I should hand over to a younger person to lead our campaign through exciting times ahead."

Members attending the 2015 AGM elected David Walsh to serve as SELRAP's new Chairman:



"Derek has served SELRAP with great dedication. He will be a hard act to follow.

This is a time of great opportunity for SELRAP, and current developments give the possibility of our plans becoming reality. I am acutely aware of the responsibility of our group to pick our way carefully towards a time in the not too distant future, when we will be able to travel between Skipton and Colne by train."

WHAT NEXT?

Clearly, nothing is certain until it is certain. That said, via membership of [and contribution to] the working group referred to earlier, SELRAP will continue to press the case for reopening the Skipton-Colne rail line.

Meanwhile, the campaign goes on

Care to help to make sure it happens then join SELRAP by contacting Derek Jennings: derek.jennings01@gmail.com Tel 01282 690411 and/or come along to the open meetings:

OPEN MEMBERS' MEETINGS FOR 2015

- Mon 11th May @ 7.00pm: New Road Community Centre, Earby.
- Mon. 13th July @ 7.00pm: Herriots Hotel, Broughton Road, Skipton
- Mon. 14th September @ 7.00pm: Venue TBC
- Mon. 9th November @ 7.00pm: New Road Community Centre, Earby.

For more on SELRAP, visit www.selrap.org.uk