

THE CAMPAIGN TO COMPLETE **The Northern Link**

via reopening the
Skipton-Colne

rail line:

2023



At a Glance

“I recognise its potential to transform connectivity between parts of East Lancashire, Skipton and the Leeds City Region, as well as provide additional resilience for freight.”

Conservative Rail Minister Wendy Morton MP, 21st January 2022

CONNECTING
COMMUNITIES
ACROSS
THE NORTH



S E L R A P

Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership

www.selrap.org.uk

AT A GLANCE APRIL 2023

It being fully 22 years since the first meeting took place in Colne library on 10th April 2001, SELRAP's twenty two years campaign to see the former rail line linking Skipton, North Yorkshire with Colne (S2C), Lancashire reopened is very well advanced.

SELRAP at Twenty Two. Who'd 'a thowt it! You can vote at eighteen.

LEVELLING UP



FRONT COVER

You've noticed then? The spirit level: a reminder if ever it was needed of the Prime Minister's commitment to 'level up' and to "to mend the indefensible gap in opportunity and productivity and connectivity between the regions of the UK."

The spirit level is also a reminder that the 'Northern Link' via Skipton-Colne is the lowest graded trans-Pennine route: an important consideration for freight hauliers.

And there is more. For crucially (critically, even), the via Skipton-

Colne route avoids the need for freight to transit already overly congested central Manchester.

Significantly, note also what the former Rail Minister has to say about Skipton-Colne.

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This edition of *At a Glance* therefore seeks to outline where the campaign is at right now, how it got there and crucially, where it is headed. And how.

All of this, then, in a bid to see completion of the 'Northern Link' East-West route via Skipton and Colne, a route that, in the Rail Minister's words, and I make no apology for repeating them, has:

"the potential to transform connectivity between parts of East Lancashire, Skipton and the Leeds City Region, as well as provide additional resilience for freight."

Added to which is this from the Queen's Speech, delivered by the now King Charles, on 10th May 2022:

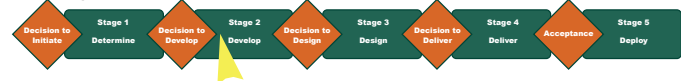
"A bill will be brought forward to drive local growth, empowering local leaders to regenerate their areas and ensuring everyone can share in the United Kingdom's success."

WHERE WE ARE

A number of years ago, SELRAP supporter Gordon Prentice MP [for Pendle] described proposals to reopen the Skipton to Colne rail line as akin to pushing a boulder uphill!

The editor made reference to that boulder within an e mail to the then Secretary of State for Transport the Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP fully twenty four months ago:

"We believe that our boulder is poised to roll down the other side of the hill I referred to.... **as we look forward to your decision in favour of progressing "our" line further along the (See below: Ed.) Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP) within the coming weeks".**



Responding on behalf of the Secretary of State on 9th June 2021, a senior representative of the Department for Transport Rail Infrastructure North Team wrote to the editor:

"We would like to assure you that levelling up all areas of the country remains at the centre of this Government's agenda, and this Department is working to deliver world class transport infrastructure in the region. The proposal to reinstate the rail link from Skipton to Colne sits within the Advanced Proposals workstream of the Restore Your Railways programme."

The writer then went on to state that:

"The Minister has endorsed proposals for this ['Develop'] work and looks forward to receiving HM Treasury's funding decision shortly." June 2021

Meanwhile, there's been substantial input [of time and funding] from the DfT, TfN and their consultants. Projected passenger figures for the new via Skipton-Colne route are stacking up nicely and have produced a positive business case for reopening the line. With freight taking that business case 'over the line' so to speak.

All in all, a healthy place for proposals to reopen 'our' line to be in.

FROM THE CHAIR: "MIND THE GAP" BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH

During this campaign's marathon, not a penny has been spent in any of those long-marginalised constituencies of East Lancashire. Together, these form the UK's most economically-deprived region where, markedly, the cost of living has been a crisis since the Queen's accession to the throne in 1952! Furthermore Pendle, Burnley and Accrington now have, officially, the UK's slowest and worst train's services.

Dr Beeching's earth-shattering report of 1963 highlighted the simple fact that huge sums of taxpayers' money were being invested in the wrong places: in the wrong projects. The same is true today. We watched open-mouthed when, back in late 2021, the MP for Colne – in his capacity as the government minister for high speed rail - announced their Integrated Rail Plan (IRP). The sheer irony of many more billions of taxpayer's money being spent in already-affluent regions in the south, thus doubling-up on their already-excellent modern rail services, is not lost on this campaign.

Accordingly, as of today, the soon-to-be-renationalised "Great British Railways" is a two-class system. First Class in the South. And Second Class up North!

Somewhat belatedly and only-very-recently, this government has realised the importance of better transport connectivity outside of those [incidentally, politically opposed] big metropolitan cities. It announced, but has not yet, properly funded, its "Restore Your Railways" programme (RYR). At our 2022 AGM in Colne, the NR RYR director spoke passionately in favour of reopening Skipton-Colne. The need is so blindingly obvious: he could not get to the venue by public transport. For the 12-mile journey from Skipton, the editor gave him a lift in his car!

So what would a modern, 2023 version, of the Beeching Report say about our proposal to invest in the Skipton to Colne project? Post-Covid, London's very-heavily subsidised trains and tubes run half-empty. However, in very marked contrast, here in The North our passenger trains are back to near-full. Further, post-Brexit, more shipping than ever before uses the northern ports. And finally, but only after Vladimir Putin changed the world in overnight on the 24th February 2022, this government has belatedly realised that decarbonised biomass keeps the lights on across the UK. Therefore the northern rail network is now full, and operating beyond its current capacity.

This campaign has worked exceptionally closely with Department for Transport, Network Rail and our key supporters, going well beyond what anyone could reasonably expect a voluntary group to do.

We have demonstrated beyond doubt that this transformational project now has a strong and undisputable strategic and business case. This is now a great opportunity, the forecasts are looking good.

Peter Bryson SELRAP Chair March 2023

MEETING THE FORMER MINISTER



The last week of May 2022 was Community Rail Week, the strapline being:

'Give the train a try'

Events took place at venues throughout the country. So why a mention here? On learning that Rail Minister Wendy Morton MP was to launch the week's events at Bingley station on the Airedale line the organisers kindly facilitated a short meeting with her at the

world famous Bingley Five Rise locks; her lunch venue. Where she told of the fact that she is fully up to speed re SELRAP's aims and ambitions. And thanked us for all the hard work we're putting into the campaign. Asked straight up when long-awaited funding for the 'Develop' work endorsed by her predecessor Chris Heaton-Harris was to be made available:

"There is no money" she responded! At which point I reminded the minister of manifesto pledges re levelling up and of £billions being pumped into specific projects in the sunny South! And that £4billion overspend on Crossrail!

All of that said, Wendy (we were on first names!) **did** take time out to meet with me. And doubtless, will remember our brief exchange, it being entirely in line with SELRAP's policy of lifting each and every stone to see what lies beneath, so to speak!

Interestingly, several of the attendees at this event were representatives of Community Rail Lancashire. Who told me that they were entirely supportive of proposals to reopen Skipton-Colne. And, having driven to Bingley they said they'd much preferred to have been able to use the train if only 'our' line had been back in use!

ON T'OTHER SIDE OF THE PENNINES

On the final day of Community Rail Week Community Rail Lancashire and Connecting East Lancashire co-hosted the Brierfield Bike Ride, a guided ride from, and back to, Brierfield station.



Brierfield station: attendees including, left, Pendle's MP Andrew Stephenson. SELRAP was, of course represented!

And Andrew Stephenson said: *"Rail is a great way to get about, across East Lancashire and to visit Pendle so I hope as a result of Community Rail Week more people will 'Give the Train a Try'."*

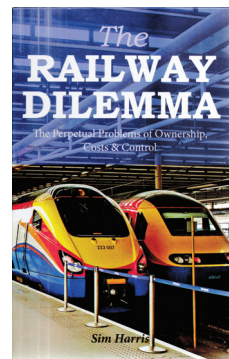
Speaking later with Andrew about SELRAP, he said **"keep on doing what you are doing."**

THE MORE REASON THEN

..... to 'get Skipton-Colne done' since there's plainly demand for those West of the Pennines to travel East.

And vice-versa. And there's more, 'cos:

Reopening Skipton-Colne will bring the benefits of the highly successful Airedale line to parts of East Lancashire much in need of them. It will transform the miserable and failing Colne branch line into a valued and effective through route




THE PERPETUAL PROBLEMS OF OWNERSHIP, COSTS & CONTROL

Published in 2015, this book by Sim Harris is a window on near-two hundred years of turbulent railway history in the UK.

Outlining the industry's spectacular growth to transport supremacy and its fall from grace as motor transport developed, the book goes on to detail rail's increased/increasing relevance within the demands of modern society.

This is a tale of ever-changing government policy.

7 DAYS: A LONG TIME IN POLITICS

The editor took the opportunity to write to the [then] Chancellor Rishi Sunak a suitably worded letter. Included within that letter was handy gift in the form you have it in one of a 230mm spirit level  that might serve as a reminder of the urgent need for progressing the reopening of the Skipton to Colne line as a prerequisite to [and rain-check on] 'levelling up' parts of the North of England much in need of it.

INDICIES OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION (IMD).

According to the Economist magazine in December 2022, East Lancashire is the most-deprived economic corridor in England.

Ever since this campaign started, East Lancashire has been well known for its socio-economic challenges. Commenting on this increasingly grim situation, SELRAP's Chris Oakley says:

"This is very serious in itself. However, even more worrying is the fact that East Lancashire is rapidly falling even further behind the rest of the country. The economic situation is deteriorating at a fast pace. Of the four local authorities in East Lancashire - Blackburn, Hyndburn, Burnley and Pendle - three of the four are now classified as being in the twenty most-derived local authorities in the UK. Just four years ago (2019) before the pandemic, only one was down at the bottom. Without urgent intervention, this situation can only get worse". (Editor's note. That right, three out of four are in the bottom 20: out of a national total of 317).

T'OTHER HALF (OF THE UK)

What the (former) Rail Minister says is however not true for all parts of the United Kingdom.

Since SELRAP was founded, our greatest single frustration has been watching governments of both political hues pumping every available penny of capital investment into the railways of London and the South East.

As per reported in the last issue of *At a Glance*

A third station in Cambridge looks set to go ahead with a price tag [last year!] of £183.6 million. The latter being total turnout costs that Ministers are seeking to achieve for the entire twelve mile Skipton to Colne line rebuild inclusive of two new stations! And HM Treasury considers 'our' scheme too expensive!

Then there are there's the small matter of the £4 billion overspend on 'Crossrail'. And recent announcement of £5 billion investment in the Oxford-Cambridge rail reopening: the other East-West scheme. The one with lower passenger forecasts than Skipton-Colne: the one that will serve communities with a lower population than Skipton-Colne. The one that will feature not only re-use of mothballed lines, but miles of new build, too.

Contrasting with the latter; whilst it is a hard fact that there are significant civil engineering issues to overcome, the entire Skipton-Colne trackbed remains intact.

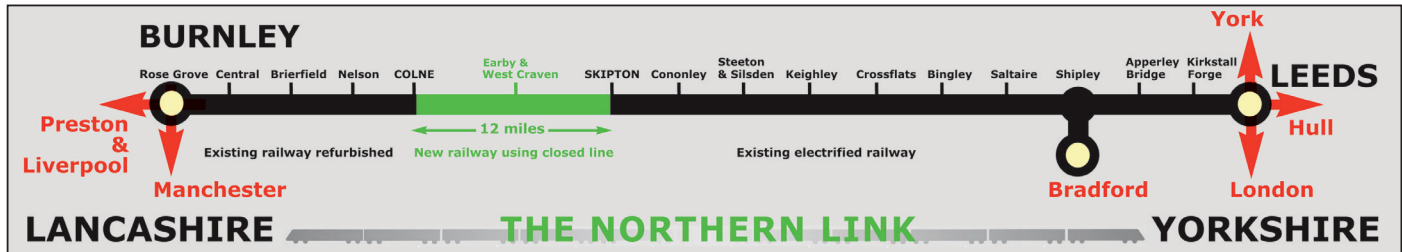
But hey these projects are in The South where to quote from George Orwell's 'Animal Farm':
"Some animals are more equal than others."



TRANSFORMATIONAL CONNECTIVITY...

... between parts of East Lancashire, Skipton and the Leeds City Regions is what reopening the Skipton to Colne line has to offer. But what, exactly, does transformational connectivity for parts of East Lancashire look like?

A direct, modern and fast passenger service of two trains per hour via Skipton and Colne to Leeds that will bring communities of East Lancashire within striking distance of new employment, social and leisure opportunities.



LET'S BUILD ON SUCCESS

The best business case is very simple: extend the Airedale line into Lancashire.

The existing Airedale line is one of the most successful routes outside of London and the South East. Used by shoppers, commuters and cinema goers alike, today it is their transport of choice. And part of the nuts and bolts of the communities it serves. It stands to reason: attractive stations that look like stations, fast, frequent & comfortable trains that start early and run until late evening. In short, trains that make use of the car seem quite daft!

The fast train service from Colne into Leeds will soon take just 55 minutes.

LITERALLY A FLYING VISIT

On the 19th January 2023 Rishi Sunak and Jeremy Hunt visited Accrington. Outside the historic Market Hall, they met our local Member of Parliament, Sara Britcliffe. At a very-well-publicised event, the Prime Minister and Chancellor then re-launched the Conservative government's "Levelling Up" policy. Their interest in several ongoing projects around the town, and also their personal commitment to rejuvenating this once-affluent region, is warmly welcomed. (Editor. Please read more on page 7).

Summed up: as per above

Transformational Connectivity for parts of East Lancashire. 'Transformational' being defined within the Oxford Dictionary as:

"Causing a major change to something or someone, especially in a way that makes it or them better"

And it cannot come soon enough, for if ever there were areas in need of being made to feel better they are some of those economically-deprived regions of East Lancashire, as referenced by SELRAP's chair Peter Bryson within his opening comments on the previous page.

For, it was soon after The Queen's accession to the throne that East Lancashire's core cotton industry began its descent into oblivion Britain having become a net importer of cotton cloth by 1958. With mills closing across Lancashire at a rate of almost one a week throughout the 1960s/70s. By the 1980s East Lancashire's textile industry had evaporated.

Meanwhile, we're still waiting for that Treasury decision!



COLNE

AVERAGE HOUSE PRICES

SKIPTON

MAKES YE THINK



Terraced Housing
Colne: £113,240
Skipton: £279,255
*Zoopla: April 2023
Just 12 miles apart, average house prices in Colne are just half that in Skipton



TRANSFORMATIONAL FREIGHT SERVICES

SELRAP's freight specialist Andy Dixon has this to say: Freight has become an important part of the efforts to demonstrate a "no brainer" case for reopening the Skipton to Colne Railway.

It's not what SELRAP was established to achieve twenty two years ago, but a lack of freight capacity across the Pennines has drawn rail freight operators and customers to our campaign. It has now become clear that moving freight has a major impact on socio-economic prospects, both regionally and nationally and when Network Rail reviewed options for investment in Trans-Pennine freight capacity, Skipton to Colne came a very creditable second to the Diggle route out of the four options considered. What has also emerged in the past twenty years is the importance of climate change and the role that rail transport should have, given that it is much greener than road transport.

Freight movements across the Pennines are increasing at about



3% per annum. Nearly all freight across the Pennines is carried by lorry on the M62 [photo]. There are currently 18,500 HGV lorries per day passing the mid-point at Scammonden.

To accommodate this growth on the railway, 5.5 more train paths per day would be needed **each year**.

Currently, NO intermodal freight crosses directly over the Pennines because there are no routes that it can use. The demand for freight is predicted to grow, partly because trade will grow generally, but also:

- A shift in UK trade from Europe to the wider world (via deep sea).
- A much greater percentage of UK trade with Europe being via northern ports with ongoing reduction of reliance on south coast ports.
- North of England acting as a land bridge between Ireland and northern Europe.
- Increased imports of biomass.
- Need to decarbonise.
- Shortage of HGV drivers.

TfN is addressing this with the long-overdue upgrade of the Diggle Route to accommodate full length, full gauge freight trains to enable container traffic to cross the Pennines. However, its main purpose is to accommodate more passenger services and this will severely constrain freight modal shift from road to rail:

- It directs freight trains into the heart of the passenger network in Manchester, with trains passing through either Piccadilly or Victoria stations.
- Not only does this make freight routes very vulnerable to perturbations, it is a very bad principle to use main passenger stations for through-running of freight and TfN acknowledges the intense pressure on passenger services in central Manchester.
- The main trans-Pennine container routes into Trafford Park can only use the Castlefield corridor. This section is one of only three in the UK designated as "Congested Infrastructure" by Network Rail, yet large parts of TfN's freight strategy hang by this thread.



Passenger trains using increasingly busy through platforms at Manchester Piccadilly station are often delayed by freight traffic. The editor had to wait for this train to clear before his [then-late] train could proceed. The Diggle upgrade will see more of this.

RESILIENCE AND ENERGY SECURITY

According to the TfN Strategy, North-South routes by road and rail are congested on both sides of the Pennines. East-West routes are confined to a few very congested roads (but dominated by the M62) and, for container traffic, no rail freight routes at all. While investment in the Diggle route to accommodate long W12 gauge trains able to carry the largest containers is welcomed, it fails as an overall strategy for some very fundamental reasons: the Drax power station at Selby has a nationally strategic role to play for Great Britain. It is critically important because it provides a large base load (nearly 10% of UK demand) as well as its vital ability to top up the electricity supply when wind and solar energy is inadequate.

The days of massive coal stockpiles have long gone and today's biomass generation is much more akin to "just in time" supplies. For the power station at Selby to fulfill its nationally important role, it needs an efficient, resilient railway between the Port of Liverpool and its power station at Selby.

In news reporting of the recent rail worker's strike action, biomass delivery into Selby seemed to be the only service cited as essential (and that was in summer).

Mark Gibbens, Drax Power head of logistics said:

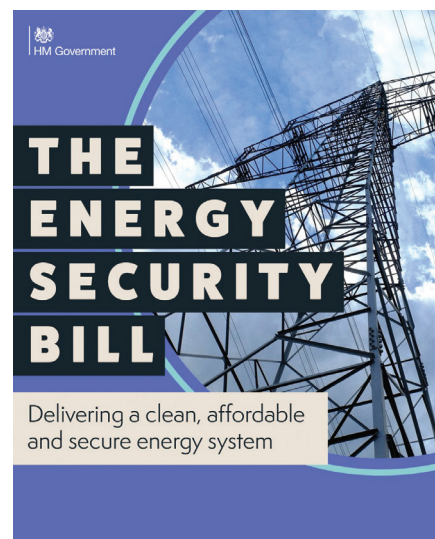
"At Drax we operate freight trains that carry sustainable biomass across the Pennines from the port of Liverpool to our power station near Selby in North Yorkshire. We rely on reliable and resilient rail links to transport the biomass that allows us to continue generating renewable electricity for millions of Britain's households and businesses and as we develop our carbon removals project BECCS at the power station. These important rail links also help keep freight off already congested road networks, helping to reduce carbon emissions across the UK's transport network."

"We operate several rail routes, including the TransPennine route, which is one of the most complicated and congested. That's why we support SELRAP in its efforts to reopen the 12-mile stretch from Skipton to Colne. It's vital for the local area as it offers a quick and affordable rail connection for passengers and it has the potential to be used for freight trains such as ours to provide a resilient alternative to the limited existing Trans-Pennine routes."

BUT HERE IN THE FAR-FROZEN NORTH

Whilst it is a fact that most of this levelling up rhetoric revolves around the need for balancing the economic opportunities for everyone regardless of whether they happen to live in the sunny South, mindful of recent worldwide events it has become clear that energy supply continues to make headline news.

Indeed, the Energy Security Bill, introduced to Parliament on 6th July 2022, aims to ensure the delivery a cleaner, more affordable, and more secure energy system. Which makes ensuring resilience of fuel supply to Drax more important than ever: its fuel sourced, importantly, from within a NATO country!

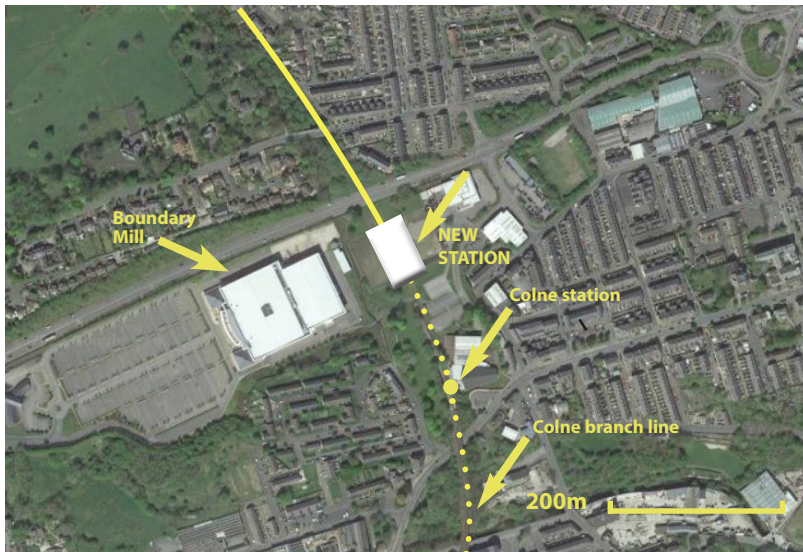


EAST LANCASHIRE: CLOSER TO LEEDS!

You heard it first from SELRAP: Colne to Leeds in fifty five minutes effectively bringing parts of East Lancashire 'closer to Leeds'. Simply put: within acceptable commuting distance. Think of it: metamorphosis from the long established pattern in East Lancashire where the trend of relatively localised employment remains following its fifty+ years isolation due to loss of rail connectivity.

A direct, modern and fast passenger service of two trains per hour via Skipton and Colne to Leeds.

But for every cloud there is a silver lining. The days when cotton kings demanded that their operatives lived close to their mills are long gone. But the sturdy terraced homes close to East Lancashire's town centres [and their rail stations] remain. And throughout the East Lancashire corridor, thousands live within easy access of the proposed via Skipton-Colne route to Leeds. And to job, education and leisure opportunities on offer therein. The new line will also encourage business developments, encourage inward investment and support economic growth. A brand new commuter belt but with affordable housing. And ripe for regeneration. Levelling Up for real:



Aerial view of Colne. The singled branch line currently terminates here. Typically for the entire area, countless affordable terraced homes are within easy walking distance of the town's station. Brownfield sites await further development. Significantly, 2.6 million shoppers currently visit nearby Boundary Mill annually.

THE CASE IS STRONG

- Strong strategic busines case and Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR).
- DfT passenger demand forecasts now show vastly improved patronage for the scheme.
- The government's 'Green Book' now places more emphasis on wider economic benefits.
- The government's levelling agenda has driven the requirement for transformational connectivity between the Aire Valley and East Lancashire.
- The via Skipton-Colne route passes near-entirely through 'Red Wall' parliamentary constituencies.
- Covid and a trend towards working from home has resulted in less-frequent but longer-distance commuting and an increase in leisure trips.
- The energy crisis has increased the need for resilient freight supply routes.
- Brexit has meant that shipping companies are making increased use on Northern ports as a result of 'issues' at Dover.
- The government's Integrated Rail Plan and its huge associated funding proposals are still 'work in progress'.
- The climate change crisis means an urgent need for transferring both passenger and freight traffic to rail in order to help decarbonise.

PATRONAGE

Remember the Arup study commissioned by SELRAP in response to the earlier work carried out in 2018 by consultants commissioned by the [then] Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling?



Tasked specifically with firming up projected patronage for the via Skipton-Colne route in contrast to the findings of the earlier report, the figures prepared by Arup were most encouraging. So much so that the DfT commissioned their in-

house consultants Atkins to carry out further detailed work using the NORMS: Northern Rail Operating Model.

PASSENGER FORECASTS ARE EXCELLENT (2023)

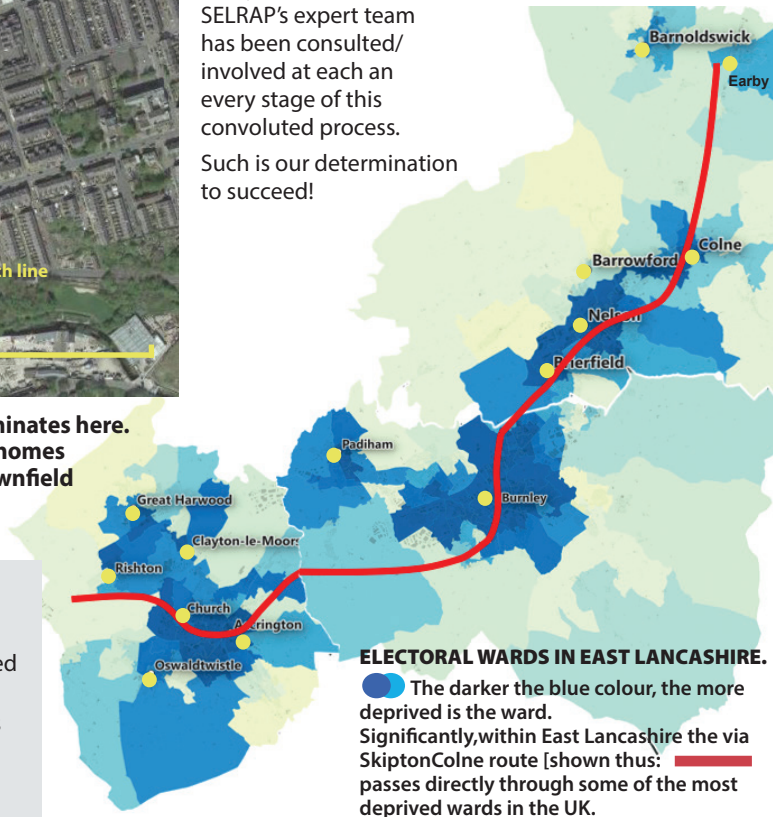
The passenger figures have stacked up very nicely and give a very strong business case for Skipton-Colne.

But there's more! In a bid to boost the case for the line still further the DfT is seeking to identify the wider economic benefits of the scheme via use of TfN's NELUM (Northern Economic and Land Use Model) system.

Then there's freight to consider.

Lest you should forget: SELRAP's expert team has been consulted/involved at each an every stage of this convoluted process.

Such is our determination to succeed!



Outlining the Authority's angle on proposals to reopen the Skipton-Colne line, Lancashire County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport says:

"You can count on the continuing support of Lancashire County Council in relation to the reinstatement and reopening of the Colne to Skipton Railway Line. The "missing link" is critical to ensuring that levelling-up and decarbonisation objectives are fulfilled, and that our residents and businesses benefit from increased employment opportunities and better east to west connectivity across the Pennines. The project is a key priority for Lancashire County Council and will be supported through emerging policy and strategy workstreams. We will continue to work proactively with the Department for Transport, Transport for the North and the rail industry to further refine the case for further development and delivery."

THE POLITICAL REALITY IS . . .

. . . that nothing happens without political will and determination. The good news is that all the MPs whose constituencies lie within the wider corridor of the Skipton-Colne route are proactively supportive of proposals to reopen the line. Significantly, most of those constituencies could be described as 'RED WALL'!

At which point you've seen it before but it may be worth repeating what former Secretary of State for Transport the Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP said about Skipton-Colne:

"It's one of the things we'd like to see happen."

And there is more. A whole lot more 'cos whilst it is a fact that SELRAP is entirely politically neutral, proposals to reopen the Skipton-Colne line enjoy cross party support.

Robbie Moore, Conservative MP for Keighley said:



"The Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership deserve enormous credit for their unwavering determination to get the Skipton to Colne Railway line up and running again. On the surface, reinstating just 12 miles of track that was removed in 1970 despite a recommendation within the Beeching report of 1963 that it be retained, may not seem much. However, SELRAP have done an amazing job of making the case for all the economic benefits this will bring.

The Skipton to Colne Railway Line is a vital piece in the jigsaw to connect Lancashire and Yorkshire. Not only this, but it will grant my constituents much easier access to great Northern cities such as Liverpool and Manchester. This does not just mean passengers, but freight as well. Currently, rail linkage between Keighley and the west is incredibly poor, but should the Skipton to Colne line re-open, this will deliver enormous economic benefit. Levelling Up our region is all about creating better transport related connectivity, and this long running campaign is all about this, and something which I wholeheartedly support.

In Parliament, I have been working closely with the likes of Sara Britcliffe MP and Rail Ministers to make the case for the Skipton to Colne line to reopen. Now, we have seen the Government express their support for reinstating the Skipton to Colne railway line, but intent cannot be enough if we are to truly maximise the potential a reopening can bring. I will not stop working, along with my colleagues, to ensure this is properly delivered, so we can take a huge step forward in connecting East with West."

Sara Britcliffe, Conservative MP for Hyndburn said:



"This government has already done a huge amount to level up the north and reopening the Skipton-Colne railway would be yet more evidence of levelling up in action. Importantly, it would give my constituents access to more employment and leisure opportunities. I will be pushing my colleagues in HM Treasury and DfT to focus less on process and more on action so a plan can be developed for reopening the line".

Liberal Democratic member of the House of Lords - Rt Hon Lord Wallace of Saltaire said:



Electrification of the lines from Leeds and Bradford to Skipton has transformed the prosperity of communities in Airedale over the past 25 years. Extension of that level of connection on into north-east Lancashire would have a similar impact, bringing together commuters, new enterprises, students and families across the region - and opening up additional paths for freight. If the government is serious about 'levelling up', this is exactly the sort of investment that should gain priority.

Green member of the House of Lords - Baroness Natalie Bennett said:



"The government's buzz phrase is "levelling up", but I'd rather talk about spreading out prosperity all around our land. And that spreading requires transport - linking up people, not just for jobs and business, but for sporting and cultural activities, to help family and friends get together, to just get an opportunity to see and do something new and different.

Many now are forced into their cars, onto congested, polluted roads - terrible for them, for the air we all breathe, and for the planet. For many other, that option is not available - and they're unable to live their lives to a full.

And of course we also need to get freight off the roads (and cut the overall levels of "stuff" we're shipping around. But for the things we need, rail is just the ticket.

SELRAP has done an amazing job in keeping the Skipton-Colne proposal on track - despite less than stellar government performance, and with the line being a Campaign for a Better Transport as a priority 1 candidate for reopening, it is time now for one more push!"

Graham Jones, former Labour MP for Hyndburn said:



Are we ever going to see 'levelling up' and rail connectivity along the vital Central Pennines Corridor or has the government pulled the plug because the national debt is too high, the Treasury parking the project in the sidings?

It might be officially at the development stage but many hardened campaigners knew several years ago that this simple project in rail terms just required a green light with shovels going into the ground. Sadly it's been litter strewn with printed paper from all government outlets

including local MPs with guff about delays, process, procedure, red tape and the hideaway line, "it's in the government/ministers' in tray".

The question now is, is this a political decision or an informed infrastructure decision? And if the latter, which one of the nine or so bodies leading on rail investment or levelling up is actually leading? We've recently seen T&Ns role undermined and yet the pronouncement by the governments in 2020 of a new red tape, quango basher, the Northern Transport Acceleration Council has hardly met. It is both but following the gargantuan effort of campaigners who have shunted the viability case over the line and kept it on track. It is 95% political.

Skipton to Colne may have modest costs of around £292m but the accumulated £2.3 trillion in government debts are delaying or cancelled levelling up projects. MPs have suddenly become less vocal about the project's prospects, an abandonment of ambition to level up as they run for political shelter.

For campaigners, promises about changes to the Green Book fiscal assessments to now include deprivation in the cost-benefit analysis have turned out to be vacuous. The Treasury cemented in a 1980's view of cash returns versus cash laid out rather than the difficult to quantify benefits of lifting a low-wage economy and aspirations with it too.

Brick walls have been plenty lately. MPs had been happy to dole out just enough words to be onside, and so too has Lancashire County Council but the truth is, where's the beef? The reds are up for forcing the government forward, the blues stuck in a word circle vortex.

SELRAP is one of the best lobbying groups. DfT has conceded nearly all their concerns but yet this is not enough. Perhaps to take this project forward, SELRAP could take a leaf out of the go head for the Poulton to Fleetwood rail reinstatement where petitions and public pressure added weight?

The outlook remains one of more hard yards.

It can only be hoped that General Election candidates will be falling over themselves to get this derailed project back in service.

SO THERE YOU HAVE IT:

Unequivocal political support across the board.

The combined message being lets get beyond the blather surrounding 'levelling up' and for a whole host of sound economic, social and environmental reasons get on with it: Skipton-Colne, that is!



Highlighting the urgent need for Skipton-Colne, thus providing access to highly-paid employment opportunities, new research has identified places in England where prices are increasing quickest. Poorer cities and towns in the North are experiencing the largest cuts to real wages.

As though to prove the point, the cost of living is increasing faster in Burnley than any other urban area in England, according to new research from policy institute Centre for Cities.

Inflation in the Lancashire town is estimated to be 11.5% - the highest rate out of the 58 urban areas looked at by the researchers.

This is notably higher than London and Cambridge, which have the lowest rate of 8.8%, and the UK average of 9.1%.

THE CONSERVATIVE MANIFESTO PROMISES

That said, the 2019 manifesto pledge on levelling up remains:

By 2030, local public transport connectivity ACROSS THE COUNTRY will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.

MEMBERSHIP AND DONATIONS

You could help further by making a donation whether you are a member of SELRAP or not. You can make a donation by PayPal or cheque

SELRAP's only source of regular income is via membership fees. Supporters will appreciate that costs for running our increasingly high profile campaign are not inconsiderable. You might also care to further-boost the strong message that SELRAP's current membership of almost 500 makes and add to it by joining us. You can do this by completing the application form below, or online via the "Join" link on our website:

<https://www.selrap.org.uk/>

Members are welcome to participate in all open meetings. Also, we are always on the lookout for people with the skills and experience to strengthen the committee.

Name.....

Address

.....

Telephone

Email.....

● I agree that SELRAP may use my contact details to keep me updated and in touch with the campaign by:

please ✓ preferences post email phone

Signature

Fee enclosed

Date

Annual subscription:

Ordinary member	£8.00
Concession (retired, unwaged, student)	£5.00
Life membership	£60.00
Group affiliation	£15.00

- Bank transfers: sort code: 05-03-83 account: 34689554: use surname/postcode as a reference
- Cheques payable to SELRAP: send to our Membership Secretary (see below)
- Membership Secretary: Iain Hodgen, 2, Record Street, BARNOLDSWICK Lancashire. BB18 5AP email: iainhodgen@hotmail.com

Data Protection Officer: Iain Hodgen. Contact details as per above.

Data protection policy from: Membership Secretary, Data Protection Officer, or website www.selrap.org.uk (member's page). You can cancel your consent to use your data at any time by contacting our Membership Secretary.

Note that cancelling ALL consents will cancel membership and vice versa.

Send any queries about how we handle your data to our Data Protection Officer. If not satisfied, contact the Information Commissioner's Office.

Information Commissioner Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF tel: 0303 123 1113 web: <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>



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AaG 2023



From the Chair: 10th APRIL 2023

Exactly Twenty Two years ago today, a very small group of community-minded individuals founded SELRAP.

Over the past few years, SELRAP has worked hard alongside many stakeholders to conclusively prove beyond all reasonable doubt that the Skipton to Colne project has a vitally-important strategic role. It also now has a financially-viable business case.

The truly transformational transport connectivity now on offer – seamlessly linking all of East Lancashire with the northern powerhouse cities of Leeds & Bradford – is realistically deliverable over the next few years.

Accordingly, to deliver on its manifesto promises of December 2019, relaunched in Accrington in February this year, this conservative government must now invest.

Peter Bryson – SELRAP Chair - 10th April 2023

TRIBUTE TO ANDY SHACKS

It is with deep sadness we report the tragic news of (original) editor of At a Glance, Andy Shackleton's severe and disabling stroke in the summer of 2022.

All of SELRAP Members at the 2023 AGM agreed the following Tribute, which was handed to Andy in a framed picture at his home in Settle.

'A Message of our profound gratitude to you Andy Shackleton for your extensive and tireless campaigning for SELRAP in your role as Communications Officer and Editor of At a Glance and as a founding member of SELRAP in 2001. As the key lynchpin of SELRAP and the Executive, you left no stone unturned in pursuit of our goal to get the railway line reopened. In a tribute to your long service to SELRAP We must ensure that this goal is achieved.'

OBITUARIES



Sadly, SELRAP has to report the recent death of Peter Smith, a former member of our Executive Committee. It is doubly sad that he will not see the reality of the rail line he believed in so passionately. We will always remember his contribution to our campaign as minutes secretary over many years. And think of him when the first train on 'our' line runs.

In April 2023, we learnt of the sad death of Roy St. Pierre. Roy was a founder, and energetic former chair of SELRAP, the "A" meaning Action. Please read the tribute on our website or facebook.

FOR SELRAP MEMBERS

We couldn't campaign without you and keeping you updated is no simple matter. Clearly, email is favourite. Might we therefore be so bold as to ask that you ensure we always have your current e-address.

MEMBERS' MEETINGS:

- Monday 12th June 2023. Town Hall, Skipton. BD23 1AH.
- Monday 11th September 2023. Crown Hotel, Colne. BB8 0QD.
- Monday 11th December 2023. Town Hall, Skipton. BD23 1AH.

OUR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

- Youtube Video: SELRAP, Join Us Up
- Website: www.selrap.org.uk
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/reopenskiptontocolne
- Paypal Donations: please use website or facebook