

SKIPTON-COLNE RAIL REOPENING PROGRESS A BIG BOOST FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Life-changing opportunities for local young people have been boosted by a major step forward in the campaign to reopen the 12-mile rail line between Skipton and Colne.

SELRAP (Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership) says the new Lancashire Combined County Authority's (LCCA's) recent decision to prioritise the cross-border "missing link", closed in 1970, is vital to help kickstart economic growth across the North, with the younger generation set to be key beneficiaries.



Craven College

Nick Tennant, SELRAP's vice chair, said: "The decision by the LCCA this spring to put the Skipton-Colne Line at the heart of its transport strategy is great news for people living on both sides of the Pennines, especially students and school leavers without a car.

"Reconnecting Pendle with Leeds, the reopening could quickly and cost effectively provide a much-needed shot in the arm for isolated and increasingly deprived communities, whose needs have been ignored by decision makers based far away for decades.

“Local young people’s access to jobs and education would be transformed. For example, vacancies at Skipton Building Society and other major employers in the Yorkshire Dales, such as the increasingly important tourism and hospitality sector, would become a much more realistic opportunity for job seekers based over the border in Lancashire.

“Enrolling at Leeds or Bradford universities, along with Craven College and Keighley College, would also be a much easier and affordable option for students from East Lancashire. The same applies in reverse for their counterparts in Yorkshire wishing to follow courses at universities and colleges along the M65 corridor.”



Burnley College

Around a quarter of students at Craven College in Skipton commute by road from East Lancashire.

Additionally, brownfield sites in East Lancashire suitable for affordable housing would become much more attractive for developers, making it easier for young people to get on the property ladder within striking distance of work opportunities in Yorkshire.

Skipton’s fast, frequent train service to Leeds and beyond currently contributes to house values in the town doubling those just over the border in Colne.

Another benefit arising for young people from the Skipton-Colne Line’s revival would be easier access to leisure opportunities in the Yorkshire Dales and around Pendle, such as walking.

Craven’s strong contingent of Burnley FC supporters would be able to get directly to Turf Moor by rail, without having to travel into Leeds. Boundary Outlet, adjacent to Colne Station, one of the North’s biggest shopping attractions, would also be much more easily reached by train from Yorkshire.

CASE STUDY 1: GEORGE FRY



George Fry (20) from Trawden, near Colne, signed up as a SELRAP member this spring. A former pupil of Park High School and Burnley College, he is about to start his third year studying French & Politics at the University of London Institute in Paris.

George said: “Train journeys around the North with my grandma are one of my fondest childhood memories. The Skipton-Colne Line would have made them much easier.

“A car should not a prerequisite for young people like me from East Lancashire to make a success of our lives.

“For me, the Skipton to Colne Line’s revival cannot come soon enough. It’s a sustainable, oven-ready and cost-effective solution to tackling traffic congestion, with the potential to dramatically improve the quality of life for many generations to come. Bring it on please!”

CASE STUDY 2: GEORGE BOULTER



George Boulter (24) from Malham, near Skipton, graduated in Politics & Economics from the University of Nottingham in 2024.

George said: “Studying at Ermysteds Grammar School gave me friends across West Yorkshire and East Lancashire. Skipton was the central hub for us as kids. Having the option to travel by rail to Colne and beyond would be a huge improvement for future generations.

“Growing up, I also saw firsthand the multitude of tourists who travel to Malham and other Yorkshire Dales beauty spots. Locally, traffic is at near breaking point for much of the summer. We desperately need to provide visitors with greener, integrated public transport options.

“I am pleased to see local leaders on both sides of the border working together to make the Skipton-Colne Line a reality once more.

“Skipton’s role as a centre for education, employment and nightlife would be greatly enhanced by its reinstatement. It’s a no brainer.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Reopening the Skipton-Colne Line has the strong support of local MPs and councillors from across the political spectrum, including Jonathan Hinder (Pendle & Clitheroe), Oliver Ryan (Burnley, Padiham & Brierfield) Sir Julian Smith KCB CBE (Skipton & Ripon) and Robbie Moore (Keighley & Ilkley).

With the former track bed still largely intact, the Skipton-Colne Line could be operational again within a decade. It is a low-risk option that is ready to go into the development phase. Unlike the long-neglected (and consequently underused) Colne-Preston Line, Northern Rail's "flagship", electrified Airedale Line, terminating in Skipton, is thriving. Alongside providing quick access to the commercial hubs of Leeds and Bradford, it offers speedy connections to London (Kings Cross), with a journey time of under three hours.

Half of Lancashire's population lives within two miles of the county's Preston to Colne central rail belt.

For further information, contact:

Nick Tennant: 0791 866 7213 nicktennant123@btinternet.com

Jane Wood (SELRAP media officer): 01282 815787 jvbwood26@gmail.com

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