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POLITICIANS BACK PETITION FOR
COLNE-SKIPTON RAILWAY RESTORATION

Sign the petition at: <https://c.org/B9mGvW9LMg>

Local MPs and councillors from across the political spectrum have joined forces to back a petition calling for the reopening of the 12-mile railway between Colne and Skipton.

On 10 October, they helped SELRAP (Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership) launch the petition, asking ministers to support efforts to reinstate the “missing link”, axed in 1970.

The online petition, to be presented to Parliament next year, notes of the line’s reopening: “Supporting government economic growth plans, the benefits for jobs, education, housing, health, tourism and the environment would boost prosperity in some of the country’s most deprived boroughs.”

The petition’s lead signatory is recent SELRAP recruit George Fry (20) from Trawden, a former pupil of Park High School, Colne. He commented: “For young people without a car in East Lancashire, getting to Yorkshire is a real struggle.

“For the sake of the environment, having a car should not be a necessity to make a success of our lives.

“The Colne-Skipton reopening would be transformational, not just for young people. It’s vital to kickstart growth, particularly in east Lancashire boroughs blighted by growing levels of poverty, such as Pendle.

“This petition is an important opportunity for all those who want to get Colne-Skipton back in

action to make their voices heard.”

The petition was launched at Thornton Hall Country Park, straddling the Lancashire/Yorkshire border, close to the route of the old line.

Jonathan Hinder MP (Pendle & Clitheroe) told attendees: “Our cul-de-sac of a railway illustrates how neglected the North’s public transport has been for so many decades. Reviving our direct rail connection with Leeds via the 12-mile missing link would be transformational for our local economy.”

In a video message of support, **Sir Julian Smith MP** (Skipton & Ripon) commented: "I commend the SELRAP team for making the case for this project's potential to boost jobs, investment and economic growth.

"The scheme also has the potential to improve opportunities for young people, strengthen links across the North and encourage more people to use our rail network."

In his speech, **Robbie Moore MP** (Keighley & Ilkley) said: “Boosting rail connectivity across the North, the reinstatement of the missing link would open up a wide range of opportunities for people of all ages, on both sides of the Pennines.

“The success of the Airedale Line from Leeds to Skipton cannot be underestimated. It’s now time to improve Keighley’s rail access to our near neighbours in Lancashire.”

The mayors of Pendle (**Cllr Nadeem Ahmed**), Skipton (**Cllr Winston Feather**) and Hyndburn (**Cllr Noordad Aziz**) also attended the petition launch.

The event was sponsored by Skipton Building Society. **Stuart Haire**, Group CEO, said: "Restoring

the Colne-Skipton rail link would strengthen connections across Lancashire and Yorkshire, opening up greater opportunities for people, businesses and communities across the region.

“As an organisation proud to call this area home, we have long supported the campaign to reinstate the line and recognise the positive impact improved transport links can have on economic growth, access to employment and local investment.”

Simon Brierley, Chief Executive of East Lancashire Commerce said: “For East Lancashire businesses, this isn't just about reinstating 12 miles of track, it's about reconnecting our economy. Reopening the Colne-Skipton Line would give companies access to bigger markets, a wider workforce and new opportunities on both sides of the Pennines.”

Michael Solomon Williams of Campaign for Better Transport said: "As the Government reforms the way the railways are run, it must focus on connecting more communities to the rail network. The Colne-Skipton Line is a prime example, which is why it is one of our priority lines. It would link people to jobs and education, boost businesses and the local economy. It would also support sustainable travel, including for tourism, which is vital to tackling climate change."

ENDS

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- The other local councillors attending the petition launch were: Cllr Stephen Atkinson (Leader, Lancashire County Council); Cllr Andy Bell (Colne Town Council); Cllr Andy Brown (Aire Valley); Cllr Raph Cohn (Keighley & Ilkley); Cllr Richard Foster (Wharfedale) and Cllr Simon Myers (Mid Craven). Also present was the Deputy Lancashire Police & Crime Commissioner, Kim Whitehead.

- The full wording of the petition:

Restore the 12-mile Colne-Skipton rail link, reconnecting Pendle and Leeds

We urge ministers to back local efforts to reinstate the Colne-Skipton rail link, closed in 1970.

Supporting government economic growth plans, the benefits for jobs, education, housing, health, tourism and the environment would boost prosperity in some of the country's most deprived boroughs.

Half of Lancashire's population lives within two miles of the Blackpool-Colne Line. Its extension to Yorkshire via West Craven is a sustainable, fair and cost-effective option to create life-changing opportunities for the young and those without a car.

At just 1% of the cost of Northern Powerhouse Rail, the Colne-Skipton Line reopening would revitalise long-neglected communities. Even Dr Beeching advocated its retention. It is key to tackling road and rail congestion across the North.

- With the former track bed still largely intact, the Colne-Skipton 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.

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