

# ON TRACK

Spring 2026

## LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY



## BACK TO THE FUTURE!

It's time to restore the Pennines' "Missing Link"



[www.selrap.org](http://www.selrap.org)

# WELCOME

## A New Look

The Skipton and East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership's annual newsletter has had a makeover.

The new title, *On Track*, reflects the project's status. We continue to make steady progress.

Our cover shows the famous 1904 tiled map of the North's rail network, displayed at Manchester's Victoria Station. Our thanks go to Philip Watson of Sheffield for his photograph.

We are also grateful to the many others who have allowed us to use their images.

As ever, we greatly appreciate all our members' support too.

We wish you a happy read, and hope to see many of you at our AGM (9 March).

## **SELRAP Executive Committee Spring 2026**

## "Shacks" Update

Andy Shackleton was a determined and effective campaigner for the project from day one.

"Shacks" often ran the half marathon between Skipton to Colne, to highlight the short length of the "Missing Link."

Sadly, following a severe stroke in 2023, Andy is now in a nursing home.

We keep him regularly updated on our progress towards making his dream come true.

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*Andy in happier times*

# CHAIR'S MESSAGE

## Steady Progress

Thanks to SELRAP volunteers' tireless campaigning over two decades, the reinstatement of the Skipton-Colne Line is ready to move into the development phase. As our cover page map shows, this would restore a vital, 12-mile-long "Missing Link", into the heart of the North's rail network.

The sad passing of our long-standing chair, Derek Jennings, required a late change to our last newsletter (December 2024). I am pleased to report that, in April 2025, we marked his two decades of voluntary service by unveiling a plaque at Colne Station (see page 4).

Louise Haigh's sudden resignation as transport secretary also required a last-minute change to our last newsletter. We quoted her replacement, Heidi Alexander: "I will do all I can to ensure we have a transport system that drives economic growth, connects our communities and protects the environment."

Unfortunately, electoral churn continues to frustrate progress. In May last year, only ten months after Labour's landslide General Election victory, Reform convincingly won control of Lancashire County Council. Since then, attention has focussed on the ongoing restructuring of local government across Lancashire, including the possibility of an elected mayor.

SELRAP was founded to revitalise long-marginalised communities in East Lancashire. This need is now greater than ever.



*The buffers at Colne Station (SELRAP)*

Alarming new deprivation data, published by the Government last October, clearly shows that poverty has significantly worsened over the past five years (see page 19).

Well-targeted investment is now essential to unlock the region's huge economic and social potential.

Restoring the Skipton-Colne Line would quickly open employment and housing opportunities, helping to stem steep decline.

There are good reasons for us to remain optimistic. In February 2025, rail minister Lord Henty acknowledged the project's "strong strategic case."

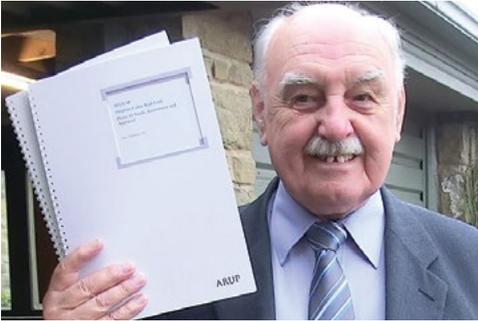
Our scheme also fully aligns with the vision laid out in Lancashire's plans for Local Transport and Growth, both published last year.

To move this vital project forward, we look forward to cooperating with the new Lancashire Combined County Authority (LCCA), and its two Yorkshire partners.

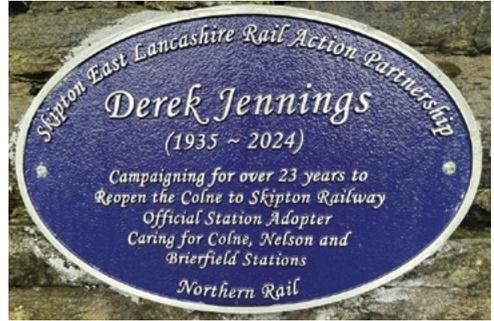
It is essential to help unleash growth and prosperity across the North of England.

*Peter Bryson*

# TRIBUTES TO DEREK



*Derek in 2015*



*The plaque at Colne Station*

On 26 April 2025, two well-attended public ceremonies unveiled tributes to SELRAP founding member and former chair, Derek Jennings, who sadly passed away in October 2024.

At Colne Station, a SELRAP blue memorial plaque marks Derek's many years of hard work campaigning for the Skipton-Colne Line's reopening.

At Brierfield Station, a new bench was dedicated to him by the East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership (ELCRP) and Save the East Lancashire Line Association (STELLA), two more groups he supported for many years.

Derek grew up in Bury, where local steam trains inspired a life-time love of railways, in this country and abroad. On retiring to Barrowford, he became

a Friends of Pendle Stations (FOPS) volunteer, maintaining Colne, Nelson and Brierfield stations.

Derek's niece Pam said: "As a family, we have been and still are enormously proud of the never-ending work he undertook with SELRAP, ELCRP and FOPS over the years – they were all so close to his heart."

Mike Cliffe, chair of ELCRP, said: "It was a pleasure to welcome the friends, family and colleagues of Derek Jennings to Brierfield to unveil his memorial bench on the station's platform."

SELRAP's longest-serving executive committee member, Dave Penney, said: "Derek was a true gentleman: courteous, persuasive, trustworthy, a reliable friend and a person of integrity."



*Pam Jennings, Caroline Holden & Mike Cliffe*



*Jonathan Hinder MP*

# MEDIA ROUND UP

Last year was another exceptionally busy 12 months for SELRAP on the media front. Our media officer, Jane Wood, continues to liaise closely with journalists, generating more positive coverage than ever before.

In January, the Skipton-Colne Line was centre stage in an interview with the chancellor on BBC1's *Sunday With Laura Kuennsberg* (see right).

A piece on the *Yorkshire Bylines* website by Colin Speakman (December 2024), forcefully arguing the case for the project, attracted over 12,500 hits.

Writing in the *Burnley Express* in May 2025 Jonathan Hinder MP commented: "This project would be transformational for our area, and I won't let it slip off the agenda." (See below).

The *Craven Herald*, *Keighley News*, *Leader Times Series* and *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* all reported our September 2025 members' meeting,



The chancellor's BBC interview (January 2025)

along with the *BBC News* (England) and *Lancashire Live* websites.

We had excellent local take-up of a press release we issued ahead of Burnley playing Leeds United (18 October 2025), highlighting how the Skipton-Colne Line's restoration would be a boost for football fans.

The autumn 2025 edition of *Friends On Track* (the Friends of Settle-Carlisle Line members' newsletter) also featured an article penned by our newest executive committee member, Nick Tennant.

**Jonathan Hinder** MP for Pendle and Clitheroe

## It's time to end the dead end ...

*PENDLE PAPERS 2/5/25*

Those railway buffers at Colne station should not be there. Our line shouldn't be a cul-de-sac. I continue to campaign for the Colne-Skipton Rail Link project which would transform the Pendle area, and provide huge benefits for the wider East Lancashire region.

For too long the scheme has been stuck with the Department for Transport, not progressing forward to the 'develop stage'. The DTf tell me that there are various reasons for this, including estimated passenger numbers being too low and the 'high capital costs to get it built. Meanwhile, our area misses out on the economic transformation this 12-mile stretch of track would deliver.

Look at the Northumberland Line, reopened after 60 years of closure. Officials predicted 50,000 journeys by Easter. The reality? 250,000 - five times higher than expected. What was dismissed as a 'colossal failure' is proving critics wrong.

Behind all the talk of trains are real people's lives. Working families who want access to more jobs. Young people who shouldn't have to leave the places they've grown up in just to find decent work. Businesses that would thrive with better connections. Reinstating this line would create a vital east-west route, opening up job markets and breathing new economic life into our towns and villages.

Even the Department for Transport admits the case is 'strategically strong' for east-west transport. The question isn't whether it makes sense - it's why we're still waiting. I've been pushing this case at every opportunity - sitting down with ministers, meeting with civil servants in the Department for Transport, working with campaign group SELRAP, and seeing first-hand how similar projects are succeeding elsewhere. I now want Lancashire County Council to

really swing behind this project, because local authority support has been so crucial to other such projects becoming a reality.

The fact is that passenger forecasts often underestimate how communities embrace new rail connections. When good services are provided, people use them - the Northumberland Line experience shows exactly what's possible when we invest in our transport infrastructure. I subscribe to the old line "if you build it, they will come".

For decades, money has gone South while our infrastructure needs have been ignored. This Government is rebuilding our public services from the rubble of a years of Conservative rule, but I'm holding their feet to the fire to ensure they deliver proper infrastructure investment in

the North of England too. This rail link would be a game-changer for our area - more jobs, better connections, and a stronger local economy.

The buffers at Colne are a visible reminder of how investment and opportunity have been cut off from our area for too long. It is time to tear them down and reconnect East Lancashire to growth, jobs, and the future it deserves and I am doing all I can to keep pushing for the reinstatement.

**Upcoming Surgeries**  
**Saturday, 10th May - Barnoldswick, 10.30-12noon**  
**Saturday, 17th May - Clitheroe, 10am-11.30am**

As always, please email me on [jonathan.hinder.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:jonathan.hinder.mp@parliament.uk) to book your slot.

**Jonathan Hinder MP meeting with the Rail Minister Lord Hendy to push for the reinstatement of the railway**

# COMMUNITY NEWS

## West Craven History Talks

*The Railway Comes to Earby* was the title of a talk at New Road Community Centre in the town (18 November 2025).

Earby & District Local History Society's (EDLHS) Bob Abel charted how the Skipton-Colne Line, till its demise in 1970, influenced life in the area.

Back in the day, trains from Earby were popular all year round, with services destined for the coast particularly busy during the traditional July Wakes Week holiday. Rail journeys to Skipton and Keighley were common for local school children too.

Contrary to popular belief, the line's closure was not the result of Dr Beeching's infamous 1960s railway review. Recognising its strategic



*Earby Station in its heyday*



importance, he actually recommended the line's retention and development. It's believed the line's subsequent closure was the result of a Whitehall civil servant's slip of the pen.

Bob is due to give a similar talk for Barnoldswick History Society in October 2026.

The pictures below are courtesy of EDLHS.



*Troops during World War II*

## Local Briefings

In 2025, SELRAP continued to present updates for a variety of local groups, including Skipton Rotary Club and the West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce.

In September 2025, our membership secretary, David Foat, updated Colne Waterside Neighbourhood Action Group on the status of the project.

## New Priorities

Despite dropping the Conservatives' *Restore Your Railways* programme, Labour is funding a few re-openings (see pages 20-21). Significantly, those moving forward are championed by their elected mayors.

They include the £5 billion "Varsity Line", linking Oxford and Cambridge. The two prosperous university cities already enjoy excellent rail services. The Green Book bias (see page 19) explains why they are receiving funding, unlike the Skipton-to-Colne Line.

Here "up North," all proposals, including Leeds/Bradford's long-promised Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) System, are still pending. West Yorkshire, with a population of 2.5 million, is Europe's largest city region without one.

To get ministerial buy-in for the "Missing Link," it is now vital that Northern leaders promote the many strategic benefits its restoration would bring.



*HS2 viaduct crossing the Grand Union Canal at Colne, Buckinghamshire*

## High Speed Hiatus

Following Rishi Sunak's cancellation of HS2's two northern legs in 2023, the government has committed (January 2026) £10 billion to fund tunnelling into London's Euston station.

The net impact of these two decisions is the entire taxpayer-funded cost of HS2 - £47 billion so far and rising by £7.5 billion each year – stands to only benefit the South.



*Richard Tice*

Meanwhile, in his foreword to September 2025 Policy Exchange report, *Instead of High-Speed Rail*, Reform's deputy leader Richard Tice wrote that, if elected to power, his party will scrap high speed rail and instead prioritise "conventional rail and roads that help ordinary folk get to work."

HS2's huge price tag could have paid for the entire Skipton-Colne Line many times over.

# THE YEAR IN POLITICS

## Electoral Dysfunction

The differing cycles for local, regional, and national elections make aligning all levels of government behind the project a major, ongoing, challenge for SELRAP.

Recently, the question mark hanging over local elections (due May 2026) created uncertainty, as does the still pending decision on whether Lancashire will have an elected mayor and local authorities.

The good news is that West and North Yorkshire's serving mayors, Tracy Brabin and David Skaith, remain firm supporters of the project.



Tracy Brabin

David Skaith

Mayor of  
Lancashire

Following the 2024 General Election, we briefed several new MPs, all strongly supportive too.

To move the Skipton-Colne Line forward, close co-operation between Lancashire and Yorkshire is now essential, especially to synchronise the complex devolved and central government funding mechanisms together.

## Whitehall Watch

Holding the Treasury's purse strings for major infrastructure projects, the chancellor, Rachel Reeves – the MP for Leeds West & Pudsey - remains a key player.

At the Department for Transport (DfT), Heidi Alexander continues as secretary of state, alongside rail minister, Lord Hendy.

The creation of the renationalised *Great British Railways* (GBR), as well funding HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR), remains high on ministers' "to do" lists.



Heidi Alexander

Lord Hendy

Rachel Reeves

Encouragingly, launching GBR in February 2025, Heidi Alexander said: "A reliable, affordable, and efficient railway is vital to supporting the government's growth mission, not only in connecting people to jobs and opportunities, but also contributing to the regeneration and integration of local communities."

The Skipton-to-Colne Line could quickly deliver these objectives.

# THE PENNINE GATEWAY

## Yorkshire's Success



*Skipton Station (John Bentley)*

Transformed by electrification 30 years ago, the Airedale Line, connecting Skipton to Leeds and Bradford, is today Northern Rail's "flagship" service.

Boosted by two new stations west of Leeds, passenger growth continues to outperform national trends. Figures from the Office of Rail & Road show that in 2023-24, over 1.2 million people used Skipton Station, making it busier than Heathrow Terminal Four (T4).

The growing demand for the fast, regular service has led Northern Rail to order longer trains.



*Leeds Station (Network Rail)*

## "A No Brainer"



*Nelson Station (hall-royd-junction.co.uk)*

Speaking in Parliament in 2019, Pendle's former MP, Andrew Stephenson, said that extending the Airedale Line into Lancashire is a "no brainer."

Offering a direct and fast rail service every 30 minutes, the reinstated "Missing Link" would revitalise the hearts of many struggling Red Rose towns. This would widen residents' work, educational and leisure opportunities, particularly for young people and those without a car.

Two new stations are proposed, at Colne and West Craven. Today's two-hour journey from Nelson to Leeds would be halved, to 58 minutes.



*Kirkstall Forge Station (Northern Rail)*

# A GAME CHANGER



## ECONOMY AND JOBS

It is essential for economic growth and employment.

Within ten years, the project would create an estimated 2,000 jobs in Lancashire and over 350 in Yorkshire.

East Lancashire salaries lag Leeds by around £10,000 per annum.

Key employers supporting the project include the Skipton Building Society and Barnfield (Brierfield).



## HOUSING

Skipton's booming housing market demonstrates the positive impact a fast and frequent train service has on local economies.

The average price of a terraced house in Skipton (£262,720) is more than double that in Colne (June 2024).

Meanwhile, East Lancashire has thousands of empty properties.

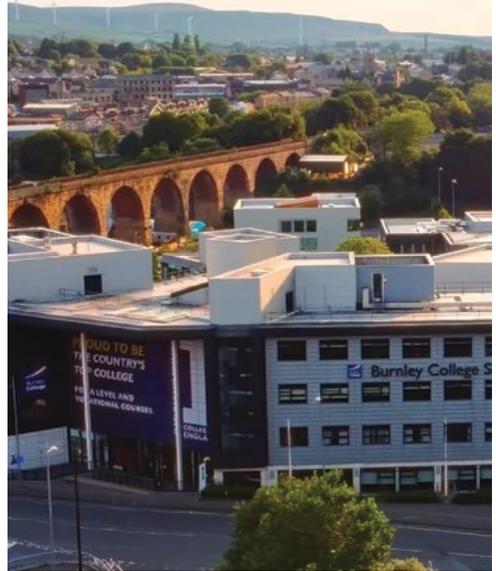
Often well-built, former millworkers' homes, these could easily be upgraded into affordable housing.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The re-opened Skipton-Colne Line would boost access to higher and further education.

East Lancashire residents wanting to study over the border in Yorkshire have the same right to a fast, frequent train service as their big city counterparts.

Centres of learning in both counties will become far more accessible, to all.



*(Burnley College)*

## QUALITY OF LIFE

The revived line would enable visitors to get to many tourist and leisure destinations more quickly and more sustainably.

Currently, just 4% of visitors to the Yorkshire Dales National Park arrive by train.

Access to green space, especially wilder countryside, provides significant physical and mental health benefits.



*(John Bentley)*

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# CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIVITY



**PRESTON**

*(Marketing Lancashire)*

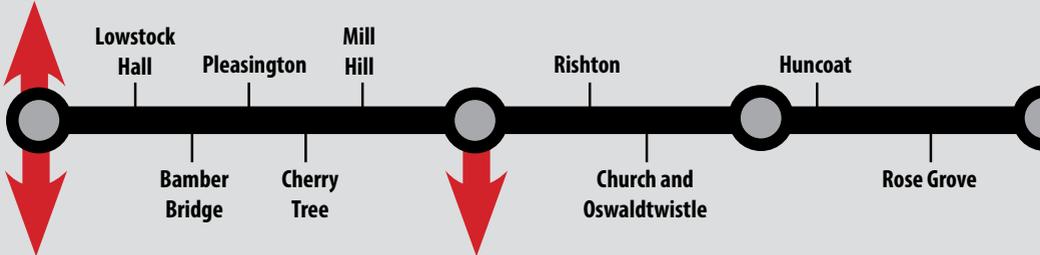


**BURNLEY**

*(ADT-TV)*

## LANCASTER

**PRESTON      BLACKBURN      ACCRINGTON      BURNLEY**



**LIVERPOOL**



**MANCHESTER**

Existing railway refurbished



**NELSON**

*(Pendle Green Party)*



**COLNE**

*(Boundary Mill Outlet)*



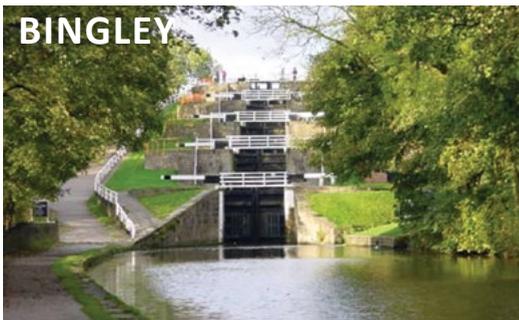
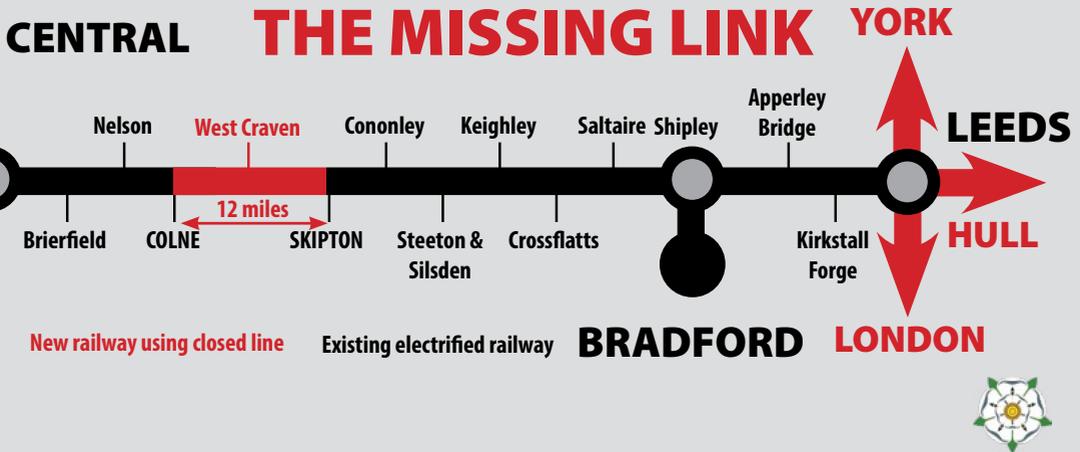
**SKIPTON**

*(Skipton Castle)*



**LEEDS**

*(Trinity Centre)*



**BINGLEY**

*(Pennine Waterways)*



**BRADFORD**

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**“People do not live their lives within regional government boundaries.” (Yorkshire Rail Plan, 2025)**

# LOCAL VOICES

## Business

**Prof Miranda Barker OBE DL (East Lancashire Chamber of Trade):**

“Creating rail connectivity between Skipton and Colne is vital. For moving our people, our learners and our workers. But also for moving our goods. Globally competitive, our manufacturers are disabled by not being able to ship their products as fast or as cheaply as the competition. For Lancashire’s strength, for the UK’s economy - Skipton to Colne rail connectivity is vital, and can’t wait.”



*Miranda Barker*

**Kathryn Fogg (Northern Community Bank):**

“The reopening will unlock countless opportunities for our communities: boosting jobs, expanding educational access, and enriching leisure choices. By connecting us directly to more towns and cities, it will help build a more inclusive and diverse region.”

## Councillors

**Azhar Ali OBE (Nelson East):** “This scheme, as well as the A56 villages bypass, would have minimal cost compared to other schemes currently being undertaken....The Government needs to refocus on counties instead of growing the cities.”

**Andy Brown (Aire Valley):** “The Skipton to Colne railway represents excellent value for money. I suspect there is no project in the country that makes a more effective connection for a cheaper price.”

**Rick Edwards (Burscough & Rufford):**

“We are keen to build future assets and infrastructure whilst increasing job opportunities of which the reinstatement of the Colne-Skipton railway line is one.”

**Ash Sutcliffe (Waterside & Horsfield):**

“This stretch of railway would be the best single biggest catalyst for social and economic change for Colne; nothing compares.”

**David Whipp (Pendle Rural/Earby & Coates):**

“Reopening of the Colne to Skipton rail route should be a priority, along with improvements to the existing East Lancashire Line.”

## A SELRAP Member

**Eric Beardsworth (Foulridge):**

“The Missing Link between Colne and Skipton could and should be reinstated as a strategic East/West route.”



*Azhar Ali*



*Andy Brown*



*Rick Edwards*



*Ash Sutcliffe*



*David Whipp*

# LEARNING FROM OTHERS

## Reversing Decline



*1960s Scottish Borders protesters*

We have continued to learn from groups who successfully campaigned for their local line to be reopened.

For example, Network Rail's Mike Smith told our 2025 AGM that the Northumberland Line could not have reopened (December 2024) without a good business case and strong local authority backing.

At our September 2025 members' meeting, the Campaign for Borders Rail's Chris Norton highlighted the crucial role community support played in the 2015 reopening of the Edinburgh to Galashiels Line, controversially closed by Dr Beeching.

Devolution of power from Whitehall is a recurring theme. If the Skipton-Colne Line was in London, Scotland or Wales, it would already be reopened.



*Levenmouth devolution boost (Network Rail)*

## Welsh Revolution



*King Edward VIII's Welsh visit in 1936 (Alamy)*

Visiting South Wales in 1936, King Edward VIII very famously said: "Something must be done" to tackle local poverty.

Nearly a century later, his wish is finally coming true.

We will be keeping a close eye on the development of the South Wales Metro, which is breathing new life into communities up and down the Welsh Valleys.

SELRAP's Andy Dixon said "With a similar population to East Lancashire, South Wales is showing what more ambition can deliver: brand-new, fully-accessible, and 'green' trains, running every 15 minutes, with common branding and ticketing. Lancashire's leaders need to up their game and follow Wales's example".



*South Wales Metro, 2025 (Andy Dixon)*

# BLUEPRINTS FOR SUCCESS

## The Scottish Borders Line



*(Network Rail)*

It is now a decade since the £355m, 35-mile-long Scottish Borders Line, connecting Edinburgh with Galshiels and Tweedbank was royally reopened.

Such has been the line's success, it is now being improved. An extension to Carlisle is on the cards.



*(Network Rail)*

## The Levenmouth Line



*(Network Rail)*

The six-mile-long Levenmouth Rail Link was reopened in 2024.

Network Rail Project Manager, Joe Mulvenna, said: "The return of the railway to these communities for the first time in more than five decades is momentous and life-changing."



*(Network Rail)*

## The Northumberland Line



*(Network Rail)*

Since it reopened in December 2024, passenger numbers on the Northumberland Line have topped over 950,000, surpassing all predictions.

The line connects Ashington and Blyth with central Newcastle.



*(Network Rail)*

## The Dartmoor Line



*(Network Rail)*

In 2021, Network Rail laid 11 miles of track connecting Okehampton and Exeter for the first time in over 50 years.

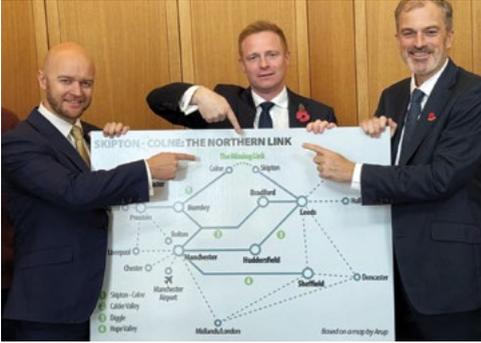
Over half a million passengers used the service in its first two years back in action.



*(Network Rail)*

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**Around the UK, recently reopened rail lines have outperformed all predictions**



*Jonathan Hinder, Robbie Moore & Sir Julian Smith*

## MPs United

After a SELRAP briefing in Parliament (3 November 2025), local MPs have reaffirmed their support for reopening the Skipton-Colne Line:

### **Jonathan Hinder (Pendle & Clitheroe):**

“I’ll continue to press in Parliament and with ministers to ensure that our area receives its fair share of investment. Our communities have waited long enough – it’s time to get this line back on track.”

### **Robbie Moore (Keighley & Ilkley):**

“Now is the time for a fast, modern rail link and I will be playing my part to help SELRAP get the attention from both local and national government to make sure that East/West connectivity is significantly improved.”

### **Rt Hon Sir Julian Smith KBE CBE (Skipton & Ripon):**

“The SELRAP team presented a compelling case for restoring the Skipton to Colne rail link, which could unlock significant economic growth across North Yorkshire and Lancashire.”

## Peer Pressure

Members of the House of Lords with local connections have recently confirmed their support for the project:

### **Lord Lee of Trafford:**

“Having been both a former MP for Pendle and tourism minister, I know how beneficial the line would be, boosting both tourism and the local economy.”

### **Lord Gascoigne of Pendle:**

“Improving East/West transport would boost not just Colne and Skipton, but the wider northern economy and connectivity.

“As a proud Pendle lad, for levelling up, growth and transport, I hope it happens soon.”

### **Lord Wallace of Saltaire:**

‘Living in Airedale, I’m well aware of how much the electrified line from Leeds to Skipton has contributed to local prosperity.

“Linking the towns of East Lancashire with Yorkshire would similarly help to raise employment, bring new families to live in the area and new companies to invest.”



*Lord Lee*



*Lord Gascoigne*



*Lord Wallace*

# MIND THE GAP

## MP Speaks Out



“The Skipton–Colne link would bring new jobs, investment and growth to communities that have been left behind for too long.”

*Oliver Ryan MP, Burnley, Padiham & Brierfield, November 2025.*

## Worsening Poverty

The latest nationwide Indices of Multiple Deprivation were published in October 2025. Measuring employment, education, health, and crime, these make particularly grim reading for the North.

Blackpool remains the country’s most-deprived town, followed by Burnley in fourth place. Compared to five years ago, Pendle experienced the sharpest economic decline of any borough in the UK. Blackburn and Hyndburn also declined, markedly, since 2019.

These truly awful figures underscore the urgent need to reinstate the Skipton-Colne Line, which would kickstart economic growth.

## Charging Bias

Council tax bills highlight an unfair North-South divide.

For example, in 2025/26 the average band D levy is £2,465 in Burnley, but only £1,017 in Westminster.

Despite this disparity, national taxpayers are funding all improvements to London’s public transport, such as the recent £800m upgrade to Bank Underground Station (right).

## Green Book Opportunity



It is widely recognised that HM Treasury’s Green Book, prioritising taxpayer-funded investment for major infrastructure projects, has unfairly favoured the South for decades.

Andy MacNae MP (Rossendale & Darwen) has repeatedly highlighted the Green Book’s southern bias to the chancellor in Parliament (see above).

On 25 February 2025, the then deputy prime minister, Angela Rayner MP, told the Convention of the North in Preston: “I share the chancellor’s determination to review the Green Book, to properly recognise the potential of places across the country.”

Redressing this imbalance would further strengthen the business case for the Skipton-Colne Line.



*Bank Underground Station (istock)  
Mind the gap announcements started at Bank Underground station in 1968.*

# A COMPELLING CASE

## Housing - Growth - Jobs - Education

From: EAST LANCASHIRE	HIGH PASSENGER NUMBERS
To: LEEDS CITY CENTRE	NEW STRATEGIC RAIL ROUTE ACROSS THE PENNINES
Route: DIRECT VIA SKIPTON & COLNE	IMPROVED NETWORK RESILIENCE
Journey time Burnley and Pendle to Leeds: LESS THAN ONE HOUR	INVESTMENT REQUIRED ~ £430 MILLION+ NEW SERVICE STARTS ~ DELIVERABLE BY EARLY 2030's

 **Regeneration & Economic Growth**

## Missing Out



*Burnley Town Centre*

Despite its city-sized population (260,000), over the past half-century successive governments have all neglected East Lancashire.

Sadly, none of the recently-announced, taxpayer-funded schemes will benefit struggling former mill towns straddling the Lancashire-Yorkshire border.

Totally inexplicably, and despite the county's escalating poverty levels (see page 19), the government's *Northern Growth Plan*, issued alongside the high-profile announcement for NPR, ignored Lancashire.

Crucially, Lancashire's Local Transport Plan (October 2025) highlights that over 600,000 people live within two miles of the Blackpool-Preston-Colne line.

Pennine communities far from the centres of power, such as Colne, Keighley and West Craven, deserve a decent, modern, rail service too. Their needs are arguably greater than those of metropolitan areas.

Fast and frequent east-to west services – linking Leeds, Bradford, Preston and beyond - would be a real game changer, for them.

## Front Of The Queue

The Skipton-Colne Line's compelling business case makes it the prime contender to join the growing number of highly successful rail reopenings around the UK.

From Cardiff to Edinburgh and from Exeter to Newcastle, recently reactivated train services have helped revitalise isolated communities, with passenger use surpassing all expectations (see pages 16 & 17).

The Budget (26 November 2025) gave the green light for two more, in Newcastle (Leamside) and Bristol (Portishead) and a £1.5 billion extension to London's Docklands Light Railway.

On 15 January 2026, the transport secretary also confirmed funding to complete the £11 billion TransPennine Rail Upgrade (TRU), and committed £45 billion for Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) into the 2040s, a boost for some Yorkshire cities.

All of this is welcome news.

But the North is far more than its big conurbations.

# THE ROUTE TO SUCCESS

## A Compelling Case



*The track bed at Thornton-in-Craven (SELRAP)*

Reinstating the Skipton-Colne Line through the only natural gap in the Pennines would cost just 1% of the budget for NPR.

The project's strategic importance is widely recognised by ministers and MPs, past and present, as well as by councillors and elected mayors across the North.

Boosting East/West rail connectivity, the restored "Missing Link" would be a catalyst for economic growth. For example, a 2024 government forecast estimated it would create thousands of jobs. The review of the Treasury's Green Book, meanwhile, is likely to further bolster the business case for it.

With the track bed still intact, its wide-ranging benefits could all be delivered long before the 2040s.

It is an oven-ready, low-risk and value-for-money opportunity.

The long-overdue restoration of the Skipton-Colne Line cannot come soon enough.

## Next Steps



*Colne-Skipton closure plaque (SELRAP)*

SELRAP, a voluntary organisation, has championed reopening the "Missing Link" for two decades. The need now is for local, regional, and national governments to work together to take this transformational project forward. This will require investing in detailed engineering studies, to assess all viable options

The new Lancashire County Combined Authority must drive the project forward, in close collaboration with its North and West Yorkshire counterparts and Whitehall. This will require political will power and cross-party support, transcending short-term electoral cycles.

The short-sighted decision to close the Skipton-Colne Line in 1970 must be reversed. Failure to grasp this opportunity to reopen it would be an unforgivable betrayal of future generations.



*Students at Leeds Station (Northern Rail)*

# YOUR SUPPORT IS VITAL

## Your Donations Are Vital

With our goal in sight, we need as much public support as possible.

SELRAP is 100% reliant on financial contributions from the local community. Quite simply, without them we would cease to exist.

We welcome donations of any size at any time. You do not have to become a member to make one.

Payment by bank transfer is preferred:

- Account Name: SELRAP
- Sortcode: 05-03-83
- Account Number: 34685954

Please use your surname and postcode as a reference.

Alternatively, post a cheque to our membership secretary, David Foat. (see page 23).

## Make Your Voice Heard

Strong community backing for this project is vital.

Your supportive letters to the press, ministers, MPs, mayors and councillors keep the project high on the agenda.

Another option for making your views known is to attend MPs' and councillors' local surgeries.

## Media Coverage

All our media coverage is logged on the SELRAP website.

## Get Social

Social media is a powerful way of getting our message across. As well as your own posts, please like and share mentions of the project to your followers.



*David Foat at Colne Station (November 2025)*

## Data Protection

Our data protection policy can be found on the members' page of our website. Alternatively, contact the membership secretary.

To cancel your consent for us to use your data, or raise queries, contact the membership secretary. (NB: Cancelling ALL consents will cancel your membership, and vice versa).

If you are dissatisfied you should contact the Office of the Information Commissioner (Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF; tel: 0303 128 1113); website: <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>)

[www.selrap.org](http://www.selrap.org)

# MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

## Join The Campaign

It is easy to become a SELRAP member.

To join, please either visit our website at [www.selrap.org](http://www.selrap.org), or use the form (right).

## Members' Meetings 2026

These are open to members and invited guests.

### • 9 March 2026 (7pm)

Colne Town Hall, BB8 0AQ.

Access via New Market Street, just off Albert Road.

There will be a speaker from the successful campaign to reopen the Northumberland Line.

### • 14 September 2026 (7pm)

Skipton Town Hall, BD23 1AH

Access via Museum Walk, opposite Marks & Spencer.

Guest speaker to be confirmed.

There will be an option for members to join both meetings online, via Zoom.

## Keeping In Touch

It is easier and cheaper to keep members informed online. Please ensure we have your current email address and let us know if it changes.

We have a members-only

Facebook group: [facebook.com/reopenskiptontocolne](https://facebook.com/reopenskiptontocolne)

## Contact

David Foat, SELRAP membership secretary and data protection officer, 54 Varley Street, Colne, Lancashire, BB8 0RB. Email: [davidfoat1@gmail.com](mailto:davidfoat1@gmail.com)

## Sign Up

Dr/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms (Please tick)

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

Postcode:.....

Telephone/Mobile: .....

Email: .....

Membership Type:.....

2026 Membership Fees	Before 31 March	After 1 April 2026
Full Member	£8.00	£15.00
Concession (OAP/ Student Unwaged)	£5.00	£10.00
Business / Group / Voluntary Organisation	£15.00	£25.00
Life Member (One-off Payment)	£60.00	£75.00
Patron		£50.00

If paying by bank transfer, please use your surname and postcode as the reference:

Account Name: **SELRAP**

Sort code: **05-03-83**

Account Number: **34685954**

**OR**

Cheques should be made payable to SELRAP and sent to:

David Foat, SELRAP Membership Secretary, 54 Varley Street, Colne, Lancashire, BB8 0RB.

Additional contributions are welcome too.

I agree to SELRAP keeping me updated about their campaign by:

*Please tick:* Post / Email / Phone / Text

Signature: .....



Date .....



[www.selrap.org](http://www.selrap.org)