

# The campaign to reopen the Skipton-Colne railway line

2020



Described in Westminster as a "No Brainer", reopening the Skipton to Colne rail line is closer still



CONNECTING  
COMMUNITIES  
ACROSS  
THE NORTH



At a Glance

## At a Glance 2020

The campaign for the reopening of the former rail line linking Skipton, North Yorkshire, with Colne, Lancashire:

- Where it's at
- How it got there
- Where it's headed



### FRONT COVER

Speaking the proverbial thousand words, these 2 x pictures say it all:

Clearly illustrating what's on offer when the 12 mile Skipton to Colne line is reopened and:

Meeting in Westminster; Members of Parliament, Senior Department for Transport officials, top rail industry representatives and SELRAP .... who combine to progress the scheme.

### SKIPTON - COLNE: WHERE IT'S AT RIGHT NOW

Are you sitting comfortably ..... then I'll begin. With a back to front sort of story that starts, unusually, at the end. And where, exactly, the campaign to reopen the Skipton to Colne rail line is at right now. With how we got there for dessert .....

In the last issue of *At a Glance* the writer cited a quote from someone famous ..... that:

**"Good ideas don't go away!"**

Indeed, proposals to see the Skipton to Colne rail line reopened, as part of the "Northern Link" East-West route for passengers and freight turn out to be such a good idea that the Rail Minister, Chris Heaton Harris was minded to state at a debate in Westminster on 29th October 2019 that:

**"SELRAP is possibly one of the best action groups I have come across in my short time as Rail Minister, and certainly one of the most effective".**



Rail Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris speaking at a debate on Skipton-Colne proposals in Westminster in October 2019

So effective, that more recently, his officials at the Department for Transport penned the following e mail to SELRAP:

***We have briefed our Ministers on the findings of the further feasibility work that [former Secretary of State for Transport] Chris Grayling commissioned and you will be pleased to know that they have asked us to prepare costed proposals for further work to take through RNEP 'Decision to Develop' approvals.***

As though you'd need me to tell you: RNEP is an acronym for the 5 x stage:

Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline .....



..... that opens the batting with Determining that there is a worthwhile proposal. And, having been Developed, Designed and Delivered, winds up with being Deployed ..... and trains on "our" line!

## SKIPTON-COLNE SCHEME AT THE "DEVELOP" STAGE

.... and what it means for SELRAP's campaign:

The e mail from DfT officials also stated that there would be:

- A full engineering study on reinstating the "missing link" as a heavy rail line, primarily for passenger services, to establish if the costs can be substantially reduced.
- Further work on the passenger demand forecasts .... and service pattern options.

### GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS FOR "OUR" LINE, THEN:

Double track, heavy rail to full modern technical standards ..... with a new station in Earby. And passive provision for future electrification. Already on the table is a direct [two trains per hour] passenger service linking Leeds with Colne in a transformational journey time of just 50 minutes. All to be delivered using modern project management and construction techniques ..... with no interruption to any existing rail services.

The new services to Colne can be introduced immediately "our" line is reopened. That said, the expectation is that they will be extended to Nelson, Burnley and Accrington just as soon as the practicalities of doing so are addressed.

### FURTHER WORK BY SELRAP

SELRAP recently commissioned a further study from world-renowned consultants, Arup: to review passenger demand forecasts for the Skipton to Colne line ..... and also better-quantify the huge socio economic benefits the new services will bring to East Lancashire. The DfT are looking forward to sight of this report: transformational rail services fit into the Government's levelling-up agenda.



Photo: Paul Bigland

Advice, then ..... is to watch this space ..... as proposals to reopen the Skipton-Colne rail line gather pace!

**Filling that space: fast, modern trains linking East Lancashire with Leeds, and beyond. And, crucially:**

- Connecting people with jobs ..... thereby:
- Contributing to the 'levelling up' process

### FROM THE CHAIR

#### Social Distancing

As I sit to write this, it is an interesting and indeed, very sobering experience to look back at SELRAP's 2020 Annual General Meeting: to realise how our normal lives have changed since the 9th March 2020. None of us present that evening realised it would be our last opportunity to freely gather with acquaintances, to exchange gossip and chit-chat. Nobody had heard of those two little words: 'social distancing'.

Our invited guest speaker that evening was David Cutter. We all crowded together into Colne's Lower Municipal Hall, to sit shoulder-to-shoulder, as David made a passionate appeal calling for the Skipton to Colne line to reopen. He finished up by giving several very good reasons why the Government needs to make this happen sooner rather than later. Coming from the Group Chief Executive of the UK's fourth-largest building society and also North Yorkshire's largest single employer, David's words made a big impression on all present.

The only sign that a big upheaval was afoot was just before he started, David had asked me for a few quiet words. He asked me to rearrange the agenda, so he could catch the last train down to London. He needed to attend an urgently convened meeting starting early the next morning. Lockdown commenced just a few days later: since when SELRAP has been social distancing.

However, during a state of national affairs unknown even to my grandparents during wartime, SELRAP has remained active as a very effective campaigning group. Another word none of us knew back in March was Zoom, which is how our executive committee now meets.

However, those two little words - social distancing - neatly sum up why SELRAP was founded. Over the past five decades, the quarter of a million people who live in the communities of East Lancashire have all experienced what many others have only very recently experienced: the detrimental long-term effects of social distancing. In other words, for the sake of just twelve miles of missing railway line, East Lancashire is a living example of what happens when long-term social distancing leads to economic deprivation, inequality and social immobility.

Thus, today, there are even more reasons why this Government must soon start building the Skipton to Colne railway line.

Peter Bryson, Chairman SELRAP, July 2020

## SELRAP'S JOURNEY TO THE DEVELOP STAGE

..... of the RNEP has been a convoluted one. In January 2019, the [then] Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, made a second visit to Colne. Where he announced that the study he had commissioned 12 months earlier had concluded that reopening the Skipton to Colne rail line is "technically feasible" and that he was "personally committed" to the proposal. Notwithstanding, he said progressing it was dependent on further study on the demand for freight ..... and review of capital costs.

## BEYOND THOSE TASTY MORSELS, HOWEVER

..... for whatever reason, the [Steer Group] study remained under wraps ..... despite multiple requests for sight of it by SELRAP and its many supportive MPs. Since then, it's been something of a .....

## ROLLER COASTER RIDE

Picture, then, the scene at SELRAP's Project Development Team meeting of 26th September 2019.



Hosted by Peel Ports at their Liverpool 2 HQ in September 2019, and Chaired by SELRAP, members of the campaign group's Project Development Team representing the Department for Transport, Network Rail, Arriva Northern [TOC], Drax Power, Arup, Amey, Arcus, the Skipton Building Society and, of course, Peel Ports attended.

Where DfT-appointed consultants tasked with the carrying out the "further study" demanded by the [then] Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling [as per above] on the demand for freight and review of capital costs outlined a number of scenarios for the future of the Skipton to Colne line, together with the services it might reasonably be expected to facilitate when reopened.

## BACK IN WESTMINSTER

..... at a meeting on 21st October, cross-party MPs and Peers, Senior rail industry representatives, Rail costings specialist[s], Rail freight users, Transport for the North and SELRAP combined to make it clear to DfT representatives that joined up, efficient and effective rail connectivity with the region's economic drivers [via the reopened Skipton to Colne line] for communities recognised to be amongst the most deprived in the UK has to be considered alongside the widely recognised and urgent need for a new East-West route for all classes of freight.



Hosted and Chaired in Westminster by [then] MP for Hyndburn, Graham Jones, Senior DfT representatives were left in no doubt about expectations for the Skipton to Colne rail line.

Commentators have noted that this October meeting took place to the backdrop of critical developments in Parliament re Brexit. Indeed, it has been asked ..... what other community group could have been directly involved with a meeting in Westminster when there was so much of National importance going on?

That fact, alone, has to be a powerful message .....

## A MESSAGE FURTHER REINFORCED

..... later that same month. At a debate in Parliament on the Colne to Skipton Railway Link ..... hosted [again] by Graham Jones MP and chaired by Sir George Howarth on 29th October ..... delegates heard [again] multiple cross-party MPs speak of their strong support for SELRAP's proposals. Amongst the many who spoke passionately and at length throughout the 90 minute debate, former Rail Minister, Andrew Jones MP for Harrogate & Knaresborough said:

***"I support this project. It covers only 12 miles: there is existing trackbed, and it will connect people and jobs."***

and John Grogan MP, for Keighley said:

***"There are advantages to the Skipton to Colne scheme. We have heard some of them mentioned that other schemes do not have. One is speed, the potential to implement this scheme speedily is something that no other trans-Pennine option has."***

The current Rail Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris ..... pictured speaking at the debate on page 2 concluded his speech by stating that:

***"The Government are keen to reach an early conclusion on what role a reinstated line could play in improving passenger and freight connections across the Pennines. Given the current phase that this scheme finds itself in, my focus, and the Government's, is on establishing the case for progressing it."***

For the full text of this debate, follow this link:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-10-29/debates/E6A80064-CCA4-441A-BE1E-E385439D1314/Colne-ToSkiptonRailwayLink>

Commentators have noted [again] that the date for this debate coincided with another critical point in Parliamentary proceedings: the announcement that the 2019 General Election would take place on December 12th.

Yet, cross-party MPs, Government Ministers, former Ministers, Shadow Ministers et al took time to take part in the 90 minute debate on the reopening of the Skipton to Colne rail line.

Again, a powerful message that has not gone unnoticed.

## AND THERE IS MORE

..... 'cos a further meeting dedicated [yet again] to progressing the reopening of the Skipton to Colne rail line took place in Westminster ..... on January 28th, 2020. Hosted and Chaired on this occasion by Andrew Stephenson MP ..... and pictured on the front cover ..... the remit for this hour and a half slot was to familiarise recently elected MPs with the campaign, and what "our" line will do for their constituents ..... and, of course, add to calls for its urgent reopening!

Once again, SELRAP was involved in coordinating the event ..... attended by over thirty delegates ..... including MPs, Peers, Government Ministers, Senior Department for Transport, Local Authority, Transport for the North and Northern Powerhouse Partnership representatives, Network Rail, Train Operating Companies, Consultants, the Skipton Building Society, and more. SELRAP's presentation focussed on the key benefits of housing, economic growth and regeneration for parts of East Lancashire ..... with existing stations situated within easy walking/cycling distance of large populations ..... and making the region the archetypal "heavy rail commuting territory".

Once again, there was common agreement on the urgent need to reopen the Skipton to Colne rail line for both passengers and freight.

This then, the third Westminster meeting in less than four months re the Skipton to Colne rail line. It makes you think: it should! It certainly excited the media. For, just moments before commencement of play, SELRAP's Chairman, Peter Bryson was interviewed by the Beeb: on College Green. The self same spot where MPs are routinely grilled in front of the Houses of Parliament!

## NOT LONG AFTER

..... "stiff letters" [on cardboard, my Dad used to say!] advocating that the Skipton-Colne scheme be progressed to the "Develop" stage of the RNEP from Lancashire County Council and Transport for the North landed on the desk of the Secretary of State for Transport, the Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, came the news that SELRAP has been working towards for the best part of far too long ..... and back to where we came in [as per page 2], the news that:

**The Skipton to Colne rail reopening scheme has been progressed by DfT Ministers to the "Develop" stage of the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline.**

## WITH THANKS TO COUNTLESS SUPPORTERS:

Parliamentarian, Industry, Local & Transport Authorities and last, but by no means least, loyal members of SELRAP ..... for their tireless lobbying over many years:

## A RESULT, THEN!

That said, nothing is certain until it is certain. And for all who have worked so hard to get the campaign thus far, there is more to do. Much more: read on .....

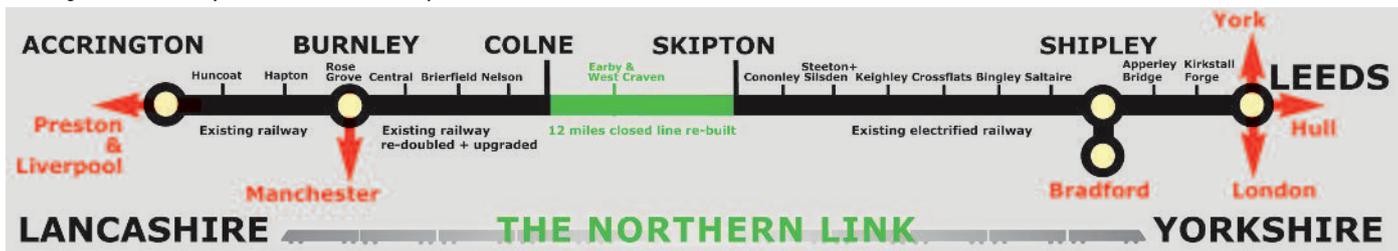
## SO WHAT'S TO DO BEFORE TRAINS CAN RUN?

Whilst it must be said that "we're on our way" ..... a whole heap, as it happens. That's why members of SELRAP's Executive Committee continue to lobby, to engage with whomsoever has the potential to progress the Skipton to Colne scheme towards reality. Inclusive of our more than several supportive MPs with constituencies throughout the wider corridor of the East-West route that reopening the Skipton to Colne line facilitates: incumbent, recently elected, so-called "red wall" winners et al. The writer is in contact on a regular basis with all of them. Many responding by asking what more they can do to further-progress the campaign.

## THEN THERE'S THE BIT ABOUT

..... attending conferences, meetings [more recently virtual], workshops, preparing Papers for the DfT and its Ministers, liaising with the media. Where, incidentally, SELRAP's increasingly high profile campaign has been featured in excess of one hundred times in the last twelve months alone. Not only locally and regionally, but nationally, too. All of which says much about the direction of travel and rationale for proposals to reopen the Skipton to Colne rail line.

And so it goes on. Indeed, progressing the reopening of the Skipton to Colne line is the next best thing to a full time job for many of us. Albeit unpaid!



## EXTENSION OF AIREDALE LINE

..... Leeds-Skipton services into East Lancashire is the current thinking within the DfT via "reinstatement of the rail link between Skipton and Colne, primarily as a passenger route". As confirmed within a letter to Sara Britcliffe MP [Hyndburn] from Chris Heaton-Harris on 6th May 2020.

The Rail Minister went on to state that capacity for trans-Pennine freight via existing routes would be further examined.

And that he was aware of "emerging proposals" for a rail freight terminal on the site of Huncoat Power Station.

The latter adding to the rationale for freight use of "our" line: Ed.



At Prime Minister's Questions [via video link] on 20th May 2020, Sara Britcliffe MP Hyndburn said she was "..... sure that the PM will join me in thanking SELRAP for the continuous campaign to reopen the Colne to Skipton railway line".

## SO THERE YOU HAVE IT .....

In the frame, then, a heavy rail rebuild of Skipton-Colne ..... inclusive of [at least] passive provision for electrification. And Network Rail specifies that all line rebuilds are to be constructed so as to allow use by W12 gauge freight as/when the need occurs.

This, to the backdrop of the fact that:

- Current conjecture at the DfT is that additional trans-Pennine rail freight capacity can be provided via use of low-riding, small-wheeled stock [with limited capacity for containers] on existing routes.
- Via Skipton & Colne is the lowest graded trans-Pennine route and, crucially [critically, even], avoids the need for freight to transit overly-congested central Manchester.
- Throughout the near-two hundred year history of railways, few have prospered with a passenger-only offer. Quite the converse: freight was always the mainstay of the rail network.
- Immediately the Skipton-Colne line is reopened, in addition to facilitating new passenger services, it will offer an additional route for Drax trains. Vital as the UK's biggest energy supplier extends its use of biomass beyond 2027, and the company progresses towards CO2 negative status via carbon capture.

## IT IS A WIDELY-ACKNOWLEDGED FACT

..... that the new route will provide social, economic + environmental benefits not only within the immediate corridor of the new East-West route, but across the North of England ..... as it contributes to the much-vaunted Government pledge re levelling up North-South economies.

## THE MORE REASON, THEN

..... to ensure that the Skipton to Colne line is built to a "future-proofed" specification. As opposed to paring the project down to the point where it is unfit for purpose as traffic develops. This, currently being the case on the [passenger-only] Borders railway. Five years on from its grand reopening by The Queen, its cost-cut majority single line infrastructure specification routinely results in delayed, disrupted and overcrowded services on the route.

## SO YOU'LL BEGIN TO APPRECIATE

..... that factoring freight into the figures could impact on the sums made available for rebuilding "our" line. Including the notion of funding sufficient to ensure that engineers have the flexibility to design-out potential negative impacts that reopening the route flags up. Inclusive of those that, rightfully, concern residents whose properties lie close to the original route of the line through Earby town centre.

## A WHOLE LOT, THEN, AT STAKE

..... as the "Develop" stage progresses ..... and practical, realisable options for both infrastructure of the new route and services on it are ..... you have it in one ..... **Developed!**

**MEMBERS' MEETINGS:** open to members + invited guests.

Please note that the following meetings will take place only when Coronavirus restrictions are lifted, and it is deemed safe to attend large gatherings.

All @ 7.00pm .....

- Mon. 14th September 2020: Crown Hotel, Albert Road, Colne
- Mon. 9th November 2020: Herriots Hotel, Broughton Road, Skipton
- Mon. 8th March 2021; Annual General Meeting: Lesser Municipal Hall, Albert Road, Colne

Please note that details of meetings in Earby will be published later.

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 could help further by making a donation ..... whether you are a member of SELRAP or not.

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.

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

.....

.....

.....

'phone

.....

e mail

.....

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

[please circle 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: Derek Jennings, 3 Hamilton Road, Carr Hall, Barrowford, Lancs. BB96DE  
email: derek.jennings01@gmail.com

Data Protection Officer: David Walsh, 38 Western Road, Skipton BD23 2RU

email: walshdavidcharles@gmail.com

Data protection policy from: Membership Secretary, Data Protection Officer, or website [www.selrap.org.uk](http://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.

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

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

AaG 2020

## FINALLY

5

..... it's worth considering what the Secretary of State for Transport said on a visit to the North of England on December 4th during the 2019 election campaign:

**"The Colne-Skipton reinstatement was one of the examples we gave on the Beeching Reversal Fund.**

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

OK, "our" line wasn't a Beeching casualty, but it's significant that reopening the Skipton to Colne line is on the SoS's radar: Ed.

Also worth considering ..... the more so as the nation wrestles with the economic and social consequences of Covid 19 .... is the:

### "BUILD, BUILD, BUILD"

..... mantra. And further statements made by Boris Johnson since his election as Prime Minister:

- "We're going to unite and level up across the country with better rail, less congested roads and beautiful British-built buses - making travel cleaner, greener, quicker, safer and more frequent."  
(11/02/2020) **Buses to take travellers to rail stations! Ed.**
- "This is a government that is wholly committed not just to defeating coronavirus, but to using this crisis finally to tackle this country's great unresolved challenges of the last three decades .....  
..... "to mend the indefensible gap in opportunity and productivity and connectivity between the regions of the UK ....." (30/06/2020)

#### Closing comments ..... on mending that 12 mile gap:

**Over the past few months the UK has learned that social isolation, compounded by poor transport connectivity and travel bans, causes untold social and economic problems.**

**However, even before Covid-19, the effect of a fifty year-long, Government imposed travel ban between East Lancashire and Leeds were already starkly obvious. Fifty years of social distancing from the economic powerhouses of Yorkshire ..... a distance of just 12-miles ..... has had a devastating economic effect. With parts of East Lancashire officially recognised as areas of multiple deprivation.**

**Thus, the casual visitor to the constituencies of Hyndburn, Pendle and Burnley can readily spot countless examples of the detrimental long term effects of enforced social distancing.**

**In late 2019, these long-marginalised constituencies voted for change ..... and long-term transformation for THE NORTH.**

**This once-in-lifetime opportunity for the new government, then, requires that the Chancellor (MP for Richmond, North Yorkshire: Ed.) conducts a critical assesment of the reason[s] why investment in transport across The North has been forgotten about during so many past decades.**

**SELRAP's campaign has proven the good strategic case for new and transformational rail services. Building Skipton to Colne must become the showcase for providing new rail services across The North ..... thus connecting communities and also levelling up the economy. It will also support the development of many environmentally sustainable policies.**

**The Government therefore needs both vision and commitment:**

- **To move Skipton to Colne rapidly through the Develop Phase and, in language the Government will surely comprehend, to:**
- **Get Skipton to Colne done!**

## FINALLY, FINALLY ..... REMEMBER

..... what John Grogan [then] MP for Keighley said:

**"The potential to implement this scheme speedily is something that no other trans-Pennine option has."**

Indeed, reinstatement of the Skipton to Colne line is flagged up within TfN's Investment Programme that parallels its [February 2019] Strategic Transport Plan ..... for completion before 2027! **Makes you think: it should ..... 'cos, as campaigners we believe it could/should be in use by 2025: Ed.**

**At a Glance is edited by:**

**Andy Shackleton  
10 Townhead Avenue  
Settle  
North Yorkshire  
BD24 9RQ**

**e mail: ashacks@btinternet.com**

**Step outside the box  
with SELRAP:**

**'Cos:**

**If you only do what  
you've always done .....**

**You'll only get what  
you've always had .....**