

The campaign to reopen the Skipton-Colne railway line 2016

At a Glance

A Green light for The North

The long wait:
Is it almost over?



S E L R A P

CONNECTING
COMMUNITIES ACROSS
THE NORTH

Patrons: George Adam, Richard Bannister, Chris Davies, Gordon Prentice, Nicholas Reade, Brian Simpson, Lord Richard Faulkner, Lord Tony Greaves
MPs Gordon Birtwistle, Nigel Evans, Anne McIntosh, Andrew Stephenson, Julian Smith MEPs Jacqueline Foster, Timothy Kirkhope

www.selrap.org.uk

At a Glance 2016:

..... an outline of the rationale behind the campaign for the reopening of the former rail line linking Skipton, North Yorkshire, with Colne, Lancashire and progress towards that aim. Rebuilding the 12 mile line will facilitate extension of the attractive Airedale line services into East Lancashire thus creating a direct & fast new trans-Pennine route from Burnley into the heart of Leeds. This will benefit commuters, shoppers, tourists, business & industry, freight transport, and more.



FRONT COVER

Colne station:

With a green light clearly on display above the buffers, and a spoof train from Skipton about to break down the barriers to reopening.

The reality is closer than you'd have previously thought possible.

The crowds are a reality, too. But on this occasion they were about to walk towards Skipton albeit on the trackbed!

Read on for more on this a low risk, low cost project that will transform empty trackbed and dead end branch line to create a new East-West link.

FROM THE EDITOR

I wish to begin with an apology. For the fact that SELRAP has been rather quiet in public recently. Fact is that in the last 18 months a whole heap has happened re the campaign to reopen the Skipton to Colne rail line. And it is difficult to know where to start. Now, however, it can all be revealed:

Following a 'summit' meeting held in Skipton in January 2015 at the behest of the Department for Transport and SELRAP [and Chaired jointly by the DfT & SELRAP], a working group was established.

Tasked with considering what purposes a rail link between Burnley, Colne and Skipton could potentially serve "in order to place such a scheme in the correct context in transport planning terms" the group met throughout 2015. Chaired by Lancashire County Council, representatives from North Yorkshire County Council, West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester combined authorities, Pendle Borough and Craven District Councils, together with those from Network Rail and SELRAP, attended.

The group known as the Output Definition Group [or ODG] was further tasked with preparing a report detailing the potential fit for the Burnley-Colne-Skipton route within the pan-northern network and to ensure that it would be fed into Network Rail's north of England network study during 2016.

But the positive news does not end there. For it is also a fact that the UK's Devolution agenda supported by all parties and giving more power to regional decision makers is potentially favourable to SELRAP. Then there is the Northern Powerhouse proposal focussing on transport connectivity to boost economic growth. Together with the initiatives made by both Transport for the North and Rail North. Added to all of this is the prediction of strong growth in passenger numbers and promise of better quality service[s] from both new northern franchises.

Something of a 'sea change', then: the backdrop to a new trans-Pennine rail route for passengers and freight via Skipton & Colne being significantly brighter.

So: watch this space. Better still, help us fill it

REMEMBER

..... the severe floods of winter 2015/16 when, across the North of England, sections of roads [and bridges] were taken out. With both urban and rural areas badly affected.

The disastrous effect on local economies was thoroughly thrown around within the media. The loss to the wider community as commuting to work became impossible and goods were diverted via longer, convoluted routes. With up to town shopping trips no longer a sensible option tales of tourists deserting in droves. And the rest

Thankfully, massive efforts are being made to restore normal services as quickly as possible. A reminder, if ever it were needed, that economic well-being parallels the availability of reliable and effective transport for goods, personnel et al.

Wholesale re-opening of closed lines is clearly not an option. But re-building a small number of short, but strategically-situated lines could impact on the network to a far greater extent than their length and/or projected cost[s] would suggest.

PARALLEL LINES

On February 2nd 1970 12 miles of double track rail line between Skipton and Colne were taken out. The link between the two towns completed a strategic tie between the wider North West and Yorkshire & Humber, their communities, populations & inter-dependent economies in between.

The reader will be aware of certain parallels between the scenarios outlined above. Sadly, they differ in that the effects from closure of 'our' line are ongoing. This being the backdrop to SELRAP's campaign. That said, dependent on circumstances, today's planners are now considering options that include those for winding back the station clock, so to speak.



RAIL: BACK TO THE FUTURE

Back in the heady days of the 1960s and 70s, everyone who mattered was going to travel by car. The rest of us would take the bus. Or simply not travel effectively making them economically inert!

History has a habit of rearing up in our faces:

- Expanded rail services are now cited as being critical.
- Notwithstanding, planners face the fact that the combined total route mileage of closed rail lines exceeds those currently in use.

The reality is that was then. And this is now. When, victim of its own success, road transport is an increasingly unreliable way of getting anywhere on time. With road congestion estimated to cost the UK economy £20 billion per year. That's £55 million per day!

The result is a doubling of rail passenger numbers [to 1.6 billion per year] over the last 20 years as travellers vote with their feet and combine to make unprecedented demands on the current network. The new buzz word being:

EXPANSION

..... thanks to the unbending efforts of today's rail industry planners who are responding to changed circumstances.

That said, their to-do lists are long ones. History having left us with huge disparities in the availability of effective transport for communities, in some cases, less than a dozen miles apart.

More than a million passengers use Skipton station each year.

Less than a dozen miles away, just 90,000 use Colne station.

Rail services in Skipton provide sustainable connectivity as a means of promoting economic growth, tourism, access to employment and education & training opportunities.

Meanwhile, slow & unreliable services on the under-utilised, under-valued and dysfunctional branch line from Burnley to Colne are failing the community they are meant to support.

Historically, through routes have consistently out-performed branch lines. Restoration as part of a strategic east-west route via Skipton is the only practical solution to the Colne branch's ongoing problems: Ed.

AND THIS

..... when the link between the availability of effective, reliable & sustainable transport and economic well-being is widely recognised by those with responsibility in that direction. Nowhere is there more mileage on this connection to be found than that within the rationale for

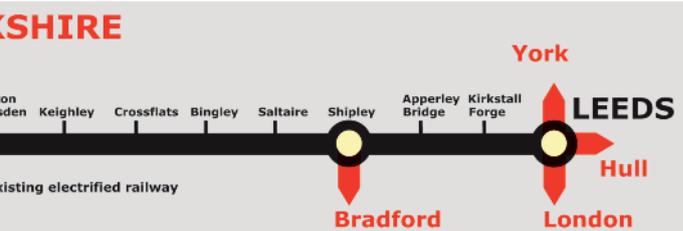
THE NORTHERN POWERHOUSE

..... the much-publicised proposal whereby the North's population of 15 million, and their respective economies, would be corralled into a collective force that could begin to rival that of London and the South East. Pivotal to this is the work undertaken by

TRANSPORT FOR THE NORTH (TfN)

..... a partnership between local transport authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and combined authorities across the north of England, working with government and national transport agencies [including Network Rail] and aimed at identifying how best to drive economic growth through strategic investment in transport. The vision for the group includes "a world class transport system" that will link up the individual cities and towns in The North, "to allow them to function as a single economy and be stronger than the sum of their parts". For more information on TfN visit:

<http://www.transportfornorth.com/index.html>



Then there's the work of

RAIL NORTH

..... an amalgam of local authorities across the north of England, in partnership with the DfT. With a remit that includes working alongside the Train Operating Companies, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Chambers of Commerce and other stakeholders (SELRAP, maybe: Ed) and a vision for the North's railway "to support economic regeneration and future prosperity, and contribute to a better quality of life for everyone working in the north of England". <http://www.railnorth.org/>

Included within the aspirations for Rail North are proposals for:

- Better connections between the cities of the North
- An expanding commuter network
- Connecting areas of economic disadvantage with areas of economic opportunity
- Providing capacity to accommodate the expected growth in freight by rail.

The reader cannot fail to recognise remarkable parallels with the rationale for the [low cost] reopening of just 12 miles of disused rail line between Skipton and Colne! Which will:

- Offer strategic connections between Liverpool & Manchester [and its Airport] and Leeds and more
- Facilitate extension of the attractive Airedale line commuter services, thus creating a direct & fast new route from Burnley [and beyond] into the heart of Leeds
- Connect economically-deprived East Lancashire with employee-hungry Leeds
- Complete the most easily graded trans-Pennine route, making it eminently-suited to freight transit.

OUTPUT DEFINITION GROUP: THAT REPORT

Crucially, for the first time ever, all the local authorities directly concerned with the [cross-border] Skipton to Colne rail line have been talking to one another about it on a regular basis. And they have prepared a report:

The *Burnley-Colne-Skipton railway: Conditional Outputs Statement* "to consider what transport purposes a potential rail link between Burnley, Colne and Skipton could potentially serve."

TRANSFORMATIONAL

The thread throughout the report is that the provision of rail services offering journey times "faster than driving" from Lancashire to West Yorkshire via Colne and Skipton would have a [Get this: Ed] "transformational effect"

So now we have a report commissioned at the behest of the Department for Transport and endorsed by all the Local Authorities directly affected by proposals concerning a future for the Skipton to Colne [& Burnley] rail line.

The report acknowledges that the corridor between East Lancashire and Leeds suffers from poor transport connections. It goes on to state that reopening the Skipton to Colne rail line would facilitate a number of very high priority journeys across The North that are currently either impossible or so convoluted as to be unattractive travel options. With obvious ones being Burnley, Nelson and Colne to Skipton, Keighley & Leeds. Journeys between destinations including Blackburn, Bolton, Bradford, Hull, Sheffield, Wakefield and York are also cited as being critical. With further options for strategic travel, including access [via Tod. curve] to Manchester airport. Consideration of provision for freight is another first.

OUR REACTION

SELRAP welcomes the publication of the 'Outputs Definition' report which we have all been working towards for the last year. In particular *Lancashire County Council, with the support and approval of North Yorkshire County Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority, have formally recognised the very high priority of better connectivity from Pendle through to Skipton and Keighley, within the Burnley to Leeds corridor.*

Clearly, the report is only intended to be a starting block for more detailed study to firm up the options and assess the business case. But the fact that it is to be used by the Local Authorities in future engagement with the Department for Transport, Transport for the North, Network Rail, the wider rail industry [franchisees et al] and relevant bodies is an important step forward in the campaign to re-join East Lancashire and North Yorkshire via the Skipton to Colne rail link.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The report proposes that further work be carried out to:

- "Understand better the scale of economic, social and environmental benefits"
- "Generate options, costed at an outline level"
- "Appraise the business cases for the options in line with current WebTAG standards."

Underlining the wide variety of transport links to which reopening the Skipton to Colne line could potentially be relevant, the report concludes that further consideration of the route should take place in the context of strategic as opposed to purely local transport planning.

The findings from the report are to be fed into the North of England route study to be carried out by the rail industry shortly. It will also be used to inform Transport for the North's developing strategies for future connectivity across the North.

NB The report could be a crucial factor in determining whether the Skipton-Colne scheme features within the DfT's Long Term Planning Process for construction in Network Rail's Control Period 6 between 2019 and 2024: Ed.

To see the report [Appendix A] in full & its backdrop, visit: <http://council.lancashire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=7838>

BIGGEST EMPLOYER IN TOWN JOINS SELRAP

SKIPTON Building Society has become an affiliated group member of SELRAP.



Pictured on Skipton station are David Cutter, Chief Executive SBS [left] with SELRAP Chairman David Walsh

David Cutter, chief executive of Skipton Building Society, said "We are pleased to help and support the SELRAP group in its campaigning for the reopening of the Skipton-Colne railway line as part of the national network for passengers and freight."

"At Skipton Building Society we recognise that improved links between East Lancashire and Leeds will bring economic and social benefits to our heartland and we are proud to support that."

SELRAP looks forward to working with "the Skipton"

SELRAP IN DOWNING STREET

Accompanied by Keighley MP Kris Hopkins, Tim Parkinson, Chairman of Airedale Springs, Haworth, was among



Tim Parkinson [left] is pictured next to Kris Hopkins MP at Number 11

prominent business people from across the country to attend a top-level Government reception hosted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt. Hon. George Osborne MP, and focussed on creation of a Northern Powerhouse.

Mr Parkinson said the reception provided an ideal opportunity to raise issues and that "Reinstatement [of the Skipton to Colne line] would provide an important rail link between Leeds, Bradford, Manchester and Liverpool, thus providing good transport links and increased capacity between key economic centres and improving the economic prospects along the route."

Airedale Springs is a supporter of SELRAP.

BIOMASS VIA SKIPTON & COLNE?

Invited to a meeting at Drax Power station, SELRAP heard that the power generator is shipping Biomass across the Atlantic to both East and West Coast ports. Drax is currently carrying it across the Pennines from dedicated facilities in the Port of Liverpool via a convoluted rail route taking 8 hours for the 100 mile journey.

Unlike coal, which can be stockpiled, biomass has to be shipped on an 'just in time' basis. It is therefore essential to secure a resilient and reliable supply chain, and to ensure that rail paths are always available.

Remember the disruption caused by floods of 2015/16?: Ed.

Drax is responsible for generating a whopping 8% of all UK electricity [and keeping the lights on: Ed] and expressed strong interest in the possibility of a strategic rail freight route via Colne and Skipton the more so on learning that it will be the lowest graded trans-Pennine route making it eminently-suited to freight.

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

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

In common with all infrastructure projects, re-opening the Skipton to Colne rail line will impact on its immediate surroundings and, to a lesser extent, beyond.

Arcus Consultancy Services Ltd have kindly provided SELRAP with an assessment of the environmental feasibility of the proposed rebuild.

The high level assessment of the planning and environmental constraints took into account planning issues; noise & vibration; landscape & visual; archeology & cultural heritage; ecology & hydrology, and flood risk.

NO SUBSTANTIAL CONSTRAINTS

Whilst it is fair to say that the report identified a number of moderate constraints that will require attention in order to minimise impact on the environment: planning issues, rights of way, protected species et al the good news is that there are "no substantial constraints to the Development" [of the Skipton to Colne rail line]

The full Arcus report will feature on SELRAP's website in due course: <http://selrap.org.uk/>

WHAT ELSE?

In addition to monthly Executive Committee meetings and bi-monthly Open Members' Meetings in Skipton, Colne & Earby, members of SELRAP's Executive Committee have found time to:

- Host top brass DfT Officers, the Chairman of Lancashire LEP, Arcus Consultancy Ltd who have [all] taken a tour of the route of the former rail line linking Skipton with Colne.

We have also had:

- Regular meetings with Lancashire County Council Cabinet Members and senior officers and met with senior representatives from:
- Pendle Borough Council
- The Department for Transport
- Transport for The North & Rail North
- Network Rail
- Arriva Northern

We have also met with [SELRAP patrons] Andrew Stephenson MP and Julian Smith MP and attended the National Rail Conference.

SO WHAT NEXT

Spurred on by publication of the ODG report, SELRAP's campaign has notched up into top gear as we approach those with the power to say "Yes".

On SELRAP's to-do list are further initiatives concerning Government Ministers responsible for the Northern Powerhouse. Then there's the Infrastructure Commission, the new Arriva Northern franchise developments with Transport for The North and Rail North and more

Oh and in our spare time we've got lives to lead, families to consider. That kind of thing.

So please don't just watch this space: help us fill it. 'Cos reopening the Skipton to Colne rail line won't happen on its own.

Please do get in touch if you have the time and inclination to help

OPEN MEMBERS' MEETINGS:

- Mon. 9th May 2016 @ 7.00pm: New Road Community Centre, Earby.
- Mon 11th July 2016 @ 7.00pm: Herriots Hotel, Broughton Road, Skipton
- Mon. 12th September 2016 @ 7.00pm: Crown Hotel, Albert Road, Colne
- Mon. 14th November 2016 @ 7.00pm: New Road Community Centre, Earby.

IMPOSSIBLE: IT TAKES A LITTLE LONGER

On the 9th September 2015, Her Majesty the Queen formally reopened the Borders Railway line in Scotland. Tweedbank and eight other towns are now reconnected with Edinburgh.

So popular are the new services into the Scottish Capital that passenger numbers have already exceeded planners' highest estimates by a substantial margin. With station car parks overflowing and standing room only on some of the new services.



Copyright M J Richardson. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic Licence

On the opening day Her Majesty travelled over the new 35 mile route using the Royal Train hauled by A4 locomotive "Union of South Africa" shown here crossing the largest structure on the line: the brand-new [71 metre; 234ft long] Hardengreen viaduct.

The Scottish Borders [Waverley] route was controversially closed in 1969 a year before closure of 'our' line severed the link across the Lancashire/Yorkshire border.

Up and running, figures for the new Scottish service indicate benefits to the economies of communities along the reopened route to the tune of £33 million per year. And with passenger numbers already well ahead of best estimates, that sum is likely to be exceeded.

SO WHAT, YOU MIGHT SAY

..... has any of this got to do with Skipton to Colne line? Think about it:

Following a 20 year campaign by the Borders Railway Campaign Group, Transport for Scotland rebuilt the railway in a little over two years. Reopening the totally-dismantled route required the regeneration of 95 bridges, along with two long tunnels the installation of 42 new structures and realignment of several major roads.

Three times longer than Skipton to Colne, more technically challenging by far, and costing a cool £350M reopening the Scottish Borders Railway was, once "impossible".

A little under 12 miles in length, the "Missing Link" between Skipton and Colne line requires an investment of just £100M. It will rejoin the communities of Lancashire and Yorkshire across the boundaries of three Local Authorities with a combined population ten times greater than the Scottish Borders region.

The largest structure en route for Skipton will take 'our' line across Vivary Way, a little to the north of Colne station. 30 metres (100ft) wide, Vivary Way is less than half the length of Hardengreen viaduct: Ed.

SELRAP believes that with determination and skill and enough vision by those with the power to say "yes" the success of the Scottish Borders Railway could soon be repeated on the Skipton to Colne line.

More on: <http://www.bordersrailway.co.uk/>

Care to help to make sure the Skipton-Colne line reopens too

Then, join SELRAP by filling in the membership form overleaf and come along to the open meetings advertised in this publication.

HELP REQUIRED

You can help progress this far reaching scheme still further by lobbying your Councillor[s] and MP and/or rail industry policy & decision makers. But don't stop there. Spread the message still further. If you represent the media, then ask what [more] your publication can do to move minds towards a rail reopening that has been eloquently described as a no brainer.

You might also care to join SELRAP by filling in the form below:



S E L R A P

MEMBERSHIP FORM Ref: AaG 2016

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

Tel:.....

Mobile:.....

e mail:.....

I wish to become a member of SELRAP and enclose my Annual Membership Fee of £8.00 [Concessions: £5], Groups £15, Life £60 and/or make a donation by **Cheque** payable to **SELRAP**; or by filling out the **Standing Order** below:

To: Bank/Building Society,

Sort Code:

Full Address:

.....

.....

Account Name:

.....

Account No:

Pay To: Yorkshire Bank plc,
21 Manchester Road, Nelson BB9 9SD
Sort Code: 05 - 03 - 83
SELRAP Account No: 34689554

The Sum of:

On the same date each year, dated:

.....

Signature:

.....

Please return to SELRAP Membership Secretary:

Derek Jennings, 3 Hamilton Rd, Carr Hall, Barrowford, Lancs BB9 6DE

e mail: derek.jennings01@gmail.com

Tel: 01282 690411

SELRAP's only source of regular income is via membership fees of just £8.00 per year. Supporters will appreciate that full colour printing and distribution costs for *At a Glance* are not inconsiderable. You could help further by adding a donation to your membership fee!