

Campaign for the restoration of South Yorkshire's ghost railways

January 19, 2023



A historic rail station in Doncaster has been backed to be restored, in plans to bring new life to former passenger routes and lost services in South Yorkshire.

Local leaders have put a case for funding to Government to reopen Askern Station and the Askern Line, between Doncaster and Knottingley, for passenger services following its closure in 1948.

Plans would create new rail links between South and West Yorkshire, bringing economic and environmental benefits through better access to jobs, homes and education.

South Yorkshire's Mayor, Oliver Coppard, met sponsoring MP for the scheme, Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP for Doncaster North and campaigners for the project in Askern.

South Yorkshire's Mayor, Oliver Coppard, said: "There is huge support for our plans to reopen the Askern railway line, because of the chance it gives us to level-up and reconnect communities currently left behind because of poor public transport links.

“Fixing South Yorkshire’s public transport system is a key priority; it has to include reconnecting our communities with our railways and better links between our train, tram and bus networks, to not only meet our net zero goals but to open up the work, education and social opportunities that everyone in South Yorkshire deserves.

“The government have set a timeframe for levelling up transport connectivity across our region by 2030, but we need them to match our energy and ambition. We’ve been working to keep the pressure on both Government and transport companies, to get the investment we need here in South Yorkshire in order to achieve that goal. Rubber-stamping projects such as our ‘Restoring Your Railways’ plans offer a great starting point.”

South Yorkshire’s Askern Line bid was shortlisted in October 2021 to progress to the next stage of the Government’s £500 million Restoring Your Railways fund, designed to reinstate local rail services and restore closed stations. A number of route and service options have been developed as part of South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority’s (SYMCA) business case, linking Askern to Doncaster and Leeds, and potentially south to Lincoln.

If given the green light, the project would cut congestion on the A19 and boost strategic connectivity between South and West Yorkshire, including towns around Knottingley and Pontefract.

Sponsoring MP for the scheme, Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP for Doncaster North, said: “It was brilliant to welcome Mayor Coppard to Askern on Friday.

“The Askern Station bid is immensely important for the area. It will connect people with employment opportunities in West Yorkshire and Doncaster, it will take cars off the over-congested A19, and it will bring people into Askern to visit the lake and the fantastic local shops, cafes and other small businesses the town has to offer.

“Local campaigners have worked so hard to get to this point and the project is supported by Doncaster Council, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and all the local leaders. I hope the Government will support our application to the Restoring Your Railway fund so that the station can finally be reopened after all these years.”

The campaign of over 20 years to reopen the Askern Line and Station has gained significant support from Friends of Askern Railway Station, local councillors, SYMCA and Doncaster Council.

Graham Moss of Friends of Askern Railway Station, said: “The Doncaster to West Yorkshire via Askern (Askern Line) Scheme is an opportunity to better utilise existing infrastructure, and level-up communities north of Doncaster which lack opportunities due to poor connectivity to the local and national railway network.

“What sets the Askern Line scheme apart is that it not only provides significant benefits for local communities, but also delivers strategic connectivity and resilience benefits right across South and West Yorkshire through the reinstatement of an underused line for regular passenger services. In the context of the climate emergency, the Restoring Your Railways programme offers a once in a generation opportunity

to reduce reliance on car use and shift trips to sustainable modes of transport.”

Doncaster Council Wakefield Council, SYMCA, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Network Rail will play a leading role in the delivery of the scheme.

Photo credit: South Yorkshire Combined Authority