

## Funding to progress 'Leamside South' business case

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The North East has been awarded funding which will be used to develop a new business case for Leamside South – a section on the disused Leamside Line running from Washington to Ferryhill in County Durham.

The Leamside Line is a 21-mile railway line in the North East last saw passenger services in the 1960s. It could be used to divert slow moving freight trains off the East Coast Main Line which runs in parallel, therefore providing a major national connectivity boost and removing the long-standing bottleneck on this vital connection.

The Government has awarded the region £350,000 in funding which will be used to progress a new Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for Leamside South – a pivotal part of the process required to re-open the line. This project will run alongside the ongoing business case development on the Washington Metro Loop – a proposed extension of the Tyne and Wear Metro along a section of the Leamside Line.

Council leaders, cross-party MPs and Peers and businesses are united behind a major campaign to re-open the Leamside Line. Its re-opening would greatly improve public health, lower carbon emissions and improve access to opportunities for work, training and education for young people and communities.

Cllr Martin Gannon, Chair of the [North East Joint Transport](#) Committee, said: "I'm pleased that, after much procrastination, the government has finally decided to show some support for the work we are doing to reopen the Leamside Line. The Leamside Line is one of the most important pieces of transport infrastructure in the North East and its reopening will deliver enormous economic, social and environmental benefits to the region – it's a no-brainer as far as I'm concerned.

"The award by government of £350,000 to Transport North East is a welcome contribution to the cost of the first stage of business case development for what we are calling "Leamside South", the reopening of a stretch of disused line from Washington to Ferryhill. This will complement the work we are doing on the Washington Metro Loop – a new metro extension that will use the northern section of the mothballed Leamside Line. Work on the Washington Metro Loop business case is much more advanced because we have funded the start of it ourselves and we're working to secure the remaining funding as soon as possible.

"I'd like to take this opportunity to clear up some confusion. Despite rumours to the contrary, the government has not agreed to fund the reopening of any part of the Leamside Line. In fact on many occasions it has said the opposite – that the North East will need to fund the line's reopening. Whilst I wholeheartedly disagree with this position, it is important to be honest and clear in the face of the government's confusing and misleading "Network North" communications.

"In two months' time we will have a new combined authority in the region and I will work with my fellow council leaders and the new Mayor to make this scheme a priority – both locally and for the next national government. It is a critical project for the economic future of our region and we need to start making concrete plans to get building."

RIA North Chair, Dave Maddison said: "We welcome and support this announcement as a key step in delivering the Leamside Line, a line that would address the connectivity and capacity challenges faced by the railway in the North East and beyond.

"RIA North has consistently advocated for the reopening of the Leamside Line to deliver economic, social and environmental benefits to the region and to remove bottlenecks on the East Coast Main Line. We look forward to working with Transport North East and the new Mayor, on behalf of the rail supply community, to develop the Leamside South business case."

*Photo credit: Transport North East*