

# Restoring Your Railway: new winners announced, as government returns lost railway connections

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Towns and communities across England and Wales left isolated when their railways were closed are one step closer to having their connections restored, as part of the government's Restoring Your Railway programme.

The Autumn Budget has confirmed that **13 more projects have been awarded up to £50,000 each to progress their plans to reinstate stations and restore lines.**

More than 50 years since the railways were radically reshaped during the infamous Beeching cuts of the 1960s, when thousands of miles of both track and stations were closed, this latest investment will kick-start development on more projects that have potential to reinvigorate local economies and level up opportunity across the country.

Projects awarded funding include:

- restoring the Don Valley Line between Sheffield and Stocksbridge in Yorkshire to regular passenger services
- reconnecting the Staffordshire town of Leek to the rail network with the Stoke-Leek line
- restarting the connection between Stockport and Ashton in the north-west
- rebuilding the line between Tavistock and Bere Alston in Devon, connecting Tavistock and Plymouth by rail

Two projects from round one of the Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund are also being funded to progress with further development work: the Waterside line (Southampton to Fawley via Hythe) and Wellington and Cullompton Stations in Somerset and Devon respectively. Other projects are under consideration as the initial ideas development work is completed and assessed.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: “Our efforts to undo the damage of the Beeching closures are gathering pace, with work on new stations and lines that can level up communities right across the UK.

“I share the enthusiasm and ambition of local campaigners across the country pushing for their local lines to be reopened and this additional funding will help progress many more schemes.

“With the Dartmoor Line opening in the coming days, we’re already laying tracks across the country and connecting communities for the first time in decades.”

These latest projects will receive a share of the third round of the Restoring Your Railway ‘Ideas Fund’, to help progress plans to deliver new routes and improved connectivity, as well as developing plans for new stations. Projects that show strong promise will be funded further, with a focus on accelerating the delivery of schemes to ensure communities see benefits as quickly as possible.

Entries have been specifically judged on their ability to deliver real economic benefits and support left-behind communities, with investment targeted at schemes with the potential to regenerate local economies by opening up access to jobs and education, supporting new housing developments and boosting tourism

Winners announced include the Waterside Line, receiving a further £7 million of investment for development for the next stage in development following success in round one of the Ideas Fund. This scheme could see services reintroduced between Southampton and Fawley, providing faster journey times and help support a shift to more sustainable modes of transport, while supporting employment opportunities and new homes being built locally.

The area saw its rail links cut in 1966 and local roads have since become heavily congested.

The development of new stations at Wellington and Cullompton, following closures in the 1960s, could see stations added to connect communities in Somerset and Devon. With a further £5 million of funding announced, these stations have potential to open up a credible alternative to the car for residents, relieving congestion on the M5 and A38. The stations would also support nearly 10,000 new homes that are planned for the area.

The Beeching cuts saw tracks ripped up or grassed over, iconic viaducts and bridges left without a purpose and communities set adrift. Initially proposed by British Rail chief Dr Richard Beeching in 1963, passenger services were ended on around a third of the rail network, with more than 2,300 stations closed and up to 5,000 miles of track axed across the UK.

Over the past year, proposals from MPs alongside local authorities, communities and campaigners, for the third round of the 'Ideas Fund' were considered by an expert panel, chaired by the Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris and including Network Rail Chair Sir Peter Hendy.

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