

# South Yorkshire's ghost railways look set for revival as reconnection plans gather pace

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Plans to bring back lost rail services and restore closed stations in South Yorkshire are gaining momentum, as the region moves forward with bids to level up and reconnect left behind communities.

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

"Fixing South Yorkshire's public transport system has to include reopening our railways and better joining up our train, tram and bus networks. Because our communities rely on these links to access the work, education and social opportunities that everyone deserves."

Cases for funding have been put to Government to reopen the Don Valley Line, between Sheffield and Stocksbridge, and the Askern Line, between Doncaster and Knottingley, for local passenger services. If given the green light, proposals will go to the next stage of the national 'Restoring Your Railways' programme to provide better access to jobs, homes and education.

South Yorkshire's Askern and Don Valley Lines are two of 13 schemes shortlisted in October 2021 to progress to the next stage of the Government's £500 million Restoring Your Railway fund, designed to reinstate local rail services and restore closed stations.

Oliver Coppard continued: "The government have set a timeframe for levelling up transport connectivity across our region by 2030, but in order to achieve that goal we need them to deliver the full Northern Powerhouse Rail and match our energy and ambition for upgrading services. Projects such as 'Restoring Your Railways' offer a good starting point."

Sheffield City Council, Doncaster Council, Derbyshire County Council, Northeast Derbyshire District Council, Chesterfield Borough Council and Network Rail will play a leading role in the delivery of the schemes.

Councillor Julie Grocutt, co-chair of the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Change Policy Committee, and Local Member for Stocksbridge said: "There is no doubt that restoring passenger rail services between Stocksbridge and Sheffield on the Don Valley Line would provide significant economic and social benefits to Stocksbridge, Deepcar, Oughtibridge, Wadsley Bridge and Neepsend, as well as neighbouring communities.

"Existing transport connectivity in this area is poor. Stocksbridge is less than 10 miles from Sheffield City Centre but on current bus services, journey times are taking as long as around one hour.

"The key to enabling our communities to grow and prosper is to connect people to opportunities, in a sustainable and inclusive way. That can only be done with an efficient and reliable public transport system that people trust. Whilst buses are a critical part of our transport network, and we will continue to fight for better services, a rail link is essential for long-term growth that helps to meet our net zero targets."

Further plans to restore services on the Barrow Hill Line between Sheffield and Chesterfield are being developed by South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and Network Rail. It could see stations reinstated at Sheffield Victoria, Beighton, Killamarsh, Eckington/Renishaw, Barrow Hill/Staveley and Whittington, and the return of a regular service, linking Sheffield, Northeast Derbyshire and Chesterfield.

Proposals for opening a new station at Waverley have also been submitted for Government review.