

Staffordshire leaders support plans for Midlands Rail Hub

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Midlands Connect has met with Cllr David Williams, cabinet member for highways and transport and other Staffordshire business leaders at Lichfield City to discuss transport and have thrown their support behind plans for the Midlands Rail Hub.

Cllr Williams and Karen Heppenstall, Head of Rail at Midlands Connect were joined by Declan Riddell from Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce and Alun Rogers from the Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Midlands Rail Hub will provide capacity for the Cross City Line service reinstated to its pre-pandemic 6 trains per hour south of Four Oaks. Local partners, including West Midlands Rail Executive, are however calling for these four trains to Lichfield per hour to be reinstated as soon as possible, once the new rolling stock come on stream in the next eighteen months.

With six trains per hour going in and out of Birmingham, the service will return to its former “turn up and

go” style, making commuting and leisure travel easier for those who live along the line. With four out of the six trains terminating at Lichfield Trent Valley, both stations in the city will see crowding relief.

Midlands Rail Hub also unlocks connectivity improvements for other parts of Staffordshire, including the potential for more and faster services for Burton and Tamworth into Birmingham.

Karen Heppenstall commented: “It’s great that Staffordshire County Council and business leaders in the county are supporting the Midlands Rail Hub. It’s great to come to Lichfield today to promote the Midlands Rail Hub. The proposals will benefit residents and those living all along the Cross City Line.

“The project is supported throughout the region and the Midlands Rail Hub is a national project and we need to give the scheme the green light.”

Cllr Williams added: “Improved connectivity is vital to vibrancy and regeneration of our urban centres, making them more attractive place to live, work and visit and attracting investment. Better rail services encourage more people to travel by train, helping to reduce traffic on our roads, reducing congestion and carbon emissions.

“We look forward to the reinstatement of the additional services on the Cross City Line as soon as possible.”

Malcolm Holmes, from West Midlands Rail Executive, commented: “There are exciting times ahead for users of the Cross City line with new electric trains arriving later this year bringing extra capacity and improved levels of comfort for passengers.

“WMRE also is working with West Midlands Trains and the Department for Transport to restore a four train per hour service between Lichfield and Birmingham in 2024 once all the new trains, which are being built locally in Derby, are in place”