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Rail link to Manchester and Weavers' Triangle bid approved

£8.8 MILLION RGF SUCCESS FOR BURNLEY

The Deputy Prime Minister has approved an £8.8 million bid for the re-instatement of the Todmorden Curve rail link and redevelopment of the Weavers' Triangle in Burnley.

The announcement made today [31/10/11] by the Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP was part of the Government's Regional Growth Fund and means:

- Train-travel time between Burnley and Manchester will be halved as a direct rail link is shared for the first time in 40 years;
- £50 million will be invested by Barnfield Investment Properties in a 3.9 hectare redevelopment of historically significant weaving mills along the Leeds Liverpool canal: the Weavers' Triangle;
- Potentially up to 1000 jobs will be created within a decade.

The bid submitted by Barnfield Investment Properties, Network Rail, Burnley Council and Lancashire County Council, is the culmination of almost a decade of work to reinstate 500 metres of rail track and halve train-travel time between Burnley and Manchester whilst bringing life back to the neighbouring Weavers' Triangle - a collection of former mill buildings along the Leeds Liverpool canal.

Connecting to Growth

Tim Webber, Managing Director of Barnfield Investment Properties, said: "Barnfield are committed to the Weavers' Triangle: its regional historical significance, and great economic potential for the region's future.

"Our reputation is built on quality developments. That will continue as we proceed in partnership with Burnley Council to develop the Weavers' Triangle. There is something positive happening in Burnley – the way the business community came together to support our bid not only fills me with great personal pride having worked in this area for many years, but it also serves as an example to other areas across the country who seek to move towards private sector led growth."

The Regional Growth Fund was set up by the Government to help areas make the transition to sustainable private sector-led economic growth and by using public sector funding as a lever to attract further private sector investment.

Political leaders commit to further action

Charles Briggs, Leader of Burnley Council, said the announcement was great news for the borough: "There are aspects of the local economy Burnley Council cannot control: global deficits, the strength of the pound, mortgage rates... but when we can make a difference, we work hard until we do. I am really proud of all those who have made this possible, and proud of the partnership working between businesses and the public sector, and the important influence of Gordon Birtwistle, our local MP who has been very active in pressing the case for this and a number of other economic development priorities. Burnley Council will now continue to work closely with Lancashire County Council, and all our private sector partners, to make a real difference to this part of the county."

Gordon Birtwistle MP said: "There were many who believed this day would never come, who believed our heritage had no part in our future, who doubted Burnley could ever have a commutable 'city-offer'. Well, this is a sign that we're on the way. This government has delivered, and over the coming years jobs will result from this announcement. This is great news for Burnley and the surrounding area too."

County Councillor Tim Ashton, Lancashire County Council's cabinet member for highways and transport, said: "Creating a fast rail link between Burnley and Manchester is our number one priority in terms of improving rail transport in the county in response to the needs of our communities."

"Reinstating the Todmorden Curve is vital for boosting jobs and economic growth in this part of Lancashire, so I am very pleased that central government has recognised the hard work of all involved and approved this bid."

"We look forward to working with all the other partners to make this fast rail link a reality."

On track with national trends

The scheme is also being seen as nationally significant. Simon Leyshon, principal programme sponsor from Network Rail, said: "Rail travel across the whole country is at an all time high and demand is set to continue to grow. The Todmorden Curve project will put Burnley within commuting distance of Manchester and open up all the tourist and leisure opportunities the city has to offer."

"It will also complement our Northern Hub scheme that will provide an additional 700 trains a day create between 20,000 and 30,000 new jobs opportunities and contribute £4bn to the economy of the North of England."

ENDS

Notes to editors

Background information

The reinstatement of the **Todmorden Curve** - 500 metres of new rail track, signalling and associated structures work - just north of Todmorden town centre, will create a direct rail link between Burnley and Manchester, halving train travel time between the two centres to approximately 45 minutes. Network Rail, commissioned by Burnley Council and supported by Lancashire County Council, undertook technical and engineering studies to prove to government that reinstatement was possible.

The **Regional Growth Fund (RGF)** is a £1.4bn fund operating across England from 2011 to 2014. It supports projects and programmes that lever private sector investment creating economic growth and sustainable employment. It aims particularly to help those areas and communities currently dependent on the public sector to make the transition to sustainable private sector-led growth and prosperity.

Business leaders in Burnley have reacted positively to the success of Burnley's bid. Thirty of the town's largest employers wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg in August last month supporting the proposal by Barnfield Investment Properties to invest in the 3.9 hectare development in the Sandygate area of the Weavers' Triangle.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Joanne Etherington or Jeremy Richards on...



Burnley