

MEDIA RELEASE



Ribble Valley
Borough Council

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REOPENING OF HISTORIC RAIL LINE WILL BRING HUGE ECONOMIC BOOST TO BOROUGH

A COUNCIL leader has praised rail enthusiasts and community groups for their ‘ceaseless efforts over many years’ after the Government this week signalled the possible reopening of the historic Clitheroe to Hellifield rail line to passengers.

The reopening of the line, which was axed by Beeching in 1962, could bring an economic boost to the borough worth millions of pounds.

Ribble Valley Borough Council was told on Saturday that its bid to the Government’s Ideas Fund to work up a business case to reopen the line and look at options for increasing rail travel had been successful.

The Ideas Fund aims to reconnect towns, ease congestion, regenerate economies and improve accessibility to jobs, homes and education.

Complementary rail services are also under consideration, including increasing the frequency of trains between Clitheroe and Manchester and a direct route between Clitheroe and Preston.

The fund generated a high level of interest and Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said Ribble Valley Borough Council’s bid was one of only 10 from across the UK to get the green light.

The reopening of the Clitheroe to Hellifield line will see the restoration of rail links for passengers and freight between Clitheroe and Skipton, Leeds to the east and Lancaster and Carlisle to the north.

Ribble Valley Borough Council leader Stephen Atkinson said: “This is tremendous news. It will be a huge boost to the borough, worth tens of millions of pounds to the local economy and East Lancashire as a whole, by improving east to west connectivity.

“It will see trains going south to Leeds and London and a possible half-hourly service from Clitheroe to Manchester, taking cars off congested roads, bringing more visitors to Ribble Valley and improving connectivity for our residents to surrounding cities.

“The main infrastructure is already in place and the Clitheroe to Hellifield line is in good condition, which gives us a great start.

“Many local rail enthusiasts and community groups have dreamed of and worked hard for this moment for many years, and this announcement is a testament to their never-say-die attitude, as well as the ingenuity of our council officers and the support of our MP, Nigel Evans.

“We are looking forward to working with the community over the coming years to bring this fantastic scheme to fruition.”

The Transport Secretary wants to reopen some of the lines closed under the infamous Beeching review, which saw 7,000 miles of railway and 2,000 stations closed across the UK in the 1960s.

The next step for the Clitheroe to Hellifield scheme is a virtual session with Department for Transport officials to establish the process for moving forward.

Photograph: ON TRACK – Ribble Valley Borough Council leader Stephen Atkinson.

Ends.

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Further details for the media are available from Ribble Valley Borough Council's communications team on 07971 978766.