



Miriam Cates MP
Member of Parliament for Penistone & Stocksbridge

Restoring Your Railway
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

20th February 2021

To whom it may concern,

Re: Sheffield to Stocksbridge (Don Valley Line) Bid

I am writing in support of the Restoring Your Railway bid submitted by Sheffield City Region to reintroduce passenger services on the existing freight line between Sheffield and Stocksbridge, also known as the Don Valley Line.

Stocksbridge is a town that has suffered from industrial decline and economic change. Where once the steelworks employed thousands, now only a few hundred work there. The need for investment and support has already been identified by the Government, with Stocksbridge being one of 101 towns chosen to take part in the Towns Fund programme.

We are confident that our Town Deal bid is laying the foundations for an economic and social revival that builds on the area's industrial heritage, whilst also embracing the jobs of the future by helping to train young people and support new businesses. Regeneration has already begun, but the one limiting factor that holds back the town's ambition is the lack of transport connectivity. Without addressing this problem, Stocksbridge will not be able to achieve the transformation that everyone is so determined to make happen.

The Stocksbridge and Upper Don ward has been identified by Sheffield City Council as being in transport poverty. This has a serious impact on the lives of local residents who find themselves cut off from public services and job opportunities by woefully inadequate public transport provision. Stocksbridge is only 9 miles from central Sheffield, and yet a bus journey between the two takes almost an hour. The only alternative for most people is to use a car, but heavy traffic leads to regular delays on the single-track road built on the side of a steep valley.

The fact that there is a pre-existing railway line along what has been identified by local and regional government as a priority transport corridor offers hope for the future. This is not a major engineering project, but the potential benefits are huge. Connecting the entire Upper Don Valley to the railway network would be a massive boost to the local economy and open up access to services and opportunities in Sheffield and beyond.

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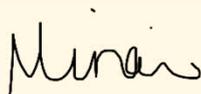
Of course, the benefits of this scheme are not limited to Stocksbridge itself. The line would serve communities all along the Upper Don Valley, including areas where hundreds of new homes are currently planned or already being built. A fast and convenient railway link would ease congestion for commuters living in Oughtibridge and North Sheffield, whilst a station at Neepsend/Kelham Island would further enhance the area's status as a hub for Sheffield's cultural, heritage, and night-time industries.

Perhaps the most significant benefit for the rest of the city comes from the reopening of Victoria station. It is already projected that the new Barrow Hill Line services from Chesterfield will stop there as there is no spare capacity at the existing Sheffield (Midland) station, thus enabling a new cross-city rail connection. A new city centre station to act as a hub for local commuter services would ease pressure on existing infrastructure, creating space for HS2 and NPR without the need to reduce local services. It would also serve as a catalyst for redevelopment on this side of the city centre, complementing Sheffield City Council's existing regeneration plans.

This scheme has the potential to be truly transformative for Stocksbridge and the Upper Don Valley. It will help us to attract new businesses and jobs to the area, boost our credentials as a gateway to the Peak District, connect people to public services they currently struggle to access, and serve as proof that we are committed to levelling up those areas that for too long have been left behind.

It should be the ambition of every elected representative and every government to help our communities to flourish. Stocksbridge is on the verge of being able to do that, but without the connectivity that a rail service brings, I fear we will once again be prevented from achieving it. I therefore hope that you will agree with me, and with the local community, and recognise the fantastic opportunity that this proposal represents.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Miriam'.

Miriam Cates MP