



The All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Leamside Line

Date: Tuesday 24th October

Time: 13:00

Venue: Room B, 1 Parliament Street and online

ATTENDANCE

Parliamentarians

Emma Lewell-Buck MP, Huw Merriman MP, Minister of State for Transport and Rail Minister, Ian Mearns MP, Kate Osborne MP, Liz Twist MP, Lord Shipley, Mary Foy MP, Nick Brown MP, Paul Howell MP (Co-Chair), Sharon Hodgson MP (Co-Chair)

Observers

Amy Bentham (Sharon Hodgson's office), Anna Graham (Transport North East), Chris McHugh (Stephenson Mohl), Daniel Holland, Reporter (The Chronicle), David Martinez (Nick Brown's office), Dawn Badminton-Capps, Head of Rail (Transport North East), Fiona Stanton (56 Degrees North), Ivan Howe (Kate Osborne's office), James Taylor, Director (Citrus Group), Jonathan Roskin (Paul Howell's office), Kevin Bell (Womble Bond Dickinson), Marianne O'Sullivan, Policy Manager (NEECC), Molly Nixon (Kate Osborne's office), Phillip Meikle, Transport Strategy Director (Transport North East), Robyn Briggs (Sharon Hodgson's office), Tobyn Hughes, Managing Director (Transport North East), Will Armstrong (Huw Merriman's office),

SECRETARIAT — 56° North

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Update on the campaign from Transport North East

Short introductory update from Tobyn Hughes, Managing Director – Transport North East; followed by short discussion with questions from Paul Howell MP, Sharon Hodgson MP and Marianne O'Sullivan, Policy Manager – NEECC

2. Short update from North East of England Chamber of the Commerce

Update from local Chamber groups on the importance of the Leamside Line to local connectivity for employment, education and leisure. This was echoed by both Co-Chairs who highlighted major businesses in the region who are supportive of the re-opening of the Line.

2. Discussion with Huw Merriman MP, Minister for Rail

The Minister outlined recent Government announcements, emphasising the positive voice regional businesses can make to compliment the cross-party case, ambitions to work in partnership on the further business case work, looking at shared resources, and that funding is there or moving in the right direction for the North East to use.



Discussion followed with contributions from Sharon Hodgson on the importance of jobs and connectivity for Washington as the fourth largest town in the UK without a rail connection; from Ian Mearns on the link between Leamside and capacity on the ECML; Liz Twist on the cross-party and region wide business support; and from Lord Shipley on the prioritisation between national benefits through capacity on the ECML and regional connectivity.

Tobyn Hughes and the Minister both emphasised the importance of partnership working and the primacy of regional and national benefit. The Minister requested a copy of the minutes and a follow up letter from the APPG to continue discussions.

[Huw Merriman left the meeting following a group photograph]

The discussion continued, with additional contributions from Ian Mearns on the need for HS2 to have also started from the North; from Tobyn Hughes on the importance of seizing the opportunities to progress the business case following recent campaign work; from Sharon Hodgson on emphasising the national importance alongside regional benefits; and Paul Howell on the benefits of connectivity between Scotland and England.

There was discussion about the national implications of Leamside for the network because of decisions around HS2 and that this is supported Transport North East's business case development for the Line to be funded and delivered in partnership with businesses, Network Rail and government.

It was also raised that the Victoria Viaduct will need further assessment if it is to be safe for heavy duty freight carriages, which would take from potential Leamside Line funding.

3. Why the Leamside Line is a 'no brainer' – North East of England Chamber of Commerce

Briefing from Marianne O'Sullivan, Policy Manager – NEECC on the cross-sector support for Leamside amongst members of all sizes and the Chamber's prioritisation of the campaign in its interactions with Government; Marianne offered support from NEECC to collate case studies on the benefits to businesses, with an emphasis on individual stories from NE businesses.

Kevin Bell from Womble Bond Dickinson reiterated Womble's support for the campaign as one of the NE's biggest legal employers and briefed MPS on the successful roundtable Womble hosted in the summer on business support for the Leamside line; and on the increase in understanding and of the Leamside Line following recent activity and coverage.

Paul Howell undertook to approach Netpark for involvement in the campaign and case studies; Sharon Hodgson undertook to make contact with Amazon for an additional discussion

4. Supporting the Leamside Line – a business case study

Briefing from James Taylor, Citrus Group Director – focusing on housing potential, and connectivity between jobs, transport and new developments. A discussion followed, including on the support for the Leamside line from Labour's candidate and potential Conservative candidates

5. Minutes from the previous meeting were approved (moved by Sharon Hodgson and seconded by Paul Howell)

6. Next steps and actions

- It was agreed that the next meeting to be in February/ early March 2024 (unless a need arose to schedule an additional meeting), with the date to be arranged between Sharon and Paul's office and for Paul Howell MP to chair the next meeting
- TNE/56^o North to draft a follow up letter to the Minister from the Co-Chairs
- TNE will be sharing an updated briefing with MPs, including suggested questions, Parliamentary interventions, and social content to share
- Business case study work to be taken forward with support and involvement of NEECC and the co-chairs.
 - TNE to work on a Leamside Line investment prospectus and APPG to review a case study of the Northumberland Line
- Sharon's office to circulate group pictures, the Leamside Line campaign video, Toba's Hughes' powerpoint and notes from the meeting
- Content of King's Speech to be reviewed