

Issued – 4 January 2019

## 50 years of campaigning and it's set to be busier than ever...

2019 will mark the 50th anniversary of campaigning for Stratford and the Shakespeare Line's railway services. In 1969, a 'North Warwick Line Defence Committee' was formed to fight proposals by the then nationalised British Railways to close the railway between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon. At the eleventh hour, the committee and local authorities were able to obtain a High Court injunction against closure which protected the route and services for over a decade. Although British Rail made a second attempt to close the route in 1984 that too was successfully stopped by the lines' rail user group, known today as the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group (SLPG).

In the latest figures, published by the Rail Regulator, the Office of Rail and Road for 2017/18, showed that the line between Stratford upon Avon and Birmingham attracted over 3 million rail passenger journeys with Stratford upon Avon accounting for over 1 million of the journeys. Since 1997 passenger usage of the railway between Stratford upon Avon and Birmingham has grown by an incredible 176%. Fraser Pithie, the Secretary of SLPG, said: **"The increase in usage of the railway by people speaks for itself and vindicates all those that have campaigned in the past 50 years for Stratford's railway service and our work continues."**

With a much greater understanding across the UK of the economic and environmental benefits that railways can bring to the areas they serve, SLPG, who surveyed both line users and Stratford Town Centre businesses in 2018, is committed to pushing both the economic and environmental benefits with local authorities, train operators and the Department for Transport. **"The retail sector will face increasing pressure in 2019 from online competition, and SLPG believes it needs to do all it can to improve train connectivity for Stratford to help support the many town centre businesses that make up the diverse and cosmopolitan attraction that Stratford upon Avon is. Users and Town Centre businesses told us through the surveys in overwhelming terms that they expect much more enabling and support from local authorities and stakeholders"** Fraser Pithie added.

In response to a consultation held in October 2018 by the West Midlands Rail Executive, which reports to the West Midlands Combined Authority and Mayor, Andy Street, SLPG stated that they want to see a 20-minute interval service between Stratford upon Avon and Birmingham introduced much earlier than an indicated date of 2026.

The Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government James Brokenshire MP has advised SLPG to get back to him and request the plans for the first phase of the Long Marston Garden Village and South Western Relief Road be 'called in' once and if the local authorities approve them in their current form. SLPG objected to the proposals because it does not believe the plans reflect the submission that was put to government to attract Garden Village status which repeatedly referred to the potential reopening of the railway south of Stratford upon Avon to link up with the London Paddington main line at Honeybourne. The reopening would also make a 50-minute direct journey between the Garden Village at Long Marston and Birmingham possible.

Fraser Pithie said **"With a notional £19 million annual economic benefit indicated as possibly arising, both the local community and our town centre businesses have said they want a proper Economic Impact Study (EIS) on the potential reopening to be carried out so the issue can be determined objectively once and for all. SLPG support the community and town centre businesses and the need for an EIS, and we'll continue to oppose any dismissal of the railway reopening scheme without evidence from an EIS."**

ENDS.

For more information please contact SLPG's Secretary, Fraser Pithie.

Notes for editor:

1. SLPG strongly believe that there needs to be greater co-operation and co-ordination between Local Planning Authorities, Local Transport Authorities and WMRE in respect of residential and commercial development and the potential impact resulting in increased demand for rail capacity.
2. Copy of letter from Secretary of State at Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, James Brokenshire MP:

  
Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP  
*Secretary of State for Housing, Communities  
and Local Government*

**Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local  
Government**  
Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Tel: 0303 444 3450  
Email:  
james.brokenshire@communities.gov.uk

[www.gov.uk/mhclg](http://www.gov.uk/mhclg)

Our Ref:3964377

4 December 2018

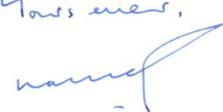
*Dear Jeremy,*

Thank you for your letter of 8 November, regarding correspondence from your constituent, Mr Pithie (Secretary of the rail user group for Stratford-on-Avon, the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group) in which he asks for planning applications 18/01892/OUT and 18/01883/FUL to be called in.

My officials have contacted the case officer at Stratford-on-Avon District Council and I understand that the planning applications are still under consideration by the council and that it will be at least six months until they are taken to a committee for a decision.

I would therefore suggest that your constituent ensures that the views of his group are submitted to the council so that they can be taken into account as it considers the application.

If the council is minded to approve the application Mr Pithie is welcome to submit a call-in request at that time. My officials are not able to 'track' applications for members of the public, or to deal with call-in requests where a committee date has not been set.

*Yours ever,*  


RT HON JAMES BROKENSHIRE MP