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## Vale & Cotswolds could get closer to Birmingham

DIRECT train services that could connect Evesham, Honeybourne, Moreton in Marsh and the Cotswolds and shrink the journey time to and from Birmingham and the West Midlands may be moving a step closer. The Shakespeare Line Promotion Group (SLPG) told a meeting of Tourist organisation, Shakespeare's England, in Stratford upon Avon on 17 October, that over 94% of Stratford upon Avon Town Centre businesses and over 800 rail users have said in response to an online survey that they want local authorities and stakeholders to get an Economic Impact Study done into reopening 6 miles of disused railway. Reinstating the disused line would enable reconnection with the Worcester - London mainline at Honeybourne.

The rail user group for Stratford-Birmingham services, who work with and are supported by the Cotswold Line Promotion Group, have highlighted what they describe as a notional value of over £20m in additional income to South Warwickshire being potentially available per year from reopening the line which was closed after a derailment at Winchcombe in 1976. "We need to confirm the economics, and the only way to do that is by an Economic Impact Study (EIS) into reopening the disused section of the line" Fraser Pithie, Secretary of SLPG said.

If the scheme were successful, it would enable a circular train service to operate in both directions linking Pershore, Evesham and Honeybourne with Stratford upon Avon but also Solihull, Birmingham and Worcester. Fraser Pithie said "Evesham could have much more frequent but crucially direct train services with Birmingham that would take approximately one hour. Trains could also service the new Garden Village housing development at Long Marston where a total of some 6,000 new homes are being built and by rail would be within around 50 minutes of Birmingham ." Evesham to and from Birmingham by train currently requires passengers to change services at Worcester and the journey takes around 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Charlbury, Kingham and Moreton in Marsh could also see a new train service that could enable direct travel to and from Stratford upon Avon enabling onward connections to Birmingham and the north. Train operator Great Western Railway stated in their North Cotswold Vision that they would like to see the line reopened so they could operate between Oxford and Stratford and remain keen to serve the Bard's birthplace

"One of the key elements that are needed before any reopening could take place is for the two remaining sections of single track along the Cotswold Line to be redoubled. We believe an EIS on reopening Stratford-Honeybourne, if positive, could help the Cotswold Line Task

Force with the business case they are building to get the remaining redoubling of the Cotswold Line done by Network Rail" Fraser Pithie added.

Potential Economic Growth

## Need for an Economic Impact Study

An orbital rail route serving the South & West Midlands could be provided if the railway was reopened between Stratford-upon-Avon and Honeybourne.

This could link **Birmingham, Shirley, Henley-in-Arden, Stratford-upon-Avon, Long Marston** (new garden village & 6900 homes planned), **Evesham, Worcester and Stourbridge**.

Rail connectivity with the **Cotswolds, Oxford, Reading and London Paddington** would also be possible.

94%

of Town Centre Businesses and Rail Users believe this scheme is worthy of a proper economic impact study to determine if pursuing such a scheme is worth further support and effort.

Enables connectivity with the Cotswolds, Evesham, Worcester & South West

12 mile shorter route to and from London Paddington

Puts Birmingham within 50 minutes of Long Marston & 60 minutes of Evesham

Connectivity for the West Midlands and South Midlands

ENDS.

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