

DEFENDING OUR LINES

- safeguarding railways for reopening



A report by Smart Growth UK April 2020

http://www.smartgrowthuk.org

Contents

Foreword by Paul Tetlaw	4
Executive summary	6
1. Introduction	8
2. Rail closures	9
3. Reopening and reinstatement	12
4. Obstacles to reinstatement of closed lines	16
5. Safeguarding alignments	19
6. Reopening and the planning system	21
7. Reopening of freight-only or mothballed lines	24
8. Reinstatement of demolished lines	29
9. New railways	38
10. Conclusions	39
Appendix 1	41

Smart Growth UK

Smart Growth UK is an informal coalition of organisations and individuals who want to promote the Smart Growth approach to planning, transportation and communities. Smart Growth is an international movement dedicated to more sustainable approaches to these issues.

In the UK it is based around a set of principles agreed by the organisations that support the Smart Growth UK coalition in 2013:-

- Urban areas work best when they are compact, with densities appropriate to local circumstances but generally significantly higher than low-density suburbia and avoiding high-rise. In addition to higher density, layouts are needed that prioritize walking, cycling and public transport so that they become the norm.
- We need to reduce our dependence on private motor vehicles by improving public transport, rail-based where possible, and concentrating development in urban areas.
- We should protect the countryside, farmland, natural beauty, open space, soil and biodiversity, avoiding urban sprawl and out-of-town development.
- We should protect and promote local distinctiveness and character and our heritage, respecting and making best use of historic buildings, street forms and settlement patterns.
- We should prioritize regeneration in urban areas and regions where it is needed, emphasising brownfield-first and promoting town centres with a healthy mix of facilities.
- Civic involvement and local economic activity improve the health of communities.



Foreword

By Paul Tetlaw

We very much welcome this report and the key messages which highlight the urgent need to protect our railway infrastructure and plan for expansion of the railway network.

It is clear that protection through planning policies has been woefully inadequate or non-existent. While it appears that the devolved administrations may have been more proactive than England, it remains the case that many thousands of miles of 19th century railway infrastructure has been abandoned and destroyed. Sadly in the 21st century we continue to allow development on former rail corridors making the cost of future reopenings that much greater.



As this report makes clear, we now need to urgently undertake a full survey of all former rail routes to see what remains and introduce protection through the planning system to ensure that no more is lost.

Having done that a strategic plan for the long term development of the railway must follow. This will likely entail the reopening of some former routes and the creation of new ones. This will no doubt be a mix of light and heavy rail systems and needs to reflect the huge changes in society and settlement patterns since the era of large scale closures.

The report goes on to suggest which lines should be considered for reopening and that should stimulate discussion and most critically action from governments and devolved administrations.

Whilst our principal focus remains the railway within Scotland and Anglo-Scottish routes we fully endorse the UK wide approach adopted in the report.

Paul Tetlaw is the convener of Transform Scotland's Policy Forum



Demolished lines cross the landscape, but are seldom noticed [Smart Growth UK]

Executive Summary

The latter part of the 20th century saw thousands of miles of our national rail network closed down and much of the infrastructure destroyed. But now it's becoming clear that the climate emergency means we need to make a much higher proportion of passenger and freight movements by rail, many aspects of the rail industry will need investment. This includes reopening of closed or demolished railways. Such investment will necessarily be a long process, but we need to safeguard those lines from development now.

Restoring railway passenger services is expensive and takes time even where a freight service still exists; where a line is mothballed it takes longer still, while most challenging is where the line has been demolished. There have been several proposals for reopenings including the Government's current "Reversing Beeching" scheme and in 2019 the Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) recommended a national programme. That report looked at the benefits of reopenings and suggested priorities. Our report leads on from the CBT report and looks at the obstacles to reinstatement and ways in which former railways could be safeguarded from development and suggests, for discussion, lists of lines for both reopening and reinstatement, with three levels of priority for each. Unlike the CBT report, it also covers Northern Ireland.

Obstacles to reinstatement include farming, housing and other development, public land sales, landfill sites and many other things. Each presents its own set of challenges.

Lines which are still open for freight or which are mothballed but are still intact require no safeguarding at present, though they may do so in future. But the formations of demolished lines are endlessly nibbled away at and require protection from further erosion. Formal safeguarding may be required where lines are likely to be reconstructed in the near future, but the process is both expensive and attracts opposition. A simpler system involving protection through the planning system needs to be codified and implemented throughout the UK.

Our recommendations for reopening of freight-only or mothballed lines to passengers and for reinstatement of demolished lines are each presented in three tiers of priority. There are many factors to be balanced here and our proposals are presented to stimulate discussion.

We have not examined the need for entirely new railways although in a number of cases they may be the most appropriate way forward, either because the formation of former lines has been so eroded as to make it effectively impossible to reinstate them or because there is a need for a new line where none formerly existed. The potential for reopening rail passenger services – as light rail or metro in our cities or as rural connectors or cross-country services outside them – is considerable. But we need to ensure we lose no more underused lines to closure or see any more of the trackbed of demolished formations lost to development of one kind or another. Our recommendations are not definitive; some might prove impossible while we may have missed other suitable candidates. They are intended to illustrate the scale of the opportunity and to stimulate discussion. We face a climate emergency and transport remains the big unaddressed area of greenhouse gas emissions. This necessitates safeguarding of these routes.

We recommend therefore:-

- 1. That a programme and ongoing budget be put in place to restore passenger services to freight-only or mothballed railway lines where the potential exists.
- 2. That national planning policy throughout the United Kingdom should make clear that the formations of abandoned railways should either be formally safeguarded or safeguarded through the planning system wherever they have potential for reopening.
- 3. That the UK government, the devolved administrations and regional and local authorities agree a comprehensive map of railways with potential for reopening, promote protection of their alignments and work to prevent obstruction of them by development.

1. Introduction

As we step up the fight against the growing climate emergency, it's becoming clear that rail closures are one of the most malign legacies the 20th century bequeathed us. A much higher percentage of both passenger and freight movements will need to be made by the low-energy movement that railways offer if we are to genuinely decarbonize transport, and a much lower percentage by road, however powered.

We urgently need massive investment in many aspects of rail transport. This will include things like electrification of the system, huge investment in rail freight, possibly including a national network, light-rail, metro, tram-train and heavy rail networks in and around our cities, reopened lines in non-urban areas and new lines built in some places.

This work will inevitably take decades and while some will require very substantial investment, other projects require comparatively little in the way of resources and could be started now.

The 19th century bequeathed us a huge railway system, but the 20th century saw thousands of miles of it closed. In the second half of the century especially, infrastructure worth billions of pounds was either torn apart or left to rot and the relics of this orgy of destruction still criss-cross our landscape. True, some 19th century railways were built in the wrong places or would have had no useful future for other reasons, but many closed lines could provide a substantial part of the basis for long-term revival of our railways. Some have huge potential to move people in a sustainable fashion, some offer the possibility of regeneration to depressed areas, some could link rural settlements into the national network and some could do several of these things; all could divert travellers from their cars.

Every year that passes, however, this priceless national asset is nibbled at by development or other processes. We now need to identify which of the lines that have lost their passenger services, have been closed and mothballed or, most importantly, have been closed and demolished, are worth protecting for the day they could be reopened as railways.

This report looks at why our railways were closed, the obstacles to reopening them and ways of safeguarding them from further destruction. It also offers - for discussion - a list of potential lines for safeguarding to stimulate debate. We now need that debate to take place and then we need urgent action from both the UK Government and the devolved administrations.

2. Rail closures

Rail closures are often viewed today as a uniquely 1960s phenomenon, but the UK's rail network mileage peaked around 1914 and several periods saw significant closures long before the 1960s: the Great War, the Depression, the Second World War and the years following 1948 when the British Transport Commission took control of the railways following nationalisation. The latter period saw a number of significant closures in the 1950s, though enthusiasm for closing uneconomic lines varied among the British Railways' (BR) regions. Around 5,340km of lines were closed between 1948 and 1962.

But it is the flood of closures which followed the first Beeching report that is best remembered. *The Reshaping of British Railways* published¹ in 1963 by BR under its chairman Dr Richard Beeching advocated closing one-third (2,363) of the country's 7,000 stations and withdrawing passenger services from around 8,000km of route. Local freight services were also to be axed and rail freight mostly restricted to bulk goods like coal, minerals, oil, cement and grain and containers. Of the 29,000km BR network, 9,700km were recommended for complete closure and some of the rest retained only for freight, with the central objective of reducing financial support to the railways, though symptomatic of hostility to railways in central government which continued for decades.

Less well known was the second Beeching report *The Development of Major Railway Trunk Routes* in 1965² which, ostensibly, selected which routes should receive investment, but advocated future development on just 4,800km of the 12,100km of Britain's trunk railways. This was taken to extremes, with plans to close the East Coast Main Line north of Newcastle, for example.

The recommendations to close unprofitable lines were pursued with vigour by both Conservative and Labour governments throughout the rest of the 1960s and continued at a low level into the 1970s. Indeed, some of the most significant closures occurred in the late 1960s such as Matlock-Buxton, Oxford-Cambridge and the Waverley Route. Most of the closures Dr Beeching had recommended (and some he hadn't) went ahead, though some lines were saved, mostly ones with relatively low ridership, owing to the hardship that would be caused in remote areas. Many influential people and politicians at that period believed that road transport would almost wholly replace railways in the long-term, apart perhaps from some commuter services in big cities although, in reality, some of these too had suffered big traffic reductions at that time. In the years 1963-70, no less than 6,367km of railway were closed.

Northern Ireland was not subject to the Beeching process, but there had been extensive closures of its railway system by the Ulster Transport Authority in the 1950s. In 1962 a report by Sir Henry Benson (recommended by Dr Beeching) recommended further closures, many of which were implemented, leaving Northern Ireland with few railways.

Closure of the Portadown to Derry line was seen as a sectarian move and was a factor in the subsequent troubles.

Although most of the first Beeching report had been implemented by 1970, Whitehall kept up the pressure to close "uneconomic" lines. In 1972 a secret plan was hatched called the "Railway Policy Review" which proposed closing around half the remaining network. There would, for instance, have been no trains west of Plymouth, nothing in Scotland north and west of Perth and Aberdeen and nothing in Wales apart from lines to Holyhead and Fishguard. It was seen off thanks to a leak to the press, which the Government responded to with phone tapping and a raid on a publishing house.

The transport ministry continued trying to close railways but had few successes and public and political opinion turned firmly against closures. When a 1983 report by civil servant Sir David Serpell³ recommended further extensive closures, including most of Scotland and the West Country, it was seen off by hostile public opinion and spirited opposition by the BR chairman, Sir Peter Parker. Campaign group Transport 2000 produced its own Serpell-type report which showed that investing in railways actually produced better financial returns than closures. But central government policy continued to hurt rail in the 1980s with a requirement for rail freight to make a 6% return on capital at a time when an average road haulier was making 3%.



Infrastructure worth billions was destroyed or left to rot in the late 20th century [Stella Stafford]

One of the last big closures was the 158km Edinburgh-Carlisle "Waverley Route" in 1969. In 2015, more than one-third of this was reopened by the Scottish Government (as far as Tweedbank) and discussions continue on reopening the remainder. Rail passenger numbers have, in fact, more than doubled since their low point in the late 20th century. Freight volumes have apparently only grown slightly, but this disguises the huge drop in coal tonnages and huge growth in other traffics.

There has, in fact, been a trickle of reopenings of both stations and short stretches of line since the late-1980s. Many stations have reopened on lines with existing passenger services and passenger services have been reinstated on some lines which had been reduced to freight alone. Since the 1960s, more than 400 stations have been opened or reopened and several hundred kilometres of route have seen passenger services restored for heavy or light rail, or metro. Instances of reconstruction for reopening where the line had been torn up, structures demolished, land sold and structures built on the formation, however, like the Edinburgh-Tweedbank reopening, have been very few, deterred both by the cost and by the opposition of those who now occupy the land.

There are, however, a substantial number of routes which only closed in the first place thanks to politics and/or poor railway management and others where new markets have emerged since closure took place. Some parts of the UK, even relatively densely populated parts, have been left without the sustainable transport that railways provide and other places have been left far from the rail network. In the longer term, the fast growing climate emergency means we need to consider how to provide as wide access to rail transportation as possible.

The Smart Growth approach stresses the importance of rail-based transportation for both passengers and freight and Smart Growth UK is conscious that large areas, even in major cities, are bereft of rail access. In the cities, new light rail, metro or tram-train services may be the answer to such deficiencies, but these too can often benefit from disused railway alignments. In much of the country, however, including within some cities, there is both a need and an opportunity to reinstate closed railways for heavy rail services or the growing opportunities offered by tram-train technology. To achieve that we must ensure that the alignments of closed railways are protected from further encroachment or destruction and that protection must extend to mothballed or freightonly lines if they come under threat. This report suggests a programme to achieve that.

3. Reopening and reinstatement

Restoring lost railway services is expensive and although a programme for such work is needed now, it must inevitably be phased over the longer term. Where a freight service still exists on a line, restoring a passenger service is usually relatively easy, though still costly as track and signals must be upgraded and new stations provided. Restoring passenger services on existing freight-only lines can cost up to £10 million per mile, or occasionally more, depending on the extent to which track and signalling upgrades are needed and the cost of new stations.

Where the line has closed but the track still exists, it is more costly still (though still well below the huge cost of building new roads). Most costly is reinstatement where the line has been demolished, which is the case for the bulk of the UK's closed railways which have potential for reopening. The 56km of the Borders Railway line from Edinburgh to Tweedbank that opened in 2015, cost £294m, but fortunately it mostly ran through an area of restricted development and most of the formation was basically intact despite more than 40 years of closure.

Altogether there are around 16,000km of closed railways in Great Britain and 1,000km in Northern Ireland. In more densely populated parts of the UK, opportunities to reconstruct long-demolished railway formations comparatively easily are rare. Reacquiring the land for rail reconstruction is both complex and expensive; property owners are understandably reluctant to part with their homes and highway authorities, national and local, are often highly protective of unsustainable modes of transport.

Despite this, calls for a national programme of rail reopening have continued down the years. In 2009, the then Association of Train Operating Companies put forward 14 lines for reopening⁴:-

- Cranleigh in Surrey
- Bordon, Hythe and Ringwood in Hampshire
- Brixham in Devon
- Aldridge and Brownhills in the West Midlands
- Wisbech in Cambridgeshire
- Leicester to Burton in the East Midlands
- Fleetwood, Rawtenstall and Skelmersdale all in Lancashire
- Washington in Tyne and Wear
- Ashington and Blyth in Northumberland

The Association identified a further 20 lines whose reopening could be justified on employment grounds. It said the 14 schemes would cost about £500m and said that, at the very least, the track beds should be safeguarded and not built on.

In 2014, Railfuture Scotland put forward⁵ a number of rail investment ideas including reopening 50 stations (with a further 45 to follow) and the opening of 23 short lines, seven of which were still carrying freight, 11 of which were demolished and would need rebuilding and five new build links.

In 2019, the Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) recommended⁶ a national programme of rail reopenings across Great Britain, initially to create 33 new lines and 72 stations. This, the Campaign estimated, would allow an additional 20 million rail passenger journeys annually by bringing an additional 500,000 people within walking distance of a railway station. CBT assessed 224 schemes as part of its research and recommended that many of them be treated as Priority 2 schemes, i.e. requiring further development or changed circumstances (such as housing development) at present if they were to be taken forward.

The CBT report said action is needed to identify the most beneficial rail expansion projects and it pointed to a lack of strategic guidance on the type and location of schemes deemed the most desirable. It is left to local authorities and investors to advocate individual schemes, with the Department for Transport (DfT) committed to helping those deemed most successful by the private sector. But local authorities are desperately short of cash and are averse to risking expenditure developing a scheme, only for the DfT to veto it, or simply not take a decision. Inevitably, support is piecemeal and skewed to those with the best commercial returns and there is no programme of public funding, in contrast to road building and other public infrastructure.

The report recommended using a new methodology to assess schemes, together with worked examples and recommendations for national, regional and local decision making. The 224 schemes put forward were assessed for viability and against a set of criteria. This was used to rate the schemes in three priority levels and recommendations for the top two priorities are shown in Appendix 1. The report included extensive content on the advantages to be gleaned from reopenings and their potential costs.

During the 2019 General Election campaign, the Conservatives promised a £500m "Reversing Beeching Fund" and cited the following lines:-

- Ashington, Seaton Delaval and Blyth in Northumberland;
- Skelmersdale, Lancashire;
- Thornton-Cleveleys and Fleetwood in Lancashire;
- Willenhall and Darlaston in the West Midlands.

In January 2020, the DfT confirmed⁷ the plan to allocate £500m to reopenings and said \pounds 1.5m would be available for the Ashington and Blyth line and £100,000 for the Fleetwood line to develop the proposals. A further £300,000 was allocated to support ideas for reinstating local services.

Northern Ireland has not fared well. Translink and the Northern Ireland Executive did identify the Portadown-Dungannon line as a priority in 2014, but the plan did not survive the collapse of Stormont. There was also talk at the time of the Portadown-Armagh line. The January 2020 agreement⁸ to restore the Northern Ireland Assembly contained an agreement that all parties would work "to achieve greater connectivity on this island – by road, rail and air". Despite a commitment to work to fight against climate change, however, the main import of this appeared to be possible renewal of air routes between Cork and Belfast and Dublin and Derry and a £75m upgrade of the A5. The main rail proposal was: "serious and detailed joint consideration through the NSMC of the feasibility of a high-speed rail connection between Belfast, Dublin and Cork, creating a spine of connectivity on the island, which could be progressed as a priority". Given the huge opportunities to expand the rail network in Northern Ireland, this was an opportunity missed.

In view of the substantial cost and disruption of reopening lines, critics will ask why it is worth it. The advantages, however, are set out clearly in the CBT report and we would refer people to that. That report also asked why progress is so slow and detailed the institutional obstacles in government which hold up progress.

In this report we want to go on from there and look at the very substantial physical obstacles which obstruct progress and what needs to be done to make the planning system able to protect disused railway alignments and to facilitate their reconstruction. We believe that the issue of safeguarding is crucial if a substantial number of lines are ever to be reopened. Already it is clear that a number, while highly desirable, have been rendered effectively impossible by decades of building development. Most others would require a degree of demolition of buildings, a substantial obstacle and cost that potentially gets worse every year these alignments are not protected by some kind of safeguarding.

The CBT report assessed 224 lines and prioritized just 33 of them for fast-track development. We support this aim, but believe there is an equally urgent need to protect many closed railways even where there is no short-term prospect of their reopening. As the fight against the climate-change emergency hots up, along with the climate, the need for a comprehensive railway system through most of the country will be recognised and people in the years to come will ask why we didn't act now when we could have done at comparatively little cost.

In 2020 Railfuture Scotland refreshed its proposals to include more than 90 new stations and more than 20 new lines.



[Railfuture Scotland, 2020]

In this report we look at reopening of freight-only or mothballed lines to passenger services and, as a separate category, reinstating demolished lines for passenger use and we suggest three levels of priority for each. We haven't looked at reopening closed lines for freight traffic, though there are undoubtedly opportunities for this. But before looking at the passenger opportunities, we must look at the obstacles to reconstruction and the role the planning system will have to play.

4. Obstacles to reinstatement of closed lines

No sooner is a railway demolished, than piecemeal destruction of the alignment is usually set in motion. The formation is normally no longer safeguarded from development, so parcels of land will be sold off, claimed for other infrastructure or used for other purposes. All of these pose serious obstacles to reinstatement of railway services and, in most cases, this process has been underway for decades. As a result, many of our former railways, even substantially built main lines, now appear as little more than scars on the landscape or isolated pieces of infrastructure, or have apparently vanished altogether.

Agriculture: Probably the main "consumer" of former railway alignments is the farming industry. Where lines ran near surface level, it is all too easy to extend fields – or commercial plantations - across them. Substantial cuttings or embankments may be harder, and less commercially attractive, to incorporate in farmland, but it still happens sometimes. In many ways, however, this is often the least problematic challenge to overcome as the physical challenge of rebuilding lines across farmland is relatively low, although land acquisition, while less expensive than developed land, may still prove costly.

Housing: One of the most intractable obstacles to reinstatement is the presence of residential development on the alignment. It might be thought there is little of this given the fact that railway land tends to be long and thin. But station sites in particular, usually located in urban areas, have proved especially attractive. Home owners are, quite understandably, most reluctant to give up their homes even for sustainable transport initiatives and even when compensation terms and notice periods are generous.

Indeed, some railways, including a number in areas of strong population growth and with excellent market prospects, have had to be omitted from the suggested safeguardings because several miles of them have been totally obliterated by urban sprawl, approved by those who took no long-term view of the future. This makes safeguarding from further development a vital immediate priority.

Public land sales: All public authorities, including Network Rail, are under intense pressure from central government to sell land for housing development, even when the land is plainly needed for other purposes. This is a serious threat to rail reinstatement.

Other built development: Virtually every kind of commercial and non-commercial building will have been built somewhere on a railway alignment. The challenges involved in their acquisition will vary, but once again their occupants may prove highly resistant to relinquishing their buildings and the cost may be very significant. Once again, safeguarding against further such development is essential.

Roads: The relatively straight courses of former railways, often cutting through urban areas, have proved irresistible to those promoting unsustainable transport modes. Even though a railway alignment may lack the width to accommodate a single-carriageway road, let alone a dual-carriageway, they represent a separation of existing uses and give road builders a flying start on land acquisition. It is surprising what length of the new highways built in the past 60 years uses former railway land. By-passes are an obvious target, but inter-urban trunk roads have not infrequently destroyed substantial stretches of rail alignment. And even where a road crossed a former railway by a bridge, it has been all too easy to remove rail-over-road bridges and to fill in road-over-rail.

Cycleways and footways: When the Beeching plan was in full swing in the 1960s, some far-sighted people began to secure their former alignments as long-distance cycleways and footways to protect them for the day when wiser counsels would prevail and they could be rebuilt as railways. Considerable lengths of both urban and rural rail alignments have been protected in this way.

Somewhere down the years, however, this original inspiration got lost. Although some of the more rural routes see few pedestrians and fewer cyclists, attempts to recover them for rail use have met with stern opposition from the cycling lobby. The Smart Growth approach stresses the importance of cycling and walking and, where such paths provide vital capacity, they would need to be diverted to nearby alignments. But it is also clear that a high-



capacity railway will contribute more to sustainable transport than a low-usage rural cyclepath and footway used mostly for leisure purposes.

Heritage railways: Many former public railways have been taken over as heritage lines and their mileage is growing all the time. In their early days many, if not most, began with the aspiration of running community passenger services as well as their heritage trains. Very few of these aspirations proved practicable. A significant mileage of the former national network which has potential for restoration of such services is occupied wholly or in part by heritage railways. Proposing their reversion to the national network is often likely to provoke understandable hostility from their membership, many of whom have dedicated significant parts of their lives to restoring and operating these lines. Often they are also a vital part of their areas' tourism offer. While there may be cases where their operation might be relocated to other disused lines in the area, the possibility of sharing tracks between modern and heritage services needs further exploration. This will not be easy as the infrastructural requirements of modern railways can be in conflict with the historic operational methods used on heritage lines. Heritage railway supporters are a key demographic likely to support rail reinstatements and their co-operation and consent would be vital.

Londfill sites: Before waste licensing was introduced in 1976 (and sometimes since), former railway cuttings proved attractive to local authorities and other waste generators as makeshift landfill sites. Although the practice was not widespread, the presence of thousands of tonnes of part-rotted municipal or even hazardous waste is a very substantial obstacle to progress. It can be tackled, as the project by the Bluebell Railway to reopen its line northwards to East Grinstead in 2013 demonstrated. This involved removal to other licensed landfill sites of thousands of tonnes of waste occupying a quarter mile long cutting. It took three years and cost £4m.

Other obstacles: A huge variety of other obstacles exist on former rail alignments which pose a variety of challenges for sustainable development. Reservoirs have flooded formations including the lines between Hexham and Hawick and between Bala and Blaenau Ffestiniog for instance. Each presents its own set of difficulties.

5. Safeguarding alignments

Where a line is still in use for freight, or usually where it is mothballed, no safeguarding from development or other forms of demolition will normally be needed. Much of the land, apart perhaps from station and depot sites, will most likely be in railway ownership so long as it remains open. Where it has been demolished, however, the formation of the railway comes under a variety of threats, any of which will hinder, or in extreme cases prevent, reinstatement. Safeguarding can take more than one form.

Formal safeguarding is an established part of the planning process, designed to ensure that land which has been identified for major infrastructure projects is protected from conflicting developments. Safeguarding directions are intended to ensure that new developments do not conflict with the construction of major projects, and when properly applied they can help control costs and prevent delays. They can also trigger blight notices under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Owner-occupiers of properties within the safeguarded area who wish to move may apply to sell their property to the Government by serving a blight notice. If they meet the relevant criteria they can expect to receive the "unblighted" open market value of their home, a home loss payment of 10% of the value of their home (subject to an upper limit) and reasonable moving costs such as legal fees, and stamp duty on a replacement property.

By formally safeguarding the route of HS2, the Government has shown in principle it is willing to meet the huge cost and opposition involved in rail projects. Opinions vary on the value of high-speed rail; it certainly has benefits and disbenefits and, despite the Government decision in principle to proceed, it is still clear that HS2 has not been well designed. Given that the Phase 2B lines to Manchester and Leeds are going to be reengineered, and are not now likely to open before 2037 at the earliest , urgent consideration needs to be given to whether there are other major rail projects which need investment sooner, e.g. main line electrification and new/reopened passenger services.

Clearly, rebuilding the UK's rail network to a level where the majority of settlements have access to rail transport will be a multi-decadal undertaking. This project needs to be started now on a systematic basis, but the cost and complexity involved mean it will inevitably take time. While we need to prioritize lines where both the need and the opportunity is high, we must not neglect the others worthy of consideration. Every year that passes, every house or other building built upon a formation and every road scheme pushed through them makes reopening that much harder. We urgently need to start safeguarding important and valuable railway formations.

HS2 has demonstrated Government acceptance of the value of formal safeguarding for rail projects, but it is expensive, time-consuming and generates opposition. It will be

needed where rail schemes are prioritized, but the bulk of schemes will be long-term ones and often something simpler will be needed.

Over the years there have been attempts through the planning system to protect closed lines to allow them to be reopened in the future. Some of these have been more extensive than individual lines. *Regional Planning Guidance for the North East*⁹ in 2002, for instance, contained a policy of preventing development on closed railway formations (although the 2008 *Regional Spatial Strategy* for the North East abandoned this).

There is no reason why abandoned railway alignments should not be protected through the plans system: local, sub-regional and (where they still exist) regional, including those of the devolved administrations. Indeed, regional plans might serve best, given that most railway lines will cross local or sub-regional boundaries.

It might be objected that formally protecting the land needed for rail reinstatements in this way denies owners the opportunity value of selling their land for development. But any form of protection designation through the planning system has this effect. The Government has sanctioned designation of fresh areas of green belt to replace other areas of green belt destroyed for development. It has also sanctioned new national park and AONB extensions. All these are likely to hinder development and reduce the potential value of land.

More difficult is the blight that can occur to properties when they are formally safeguarded. In such cases owners can demand they be acquired. Protection of land in a development plan is far weaker than formal safeguarding and can be overturned through the development control system or on appeal, though it could and should be made a material consideration for planning applications and given significant weight. There would need to be a national fund for such cases, though it should not attempt to meet opportunity values.

6. Reopening and the planning system

England: England's *National Planning Policy Framework*¹⁰ offers scant encouragement to reopen railways. Its transport provisions are primarily about planning for the effects of transport network changes on the built environment and it devotes a lot of space to parking standards. However, paragraph 104(c) says planning policies should "identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large-scale development". This gives no indication of what sort of transport it is talking about, so it could be road or rail, or any other mode. Paragraph 104(e) says planning policies should "provide for any large-scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area", taking account of whether it is likely to be a "nationally significant infrastructure project" using a Development Consent Order which can be used to safeguard rail alignments, but seldom is in practice.

The national planning practice guidance¹¹ gives advice on preparing transport evidence bases for local plans and says this should encourage a shift to more sustainable transport usage "where reasonable to do so". It does not indicate where it would be unreasonable to do so. But it makes clear the evidence bases are to enable assessments of the transport impacts of development and that is the context in which "improving the sustainability of transport provision" should be seen. There is also guidance on travel plans, transport assessments and statements, but with the objective of assessing and mitigating the negative transport impacts of development "to promote sustainable development".

Travel plans offer some crumb of help as they are supposed to be "long-term management strategies for integrating proposals for sustainable travel into the planning process". But in case this should be seen as an invitation to start considering major investment in sustainable rail-based transport, the same paragraph goes on to say: "They should not, however, be used as an excuse for unfairly penalising drivers and cutting provision for cars in a way that is unsustainable and could have negative impacts on surrounding streets". And to ensure their use is limited, it goes on to say: "Travel plans should, where possible, be considered in parallel to development proposals and readily integrated into the design and occupation of the new site". All too often the public transport involved even in major housing developments is just a low-frequency bus service, though this seldom stops developers making big claims about sustainable transport links.

The Department for Transport has a Restoring Your Railway Fund which invites MPs, local authorities and community groups in England and Wales to say how they would like to fund reinstatement of axed local rail services or reopen closed stations. The three areas to be supported will be developing ideas, accelerating existing proposals and making proposals for new or restored stations. Ideas Fund bids will be considered for 75% of up to £50,000, while the new stations fund has a £20m current round.

Scotland: Scotland's *National Planning Framework 3*¹² aims to decarbonise the transport sector "in the long term". But its attention to railways is mostly about improvements to existing lines. The *Scottish Planning Policy*¹³ says planning should:-• optimise the use of existing infrastructure;

• reduce the need to travel;

• provide safe and convenient opportunities for walking and cycling for both active travel and recreation, and facilitate travel by public transport;

- enable the integration of transport modes; and
- facilitate freight movement by rail or water.

Again, its principal focus is meshing transport with development, but in contrast to English policy, it says: "Disused railway lines with a reasonable prospect of being reused as rail, tram, bus rapid transit or active travel routes should be safeguarded in development plans". It does not amplify this and goes on to discuss new railway stations. But it is clear that the Scottish Government does accept in principle the safeguarding in development plans of railway formations to protect them for future reopening.

Beyond national planning policy, Scotland does consider the issue through its transport policies. Issues like railways are dealt with through the Transport Scotland agency. It has introduced a "pipeline-based" approach to rail project development and delivery and has a Local Rail Development Fund to take projects to a business case and appraisal stage. These include a number of studies assessing needs in various locations.

Wales: Wales too is concerned at decarbonisation of transport networks. *Planning Policy Wales*¹⁴ says that: "Development plans should identify and support appropriate public transport routes, measures and facilities. This should take into account proposals in the local transport plan, which could include improved facilities for bus passengers, park and ride schemes, new rail lines, including light rail, the reopening of rail lines...".

In particular, it says (paragraph 5.3.8) that: "Disused railways and disused or unused rail sidings should, in collaboration with Transport for Wales and Network Rail, be safeguarded from development which could adversely affect them being brought back to rail use in the future. Any planning application or proposed development plan policy in the vicinity of, or directly affecting a former railway line should consider the impact on their potential use for rail in the future. As an interim measure, it may be appropriate to use disused rail alignments as open space corridors, for example for walking and cycling".

This is an extremely strong statement and it is not qualified with any requirements about the reasonableness of the prospects of the alignment being reused. This allows the possibility of safeguarding long-term prospects for reopening. The Welsh Government has its South Wales Metro project which includes a number of light rail, metro or heavy rail projects. In 2018, the Government also published a feasibility study¹⁵ of reinstating the Aberystwyth-Carmarthen rail link.

Northern Ireland: The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland¹⁶ stresses the importance of decarbonisation and promoting patterns of development which reduce the need for motorised transport. Among its objectives is the need to: "protect routes required for new transport schemes including disused transport routes with potential for future reuse", though this does not specifically refer to railway alignments.

7. Reopening of freight-only or mothballed lines

This section covers the simplest forms of reopening to passenger services. i.e. where the line is still in use for freight traffic or is disused but still intact. Typically freight lines will need their track and signalling upgraded and stations rebuilt or new stations built to carry passenger services. Mothballed lines are likely to need more work, often including a complete new track and signalling installation and much of the basic infrastructure overhauled.

Either of these is obviously much cheaper than a complete rebuild and such lines have a priceless asset in terms of an intact formation (which is, in effect, almost always safeguarded for rail use), which has not been built on. The land will almost certainly still be in railway ownership and much of the work (stations apart) may be done under permitted development. There is also likely to be less local opposition to reopening, though this should not be lightly dismissed as it can pose substantial challenges – and local people have rights which should not be ignored.

It might be objected that, as this report is primarily about safeguarding, there is no need to consider such lines. As long as these lines remain open, or where they are closed and remain in railway ownership, safeguarding will generally be unnecessary, though important candidates should be protected in development plans. But some of them are, in fact, partly demolished and consideration would need to be given to either formal safeguarding or protection in the development plans system. Then there is the pressure from the Treasury to sell off "surplus" public land, even where it is likely to be needed in the near future. And finally such lines can be closed, or the mothballed ones torn up, meaning they will need just as much safeguarding as a demolished route.

This section, and the succeeding one on reinstatement, does not include reopening of short chords linking two intersecting lines, from which significant benefits may accrue. Neither section makes a distinction between possible reopening as heavy rail and reopening as light rail or metro. In some cases either will be a possibility.

The lines are listed in three categories.

Tier 1: This covers lines which would be relatively easy to reopen and where a strong case exists in terms of potential market, regeneration benefits or need. In most cases there will be strong support from the local community and political backing exists to justify such a high priority for reinstatement. Such lines will normally have much of their formations intact (although some of the land required for restoring passenger services may be lost, or under threat), they will have the majority of significant structures in place and they will have significant local pressure for reopening. A small number of the mothballed lines may have had the track lifted on parts of the formation,

however, or even, in rare cases, stolen by scrap criminals but many would, in any case, require track relaying or upgrading for passenger use.

Tier 2: This category covers existing or mothballed lines which could demonstrate a good case for reopening, though not as strong as Tier 1. These would be lines where there is clear potential for traffic, passenger and/or freight, or clear economic benefits would accrue and their possible reuse has at least been the subject of local discussions.

Tier 3: This would include lines where, although traffic would be relatively light, they could provide a public service to less well-connected communities. Such lines will be important in the longer term when the environmental objections to road transport and the climate emergency make it necessary to connect as many communities as possible to the rail network, giving a vital lifeline in a future where use of a car would be more expensive and less environmentally acceptable. In the longer term, as the fight against the climate change emergency gathers pace, we will need to ensure most parts of the UK have at least some access to rail services, and preferably good access.

NB Where a line crosses a national or regional boundary, it is included in the section where the majority of its mileage lies.

Tier 1

East of England

March-Wisbech Stro	ong local pressure.

East Midlands

Leicester-Coalville-Burton-on-Trent	Coalville is now one of the biggest English towns without a rail service. Frequent
	attempts to reopen.

Greater London

North East

Newcastle-Bedlington-Ashington	Detailed planning already in hand by
	Northumberland.
Pelaw-Washington-South Hylton	Under consideration as part of Tyne &
	Wear Metro (using part of the mothballed
	Leamside Line). Part demolished.

Northern Ireland

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North West

Poulton le Fylde-Fleetwood	Strong local pressure and political
	support (but arguable whether making it
	part of the Blackpool tramway would be
	better than reinstating as heavy rail).

Scotland

Edinburgh Suburban & Southside	Possible tram-train.
Levenmouth - Thornton Junction	Currently subject to detailed study by
	Transport Scotland.

South East

Bicester - Milton Keynes & Aylesbury - Milton Keynes (East-West Rail Phase 2)	Funding agreed, awaiting Transport and Works Act (TWA) approval.
Cowley - Oxford	Subject of repeated studies and support from National Infrastructure Commission.
Fawley – Hythe – Marchwood - Totton- (Southampton)	Hampshire County Council is interested.

South West

(Bristol) – Filton - Henbury	Funding agreed, awaiting TWA.
Bristol - Portishead	Funding agreed, awaiting TWA.
Fowey-Lostwithiel	Local interest in park & ride service, requires signalling and track layout alterations to accommodate existing clay trains

Wales

Beddau - Pontyclun Part of South Wales Metro proposals.	Seddau - Pontyclun	Part of South Wales Metro proposals.

West Midlands

Wednesbury - Dudley-Brierley Hill	Work underway as part of West Midlands
	Metro
Wolverhampton - Walsall	Detailed planning already in hand by
	West Midlands

Yorkshire & Humberside

Barnetby - Gainsborough	Western end to Gainsborough Central
	recently regained services but the rest
	has a Staturdays only service, despite
	serving Brigg.

Tier 2

East of England

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East Midlands (Mansfield) - Shirebrook-Ollerton Trent Junction - Castle Donington - Burton-on-Trent

Greater London Old Oak Common - Northolt

North East of England

Bedlington Station - Morpeth Pelaw - Ferryhill (the Leamside Line) Stockton - Ferryhill

Northern Ireland Antrim – Belfast Airport - Lisburn

North West of England

Edge Hill - Aintree Northwich - Sandbach Warrington - Ditton

Scotland Dunfermline - Alloa

South East of England Grain - Gravesend

South West of England Bristol – Yate - Thornbury Radstock - Frome

Wales

Amlwch - Gaerwen Cwm Bargoed - Ystrad Mynach Glyn Neath - Neath Hirwaun - Aberdare

West Midlands

Castle Bromwich - Walsall Gobowen - Oswestry Stourbridge – Dudley – Walsall (part demolished) Walsall - Lichfield (part demolished)

Yorkshire & Humberside Sheffield - Stocksbridge

Tier 3

East of England

East Midlands Ollerton – Tuxford – Lincoln

Greater London Brentford - Southall

North East of England Loftus - Saltburn Lynemouth - Ashington

Northern Ireland

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North West of England Clitheroe - Hellifield

Scotland Dalmellington - Ayr

South East of England Appledore – Lydd - (New Romney)

South West of England

Wales Seven Sisters - Neath

West Midlands Wellington - Buildwas

Yorkshire & Humberside Brancliffe – Kirk Sandall Grassington - Skipton

8. Reinstatement of demolished lines

Inevitably, reinstatement of demolished lines is a much bigger challenge. It faces many obstacles, of which the actual reconstruction is only one. There is the challenge of land acquisition; in agricultural areas this may not be too onerous, but where development has taken place it will be considerably more expensive and will face opposition. Track beds may also have been used for other purposes. Then there are the statutory processes involved in reopening and local opposition, quite apart from the construction challenge itself.

Particularly troublesome are the considerable mileages of roads built on the alignments to which local traffic patterns will have adapted themselves. The road may offer a separation of neighbouring functions which could ease land acquisition and many of the high-capacity roads created on former railways would be little hurt by surrendering part of that capacity to sustainable transport. Some kind of tram-train installation may be a relatively simple solution in these cases. In the longer term, a move away from roads to the sustainable transport offered by railways would considerably ease the process of reducing road capacity.

Nevertheless, we have been conscious of the obstacles created by building development in this selection. In some cases, good candidates have been given lower priority in these rankings because building development is extensive; in other cases excellent candidates have been omitted altogether. One example is the former line between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth. This could provide a useful local service to a string of heavily built up areas to the large towns at either end but, because no-one has bothered to safeguard the alignment from development, that would be hugely challenging. That said, it is clear that most reinstatements would necessitate some form of property acquisition and we have included many lines where it would be a challenge, but where the benefits would justify it.

Selection of a former rail alignment for any of the tiers here has to involve a balance between traffic potential, regeneration need, sustainable transport need and the obstacles involved, especially development. The list below is presented to stimulate a national discussion.

Once again, the lines are presented in three categories.

Tier 1: These again are lines where a very strong case can be made in terms of potential market, regeneration benefits or need. In most cases such lines would be likely to have much of their formations intact and a majority of significant structures in place although inevitably, with any closed line, there would be likely to be obstacles in terms of structures occupying the track bed, demolished infrastructure and land ownership.

They would normally, however, enjoy significant local pressure for reopening, preferably including political support.

Tier 2: Once again, for inclusion these lines would need to demonstrate a reasonable case of reopening based on market or regeneration potential or need. This category would include lines that had been demolished, possibly for long periods, where significant parts of the formation and some of the structures remain intact (though not necessarily in public or railway ownership). It would, however, include lines where there are significant developmental obstacles in terms of development on the formation, or land ownership issues.

Tier 3: This includes long demolished lines where at least some of the formation and perhaps a few of the structures remain intact. Some would only ever have had relatively light traffic but would provide a public service to less well-connected communities, a vital lifeline in a future where use of a car would be more expensive and less environmentally acceptable. As the fight against the climate change emergency gathers pace, we will need to ensure most parts of the UK have at least some access to rail. This category also includes lines with higher traffic potential (in the short or long term) but where there are significant, but not insurmountable, obstacles in terms of demolished structures or development on the track bed. One way or another, a large number of lines will fall into this category and, given the threats to them from building development and other obstacles, we need to start finding ways of safeguarding them now before further damage is done.

There are plenty of other former alignments where no serious case could ever be made for their reinstatement, because:-

- their traffic potential would be so light;
- there are other open or potential rail links which provide the service;
- so much of their alignment or infrastructure has been destroyed or built on since closure, it would be simpler to consider entirely new construction for these areas.

These lines would be excluded. But we do need to get away from the short-termism which has bedevilled the fight against climate change and we need to start thinking about the fairly comprehensive rail network the UK once had – and needs to have in the future.

Tier 1

East of England Bedford – Sandy - Cambridge Sudbury - Haverhill - Cambridge

East Midlands Matlock - Buxton Greater London

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North East of England

Northern Ireland Antrim – Belfast Airport – Lisburn Dungannon - Portadown

North West of England Skipton - Colne

Scotland Elderslie – Kilmacolm Hawick – Tweedbank Perth – Kinross - Cowdenbeath St Andrews - Leuchars

South East of England Uckfield - Lewes

South West of England

Okehampton – Tavistock – Bere Alston Wadebridge - Bodmin

Wales

Aberbeeg - Abertillery Afon Wen – Caernarfon - Bangor Carmarthen - Aberystwyth

West Midlands

Leek - Stoke-on-Trent

Yorkshire & Humberside

Beverley - Market Weighton - York Harrogate – Ripon Harrogate – Wetherby – Leeds Oakenshaw South Junction – Cleckheaton – Liversedge – Heckmondwike - Goose Hill Junction

Tier 2

East of England

Bedford - Hitchin Braintree - Stansted Cambridge - St Ives – Huntingdon - Kettering Croxley Green - Watford Hunstanton – King's Lynn King's Lynn – East Dereham Maldon - Witham Northampton - Bedford Norwich – Melton Constable – Holt Wells-next-the-Sea – Fakenham – East Dereham

East Midlands

Bedford – Olney - Northampton Grimsby – Louth – Firsby – (Boston) Northampton – Market Harborough Northampton – Wellingborough – Oundle - Peterborough

Greater London

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North East of England

Barnard Castle - Darlington Bishop Auckland - Durham Gateshead - Rowlands Gill – Blackhill - Consett Guisborough - Middlesbrough Hartlepool – Shotton – Murton – Seaton - (Sunderland) Newcastle – Scotswood – Blaydon Newcastle – Walker - Wallsend Ponteland – Newcastle Airport Tow Law - Crook - Bishop Auckland

Northern Ireland

Armagh - Portadown Dungannon – Omagh – Strabane – Derry

North West of England

Bury - Bolton Penrith – Keswick – Cockermouth Skelmersdale – Ormskirk West Kirby – Heswall – Neston – Hooton

Scotland

Banchory - Aberdeen Boddam – Aberdeen Crieff - Perth Dumfries - Castle Douglas - Stranraer Fraserburgh – Dyce – (Aberdeen) Galashiels – Peebles – Eskbank – (Edinburgh) Hawick – Carlisle Kilmacolm - Greenock Lockerbie – Dumfries Mauchline Junction – Newton-on-Ayr (Perth) – Stanley – Forfar – Arbroath/Laurencekirk Stirling – Callander - Crianlarich

South East of England

Banbury – Buckingham - Verney Junction Bourne End - High Wycombe Bournemouth – Wimborne – Ringwood - Brockenhurst Didcot – Newbury - Winchester Fairford – Witney – Oxford Guildford – Horsham Horsham – Shoreham-by-Sea Polegate - Tunbridge Wells Princes Risborough – Thame – Cowley – (Oxford)



South West of England

Bideford - Barnstaple Brixham – Paignton Exmouth – Budleigh Salterton & Sidmouth – Feniton Ross-on-Wye – Gloucester

Wales

Afon Wen - Caernarfon Llangollen – Wrexham Merthyr - Abergavenny Mold - Chester

West Midlands

Oswestry - Welshpool Stafford – Newport - Telford

Yorkshire & Humberside

Deepcar – Penistone – Hadfield Leeds – Otley – Ilkley Ripon - Northallerton

Tier 3

East of England

Buntingford – Hoddesdon Framlingham – Wickham Market Hadleigh - Bentley Hatfield – St Albans King's Lynn - Spalding March - Spalding Mildenhall - Cambridge Mundesley – North Walsham Welwyn Garden City – Luton – Dunstable – Leighton Buzzard Wroxham - Aylsham – Fakenham – King's Lynn

East Midlands

Horncastle – Woodhall Spa Lincoln – Woodhall Spa – Boston Mablethorpe – Louth Northampton – Towcester – Banbury Rugby – Wigston – (Leicester)

Greater London

Alexandra Palace – Highgate – Finsbury Park

North East of England

Alston - Haltwhistle Barnard Castle - Bishop Auckland Bellingham - Hexham Bishop Auckland – Spennymoor - Ferryhill Castle Eden - Cornforth – Ferryhill Consett – Stanley – Pelton – Washington Durham – Lanchester - Consett Middleton-in-Teesdale - Barnard Castle Rothbury – Morpeth Tweedmouth – Coldstream – Kelso – St Boswells

Northern Ireland

Armagh – Newry Ballycastle – Ballymoney Enniskillen - Omagh Magherafelt – Antrim Magherafelt – Dungannon Newtownards – Comber - Belfast

North West of England

Accrington – Ramsbottom Blackburn - Chorley Blackburn – Great Harwood – Padiham - Burnley Glazebrook – Partington – Altrincham Ince-in-Makerfield – Tyldessley - Eccles Longridge – Preston Macclesfield – Marple Macclesfield – Leek - Cheddleton Silloth – Carlisle

Scotland

Ballater - Banchory Boat of Garten – Craigellachie – Dufftown Denny - Larbert Elderslie – Lochwinnoch – Dalry Girvan – Turnberry - Ayr Jedburgh – Roxburgh Kirkcudbright – Castle Douglas Langholm – Riddings Junction Larkhall – Strathaven – Darvel – Galston - Kilmarnock Lossiemouth - Elgin Macduff – Turiff - Inverurie Reston – Duns – St Boswells Whithorn – Wigtown - Newton Stewart

South East of England

Alton – Fareham Midhurst – Chichester Three Bridges – East Grinstead – Groombridge – Tunbridge Wells

South West of England

Barnstaple - Taunton Bideford - Great Torrington - Halwill - (Okehampton) **Blandford Forum - Bournemouth** Bude – Okehampton Chard Junction – Chard - Taunton Chepstow-Ross-on-Wye – Hereford Cirencester - Kemble Clevedon - Yatton Helston – Gwinear Road Ilfracombe - Barnstaple Kingsbridge – Brent Launceston – Lydford – Tavistock Lyme Regis - Axminster Moretonhampstead – Newton Abbot Padstow - Wadebridge Seaton – Seaton Junction Tiverton – Tiverton Junction Wells – Cheddar - Yatton

Wales

Aberaeron - Lampeter Barmouth – Dolgellau - Corwen Blaenau Ffestiniog – Trawsfynydd Cardigan - Carmarthen Denbigh – Rhyl Mold - Chester Neath – Brecon - Hereford

West Midlands

Bridgnorth – Ironbridge - Shrewsbury Hampton-in-Arden – Whitacre Junction Kenilworth – Berkswell Leek - Macclesfield Leominster – Bromyard – Worcester Wellington – Market Drayton - Nantwich Wellington – Market Drayton – Stoke-on-Trent

Yorkshire & Humberside

Hornsea – Hull Pateley Bridge - Harrogate Pickering – Malton Redmire – Garsdale Richmond - Darlington Withernsea - Hull

9. New railways

One area we have not examined in detail is the potential for new railway lines as this report is primarily about safeguarding underused or demolished lines for possible passenger use. Given the destruction of our rail network over the past century and the urban sprawl that often precludes reopening of railways, especially in the most populous areas where they are most needed, however, new construction offers a way forward in many places. New lines can be designed to serve the markets of the present and the future, while existing routes may reflect those of the past.

In a few cases (apart from HS2 and Crossrail 2), this is under consideration. Merseytravel, for instance, has been looking at a possible new route from Liverpool to Kirkby and Skelmersdale. There are other cases, both light and heavy rail. But such schemes are inevitably expensive and land acquisition etc. is challenging. However, the failure to protect railway alignments over the past half century or longer means such schemes are likely to become more common over time.

10. Conclusions

A quick glance at large-scale maps of the United Kingdom reveals the opportunities for reusing under-used or demolished railway lines. In and around our cities this might be for light-rail, metro or heavy rail, but in more rural areas it is most likely to be heavy rail.

We have not estimated the total mileage of the lines we recommend, but it is considerable. Nor do we imagine our list is wholly definitive; it is presented for discussion purposes. Many considerations are involved including traffic potential, regeneration or remoteness need and the obstacles involved. A comprehensive national study, beyond our resources, is needed.

A programme of restoring passenger services to freight-only lines and reopening mothballed lines is clearly a way of securing "quick hits". This could draw on and expand the recently announced "Reversing Beeching" package. We recognise that neither funding nor design and construction industry resources are limitless, so a rolling programme should be shortlisted for early implementation and further lines for development assigned to "shovel ready" status, to be implemented as resources become available.,

A few of those we have recommended may prove to have insurmountable obstacles; equally we may have missed other candidates where a good case could be made. Our proposals are intended to illustrate the scale of opportunity we have and to stimulate a long overdue discussion.

The key thing is to ensure we lose no more of our underused lines to closure or the trackbeds of our abandoned railways to development of whatever kind. This report takes forward the work in the Campaign for Better Transport report which set out the advantages and potential costs. We believe rail reopenings are a vital long-term project and, to this end, the alignments of many demolished lines will need to be protected now from further erosion and development. Planning policy in the devolved administrations is clearly ahead of England in terms of the help it offers to protecting closed alignments. It's time national policy in England caught up.

We are facing a severe and worsening climate emergency. Some like to kid themselves that our zero carbon targets can be met by a switch to electric vehicles. They cannot. At best that would secure a carbon reduction around 50% and all the other problems our reliance on motor vehicles cause would remain untouched. We need to offer people the chance to use sustainable transport around as much of the UK as possible; not only around all of its more densely populated areas but also to bring rail access to many areas which are currently far from their nearest station. All parts of the UK need "pipelines" of reopening schemes, in the way we currently prioritize unsustainable road building.

We recommend therefore:-

- 1. That a programme and ongoing budget be put in place to restore passenger services to freight-only or mothballed railway lines where the potential exists.
- 2. That national planning policy throughout the United Kingdom should make clear that the formations of abandoned railways should either be formally safeguarded or safeguarded through the planning system wherever they have potential for reopening.
- 3. That the UK government, the devolved administrations and regional and local authorities agree a comprehensive map of railways with potential for reopening, promote protection of their alignments and work to prevent obstruction of them by development.

APPENDIX 1 Rail reopenings recommended by the Campaign for Better Transport, 2019

Priority 1

East of England

Bedford – Sandy - Cambridge Haverhill - Cambridge Wisbech - March

East Midlands

Burton-upon-Trent - Leicester Matlock - Buxton Shirebrook - Ollerton

Greater London Brentford - Southall Old Oak Common - Hounslow

North East of England

Ashington – Blythe - Tyne Ferryhill - Stockton Pelaw - Ferryhill (the Leamside Line)

Northern Ireland

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North West of England Poulton-le-Fylde - Fleetwood Skelmersdale - Liverpool Skipton - Colne

Scotland

Dunfermline - Alloa St Andrews - Leuchars Leven - Thornton Junction

South East of England

Cowley - Oxford Fawley – Hythe - Totton

South West of England

Bere-Alston – Tavistock - Okehampton Henbury Loop Portishead - Bristol

Wales

Aberbeeg - Abertillery Beddau - Pontyclun Caernarfon - Bangor Hirwaun - Aberdare

West Midlands

Camp Hill Chords Leek - Stoke-on-Trent Stratford-upon-Avon - Long Marston - Honeybourne Walsall - Water Orton Walsall - Wolverhampton

Yorkshire & Humberside

Harrogate – Ripon - Northallerton Low Moor - Thornhill

Priority 2

East of England

Northampton – Bedford Braintree – Stansted Norwich - Wymondham - Fakenham - Little Walsingham - Wells Next the Sea Kings Lynn – Hunstanton Sheringham - Holt – Fakenham Watford - Croxley Green Newmarket – Ely Witham – Maldon Rugby - Peterborough via Market Harborough King's Lynn – Dereham

East Midlands

Lincoln - Spalding – Boston Marylebone – Leicester Ullesthorpe - Rugby

Greater London

North East of England

Middlesbrough – Guisborough Consett - Stanley – Beamish – Pelton – Washington Durham - Bishop Auckland

Northern Ireland

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North West of England

North Mersey Branch Line Rawtenstall - Manchester Victoria Bolton – Bury New Carnforth chord Southport and Cheshire Lines Extension Railway Penrith – Keswick Carlisle – Galashiels Partington – Glazebrook Burscough - Burscough Curves (Preston - Southport line) Sandbach - Northwich, including a new Middlewich station Waterloo Tunnel, Waterloo Dock - Edge Hill Junction Wapping Tunnel, King's Dock - Edge Hill Junction Canada Dock Branch Line St Helens Central - St Helens Junction

Scotland

Dumfries - Castle Douglas – Stranraer/Kirkcudbright Waverley Line beyond Tweedbank to Hawick

South East of England

Brighton Mainline Two Hall Farm Curve Polegate - Pevensey (Willingdon Chord) Polegate to Tunbridge Wells Oxford - Fairford via Witney Aylesbury – Rugby Bourne End - High Wycombe Windsor Link Railway - Slough to Waterloo via Windsor Gravesend to Thamesport (Hundred of Hoo Railway) Banbury - Verney Junction Brockenhurst – Ringwood Sturt Road Chord Alton - Fareham (the Meon Valley Railway)

South West of England

Cirencester – Kemble

Minehead – Taunton Exmouth - Budleigh Salterton – Sidmouth Chard Junction - Chard Town – Taunton Exeter – Bude Newton Abbot – Moretonhampstead Exeter - Newton Abbot (Teign Valley Line) Frome – Radstock Barnstaple – Ilfracombe Swindon – Marlborough Weymouth Quay tramway Barnstaple – Braunton Axminster - Lyme Regis

Wales

Aberystwyth – Carmarthen Amlwch branch Blaenau Ffestiniog – Trawsfynydd Mold – Chester Tidenham - Hereford (Wye Valley) Llangollen – Wrexham Mumbles Tramway (Swansea Bay) Ystrad Mynach to Bedlinog

West Midlands

Hampton in Arden - Whitacre Junction Walsall – Lichfield Shrewsbury – Ironbridge Kenilworth – Berkswell Wellington - Stoke-on-Trent via Market Drayton Stourbridge - Dudley – Walsall Shrewsbury - Stafford

Yorkshire & Humberside

York - Hull via Beverley Bradford Crossrail Malton – Pickering Hadfield - Penistone – Deepcar Redmire – Garsdale Leeds - Otley – Ilkley Skipton – Grassington Skipton - Embsay - Bolton Abbey – Addingham – Ilkley Saltburn – Loftus Harrogate - Leeds (via Wetherby) Brancliffe - Kirk Sandall Oakenshaw South Junction - Goose Hill Junction

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⁸ New Decade, New Approach [Dublin and London: Irish and UK Governments, January 2020] <u>https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/</u> 2020-01-08 a new decade a new approach.pdf

⁹ Regional Planning Guidance for the North East [London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2002]
¹⁰ National Planning Policy Framework [London: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government,

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¹¹ *Planning Practice Guidance* [London: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, various dates] <u>https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance</u>

¹² National Planning Framework 3 [Edinburgh; Scottish Government, June 2014]

https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-3/

¹³ Scottish Planning Policy [Edinburgh: Scottish Government, June 2014]

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¹⁴ *Planning Policy Wales* [Cardiff: Welsh Government, December 2018] <u>https://gov.wales/planning-policy-wales</u>

¹⁵ Aberystwyth to Carmarthen Rail Reinstatement Feasibility Study [Cardiff: Welsh Government, September 2018] <u>https://gov.wales/aberystwyth-carmarthen-rail-reinstatement-feasibility-study</u>

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