

## Restoring Your Railway projects that hang in the balance after £43M spent by DfT

The Department for Transport (DfT) spent £43M on Restoring Your Railway projects that face an uncertain future following chancellor Rachel Reeves' cancellation of the programme, *NCE* can reveal.

The Restoring Your Railways scheme was intended to bring abandoned railways back into service, many of which were taken out of service during the infamous Reshaping of British Railways report written by Richard Beeching in 1963. This report identified 2,363 stations and 8,000 km of railway line for closure.

At the end of July, Reeves confirmed that UK infrastructure projects including the Restoring Your Railways programme "will not move forward" as the government looks to fill a £22bn hole it had discovered in its audit of public finances. During her speech, she stated the [Restoring Your Railway programme](#) cancellation would save £85M of public funding.

When the programme was cancelled, it was stated that projects that were currently being delivered would be completed while all others would become part of transport secretary Louise Haigh's review to assess each DfT project individually.

Haigh is currently presiding over 44 of the 51 Restoring Your Railway projects as part of her review.

Local authorities are continuing to progress the schemes and are confident the money will not be wasted as they will utilise different funding methods to complete them.

### Spend so far

Taking data from a Freedom of Information request, *NCE* can reveal the DfT spent a total of £316M on the Restoring Your Railway fund, with £273M of that having been spent on projects that have been delivered or are in the process of being delivered.

By far the biggest spend has been done on the Northumberland Line, which is currently being delivered, and has so far cost the DfT £211M.

The restored Northumberland Line will soon bring passenger trains back into service between Ashington and Newcastle with six new railway stations.

[The Dartmoor Line was the first to reopen through the Restoring your Railway Fund](#), £49M was spent on this by the DfT through Restoring Your Railway. In addition, a further 11 new stations have been opened across the country under the New Stations Fund, which was part of Restoring Your Railway.

The full list of Restoring Your Railway projects and the DfT spend on them is below.

### Uncertain future

Out of the projects whose future is currently not determined, the DfT has incurred the biggest spend on the Portishead Line, a plan to reconnect North Somerset with Bristol. This scheme is currently at the outline business case stage and has cost the DfT £16M so far.

North Somerset Council leader and executive member for major projects Mike Bell stated in July that the council remains "absolutely committed" to reopening the Portishead Line.

The second biggest spend on an uncertain project is for the Waterside Line in Hampshire, which has cost the DfT close to £6.5M.

Third is the proposals to reconstruct the Wellington and Cullompton Stations in Devon, which have cost 6.5M so far. In August, [Mid Devon District Council expressed its disappointment at the government's decision to withdraw funding for the reopening of two new train stations](#).

Out of the 51 projects on the datasheet provided to *NCE*, 35 of them only made it to the Strategic Outline Business Case for a total spend of £2.6M.

## Local authority response

Since the cancellation of the fund, a number of councils have come out to state that they will be continuing with the schemes regardless of whether the DfT wants to continue funding them or not.

Speaking to *NCE*, a spokesperson for West Yorkshire Combined Authority stated the organisation was not expecting, per se, to receive any further funding from the DfT for its proposals to build the new Thorpe Park station. This has benefitted from £3.3M spent by the DfT to produce the Outline Business Case.

The spokesperson further stated the authority is continuing to progress the scheme while Haigh conducts her review.

The Ivanhoe line in Leicestershire was another project being advanced under Restoring Your Railway. Phase 1 and 2, the DfT has spent £2.5M on the Outline Business Case for Phase 1 and the Strategic Outline Business Case for Phase 2.

The campaign to restore the line was being organised by being organised by the Campaign for the Reinstatement of the Ivanhoe Line. While Leicestershire County Council was not directly involved, it did stress its disappointment at the cancellation of the fund.

A spokesperson for Leicestershire County Council said: “We will always support new rail infrastructure, so we are disappointed that this avenue of funding for the Ivanhoe Line has been closed off. We also recognise, though, that when funding is tight, it needs to be directed at the highest priorities.

“However, in general terms around rail projects, the electrification of the Midland Main Line, which will see new Class 810 bi-mode ‘Aurora’ trains running through Leicestershire from early 2025, and the doubling of rail services between Leicester and Birmingham through the Midlands Rail Hub, will bring greater benefits across the county.”

City of York Council told *NCE* that it was continuing to push for its local scheme of reopening Haxby Station, which the DfT spent £1.5M on developing the outline business case for.

City of York Council director of transport, environment and planning James Gilchrist said: “The council continues to provide information to the DfT and Treasury regarding the scheme at Haxby Station and we are working with Network Rail on the planning application that was submitted earlier this year.

“Since the government announced they were reviewing transport projects the council has been making the case for why this project is important and will continue to do so until a definitive decision is made.”

[Shortly after the cancellation, the Campaign for Better Transport urged the government to introduce a Restoring Your Railway alternative following the programme being cut.](#)

[Hampshire County Council and North Somerset Council also recently discussed the potential reinstatement of abandoned railway lines in their counties despite the axing of the scheme.](#)

## More lines needed to improve transport resilience

As well as restoring connectivity to areas that may have lost it during the Beeching cuts, Transport Action Network director Chris Todd argues that reconstructing many of these lines would improve the overall resilience of the UK’s rail network.

“Having more lines does help provide greater resilience and enables people to travel when you know you have issues around maintenance or unexpected events with climate change on their main line, which are potentially becoming more frequent,” he said.

“There definitely is a need for more railways but that’s not to say that every single railway that ever was a railway necessarily should go back to being a railway.”

Another positive of restoring rail connectivity for more rural areas to bigger conurbations is to reduce road congestion along these corridors.

“There are examples all around the country where we do need to link in reasonable sized populations to bigger conurbations to cut down on the congestion that is suffered on neighbouring roads and to reduce this pressure in the cities, which makes them really inefficient,” Todd said.

“If they're being swamped with cars that affects productivity which will affect economic growth, air pollution and lots of other things as well.”

While the cancellation of the fund is disappointing to many, Todd argued that there needs to be a more consistent approach to regional rail funding in the UK.

“There seems to be something that needs to be looked at in the way that smaller and maybe not so small interventions can make a real difference,” he said.

“I think that was the intention of the fund but it was an outlier, a one off.

“We need something consistent that will allow more rural places to put forward their own ideas.”

A DfT spokesperson said: “Restoring your Railway projects at the delivery stage will be completed, whilst other individual projects at business case stages are being considered under the Department’s internal review.

“This government has inherited an extremely challenging economic position but remain committed to improving rail connections and investing in infrastructure that will drive economic growth.”

You can see all of the Restoring Your Railway projects, how much has been spent on each one and at what stage they are at below:

<b>Project</b>	<b>Cost of Work Done</b>	<b>Business Case Status</b>
Northumberland line	£211,400,000.00	FBC - Delivery
Dartmoor line (Okehampton to Exeter)	£49,900,000.00	Delivered
Portishead	£16,198,000.00	OBC
Waterside line	£6,490,000.00	FBC
Wellington and Cullompton stations	£5,610,000.00	FBC
White Rose station	£5,000,000.00	FBC - Delivery
Marsh Barton	£3,468,000.00	Delivered
Thanet Parkway	£3,400,000.00	Delivered
Thorpe Park station	£3,300,000.00	OBC
Ivanhoe line Phase 1 and 2	£2,522,000.00	OBC (Phase 1); SOBC (Phase 2)
Edginswell station	£2,000,000.00	FBC
Haxby station	£1,500,000.00	OBC

Meir Station - Stoke-On-Trent and North Staffordshire	£1,500,000.00	FBC
Mid Cornwall Metro/Newquay line**	£1,356,000.00	FBC - Delivery
Barrow Hill line (Sheffield to Chesterfield)	£1,353,000.00	OBC
Deeside	£400,000.00	SOBC
Devizes Parkway Station	£355,980.00	SOBC
Ferryhill - Stockton-on-Tees	£203,000.00	SOBC
Aldridge Station	£150,000.00	SOBC
Fleetwood line	£113,000.00	SOBC
Don Valley line (Sheffield to Stocksbridge)	£108,000.00	SOBC
Beverley to York	£50,000.00	SOBC
Bolton-Radcliffe / Bolton-Bury	£50,000.00	SOBC
Bury-Heywood-Rochdale	£50,000.00	SOBC
Clitheroe to Hellifield	£50,000.00	SOBC
Consett-Newcastle line	£50,000.00	SOBC
Corsham Station	£50,000.00	SOBC
Darlington to Weardale	£50,000.00	SOBC
Gaerwen – Amlwch line	£50,000.00	SOBC
Isle of Wight	£50,000.00	SOBC
Kemble - Cirencester	£50,000.00	SOBC
Langport and Somerton, Castle Cary - Taunton	£50,000.00	SOBC
Middlewich Re-opening	£50,000.00	SOBC
Rawtenstall to Buckley Wells	£50,000.00	SOBC
Tavistock to Plymouth	£50,000.00	SOBC

Oswestry - Gobowen line	£47,250.00	SOBC
Bristol Temple Meads - Bath Spa (St Annes)	£47,064.00	SOBC
Stonehouse Bristol Road station	£45,862.00	SOBC
Preston - Blackpool South (South Fylde)	£45,145.00	SOBC
Melton Mowbray - Nottingham	£45,000.00	SOBC
Stoke – Leek line	£41,067.00	SOBC
Gainsborough - Barton (South Humber Link)	£39,833.00	SOBC
Ashton to Stockport	£36,482.00	SOBC
Wareham - Swanage	£32,625.00	SOBC
Abbey line	£30,785.00	SOBC
Stratford Upon Avon - Honeybourne - Worcester/Oxford	£30,075.00	SOBC
Maid Marian line	£27,502.00	SOBC
Waverley station (Sheffield)	£22,089.75	SOBC
Askern Branch line (Doncaster-Askern line)	£18,714.00	SOBC
Beeston Castle and Tarporley, Crewe - Chester	£18,000.00	SOBC
Abertillery line	£0.00	OBC
St Clears	£0.00	FBC

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