

## **APPENDIX A**

### **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 26<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2015 QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN**

#### **Question to the Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee, from Councillor Richard Jackson**

Plans to extend the Robin Hood Line to Ollerton and Edwinstowe have received backing from local residents, MPs, the Mayor of Mansfield, and the Secretary of State for Transport.

Can the Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee confirm that this Council is 100% behind Sherwood MP Mark Spencer's campaign for this line extension and will do everything possible to make it happen?

#### **Response from Councillor Steve Calvert, Vice-Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee on behalf of Councillor Kevin Greaves, Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee**

The County Council was the initiator of the Robin Hood Line project to re-open the railway between Nottingham, Mansfield and Worksop. Work commenced in the late 1980s and the Line was completed in 1998. The Council invested £6m from its reserves with other funds made available nationally and from the European Union.

The County Council has been delighted by the success of the project, carrying over one million passengers per annum which makes it the busiest re-opened railway line anywhere in England. The continued success led the Council to increase the frequency of services in the years 2000, 2002 and 2008 with the introduction of half hourly services on Monday to Saturday and a Sunday service.

The re-opening of the Dukeries Line to Ollerton would be a natural extension of the Robin Hood Line from Shirebrook and would include the re-opening of stations at Warsop, Edwinstowe and a new station at Ollerton. It has been a long standing aspiration of this County Council and is recognised as a key component of its wider strategy to promote economic growth in the Sherwood area. We have already commissioned feasibility work from Network Rail which estimated that, whilst the scheme is thankfully feasible (most of the track is in good condition), the likely capital cost of the works required are in the order of £12m in addition to a County Council revenue subsidy required of around £500,000 per annum. The County Council has now commissioned more detailed design work to see if there are any options to further reduce the annual revenue subsidy requirement. The County Council has commissioned all these studies without the financial support of any other bodies.

An article appeared on the website of the Newark Advertiser last October regarding a meeting between Mark Spencer, the MP for Sherwood, Claire Perry, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport and representatives from the Ollerton and District Economic Forum. It reported that Claire Perry would work with Mark Spencer and assist in putting together a business case which could then be submitted to

Government. This sounded promising so we waited to hear from either of them but to no avail. Accordingly, our Chairman of Transport and Highways Committee wrote to Claire Perry in December to welcome her offer of support and proposed a 50/50 share of costs for the next stage of feasibility work. There was still a wall of silence. We chased up a reply on 4<sup>th</sup> February and on the 27<sup>th</sup> February. Finally we received a response (and an apology) dated 4<sup>th</sup> March from Claire Perry which said that it was not appropriate to read any firm commitment to funding our proposed feasibility studies which are fundamental to the business case. Furthermore there was no reference to any so called “campaign” led by Mark Spencer MP.

I can therefore confirm that this Council is leading the work on developing a business case for the re-opening of the extension to Ollerton and is working very closely with Network Rail, East Midlands Trains and the Department of Transport to achieve it. It remains the only body investing any funds in the project. I am not aware of any significant contribution by the local MP to the success of this work but I would welcome his support.