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Local businesses back Birmingham-Black Country-Shrewsbury rail line improvements

Shropshire-based businesses and organisations have backed proposals to improve the rail line between Shrewsbury, Telford, the Black Country and Birmingham, in a bid to unlock Shropshire's economic potential.

A report released today by Midlands Connect outlines how firms in Shropshire feel improved rail connections could positively impact their business operations. The firms overwhelmingly feel that investment in the rail line could be transformative for the region, unlocking employment opportunity, supporting sustainability targets, attracting visitors to the area, and opening up new markets.

The proposed improvements involve boosting the line speed to 90 miles per hour, which would be achieved by two minor alignments within the railway corridor, as well as improvements around signalling on the line. Future proposals will include rail electrification and a new hourly train to London from Shrewsbury.

Midlands Connect spoke to a number of local firms and organisations in Shrewsbury and Telford, some of which employ thousands of local people. This included representations from Pheonix Group, with offices in both Telford and Birmingham, Cove Group, HM Revenue & Customs, Visit Shropshire and a local business organisation, Country Land and Business Association.

Having read the report, Shaun Davies, the new MP for Telford, has also voiced his support for the plans and has urged the Department for Transport to proceed with funding the improvements. He said:

"As the MP for Telford, I wholeheartedly support Midlands Connect's outline business case for funding to improve the Birmingham to Telford to Shrewsbury rail line, allowing for faster and more frequent trains along the route.

"Local firms have clearly outlined the importance of these rail improvements to the future growth of their businesses, providing them with better access to markets, talent, and resources in the West Midlands and beyond.

"By investing in the Birmingham to Telford to Shrewsbury rail line, we would lay the groundwork for a more integrated and prosperous regional economy—encouraging tourism, attracting trade, and supporting our businesses to flourish.

"The support for these plans in the local business community is resounding and shows that this funding is not just about improving rail transport; it's about unlocking economic growth and driving success for our region's business sector."

This sentiment was echoed by Lezley Picton, the Leader of Shropshire Council, who said:

"Boosting line speeds on this important route is vital to fulfil Shropshire's economic growth potential, enabling faster and more direct journey opportunities for passengers and businesses alike.

"But that's not all, better rail links could also mean more people taking the train and relying less on their cars.

"I fully support Midlands Connect proposal and would ask the Transport Minister to give the green light to this important project."

Commenting on the publication of the report, Maria Manchoses, CEO of Midlands Connect said:

"The level of support for our proposals in Shropshire's business community is incredible, with local firms recognising the critical role that rail connectivity plays in supporting their growth."

"We strongly feel these plans for line speed improvements between Birmingham and Shrewsbury would help to restore business confidence in local rail. However, we will continue to champion the need for direct, hourly trains to London as well as electrification."

"I believe that this project will help level up the Black Country, support economic development in Shropshire and unlock the fantastic growth of Telford in the years ahead."

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