

## Adjournment debate: 'Woodhead rail route and options for its future'

1.30-2pm, Tuesday 11 March

### Called by Angela Smith, MP for Sheffield Hillsborough

National Grid plans to move electricity cables from old Victorian tunnels to the new Woodhead tunnel, which sits on a potential future rail route from Manchester to Sheffield.

The modern tunnel is the only one which is suitable for rail use. If the Government does not intervene, National Grid's action will preclude use of the tunnel for a new trans-Pennine rail route.

The moving of the cables is going ahead without an assessment by Government of the different costs involved if and when the railway line is reopened.

It is vital that the Woodhead line can be reopened in the future as part of a growing railway, and the Government should ensure this can happen at the lowest cost to the taxpayer.

### Support for safeguarding the Woodhead rail route:

- The Woodhead rail route and tunnel are safeguarded in several **statutory regional and local plans**.<sup>1</sup>
- The **Northern Way** has called on Government to ensure potential reuse of Woodhead Tunnels for rail (8<sup>th</sup> January 2008). John Jarvis, the Northern Way's Transport Director said

'It is likely, based on the work that the Northern Way has carried out to date, that a new higher speed rail route across the Pennines will need to be built in the next 15-30 years. Without the availability of the Woodhead Tunnels this would involve large-scale, expensive tunnelling and would dramatically increase the costs to build any new rail line across the Pennines.'

- **IPPR North** released 'Moving On: A progressive transport policy for Northern England' on 28 February 2008 which called for improvements to this rail corridor. The paper says

'The main rail links *within* the North – particularly on the trans\_Pennine corridor and between Liverpool and Manchester and Leeds and Sheffield – are not fit for purpose. Failure to invest in these links is likely to lead to increased congestion on rail and road links, decreasing public satisfaction, and additional domestic air travel (with serious implications for greenhouse gas emissions).'

- The **Government's White Paper 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway' (July 2007)** says there is a need for capacity increases on the Trans-Pennine corridor and that the capacity of the rail network needs to double in 30 years.
- **Campaign for Better Transport** believes that doubling capacity is likely to require reopenings of lines and stations. It therefore makes sense to consider the case for safeguarding key routes – and the Woodhead route in particular - to avoid greater cost and inconvenience in the future. The new White Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System' needs to present a real vision for the future rail network, which includes plans for safeguarding.

---

<sup>1</sup> Peak National Park Structure Plan (1994), South Pennines Integrated Transport Strategy Business Plan (2005-2015), Peak District National Park Authority Local Plan (2001), Regional Spatial Strategy 8 East Midlands (2005), Derby & Derbyshire Joint Structure Plan Transport (2001), High Peak Borough Council Local Plan