



## PRESS RELEASE

14 April 2020

### SAFEGUARDING OUR RAILWAYS FOR REOPENING

Action is needed through the planning system to protect thousands of miles of disused railway routes if they are ever to play their part in getting the UK the sustainable transport the gathering climate emergency necessitates, according to a new report.

*Defending Our Lines – Safeguarding Railways for Reopening* is published by the Smart Growth UK coalition and looks at the protection that demolished and disused railways need to ensure they can be reopened for passenger use. Its key message is that this vital national infrastructure, neglected and ignored for so long, needs protection from development and other obstacles to reopening.

“Sadly in the 21st century we continue to allow development on former rail corridors making the cost of future reopenings that much greater,” says Transform Scotland Policy Forum convenor Paul Tetlaw who contributed a Foreword. “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.”

Thousands of miles of railway were closed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and many of them could provide much needed rail links to both urban and rural communities. But once lines are demolished, their routes get nibbled away at by a number of interests: houses and business premises, new roads, farming and many more.

Formal safeguarding of routes likely to reopen soon is costly. In Scotland and Wales, however, national planning policy encourages local authorities to protect routes they believe have potential for reopening through the planning system, but in England and Northern Ireland there is no specific policy.

Last year a Campaign for Better Transport report set out the benefits of reopenings. The new report leads on from that and includes, for discussion and further development, lists of demolished former lines, mothballed lines and freight-only lines with potential for new passenger services.

**Notes to editors:** *Defending Our Lines* can be found at:-

[http://www.smartgrowthuk.org/resources/downloads/Rail\\_Safeguarding\\_Report\\_2020.pdf](http://www.smartgrowthuk.org/resources/downloads/Rail_Safeguarding_Report_2020.pdf)

[Smart Growth UK](#) is an informal coalition of national and local groups and individuals who support the “Smart Growth” approach to spatial, transport and community planning. This promotes compact and functional urban areas and sustainable transport options and opposes urban sprawl and car-dependency.