

# Beeching lines may reopen ...to boost housebuilding

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RAILWAY lines and stations lost during the Beeching cuts could be reopened to drive housebuilding.

The Transport Secretary said yesterday that reversing some of the 1960s closures would provide homes, boost the economy and ease overcrowding.

Chris Grayling's ministry will today announce it is to accelerate plans announced in the Budget to reopen a rail link between Oxford and Cambridge.

Other lines in Bristol, Devon and the West Midlands could be reinstated, along with the building of four stations in West Yorkshire.

Chancellor Philip Hammond hopes new infrastructure will allow him to deliver on his vow in the Budget last week to build 300,000 homes a year.

Around 5,000 miles of track and 2,363 stations were closed between 1964 and 1970 following a report by British Railways chairman Richard Beeching.

The railways were losing millions of pounds a year and the former business-

## 'We need a new way of working'

man and engineer was given the job of making them profitable again.

His 1963 report, the Reshaping of British Railways, recommended closing down parts that were losing money - about a third of the network. Tens of thousands of jobs were lost, making Dr Beeching a villain to many.

The Department for Transport will pledge to reverse some of those decisions to cater for a growing number of train passengers putting the network under strain. Last week the Treasury confirmed funding for phase two of the western section of the East West Rail link between Oxford and Cambridge.

The line, which runs from Bicester to Bedford and Milton Keynes to Princes Risborough, will be completed by 2023.

An independent East West Rail Company will be set up to deliver the central section between Bedford and Cambridge to open in the mid-2020s. More than 100,000 homes will also be built in Oxfordshire by 2031 as part of this investment in the region.

The Government hopes that the

line will help create a hub for technology and science.

Other proposed openings include lines from Bristol to Portishead and Bristol to Henbury. Further plans have been submitted to restore connections in Devon between Exeter and Okehampton and Bere Alston and Tavistock.

Further 'opportunities' to reopen lines are being considered around Birmingham according to the Government rail strategy. The

four new stations being considered for West Yorkshire are Elland, Thorpe Park, White Rose and Leeds Bradford International Airport Parkway.

Local authorities have to submit business cases to apply for central government funding.

The DfT said 5,500 new carriages will be on the network by 2021, which is busier than at any time since 1919 - despite being much smaller. Mr Grayling said: 'We

need a new way of working to help our railway deal with the challenges it faces.

'We need to expand our network to unlock jobs and housing growth across the country.'

Labour said the Government was failing to tackle fare rises and accused it of scrapping millions in promised rail investment.

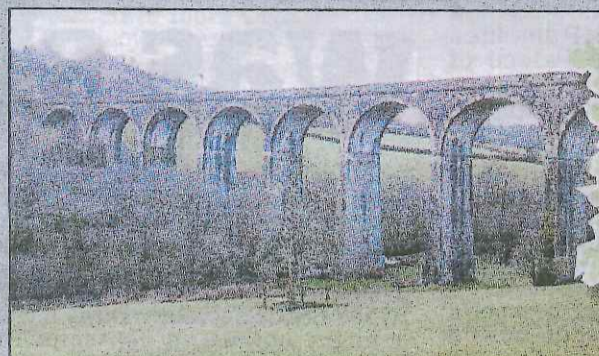
Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has put forward plans to renationalise the railways but has not set out

how this would be funded. Andy McDonald, Labour's transport spokesman, said: 'These flimsy re-announcements and unfunded proposals come as fares have risen at twice the rate of wages since 2010 and follow the decision to scrap hundreds of millions of pounds of promised rail investment.'

The announcement comes amid reports that the DfT will overhaul rail franchises and reform Network Rail.

## AXED IN THE 1960s - BUT BACK ON TRACK

Lines and stations which could be reopened if funding requests are granted:



Shillamill Viaduct on the Bere Alston to Tavistock rail line

■ Funding already confirmed for phase two of the former Varsity Line western section between Oxford and Cambridge

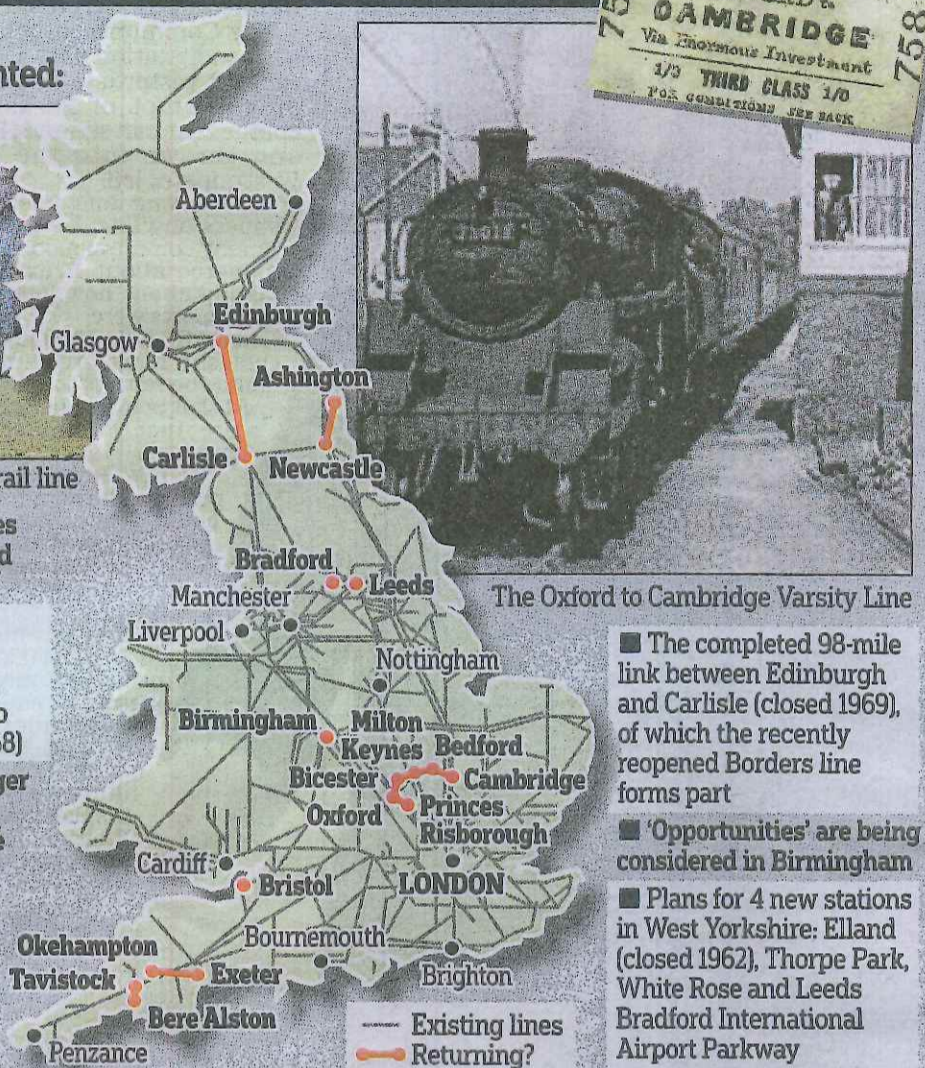
■ One part of the line, which runs from Bicester to Bedford and Milton Keynes to Princes Risborough, will be completed by 2023

■ An independent East West Rail Company will be set up to deliver the central section between Bedford and Cambridge to open in the mid-2020s

■ Two suburban routes in Bristol: to Portishead and Henbury

■ Devon routes connecting Exeter to Okehampton (closed in 1972) and Bere Alston to Tavistock (closed in 1968)

■ Half-hourly passenger services suggested on the Beeching-axed line between Ashington and Newcastle, with new stops at Bedlington, Bebside Choppington, Newsham in Blyth, and Seaton Delaval



The Oxford to Cambridge Varsity Line

■ The completed 98-mile link between Edinburgh and Carlisle (closed 1969), of which the recently reopened Borders line forms part

■ 'Opportunities' are being considered in Birmingham

■ Plans for 4 new stations in West Yorkshire: Elland (closed 1962), Thorpe Park, White Rose and Leeds Bradford International Airport Parkway