

North-east rail revolution begins with Beeching reversal and fund for new trains across Tyne and Wear

- rail minister confirms £1.5 million to accelerate re-opening Ashington-Blyth-Tyne line for passengers, with project at forefront of £500 million commitment to reversing Beeching cuts
- government invests £337 million to deliver new, modern metro train fleet across Tyne and Wear
- Middlesbrough Station to receive £500,000 package to drive forward proposed station upgrades

A major investment package into new trains, the re-opening of closed routes and new upgrades for stations was unveiled by Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris in Newcastle (28 January 2020), with passengers across the north-east set to see significant rail improvements.

The Department for Transport is investing £1.5 million in Northumberland County Council's project to re-open the Ashington-Blyth-Tyne line to passenger services. Closed during the Beeching cuts, this funding places the project at the front of a new nationwide drive to [re-open former rail routes, through a £500 million government fund](#).

The fund is aimed at bringing back the rail connections needed to level up access to opportunity across the country.

This announcement comes on the same day that Nexus, the operator of the Tyne and Wear Metro, announces the manufacturer of their new £362 million fleet. Backed by £337 million of government funding, the new trains are set to transform journeys, providing more comfortable seats and better information for millions of passengers who use the network.

Middlesbrough Station could also see major redevelopment as the government commits £250,000 of funding, matched by the Tees Valley Combined Authority, to take forward upgrades to Middlesbrough Station. This would enable the station to accommodate more, and longer, trains, benefiting to the hundreds of thousands of passengers who use the station every year.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

We are committed to reinvigorating rail connections across the north-east, improving access to jobs, leisure and education across the region.

Levelling up the north is a priority for this government. This investment – to reconnect isolated communities, improve stations and deliver new trains – shows that we are putting our money where

our mouth is.

The visit coincides with [Transport Secretary Grant Shapps visiting Fleetwood](#) to launch the government's £500 million fund into reversing Beeching closures across the country.

The cuts, which were initially proposed by British Rail chief Dr Richard Beeching in 1963, ended passenger services on around a third of the rail network, closing more than 2,300 stations and up to 5,000 miles of track across the UK.

Visiting Poulton-le-Fylde line today (28 January 2020), which has been closed to passengers for over 50 years, Mr Shapps set out how the new investment will see long-isolated communities benefitting from better rail connections.

To launch the reversal scheme, the government is also announcing £1.5 million of funding for the Ashington-Blyth-Tyne Line in Northumberland, the Fleetwood line in Lancashire, and an Ideas Fund.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Many communities still live with the scars that came from the closure of their local railway more than five decades ago. Today sees work begin to undo the damage of the Beeching cuts by restoring local railways and stations to their former glory.

Investing in transport links is essential to levelling up access to opportunities across the country, ensuring our regions are better connected, local economies flourish and more than half a century of isolation is undone.

Recognising that not all growing towns can re-open previously existing stations, and that some areas may never have been served by rail, the government is also announcing a fresh round of the New Stations Fund.

Two previous rounds of the scheme have already helped develop 10 brand new stations across England and Wales. The new round will be allocated £20 million.

The Transport Secretary has invited MPs, local authorities and community groups across England to come forward with proposals on how they could use funding to reinstate axed local services. £300,000 has been committed to an 'Ideas Fund' to kickstart the process and encourage innovative ideas that will then be considered for further funding in the future.