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Saved Railway is a Runaway Success

The 11th April 2014 will see the 25th anniversary of the government's decision to reprieve the Settle-Carlisle railway from closure. The announcement followed years of campaigning for its retention. Since then, the line has prospered beyond all expectations.

Richard Morris, Chairman of the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line (the group set up in 1983 to oppose threatened closure) said: "Even the most optimistic in 1989 could not have imagined how successful the line would be."

If success is measured in passenger numbers and the volume of freight traffic, then the figures speak for themselves. There has been a tenfold increase in passengers since the 1980s, currently standing at 1.3 million a year. Freight has returned to the railway, making it a 24/7 operation, with over 40 freight paths day and night. Key to this has been extra signalling equipment which has almost doubled the line's capacity and hundreds of millions of pounds invested in new tracks. All in all, there are more passengers and freight than ever before in the line's history.

The role that the unique heritage buildings and stunning landscape setting have played in this success story must not be underestimated. The Settle-Carlisle is recognized as one of the World's Greatest Railway Journeys. Most of the intermediate stations have re-opened, the beautiful Victorian station buildings have been renovated and are now tended by an army of volunteers. The iconic Ribbleshead viaduct, once condemned, has been restored and is the highlight of the journey for many. All this explains why the line is a magnet for visitors from all over the world, and a star route for the burgeoning steam rail-tours industry. Route Managing Director for Network Rail, Dyan Crowther, said: "The line is one of the most beautiful in Britain and will continue to be an important part of the railway in the north of England."

The Settle-Carlisle, carving its way up the backbone of England, offers a vital diversionary route to train operators when the east and west coast lines are closed. Wily passengers watching the pennies may be more interested to know that the line offers the cheapest route to Scotland – by a whopping 59% (Which? January 2014).

Alex Hynes, Managing Director of Northern Rail said: "The Settle to Carlisle line is a vital part of the bustling and vibrant towns and villages that stretch across the Pennines and along the Dales. And they're growing; we're now carrying 1.3 million passengers every year. It's hard to think what could have happened to these communities 25 years ago if the proposed closure had gone ahead."

More information about the Settle-Carlisle Railway can be found at www.settle-carlisle.co.uk.

ENDS



Image 1: Ribbleshead viaduct



Image 2: Settle station

Editors' Notes:

The Settle-Carlisle Partnership of bodies works with Network Rail and the train operators to ensure the ongoing success of the line. It comprises the Settle-Carlisle Railway Development Company, The Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line and The Settle-Carlisle Railway Trust.

More information about the railway and the partnership can be found at www.settle-carlisle.co.uk

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