

## Background to the petition to re-open Etruria Station



Whilst Stoke-on-Trent is well connected to *national* infrastructure (the M6, A50, A500 and West Coast Mainline serve the city, and HS2 is set to enhance this national connectivity), the *local* connectivity within Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire is very poor, especially at rush hour, with heavy dependency on the car. This dependency on cars comes despite 30% of the city's population having no access to a (private) car. Motorists and the carless alike struggle

to get around the conurbation, and this limits access to employment opportunities.

The strategic road network is particularly congested where it runs through the urban conurbation, the A500/A50 currently operate at around 110% capacity, resulting in significant tailbacks and poor reliability at peak times. The A500/A50 is a classic piece of “urban splintering” – a road cut through communities that has increased the transport wealth of those with cars while further depriving those who have no car and now face the physical and psychological barriers of busy roads which have designed pedestrians, public transport users, and cyclists out.

The combination of road congestion with lack of connectivity and poor reliability of local buses due to that congestion, currently inhibits investment – a compounded barrier to employment for people who already struggle to access employment opportunities. Improved local public transport would support wider development in the area, unlocking currently unviable sites for housing and economic regeneration.

Indeed, bus use in the city has declined by more than ten per cent in the last year alone, with over one million fewer bus passenger journeys in 2018-19 than there had been in 2017-18. The main reason, according to operators, is a lack of reliability and delays caused by road congestion. Perversely, this has led bus operators to run fewer services at rush hour than during off-peak times! Buses after 5.30pm in the city are a rarity.

Unlike many other parts of the country, North Staffordshire has not benefited from improvements which have seen new stations or stations reopened since Beeching. In fact, things have worsened since Beeching: following the West Coast upgrade, services were lost (“suspended”) to Barlaston and Wedgwood, and the local station at Etruria was removed entirely by the Strategic Rail Authority despite private operators being willing to run trains there. This was done to the (marginal) benefit of (slightly) improved fast inter-city services but has further degraded local rail connectivity in North Staffordshire.

As more people turn to cars congestion worsens. The local road network is not capable of meeting future economic demands. Pavement parking is also common in the city, worsening the lives of pedestrians and those with accessibility needs, e.g. those with wheelchairs or prams.

Today's Government recently announced £29 million in transport funding for Stoke-on-Trent from the Transforming Cities Fund. This is being invested over the next three years across the city. And we need to go further. We can show the Government that we want a new, better, Etruria station and petition them to agree to Jo Gideon's bid for funding from the Restoring Your Railways fund so that we make a proper study.