

The Sandbach-Middlewich-Northwich Railway Line.

A proposal to reopen the Sandbach-Middlewich-Northwich railway line to passengers and the opening of new station at Middlewich.

Since the 1990's there has been a goal to reopen a railway station at Middlewich and bring passenger train services back to the town.

Middlewich is the largest town in Cheshire without a railway station. Half the working population is employed outside the town and their only means of getting there is by car, adding to the huge problems of traffic. Reopening of a station is therefore vital to the economy of the town.

Middlewich lost its passenger trains in 1960 and the line has since then been retained as a low maintenance freight route with a 20mph speed limit. Back in 1999 the Middlewich Rail Link Campaign (MRLC) commissioned a study into the possibility of restoring passenger services. *The Chapman Report* was positive, but the transport authorities were not interested, so it sat on the shelf.

In 2004 the MRLC asked Cheshire County Council to set up a Steering Group of all interested parties to again move the idea forward. The group began work in 2005, with meetings convened by Cheshire County Council.

It investigated upgrading the line, opening a new station with modern accessibility and safety features, planning a timetable to fit in with the rest of the railway and most importantly, consulting the travelling public. Organised by Middlewich Vision, this survey received 197 responses and from the sample 152 daily return train journeys originating in Middlewich were identified. But just when the Steering Group was ready to present its findings in June 2006, the meetings suddenly stopped.

In February 2008 Middlewich Town Council took the initiative and reconvened a new Steering Group. The new Group includes participants from Cheshire County Council, Congleton and Vale Royal Borough Councils, Middlewich, Northwich, Winsford and Sandbach Town Councils, Pochins, ASLEF-Crewe, Middlewich Vision, North West Development Agency, Cheshire & Warrington Economic Alliance, Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association and the MRLC. It has successfully canvassed all the local MPs to support the project.

The MRLC meet on the last Tuesday of each month at the Boars Head Hotel, Kinderton Street, Middlewich at 8:00pm. All who have an interest in seeing the line reopen are welcome to attend. The meetings provide a good supporting link into the Steering Group.

For further details visit www.middlewichstation.org.uk or e mail the MRLC Chairman, Dave Roberts at stationcampaign@aol.com