

Demands for the promised rail station at Winchburgh to become reality

Winchburgh residents, who say it is Scotland's fastest-growing town, have delivered a petition of more than 2,000 signatures to MSPs on Tuesday.

The locals are calling for The Scottish Government to “name a date” for the delivery of a rail station that would remove half a million cars from Central Belt motorways and ensure the country takes a “significant step” towards its net-zero emissions goal.

Representatives of Winchburgh Community Council and Winchburgh Community Development Trust, as well as local residents, travelled by bus to Edinburgh. This is a near-hour-long journey that is the only link between the growing town of around 4,000 people – set to increase to 14,000 in the coming

decade – and the capital. The journey if taken by rail would last around 15 minutes.

The petition, signed by many who would benefit from the rail link based in Winchburgh and the surrounding area, was delivered to Parliament by MSPs Foysol Choudhury, Sue Webber and Miles Briggs.

An independent impact report published by Systra into the viability and benefits of a station in Winchburgh on the main Edinburgh-Glasgow railway line found that that opening a station in the West Lothian town could remove an estimated 1658 car journeys from roads every day, replacing slow journeys on congested roads with sustainable train journeys lasting less than 15 minutes. The station would also support direct benefits to passengers of £2.4m a year, and generate at least £3.5m of decongestion benefits annually.

The petition called on Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, to “name a date to open a station” at Winchburgh. The proposal has cross-party support.

John Hamilton, CEO of Winchburgh Developments Ltd, said, “We’re only here developing Winchburgh for a finite amount of time, until all the land has been developed and all the houses, schools, parks and amenities are built.

“We are determined that the community can benefit from a sustainable transport solution as obvious as a rail station on the Edinburgh to Glasgow mainline. As far as I’m concerned, we don’t want to miss this opportunity to take 500,000 cars off the major Central Belt motorways each year. That part of the railway station lies with the public sector, not with the developers of Winchburgh.

“It has frequently been misunderstood since Planning Permission was granted in 2012 that the rail station delivery is to be led by WDL. That is absolutely not the case. It would be unusual, not to say impossible, for a private developer to

lead the delivery of a new railway station on the main Edinburgh/Glasgow rail line.”

Fiona Hyslop, MSP for Linlithgow, said: “As the local constituency MSP, I have long been supportive of the case for the proposed train station at Winchburgh and will continue to help all the key partners working together to deliver it.”

Sue Webber, MSP for Lothian, said: “There is no question the thousands of homes to be built at Winchburgh are badly needed, but what will effectively be a new town badly needs modern transport links or its population will be strangled by congestion, unable to reach places of work or vital services like hospitals, or indeed the national rail network, without being snarled up in queues of traffic.

“The SNP-Greens say they are committed to net-zero, yet they are prepared to sit back and do nothing while thousands of new residents watch the trains whizz past.

“The Scottish Government approved the housing plan, but is now washing its hands of the transport implications, saying it’s all the developer’s responsibility. Well the developers met their side of the bargain by funding the new M9 interchange and now it’s the government’s turn to make the railway station happen.”

Foyso! Choudhury, MSP for Lothian, said: “The Winchburgh community has campaigned for many years for a much-needed train station and I have been raising this for almost two years at the Scottish Parliament. We must all work together to secure a station for the people of Winchburgh, who were sold homes on a belief it would be a commuter town. I cannot understand why the Scottish Government has ignored my requests to this extent so many times.

“I even previously invited the previous Minister to come and see first-hand why a railway station is needed and the importance of clean and sustainable transport links for

Winchburgh, yet the Scottish Government still do not seem to be taking this seriously.

“I am glad that other stakeholders, including MSPs, local councillors, the local community and the developers Winchburgh Developments Ltd are taking this seriously where the Scottish Government are not. I was pleased to join the community in delivering a petition for the Minister – let’s get action from the Scottish Government.”

Graham Campbell, chair of Winchburgh Community Council, said: “The time is now for those in power to act on this proposal. We keep hearing that this generation has little time to react to climate change and to take action to reduce carbon emissions. What is the Scottish Government waiting for? They are doing good by introducing rail links in smaller communities across Scotland and have now acknowledged they hold the keys to unlock the potential for Winchburgh, the station that will have the greatest impact in helping to reach net-zero. Today’s petition is about urging them to set a date for a railway station that will benefit tens of thousands of people and help us reach those climate targets.”

Community volunteer and activist Hazel McLeod said: “Reinstating a rail station in Winchburgh has been identified as far back as the first masterplan in 2004. Approved planning permissions included a station on the overall plan, however no timeline for the opening of a station has been agreed by a plethora of departments and officials. With the population of Winchburgh rising, and given the benefits of a station to tens of thousands of people, it seems to me to make environmental and economic sense to address this matter urgently.”

All photos courtesy of Mike Wilkinson



Pic shows residents (left to right) Jennifer Nicolson (38) and daughter Ena (7 months) and Amy Stewart (32) and son Ruaridh (3) outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh.
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Pic shows L-R: Foysoyl Choudhury MSP, Sue Webber MSP and community activist Hazel McLeod with box of petition signatures outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh.

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