

# Plans for 24-hour rail freight are denied

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News Reporter

RUMOURS that a railway line from Lichfield is about to reopen for 24-hour freight use have been categorically denied by the Strategic Rail Authority.

According to local residents, the speculation started when engineering workers began appearing on the remnants of the line between Walsall and Lichfield.

It is alleged one of these workers explicitly stated that the line was earmarked for reopening, and that it would be for freight trains' 24-hour use.

Residents were disturbed to hear this, fearing it would mean constant disruption as trains passed through around the clock.

Hammerwich resident Barry Taylor of Station Road, whose home lies close to the rail line, was distressed by a conversation his wife had with one of the workers

to 40 trains a day.

"My wife asked 'are you sure?' and he said they have never been sent on a job when they haven't been needed," explained Mr Taylor.

Peter Hughes, Midlands spokesperson for Railfuture, which campaigns nationally for better passenger and freight networks, reinforced this speculation.

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## 'Re-opening from Stourbridge to Lichfield currently being reviewed'

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He said: "There are definitely plans for freight to go from Stourbridge to Walsall and it would be logical to carry on to Lichfield.

"So yes they will be definitely looking at it, but is there a date for it, probably not."

Dr Andrew Traill from the Freight Transport Association (FTA), also confirmed that plans for the line were undoubted by being

freight point of view to reopen it.

"It is certainly one which is being considered."

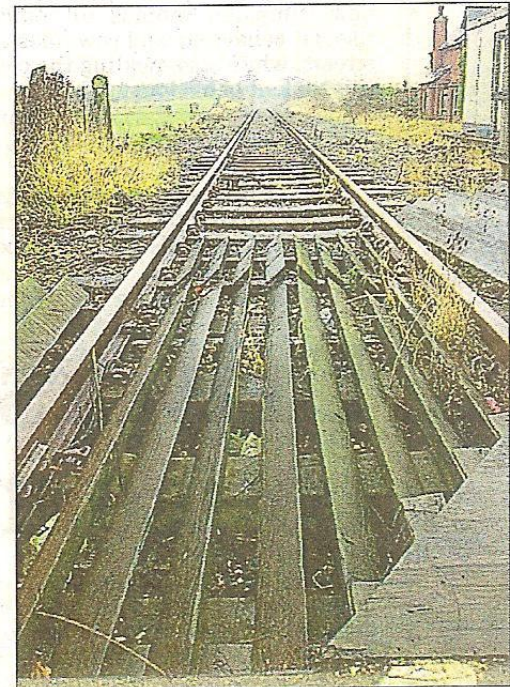
Freight transportation company EWS, which in 2002 backed the SRA's plans to reopen the line, was ambivalent about the future plans for the line.

An EWS spokesperson said: "The re-opening of the route from Stourbridge to Lichfield is currently being reviewed by the SRA.

"EWS re-affirms its long standing support for this project which will deliver a freight priority route via Birmingham, as well as injecting additional capacity in the rail network for other passenger and freight services.

"We will continue to work with interested parties to re-instate this important missing link in the rail network."

In spite of this speculation, a spokesman from the Strategic Rail Authority said: "I can confirm that the SRA has no plans to reopen the Stourbridge to Lichfield line at



■ The stump of the former Lichfield to Walsall railway line, near Hammerwich, which sees only occasional traffic to a Brownhills oil terminal. (AW776-1938)

the mixed messages, added: "Something is