

I am pleased to report to Council the progress that has been made on re-opening a railway station at Saltford as part of the vision of MetroWest – that is frequent commuter services criss-crossing our sub-region. In December 2023 Cllr Jon Godfrey, Chair of Saltford Parish Council and I met with the previous West of England Metro Mayor to discuss the case for re-opening a Saltford Station. WECA Committee approval followed in January 2024 for a 'New Stations Feasibility Study' including a station at Saltford. Thanks to the advocacy of Cllr Kevin Guy, the West of England Combined Authority Committee in March this year went further and included Saltford in business case development for potential new stations as part of developing a new regional rail strategy. Work on a business case for a Saltford Station has never happened before and Cllr Guy is to be congratulated.

In early June, I met with Professor Rebecca Schaaf, Interim deputy Vice-Chancellor of Bath Spa University at the Newton Park campus to ask Bath Spa University to re-affirm its support last given in 2019 for a re-opening of Saltford Railway Station. I am delighted that Professor Schaaf has since written on behalf of Bath Spa University to leaders at WECA and B&NES reaffirming the University's support for the re-opening of Saltford Railway Station. In her letter, Professor Schaaf writes *"the proposed reopening of Saltford Station, approximately two miles from the Newton Park campus aligns closely with our values and would offer significant benefits to both the University and the region as a whole. It would help reduce car dependency, alleviate traffic congestion, and support climate emergency objectives."*

This support from Bath Spa University is very welcome and can only enhance the business case for a station.

WECA Mayor Helen Godwin has responded to the Bath Spa University letter *"Thank you for this letter which is indeed really helpful as we start to think about future transport strategy and how we can build the true suburban rail network that we need."*

These positive steps I have described are the consequence of the work and actions of Liberal Democrat councillors, B&NES officers, and others, and not anyone posturing on the sidelines.

One of the slogans we hear is a nostalgic "Saltford Station – Bring it Back". I say "Saltford Station -Bring it ON!"

END