

Cambridge to St Ives the CASTIRON way – rail scheme attracts immediate cash support

New proposals challenge guided bus plan

CASTIRON – the Cambridge and St Ives Railway Organisation – has launched an appeal for volunteers and funds in its quest to reopen the railway in stages...and received a pledge of £100,000 within an hour of the proposals being published.

The organisation's director, Tim Phillips, says the scheme is "a realistic alternative to the guided bus plan, which no-one seems to want.

"We are told that the guided bus is a done deal yet everyone I talk to seems to think it is barmy. I researched and wrote a consultation document and emailed it to a number of addresses plucked from websites discussing the transport problem of the A14 corridor. 40 minutes later we received a promise of £100,000 from a private individual, on condition that we come up with a properly costed scheme.

"This shows that there is a real belief in a new way of doing things – although what we propose harks back to the origins of the railways in Britain".

The recent reopening of the independent Wensleydale Railway, which has been achieved through public support and subscription, caught Tim's imagination.

The CASTIRON scheme proposes a staged reopening to keep costs down, minimise risk and assess progress at each step. It would effectively be a 'micro-franchise'.

Stage 1 would be from Swavesey to Cambridge Regional College, with connecting buses on into the city, the station and Addenbrooke's, as well as from Swavesey to St Ives and Huntingdon.

Stage 2 extends the line to St Ives and Stage 3 reopens the section from CRC into Cambridge Station.

The ultimate goal is to reconnect with the East Coast Main Line at Huntingdon and electrify the line, providing much wider benefits locally, regionally and nationally.

"We need people with all sorts of skills to come forward and offer help. There are legal, financial and practical considerations. I am an accountant by profession but I certainly cannot cope with everything on my own", says Tim, who helped to run the highly successful 'specials' from his then home village of Swavesey to Cambridge in the late 1980's.

"The Wensleydale Railway has shown that it is possible, yet on the face of it, our task is easier as the line is shorter with much less to rebuild. I reckon we could be up and running within a year at far less cost than the guided bus. Any additional conventional bus journeys generated by the scheme would be replacing cars".

Anyone prepared to help with the scheme should write to CASTIRON at St Francis House, 10 Newmarket Road, Cambridge CB5 8DT or email Tim.Phillips6@ntlworld.com