



## **GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY**

LOUGHBOROUGH, LEICESTERSHIRE

### **PRESS INFORMATION**

*Celebrating 40 years of preservation in 2009*

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> April 2009

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## **GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STUDY GETS UNDERWAY**

### **ANDY REED MP ADDS HIS SUPPORT AS CONSULTANTS STUDY EXTENDING THE RAILWAY**

**Charnwood Borough Council as the lead authority and the Great Central Railway are delighted to announce the appointment of Atkins Consultants to carry out the Great Central Railway Economic Development Study.**

Atkins will start work immediately with their final report due in October this year. The development study will examine several proposals for expanding the award winning tourist line and its facilities. However, the investigation's remit is much broader than the running of heritage trains. It will crucially delve into options for the future use of the line, reconnecting at Loughborough and the prospects of carrying freight to running commuter trains.

Bill Ford, President of the Great Central Railway said, "**Many people know the Great Central Railway for our award winning heritage credentials. However in the last few years we've developed our business into training, testing and film making. We've always had big visions for how the line might develop, but this study is about more than making a longer tourist railway. We're hoping the study will prove that a 'Greater Great Central' can deliver benefits for the economy and play a real transport role in the East Midlands. If we bring in more tourists as well, that's the icing on the cake for everyone. We're very pleased to be working with the East Midlands Development Agency and Charnwood Borough Council on this vital study**".

Among the development proposals Atkins will be examining are:

**BRITAIN'S ONLY DOUBLE TRACK, MAIN LINE HERITAGE RAILWAY**  
Great Central Railway, Great Central Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 1RW  
Tel: (01509) 230726 Fax: (01509) 239791

Great Central Economic Development Study begins  
070409

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- Reconnecting the two independent halves of the Great Central Railway by replacing a key bridge over Network Rail at Loughborough.
- Possible future extensions of the Great Central towards Nottingham and Leicester.
- Development of a new engineering skills centre and locomotive depot at Loughborough.

The study will seek to prove the economic, transport and educational benefits offered by the revived rail route. The consultants will be talking to a range of local stakeholders including local authorities, industry, education bodies and transport providers as they compile their report.

Cllr Stephen Hampson, Cabinet Member of Charnwood Borough Council, lead local authority in the study comments: **“This is a vital step in the development of Loughborough and the whole area between the Cities of Nottingham and Leicester. With major regeneration plans well advanced for the eastern side of the town and for upgrading the capability of the main line station to match the needs of the rising population, we are delighted to have the prospect of a major development of the heritage railway to add to our tourist and leisure seeking visitors.”**

The study is set to cost over £350,000. A large amount of this will be funded by the East Midlands Development Agency, with a proportion coming from the Great Central Railway itself. The exact figures will depend on the final cost of the study.

Atkins will deliver two reports. At the end of May the consultants will recommend which of the development proposals warrant closer investigation. A final in depth analysis is due to be delivered in October. This will then become the key document which brings private and public funding on board to develop the line. However, no such developments could take place without further planning and statutory permissions being obtained. Development on the ground is still some time in the future.

Atkins is the leading UK and internationally reputed consultancy firm with special expertise in transportation development and has been involved in Midland Main Line modernisation and Nottingham’s NET2 rapid transit systems. Project Director Bashir Chaudhry comments **“This is a very exciting prospect and we are very pleased to have won this contract which will exercise our wide range of specialists in planning, heritage, transportation development and business**

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case construction. **Great Central Railway is to be congratulated on its vision and of Charnwood Borough Council on being determined to translate that into a practical and economic plan. There are not many such schemes that reach this stage – and we are much taken by being involved,”**

There will now be an extensive consultation period and it is expected that there will also be a chance for local residents and visitors to contribute to the study in the next few months.

**ENDS**

**WORDS 705**

#### **ABOUT THE GREATER GREAT CENTRAL DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

This is a joint venture between the managers of the two independent Great Central Railway heritage operations, the one based in Loughborough and the other at Ruddington at the Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre. Currently the two 8 mile railways are separated by a 500 metre gap in Loughborough, where two critical bridges and an embankment were dismantled in 1980. The Group was established 4 years ago to investigate the joint development and to seek commercial and public sector partners to deliver a revived main line that can serve the Cities of Nottingham and Leicester, with Loughborough as its hub.

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