

**PRESS RELEASE – FAO LOCAL REPORTERS
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**LOCAL SNP FULLY UNITED IN STRONG SUPPORT OF LEVENMOUTH RAIL LINK CAMPAIGN
MSPS AND MPS ACTIVELY ENGAGED WITH COMMUNITY CAMPAIGNERS**



SNP politicians in Fife have renewed their strong commitment to the Levenmouth Rail Campaign, and remain united, determined and focused in working with campaigners seeking to deliver a rail link for the east of Fife.

Fife's elected SNP representatives also strongly rejected a contentious claim by Fife Council leader Lesley Laird that the SNP hadn't given "strong enough support" to the campaign.

Commenting on Mrs. Laird's statement, David Torrance MSP said; "I am surprised and disappointed by this claim. The SNP in Fife have consistently engaged, encouraged and strongly supported the Levenmouth Rail Campaign from the beginning.

"We have also been pleased to work with other parliamentarians across traditional party boundaries in support of this common cause."

He added; "Improving transport infrastructure for the Levenmouth area could have huge benefits for local communities, and has the potential to significantly revitalise lifestyles and the economy in the east of Fife.

"I have recently met with Humza Yousaf, the Cabinet Minister for Transport, who has shown a clear interest in the Levenmouth Rail Link campaign and is willing to discuss the best way to take these plans forward."

SNP MP for North East Fife, Stephen Gethins, is highly supportive of the campaign. Commenting, Mr Gethins said; "The re-opening of the railway line between Thornton and Leven is key to opening up the Levenmouth area to investment and opportunity for further regeneration, and along with my SNP colleagues I will do what I can to ensure that reinstatement of this vital rail link becomes a reality."

He added; "Re-opening the five-mile stretch would boost locally-based businesses like Diageo by reducing its reliance on road haulage and transport fuel bills and cutting its carbon footprint. Providing a close link to the main east coast rail line would make Fife Energy Park and Methil Docks much more attractive and accessible to investors, while the link would also be a great asset for commuters and provide the ideal gateway for tourism in the East Neuk."

The SNP's Jenny Gilruth, MSP for Mid Fife & Glenrothes, is also looking to continue the engagement shown by her predecessor Tricia Marwick. A former SNP MSP and Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, Tricia had worked closely with Labour's Lindsay Roy MP to liaise with local campaigners. Ms Gilruth recently met with campaigners at a meeting in June, and will again be meeting with David Torrance MSP and campaigners on Wednesday to continue this work.

Commenting, Ms Gilruth said; "Re-establishing the Levenmouth Rail Link is of vital importance to this area and its economy. Not only is it the largest urban area in Scotland not served by rail, it would completely open up the Levenmouth area to jobs and inward investment.

She added; "We've seen demand on the new Borders Railway far outstrip what was ever predicted. I am very proud to support the Levenmouth rail link campaign and will do what I can to ensure it happens."

The campaign was recently discussed in detail by David Torrance MSP and the Scottish Government Minister for Transport, Humza Yousaf. Writing to Mr Torrance, the Minister for Transport said; "I am committed to on-going improvements to rail services and connectivity and am willing to consider proposals for new services, including the Levenmouth Rail Link.

Mr Yousaf added; "I congratulate the campaigners for the work they have carried out thus far. While I understand their frustrations, I can confirm that progress is being made."

The SNP's Peter Grant MP – who took over from Lindsay Roy MP last May – expressed a strong personal history of supporting the rail link campaign. The SNP MP for Glenrothes

said; “As leader of Fife Council I gained all-party support for making Levenmouth rail link the council’s top transportation priority.

“I would welcome an assurance from the current administration that it still is.”

He added; “It’s a pity Mrs Laird appears to be more interested in attacking the SNP than in making progress in delivering something we can all agree on.”

The renewed commitment to the Levenmouth Rail Campaign follows calls from Railfuture Scotland for the Scottish Government to boost rail infrastructure in Fife.

David Torrance MSP is optimistic to the future for the campaign. “I’m greatly looking forward to my next meeting with the local campaigners, both to relay Humza’s feedback and to discuss the next steps,” he said. “Those involved should be celebrated for their tireless work to benefit their communities. The SNP in Fife remains on track to help deliver the best solution for people in the Levenmouth area.”

The Levenmouth Rail Campaign continues to call for a rail link connecting the national rail network to the Levenmouth area. The group claims a new line could serve up to an estimated 50,000 people in “the largest urban area in Scotland not directly served by rail.” A former rail line connected Thornton and Leven, but is currently permanently closed.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

Photograph details (*left to right*): David Torrance MSP, Tricia Marwick (former MSP and Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament) and Stephen Gethins MP.

The Levenmouth Rail Campaign can be found at <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>.

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