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Single rail line is bad for business says Gloucestershire First

Gloucestershire First, the countywide economic partnership, has called for private sector companies to throw their weight behind the County Council campaign to improve rail services between Swindon and Kemble.

This section of line was changed from a double to a single line in 1968 and has, according to many local businesses, led to many missed appointments, lost business opportunities and much frustration.

“The single line holds back economic development in the county. It reduces our ability to compete for inward investment with other parts of the UK and overseas locations,” said Catherine Farrell, who is leading the campaign on behalf of Gloucestershire First.

“As the partnership responsible for economic development in Gloucestershire, we wholeheartedly support the effort being made by the County Council to get Network Rail to include improving this line in its 2009/14 business plan.”

To date over 40 companies have responded to the partnership’s call for support. Between them they employ 9,000 people and turnover £2,273 million. Their views have now been sent to transport minister Tom Harris and the Government Office for Rail Regulation.

Peter Foyle of commercial property agents Bruton Knowles writes: “In working to encourage companies to come to Gloucestershire, restrictions caused by this line are frequently raised as a reason for rejecting the county.”

Keith Whitelock, CEO at Group 4 Technology said: “This problem is having a significant effect on the ability of good quality candidates living outside the area to establish an efficient and timely commute.”

Simon Speers who runs the Bottlegreen Drinks Company in Stroud comments: “Our employees are often forced to seek alternative ways to travel to ensure they don’t miss an important meeting or appointment.”

And Terry Morgan, the regional head of the Federation of Small Businesses added: “These difficulties cause many to waste time and money. Missed business opportunities, congested roads and its impact on staff are all worsened by the current inadequate infrastructure.”

Catherine says it is important the rail regulators are made aware of the strength of feeling locally and the negative impact the single line is having on the county economy.

“It is tough at the best of times to persuade companies to come here, establish a base and create new jobs. This single line is not doing our economy any favours and we urge other companies to let us have their views as the lobbying for improvements continues.”

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Issued on behalf of Gloucestershire First, the countywide economic partnership established to develop the economic wellbeing of the county. By bringing together partners in the field of economic development, including local authorities, the South West RDA and the private sector, Gloucestershire First provides an overall strategic plan for the county.

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