

## **BRAG WELCOMES FURTHER HASTINGS RAIL SUMMIT**

Rail campaigners Bexhill Rail Action Group (BRAG) welcomed the Rail Summit held in Hastings by MP Amber Rudd on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January.

A number of committee members attended the meeting, at which presentations were made by Rail Minister Claire Perry MP, and senior managers from Southern Rail, Southeastern, Network Rail and Hitachi.

The showpiece of the event was a special promotional round trip from Hastings to Eastbourne by a Class 395 High Speed 'Javelin' train, stopping for a brief photocall at Bexhill station on its return journey. Rail groups hope that a regular high-speed service can be introduced by 2020, reducing the journey time from Bexhill to London to just 78 minutes.

However, the project requires capital investment of over £100m, notably the electrification and upgrading of the Marshlink line from Hastings to Ashford via Rye.

BRAG Spokesman Richard Madge said:

"The message from the Minister was very clear: All stakeholders need to work together to make this vision a reality. Network Rail is developing the technical case, and East Sussex County Council is undertaking a Cost/Benefit analysis. This should be completed later this spring, and if successful the project would be included in Network Rail's national plan from 2019.

He added

"The Minister confirmed that regeneration benefits will be taken into account, which is a positive factor because this would be a major spur to improving the local economy in both Bexhill and Hastings."

Meanwhile, Network Rail confirmed at the meeting that the multi-million pound re-signalling of the line between Lewes and St Leonards, which has been beset by delay, will go live over the weekend of 14/15 February. This should improve performance on the route by allowing trains to run closer together and to recover time when running late.

For further information about Bexhill Rail Action Group, please visit [www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk](http://www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk) or [www.facebook.com/bexhillrailactiongroup](https://www.facebook.com/bexhillrailactiongroup)

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