I’m speaking on behalf of CPRE, the countryside charity.

In the Upper Don Valley at Dunford Bridge the pylons are striking vertical intrusions. Here the river runs between in-bye pastures that rise to sweeping moorland but the near horizons are dominated by pylons. They mar the openness of Barnsley’s Green Belt and the setting of the nationally designated Peak Park, both of which could offer so much more natural beauty to residents and visitors if this application is approved. Removing the pylons will also boost the local tourist economy. Hence our strong support for this scheme.

We are also strongly supportive of rail re-opening. The two schemes are not incompatible. We share our rail colleagues desire for Woodhead to be re-opened. We have long campaigned for it. The climate emergency is our priority too, as it is for Barnsley. It must be addressed urgently by decarbonising all transport modes, including a huge shift of both passengers and freight from road to rail.

In this instance we believe it is possible to have your cake and eat it. Currently the high voltage electricity lines lie within the 1954 rail tunnel. So any rail re-opening would either have to move them into the Victorian tunnels or leave them where they are. Both options require a substantial re-bore of the two Victorian tunnels or boring new tunnels. In comparison, the cost of moving the proposed 2km of underground line being considered today would be a tiny component of the future costs of Woodhead re-opening.

We are clear therefore that cable burial does not preclude the re-opening of this line in the future. You can have both, so we urge you to approve this innovative scheme.

Thank you.