PRESS RELEASE FOR ANNOUNCEMENT ON / AFTER 11th November 2026

BRTA - British Regional Transport Association

Sustainable Britain Needs Re-Railing

Universal Bedford Resort:
The Need for Strategic Rail Connectivity

BRTA Press Release: 11th November 2026

BRTA has sent a letter to Universal to draw attention to strategic rail access and links and inviting their attention and interest in ensuring they can be delivered.

The **British Regional Transport Association (BRTA)**, is a voluntary transport advocacy organisation that strongly supports the proposed Universal resort development in Bedfordshire.

We believe this project represents a transformative opportunity, not only for Bedford but for the wider Midlands, South East and East of England. The resort promises substantial economic, employment and tourism benefits, and we welcome Universal's investment in the United Kingdom.

However, we are concerned that current transport planning may not adequately provide for the possibility that the resort proves significantly more successful than current forecasts anticipate.

Universal is creating a destination of national significance. Visitors will travel from all directions to a single location and, if attendance exceeds expectations, the surrounding highway network could face increasing pressure despite planned road improvements. We therefore believe that robust, future-proofed rail connectivity should form a central component of long-term planning.

The Bedford area occupies a uniquely strategic location at the crossroads of several regions:

- London and the South East to the south;
- Milton Keynes, Northampton and the Midlands to the west and north-west;
- Cambridge and East Anglia to the east;
- The East Midlands to the north.

While rail access from London is comparatively strong through Thameslink, significant gaps remain elsewhere.

In particular:

- Rail access from Northampton and much of the wider Midlands remains indirect and relatively unattractive.
- Travel from Leicester and the East Midlands requires inconvenient interchange arrangements.
- There is currently no direct rail connection between Bedford and Cambridge.
- East West Rail proposals remain some distance from delivery and do not presently address wider connectivity concerns.

We believe there is a risk that existing plans underestimate the attractiveness of the resort and the volume of visitors who could be encouraged to arrive by rail if suitable infrastructure were available.

Bedford-Northampton Railway Reinstatement

BRTA believes that reinstating the Bedford-Northampton railway would offer substantial benefits to Universal, local communities and the wider region.

A modern rail connection integrated with Thameslink and the wider national rail network could create direct links from Birmingham, Northampton and the Midlands to the resort via Wixams Station. This would:

- Increase the resort's catchment area;
- Make access easier for employees as well as visitors;
- Reduce reliance on private cars;
- Lower demand for parking provision;
- Help mitigate road congestion;
- Improve environmental sustainability;
- Provide inclusive access for those unable to drive.

Given the scale of the resort and its anticipated long-term success, we believe this opportunity merits serious consideration.

Specific Requests

We would greatly appreciate Universal's support in the following areas:

1. Protection of the former railway alignment

We are concerned that a proposed residential development north of Bromham, on the former railway corridor, could prejudice future reinstatement of this strategically important route. We believe the wider regional implications should be carefully considered before development proceeds and would welcome Universal's support for safeguarding transport options that may benefit the resort in the future.

2. Support for further consideration of the Bedford-Northampton rail link

We would be grateful for any assistance in helping ensure that this proposal receives appropriate consideration from Government, transport authorities and strategic decision-makers.

3. Independent assessment of strategic benefits

A study examining the potential benefits to Universal Bedford, local regeneration and regional accessibility arising from improved rail connectivity, including both Bedford-Northampton and Bedford-Cambridge links, would provide valuable evidence for future planning. Previous studies have consistently indicated strong demand and strategic value for these connections, yet further work is required to quantify the specific opportunities presented by the Universal development.

Conclusion

Our concern is straightforward: the resort may prove even more successful than current projections suggest. If that proves to be the case, investing in comprehensive rail connectivity now could deliver substantial long-term benefits for Universal, visitors, employees and the wider region.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you or members of your senior leadership team, either in person or via an online meeting.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to the success of Universal Bedford and hope that the transport infrastructure supporting it will be equally ambitious.

End Press Release

Further comment:

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