

to the Albert Basin in Newry. It was estimated that the cost of the extension line to Armagh would be in the region of £180,000 and it was proposed to raise this money through the sale of shares at £10 each. Mr. Hemans' plan for the construction of the line was to bring it through Drumbanagher Demesne. When this route had been originally proposed in 1845 Colonel Close has asked for £20,000 compensation. However, when the plans were laid before Parliament it was declared that, as evidence of the good will of the landed gentry to the construction of the railway, Colonel Close had withdrawn his claim. The background to this declaration was to be explained later.

The plans included the proposal to have stations at Drumbanagher, Loughgilly, Markethill and Hamiltonsbawn. The line would be 22 1/2 miles long with a short tunnel at Loughgilly. In spite of the stiff opposition of the other companies who, among other things, drew Parliament's attention to the fact that the Newry and Armagh Company had spent £135,000 in constructing a 3 1/2 mile line, the bill to extend the line to Armagh was passed in August 1857. However, it then became clear that Colonel Close's decision to withdraw his claim for compensation had only come about when the Company had agreed that the line would not proceed through the demense but that instead a tunnel would be constructed to take the line through Lissummon Hill. It was explained that has this been disclosed at the time, coupled with the opposition of the other companies, a line involving the construction of a long tunnel would have been unlikely to receive Parliamentary approval. It was also added that the revised line including the tunnel would be 1 1/2 miles shorter. Approval for the construction of this line was eventually obtained without further opposition from the other companies and the pressure was then on to raise the necessary funds. All and sundry were encouraged to purchase shares and local business people in Newry and Armagh were exhorted to support the venture. A number of meetings were held and these were invariably addressed by Mr. William Kirk, M.P. of Annvale, Keady, a substantial mill owner in that area and a major shareholder in the Company. The response was patchy and a succession of contractors were appointed and started work, only to have to withdraw when the funds ran out. Included among these were R. S. North of Bedford Square, London and McCormick Green and King — the latter had actually commenced work on the tunnel section. An attempt to obtain funds from the Public Works Loan Commission was unsuccessful.

