

# Record your interest

Railfuture has a proud history of fighting for rail, which goes back well into the 1950s and one of its predecessor organisations, the Society for the Reinvigoration of Unremunerative Branch Lines in the UK (SRUBLUK) was formed in response to the 1954 closure of the Kent & East Sussex Railway.

It is from this organisation that many good ideas came, such as the need for diesel multiple units, simplified signalling, and automated level crossings.

If the ideas had been adopted earlier, many branch lines could have remained, being run efficiently and economically.

Of course we all know that some accountants used dirty tricks to conceal the real value of those lines and the real financial contribution they made to the railway.

Documents from the early history of SRUBLUK have been carefully looked after by Railfuture member Nigel Watt, who was the Secretary of SRUBLUK from its foundation,

and who now needs to pass them on for safekeeping. Of particular interest is correspondence with John Betjeman, Lord Kinross and Sir Arthur Elton.

Nigel says that the papers would fit into a laptop-sized case.

Railfuture does not have an office, but it does need to protect its history.

If you could care for the papers, or better still, consider how we could scan them so they can be put on an archive section of the Railfuture website, please contact *Railwatch* co-editor Ray King or Nigel Watt direct at 16 Overhill Road, London SE22 0PH. Email: nets.watt@btinternet.com

Among the papers in Nigel's care is the 1955 BTC Report on the *Modernisation and Re-equipment of British Railways*, and SRUBLUK papers from 1952-53, including reports of early meetings at the Friends' School, Saffron Walden where the founders were students.

## railwatch

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Copy to: editor@railwatch.org.uk

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## Media enquiries

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## Membership

£21 per year. Family: £21 plus £2 for each extra person. Pensioners, students and unemployed: £14. User groups, community and parish councils: Please apply for rates.

**New members** apply to David Harby, 6 Carral Close, Lincoln LN5 9BD membership@railfuture.org.uk

**Renewals and other membership queries:** Lloyd Butler, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND. Email: renewals@railfuture.org.uk

## Policy

Chairman: Mike Crowhurst, 33 Station Court, Aberford Road, Garforth, Leeds LS25 2QQ. Tel 0113 286 4844

## Elections

Board elections held annually. Nomination forms can be obtained from Returning Officer, PO Box 7690, Hinckley LE10 9WJ. You can also download a form from www.railfuture.org.uk

## Who's Who

Many other useful contact details can be found on the Railfuture website www.railwatch.org.uk

# A super future looks

## TAUNTON 2010

The mayor of Taunton Deane stressed how important rail and public transport generally are to the town when he welcomed Railfuture delegates to a rail development conference in the Somerset town in July.

Councillor Jefferson Horsley said rail was pivotal to the town and to the long-term future of the country.

Taunton now has an economic strategy called Grow Green but he said the town's railway station is externally shabby and some of the railway bridges look as if they had not had a lick of paint for 50 years.

First Great Western's John Bird said £4 billion is being invested in the main line between 2009 and 2014, more per mile than was spent on the upgrade of the West Coast main line.

Both Paddington and Reading are getting major upgrades.

But the Government is reviewing the plan to electrify the London to Swansea line between 2015 and 2018, as well as the "inexplicably linked" intercity express programme, which would have delivered a new fleet of trains for the line.

While the future of the Great Western line is in doubt, Network Rail is already working on upgrading the line from Southampton to the West Coast main line via Leamington to allow 9'6" containers to go by rail.

Network Rail's Charles Vary said that for every £1 spent on the project, there would be a £4.20 benefit to the British economy. It was also crucial because, by 2020, it is estimated that 70% of the containers in Britain will be 9'6" rather than

8'6". The Southampton tunnel part of the upgrade has already been completed, early and £10 million under budget.

One of the big companies now using rail freight is Tesco, said Nick Gallop of Intermodality. Tesco is using Stobart Rail because it saved them money, rather than out of altruism to save the planet, and now wants to run nine trains a day.

Supermarkets are already using trains to bring fresh produce from Italy and Spain to Britain.

Sainsbury wants its Felixstowe traffic on the railways and Asda runs a Midlands-Scotland service. He said rail freight could improve its financial performance if it could offer direct rail access to depots, rather than having to rely on road at either end of the journey.

Freight trains have an advantage because they can take 28 lorry loads with one driver and road cannot compete on carbon dioxide savings.

Rail freight uses one third of the fuel needed to move freight by road. Rail freight is expanding and there is even a project to run TGV postal trains from Perpignan in the south of France to Barking, Essex.

He urged Railfuture campaigners to persuade local councils to clear the obstacles to rail freight depots in their areas.

He said local authority plans were often full of empty words. He said shipping companies

# likely for rail freight



Picture: scot-rail.co.uk

## EVERY LITTLE HELPS Tesco is now using rail freight

would use ports if they knew there were proper rail facilities.

Railfuture's George Boyle pointed out the irony of a few people objecting to rail freight depots which brought significant environmental benefits to the majority, while ignoring the enormous number of homes and people whose lives are blighted by existing lorry traffic.

He added: "We need to see that the greater good is served."

By using misleading statistics, the road lobby has also devalued the enormous tonnages of freight that go by rail. Some local people, however, are coming to the aid of the railway, reported Keith Walton of the Severnside Community Rail Partnership.

He said he has seen local groups watering plants at stations, art work being provided for blocked-up windows and poster boards filled with student designs. He said

even offenders on community payback schemes were being drafted in to help with repairs and upgrades, thanks to the cooperation of the Probation Service.

The reinvigoration of branch lines was also highlighted by Richard Burningham, who is manager of the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership.

He said all the lines in his area have their best-ever service and the Gunnislake line has nine trains a day, more than ever in its 100-year history, and there were Sunday trains for the first time since 1961.

He said: "These branch lines are important to people's lives today. They are not an anachronism."

He said Kilbride Community Railway had a plan to bring back trains to Tavistock if they are allowed to build 750 homes there but the residents reaction was: "We love the railway but hate the houses."

Meanwhile, if you are interested, please send a SAE to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ. It is planned to send out full information immediately after Christmas.

❖ We congratulate Railfuture vice-president John Gummer, former Conservative MP for Suffolk Coastal, on becoming a life peer. He is now Lord Deben. His name was omitted from the list of Railfuture vice-presidents in *Railwatch* 124, along with David Bertram and Lord Paul Tyler. The name of Jim Beale MBE was spelt incorrectly. Our apologies.

❖ The European Passengers' Federation to which Railfuture is affiliated, issues a twice-yearly electronic bulletin. It can be viewed on its website

www.epf.eu or you can obtain a paper version from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ. EPF will hold its annual conference and general meeting in Barcelona on Saturday 12 March.

❖ A new website has been set up by the European Commission to give information on airline and rail passengers' rights. It can be found at <http://ec.europa/passenger-rights/en/index.html> although bus, coach and maritime users' rights are still being negotiated.

❖ Railfuture's 2010 draw will take place at the London conference on 13 November so please send in any tickets and money before 11 November. After this date, any money sent will be treated as a donation.

◆◆◆◆ Rail reopenings conference in Shoreditch, London, 13 November 2010

## IN BRIEF

❖ Railfuture returning officer Chris Precey reports that there will be at least three vacancies on the RDS board in 2011. All members should consider who you would like to fill the vacancies. You can send in a nomination to Returning Officer, PO Box 7690, Hinckley LE10 9WJ. Nomination forms can be downloaded from the Railfuture website or obtained from the Returning Officer.

❖ Used postage stamps and old rail tickets can be collected to raise money for Railfuture. But Railfuture's contact with a dealer has been lost. If you know of a dealer who will pay for stamps and rail tickets, please contact *Railwatch* co-editor Ray King.

❖ The report in *Railwatch* 124 that the public ownership of rail

motion was carried overwhelmingly was incorrect. The motion, proposed by Ian McDonald and seconded by Andrew MacFarlane was in fact referred back to the Railfuture board and policy committee for re-consideration.

❖ Since 1994 RDS Group Travel has been organising group visits by Eurostar to the continent for Railfuture members and friends. In spring it is proposed to organise a six-day trip to Munich by high-speed trains from London. Munich is an interesting city worth visiting in its own right but it is also a key rail hub, with many excursions possible. We hope to have more details in the next *Railwatch*.

www.railfuture.org.uk

## LOCAL ACTION

### North East

By Peter Kenyon

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#### ■ Metro enters new era

The first phase of the £350 million Metro upgrade was approved by the new Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne in June. "We are delighted," said Metro director general Bernard Garner. "Every pound spent on renewing Metro is worth up to £8 to the local economy." In July the Metro received another boost, the completion of a 100-day clean-up to mark the takeover by DGB Regio. Painters moved in to freshen up 59 stations, stairs and fences were repaired and the trains received a deep clean. An average of 12 pieces of chewing gum were removed from each square metre of the train floors. The train refurbishing programme began in June, with the first carriage going to Wabtec Rail at Doncaster. By 2015, all 90 carriages should have been rebuilt. A family fun day was held at Gosforth depot on Sunday 8 August to mark the 30th anniversary of the opening of the system.

#### ■ Have your say on the Metro

The need for a new consultative group was recognised during the negotiations for the Metro operating contract. Following a meeting in Gateshead in July, arrangements were made to launch the group on Thursday 21 October at 19.00 in the Council Chamber, Gateshead Civic Centre. All those interested are invited.

#### ■ Action and co-operation on the Weardale Railway

An additional diesel unit is in use on the daily community train service between Stanhope and Bishop Auckland. At weekends, passengers can change to the heritage service at Stanhope and pay a supplementary fare. Additional paid staff have been taken on to work with the volunteers. It is hoped that the access to the new Weardale Railway station from the Bishop Auckland terminus can be made more convenient and direct. The coal handling facilities at Wolsingham have now received planning permission and when completed will provide new employment opportunities as well as revenue for the railway. Chris Green, then a Network Rail Director, visited the railway in June. An on-board tourism information exchange day was held in August to help spread information about the amenities and attractions of the dale.

#### ■ Coastliners keep watch after one mighty cheer

After nearly 10 years of waiting, the Coastliners rail user group was delighted to see Hartlepool Transport Interchange, bringing together rail, coach, bus and taxi services, opened in August, in time for the Tall Ships event. The group is also hoping for progress after monitoring the slow timings of Grand Central trains north of York. The Durham Coast resignalling scheme will be completed this autumn and could supply the spur for train speed-ups.

#### ■ Northern loses out on the main line

Railfuture campaigners attended Northern Rail's Newcastle timetable consultation which included a Department for Transport official. Northern is at the bottom of the pecking order for injecting requests into the new East Coast timetable (now delayed until May 2011). Many proposed improvements, where Northern journeys include travel along or across the main line, had been stymied by the priorities of other operators. The weekend schedules had still not emerged and it came out in discussion that no one, apart from those at the centre of the operation, had yet seen the complete weekday timetable.