



Newport station, pictured in August, is a bright spot but the axe is hanging over many other rail projects

Picture: NETWORK RAIL

Futuristic station beats the gloom

Newport's new £13 million station opened to passengers in September, a year after it was featured in *Railwatch* 121.

Network Rail's Mark Langman said: "Wales relies on rail and the new Newport station is a great example of how rail industry partners are working together to bring Wales' stations into the 21st century, encouraging even greater use of the railway network."

Arriva Trains Wales said: "This new development marks a huge step forward for passengers in Newport. It will encourage more people to try the train."

Mike Otlet, technical director, Atkins, said: "Newport station is an iconic example of clever design and engineering excellence."

The station was jointly funded by Network Rail and the Welsh Assembly Government, with support from Arriva Trains Wales and Newport City Council.

It was designed by Atkins and Grimshaw and was constructed

by Galliford Try. The roof is built with self-cleaning ethylene tetrafluoroethylene which is only 1% of the weight of glass and transmits more light.

Positive news can also be found in many other parts of Britain.

Work is to start in 2012 east of Ely, Cambridgeshire, on new £18 million loops as part of a project to clear the way for more freight trains carrying "high cube" containers to run from Felixstowe, Suffolk to the Midlands, North West and Scotland.

As part of the overall project, a new £25 million chord is to be built at Nuneaton to prevent freight trains holding up passengers on the West Coast main line.

When completed in 2012, the route from Felixstowe should be a candidate for electrification.

The reality, however, is that the Government's axe is hanging over many rail projects even though investment in rail is the most cost-effective way to achieve real transport benefits. To remind the Government

how important it is to maintain investment in rail, Railfuture has sent an eight-page document entitled *Britain's Railways – Much More for Much Less*.

The paper can be downloaded from the Railfuture website or you can apply for a paper copy from: David Harby, 6 Carral Close, Brant Road, Lincoln LN5 9BD

The Department for Transport has already deferred a decision on the intercity express programme as recommended by Sir Andrew Foster, former chief executive of the Audit Commission.

The DfT is also waiting for the result of Sir Roy McNulty's value for money review of the rail industry. Sir Roy is a former chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority.

Whether it is sensible to cut rail funding at a time when rail passenger numbers are showing a significant increase is another matter.

Rail users like those represented by the Bedford Commuter Asso-

ciation are already angry that the Government should even be considering not delivering the full complement of new Thameslink trains.

There has been dreadful overcrowding on the route for 15 years, while passenger numbers have continued to grow.

In the north of England, many local services are struggling on with dilapidated Thatcher-era railbuses that cannot handle the 35% growth that has occurred on the "no-growth" Northern franchise.

And if the Government axes the Liverpool-Manchester and Great Western electrification schemes, it will deserve the invective that will inevitably be thrown at it.

It should remember that the rail industry's excessive costs are largely the result of the botched privatisation of the last Conservative government.

That privatisation also led directly to the 2002 Potters Bar crash which left seven people dead.

You can download information from www.railfuture.org.uk