

# railwatch

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railfuture

Ashington reopening: Page 2

Picture: A CARMICHAEL



*Transport Secretary Chris Grayling (centre) on the platform at Morpeth waiting for a special train to take him round the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne lines which could be reopened*

*The new Winslow station proposed for East West Rail*

Picture: BUCKS HERALD

railfuture



East West Rail: Pages 12-13

## Railfuture Summer Conference

Saturday 22 June 2019

The North East branch is proud to be hosting this year's Railfuture Summer Conference in Darlington on Saturday 22 June 2019.

The emphasis at this conference will be on new developments in the industry - and what better place to locate the event than Darlington, where railway history began?

Key inputs will come from representatives of Hitachi Rail Europe, Tyne and Wear Metro, the Port of Sunderland, the Esk Valley Rail Development Company, and from the elected Mayor of Tees Valley, Ben Houchen.

The event is to be held at the Dolphin Centre, Horsemarket, Darlington DL1 5RP - less than 15 minutes walk from the railway station.

Places are still available, but bookings for this conference will close on 20 June 2019. It would help us if you could make your bookings before 10 June, as we have to give numbers to the caterers on that day.

Tickets cost £15 for the day, to include a lunch, but book before 30 April for an Early Bird discount [available only to Railfuture members] that will reduce the cost to £12.50. Holders of 16-25 Railcards will pay only £10.

If you wish to visit the area for longer than the one day, there is plenty of accommodation in Darlington, as well as good places to eat - all just a few clicks away on the internet.

While you are here, there are lots of railway-related things to see. We have got the first railway bridge at Tanfield (near Gateshead), the Locomotion museum in Shildon, the pioneering Tyne and Wear Metro to the north, around Newcastle, Whitley Bay and the Sunderland area . . . and much more.

Bookings: [www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/#book](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/#book)  
For further details please email [conferences@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:conferences@railfuture.org.uk)

## PAGE ONE PICTURE: Ashington reopening

Prospects for bringing passenger trains back to the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line looked brighter in February when Transport Secretary Chris Grayling travelled on a special train along the line from Morpeth.

Mr Grayling said he supported a passenger service on the line in principle and said it would be a positive addition to the Newcastle rail network and would help communities along the coast.

Rail campaigners were sworn to secrecy about the event and even committee members of the South East Northumberland Rail User Group were kept in the dark.

In an unconnected development, a truce in the long-running dispute between Northern and the rail union RMT was declared just afterwards.

Reopening the freight-only line which closed to passengers in 1964 is now official policy for Northumberland County Council who invited Mr Grayling to see the potential for himself.

Mr Grayling told the *Newcastle Chronicle*: "There are about six places around the country where there is a real opportunity to bring back passengers to lines that haven't had them since the days of Dr Beeching. This is really one of them. I never make absolute commitments to provide funding but I would say this is a really strong candidate. We are putting money through the Transforming Cities Fund into improving transport infrastructure around our major cities. This would be a really

positive addition to not just to the rail network into and out of Newcastle but right up into Northumberland, where it would make a real difference to the communities here. A lot of people will look at this line and say: Why on earth doesn't it have passenger trains already?"

On board the special train were Railfuture member and SENRUG chair Dennis Fancett, local councillors, and representatives from Northern, Network Rail, Transport for the North, Nexus, consultants AECOM, and a TV crew, which filmed Mr Grayling on Bedlington station.

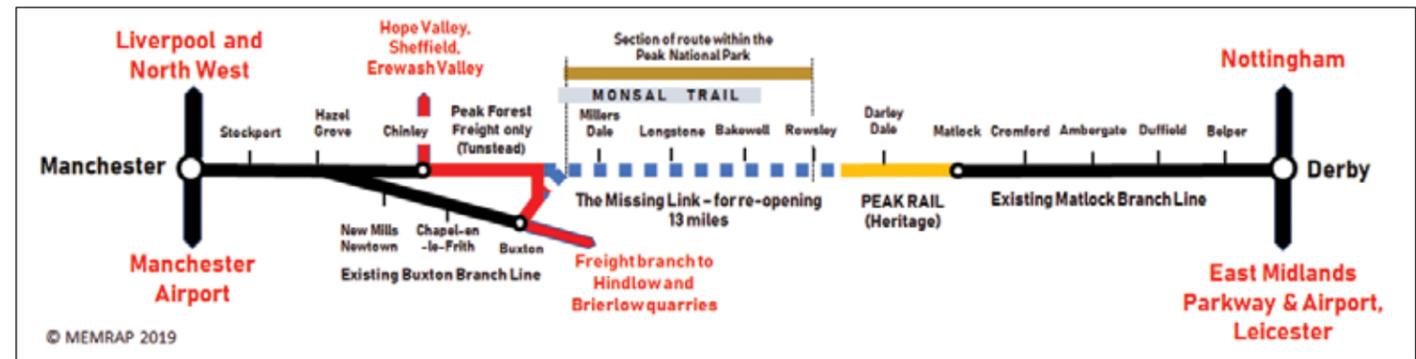
Dennis was able to talk to Mr Grayling about his 14 years of campaigning for the reopening, and his frustration with the Network Rail GRIP process.

He explained to Network Rail managers the strategic importance of the Ashington-Butterwell corridor, added to the Newcastle-Ashington line, as a relief and diversionary route for the East Coast main line.

Dennis spoke to Northern's regional director about SENRUG's separate campaign for a local service along the ECML between Morpeth and Berwick. There is now a real chance of a feasibility study into establishing this service.

Northumberland Councillor Richard Wearmouth also briefed Mr Grayling.

A few days later, the county council approved £3.5 million to progress Ashington reopening, with a target 2022 reopening date.



THE ROUTE: Showing the parts that are already open and the sections which need rebuilding

# Dales link could be re-born

The magnificent former Midland main line through the Derbyshire Dales could be reopened, providing a new route from the Midlands to Manchester.

A campaign has recently been launched aimed at restoring a 13-mile missing link which would allow trains to run through from Derby to England's north west.

Ironically the route saw extra use shortly before it was closed, when traffic was deliberately diverted to it during the 1960s from the West Coast main line, when the WCML was disrupted by electrification work.

The high speed Midland Pullman diesel train provided a premium service for six years from London to Manchester but the through route was lost when the Matlock to Buxton section was closed by the Labour government in 1968.

Stephen Chaytow recently joined Railfuture and is now the prime mover behind this campaign, working closely with its founder from Matlock, Robin Greenwood. Stephen now reports on progress:

For the first time since the failed feasibility study of 2004, there is a serious proposal to renew the most direct rail link between Manchester and the East Midlands, by rebuilding the missing Matlock to Chinley/



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12.03 pm	St. Pancras	6.10 pm		London Road	

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SWANSONG: Premium service just before closure of the route

Buxton section, closed more than 50 years ago. Last year, the heritage operator, Peak Rail, tendered for a feasibility study to assess a freight-led private reinstatement.

The impetus for this is the increasing passenger numbers on the Manchester-Sheffield Hope Valley route and consequent pressure on Transport for the North to add new services to a busy line.

The Buxton-based quarry operators see their business operations suffering. With their

stone trains leaving Peak Forest from a standing start, it takes four miles of climbing through Edale to reach an adequate line speed, conflicting with passenger paths and holding up the services behind them.

Currently, this is the only route available to take limestone and aggregates out by train.

With the heritage Peak Rail operation as the leading stakeholder and lobbying behind a veil of non-disclosure agreements, little detail has yet reached the public domain.

It is thought that Peak Rail's preference for a private reopening means that they would stand a better chance of implementing their own community rail proposals, rather than risk being swept aside by Network Rail in a full public opening.

However, this assertion is challenged by many within Railfuture who cite the North York Moors Railway operation on Network Rail track between Grosmont and Whitby.

Peak Rail has supported the inauguration of MEMRAP (the Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership) to start a public debate on a topic already attracting much interest.

The Peak National Park Authority is however concerned at the potential threat to its now well-established Monsal Trail (for cyclists and walkers) along much of the route.

Amid these complications, Railfuture East Midlands branch members are now supporting the efforts of MEMRAP to roll out a debate and campaign presence in the Dales area.

A meeting of MEMRAP was held in February at Robin Greenwood's home in Matlock.

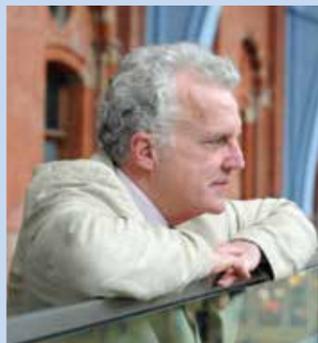
Anyone requiring further details should contact either Ian Clark or Stephen Chaytow from Railfuture East Midlands or email: [schaytow@gmail.com](mailto:schaytow@gmail.com)

## President's column: Is it back to the future with a new Big Four?

The Williams Review will trigger the biggest change in the railways since the privatisation of the mid 1990s.

That is what Tom Harris, a former Labour transport minister and now a member of the advisory panel for the Williams Review, said at a debate held in mid February which both I and Railfuture director Roger Blake attended.

That is a big statement and Harris meant it. There have been countless other reviews in the past quarter of a century and most gathered more dust than a desert town in a storm. "This one will not," Harris told me afterwards, because there is a consensus that we need change. But what change is the question? There does seem to be an awful lot of consensus over the idea that some sort of "guiding mind" or "strategic body" is required



Railfuture president: Christian Wolmar

for the railways. That became clear in the aftermath of the timetable chaos in May last year which was the result of a failure of anyone to get to grips with the issue. While the general agreement about the need for such an organisation is welcome, working out its precise nature is something

that will tax Williams and his team to the utmost. Vertical integration, bringing operations and infrastructure back together again, is another issue which finds favour with many analysts. I have long supported this as I see the fragmentation of the railways as the biggest mistake made at privatisation.

The railways are inherently a system and should be treated as such, rather than be subjected to the "pretend capitalism" which has added so much expense and malfunction to the system.

However, given that Network Rail is in the public sector and the operations are in the hands of private contractors, this is a difficult one to get past a secretary of state - a Conservative one will obviously want a private sector solution and a Labour one the opposite. My view is that given Network Rail is in the public sector and

is by far the biggest beast in the industry, inevitably such an integrated organisation would have to start in the public sector, and then quite possibly be privatised in the future.

The current secretary of state (who may not be in the job by the time you read this given the fluidity of politics at the moment) favours a kind of Japanese model which is not that dissimilar to the Big Four of the interwar years.

So perhaps watch this space, especially given Network Rail's announcement that it is grouping its routes (divisions) into four in England and Wales plus Scotland.

Moreover they almost match the names of the Big Four. So is the review going to be a step into the future or a march back to the past?

Ian Brown on the Williams Review: Page 20

## Railfuture Campaigner of the Year

By Wendy Thorne

Railfuture membership director  
A new award is to be presented at the Railfuture AGM in May:

**Railfuture Campaigner of the Year.**  
The award will be recognition for the dedication and achievements of Railfuture volunteers.  
We will be making the inaugural award for Campaigner of the Year at the annual general meeting in Cardiff on Saturday 18 May 2019.  
The award will be presented by Railfuture's honorary president Christian Wolmar after the formal business has concluded and will be

followed by lunch and an opportunity to network. So, do you know someone who has contributed to the success of Railfuture?

Someone who has gone the "extra mile"? Perhaps they have raised the profile of Railfuture on key issues or started a successful campaign in their local area.

We will require a written statement of no more than 500 words identifying how the nominee has contributed to Railfuture's mission to be the number one advocate for rail users and the rail industry and how they have enhanced Railfuture's campaigning for a bigger, better railway.

■ Nominations may be made by any Railfuture member

■ All Railfuture members are eligible to be nominated

■ You may nominate yourself

■ The deadline for nominations to be received has been extended to 18 April 2019

■ To submit a nomination please email membership director at:

[wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk)

■ Or if you prefer to submit a paper entry please send c/o 40 Ripplside, Portishead BS20 6NB

paul.hollinghurst@railfuture.org.uk

### ■ ■ Soham station plans revealed

Network Rail has issued proposals for a new railway station in Soham, Cambridgeshire. The plans have been worked up with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. They will include a new four coach long platform at the site of the former Soham station (1879-1965) as well as car and cycle parking facilities. Early designs show passive provision for a second platform and a footbridge. Currently Greater Anglia's Ipswich-Peterborough trains operate at two-hourly intervals but there is a franchise commitment to increase this to hourly. Most of the predicted Soham passengers are expected to travel to Cambridge, changing trains at Ely. Railfuture East Anglia wants the Newmarket west curve reopened, allowing direct trains from Soham to Cambridge.

### ■ ■ Great expectations for stations

Railfuture East Anglia has issued a report on what passengers should expect at a station. Expectations at major stations such as Ipswich or Cambridge are obviously higher than those at an unstaffed halt such as Brundall Gardens or Wrabness, while medium-sized stations should have staff, a proper toilet and a waiting room. Members are being provided with a checklist for their stations and it is planned to award plaques to the best stations, funded by the legacy from our late member Clara Zilahi. The winners of the first three plaques will be announced at the branch meeting in Ipswich on 15 June.

### ■ ■ Celebrating 175 years of Norfolk railways

The first railway in Norfolk, from Norwich to Great Yarmouth via Reedham, opened in April 1844. The 175th anniversary is being marked by events over a three-month period. An exhibition is being staged during May at several venues, including libraries in Great Yarmouth and Gorleston during May by the East Norfolk Transport Users' Association, which is affiliated to Railfuture. The exhibition will also look to the future, with modernisation of the line and the new bimode trains coming soon. A small brochure is being prepared with details of events and this can be obtained from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ (trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk)

[www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Rail+Network](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Rail+Network)  
Twitter: @RailfutureEA

## Railpass report

A new report called *Easy Travel with a Railpass* has been compiled by Trevor Garrod and draws on the knowledge and experiences of people who have used Interrail and national or regional passes in Great Britain and many other European countries. It supplements information provided in the European Rail Timetable and websites such as The Man in Seat 61 at [www.seat61.com](http://www.seat61.com). Interrail is now accepted by three open-access train operators in Austria and the Czech Republic. On the other hand, Britain's Anglia Plus day-ranger, once very attractive, has become less so after a 25% increase in its price in 2019. There are now over 100 rover or ranger tickets available in Great Britain, listed on the National Rail website, which can save travellers time and money. There is also an Oder-Neisse ticket which can be used on train services in the area where Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic meet, although it is not valid on all sections of all lines. Some city regional cards can be ordered online from Britain before you venture abroad. *Easy Travel with a Railpass* is available in electronic form from trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk

anthony.kay@railfuture.org.uk

### ■ ■ National Forest Line campaign

A new group campaigning to reopen the line from Leicester to Burton-upon-Trent attracted 70 people to its first meeting in Swadlincote, South Derbyshire, in January. It chose Geoff Bushell as its chairman. Railfuture's Ron Steven recalled the 1960s journey from Coalville to Leicester took half an hour by train, compared to an hour by road now. The line was listed for reopening in 1994, but shelved at the time of rail privatisation.

### ■ ■ Intercity Railfreight plus pedal power

Jeff Screenshot, managing director of Intercity Railfreight, was guest speaker at Railfuture East Midlands' January meeting. The company was founded in our region in 2011, and transports freight items on passenger trains, similar to the former Red Star Parcels operation. Their earliest consignments were time-critical medical samples from Nottingham to London, and more recently they have been taking fresh seafood from Cornwall to London restaurants. Mr Screenshot believes future expansion of his business will make a major contribution to tackling the congestion and pollution caused by delivery vans. The speed and reliability advantages of rail are obvious, while the "last mile" for many consignments will be by electric-assisted cargo cycles.

### ■ ■ Cakes to mark Parkway anniversary

Railfuture East Midlands held its January meeting in the first class lounge at East Midlands Parkway, unaware that it was the 10th anniversary of the station's opening. East Midlands Trains presented us with a reminder in the shape of celebration cakes. Keep an eye on the Railfuture East Midlands web page for details of future meetings. The usual pattern is that the committee meets from 12.00 to 13.00 at East Midlands Parkway, with an open meeting for members from 13:30 to 15:30.

### ■ ■ Inter-City Kitty campaign momentum

Following Railfuture East Midlands' successful Inter-City Kitty campaign launch in Derby in October, momentum is growing for improvements to the Derby-Stoke-Crewe service. MPs along the line have met to seek improvements and we hope this will lead to implementation of proposals by Transport for the North for a Liverpool-Leicester service via Crewe and Derby, plus extension of the present East Midlands Trains local service beyond Crewe to Manchester Airport. Railfuture also wants the Manchester Airport service extended to Nottingham.

### ■ ■ Reopened line could be key link for HS2

Ashfield District Council has approved funding for a study into reopening the line that connects Kirby-in-Ashfield (on the Robin Hood Line) to the Erewash Valley line via Pinxton. It is currently used for freight and driver training but reopening to passengers would provide a link to the proposed Toton HS2 station for many communities in North Nottinghamshire.

### ■ ■ Rail can boost economic growth strategy

Railfuture East Midlands has submitted detailed ideas to show how rail improvements can support economic and housing developments outlined in the draft Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan, which is already being revised.

### ■ ■ Model idea to boost membership

Railfuture East Midlands will be planning to recruit new members with our stand at the Great Central Railway's Model Railway Event from 14-16 June.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch)  
Twitter: @RailfutureEMids

# Electric trains are best, especially for Pennines

By Paul Abell

paul.abell@railfuture.org.uk

Much was promised for this decade in the way of railway electrification only for the reality of delivery to fall disappointingly short.

Who now remembers the announcement of an electric link between Oxford and Coventry?

Or the electric link from Didcot to Oxford, come to that.

And what of the people at Gospel Oak in London looking at the new overhead wires but still making do with diesel trains for the service to Barking?

## The positives

It is important though to give credit for the positive achievements of the decade, electrifications which followed the wasted years after the completion of the eight-mile Kidsgrove-Crewe link in 2003.

At long last, electrification of the pioneer Liverpool and Manchester Railway has given an electric link between the two premier cities of the North West, with Blackpool also eventually getting electric services.

The West Midlands success story of the electrified Cross-City line was enhanced in 2018 by a Worcestershire extension down the Lickey Incline to Bromsgrove.

In Scotland there are now five electric links between Edinburgh and Glasgow (now that the Shotts line is completed ahead of schedule), and Paisley Canal showed how a line could be electrified economically in 2012, while Stirling, Alloa and Dunblane were added to the electrified



**CARDIFF CENTRAL:** Gantries for electrification on platform 0 in January 2019. The wires will soon follow, but Swansea will have to keep waiting



**BOLTON:** Hooray! That was the verdict of Professor Paul Salvson when much-delayed electric trains ran through Bolton in February from Manchester Victoria to Buckshaw Parkway

network last year. On the other hand readers in Swansea will, quite rightly, be about to remind me in no uncertain terms that their city (the second largest in Wales) was unceremoniously dumped from the Great Western main line project.

Does the forthcoming need to switch to diesel traction at Cardiff Central betray the London-centric nature of this decision? Was there no appreciation of the potential of regional electric services linking Swansea, Cardiff, Newport, Bristol and Bath, points in between and points in the Valleys?

## London's long wait

2018 saw the completion of the Gospel Oak-Barking electrification – as long as you do not regard providing electric trains as being an essential part of such a "completion".

With luck, 2019 will see these finally enter service. In contrast there is evident doubt even at the highest levels that 2019 will see the completion of Crossrail.



**MANCHESTER PICCADILLY:** The two lines on the left were electrified as part of the LNER Woodhead scheme (started 1936, completed 1954), while the other lines were part of the great London Midland electrification scheme, electrified to Crewe in 1960 and completed through to London Euston in 1966



**HADFIELD:** From 1954 to 1970, there was an electric passenger service over the Pennines, but now the route from Manchester ends at Hadfield, 30 miles short of Sheffield

for the time being the chance of regional electric services linking the three cities of Leicester, Nottingham and Derby.

Further North, Windermere passengers will be seeing their bimode trains switching to diesel engines at Oxenholme.

On a much larger scale the Liverpool-York electrification has apparently become the Liverpool-Manchester (or possibly Stalybridge) electrification, while any thought of electrifying the Calder Valley or Hope Valley lines has completely vanished off the radar.

## Well done, Scotland

So we now have five electrified links between Edinburgh and Glasgow, and none between Manchester and Sheffield, or Manchester and Leeds, or Leeds and Sheffield. Well done Scotland.

At this point I would draw your attention to the March 2015 report of the North of England Electrification Task Force



**MARSDEN:** No wires here because electrification of this most important Manchester-Leeds trans-Pennine route has been deferred. Marsden is near the top of the westbound climb over the Pennines, a challenge to bimodes which have a poor power-to-weight ratio compared to electric trains

# GOING DUTCH WITH EUROSTAR – IS IT BETTER THAN TRAVELLING BY AIR?

**Railfuture's Ian Brown and Jerry Alderson travel to Amsterdam by Eurostar and in this article Ian Brown compares it with air travel from London to Holland**

Eurostar introduced direct trains from London to Rotterdam and Amsterdam in April last year, with a journey time of three hours 55 minutes – just inside four hours. There are two trains on weekdays and one on Saturdays and Sundays.

There is no direct return service as yet, so returning passengers have to use a Thalys or Eurostar service to Brussels and change there. An hour is required for the change while return immigration and customs formalities are undertaken.

Eurostar has announced that it wants to introduce a return service "before the end of 2019" with formalities conducted in Amsterdam and Rotterdam stations.

## The initial service

Trains leave St Pancras International at 08.16 and 17.16 and call at Rotterdam. A new 11.04 service starts in June and



**VELARO:** Ian Brown and Eurostar at Amsterdam Centraal

the 08.16 is moved forward to 07.16 to attract business travellers. 250,000 people have used the service so far. Two more trains are planned in 2020. Let us hope there will be a direct return train by then. Even

without a direct return train, Eurostar was confident enough to test the market and it seems to have worked. Why? London-Amsterdam is the largest air market within Europe. Paris would be, but Eurostar has half

of that market. The critical new factor is the increasing number of online ticket bookers on both Eurostar and the airlines who want single rather than return tickets.

The key determinants for many of them are price and journey time.

None of the Dutch-bound trains stop at Ebbsfleet, Ashford, Lille or Antwerp.

## Go and compare

We thought the time was right for Railfuture members to try the service and carry out a Railfuture Go and Compare exercise with the more familiar air travel.

From Amsterdam to Brussels, the service is shared with Thalys, which uses older trains than Eurostar.

St Pancras International is a far better starting point than Heathrow, especially for people starting their journeys north of London. London City Airport is more convenient from parts of east and south London, which begs the question of whether Stratford International should



**EUROSTAR:** Standard Premier breakfast

be served by Eurostar. Stratford International station was built at a cost of £700 million but is used only by domestic high speed trains.

Railfuture sees a strong case for international trains to stop at Stratford, to balance the proposed Old Oak Common station on High Speed 2 in west London.

Customs and immigration procedures apply at boarding for both for Eurostar and air. However, if you arrive by train, there is no further check. This is a plus for Eurostar.

Two other pluses for Eurostar are that you avoid the increasing tendency of airlines to charge high prices for luggage, or for seat changes, to recoup money lost on low headline fares.

Airport security operations have improved at Heathrow, but London City is having a hard time coping as business has outgrown available capacity.

## E-tickets

St Pancras International has its moments too, but generally the procedure works well. Almost everyone has e-tickets just as air travellers do, the security staff are cheery and St Pancras has e-Passport gates, some of which work.

The general waiting area is adequate, but like London City Airport can soon fill up, an issue to be tackled if Eurostar continues to expand.

Train check-in opens 90 minutes before departure, presumably shorter than at an airport to minimise overcrowding. There is a coffee shop in the lounge. However, there is a vast array of shops and cafes in the main station itself.

There is also a business lounge, matching airline lounges and better than some. Boarding begins 20 minutes before departure. The older Eurostar



**NO DRAMA:** Eurostar from London arrives at Amsterdam Centraal in a normal platform



**RETURN POSSIBILITY:** A Thalys from Amsterdam to Brussels

trains have not been equipped to operate on the Dutch railway system and the new high speed line in the Netherlands, so the service is run with the newer German Velaro e320s. They carry nearly a thousand passengers, equivalent to three Jumbo Jets. There are first class sections at each end of the train. Both are better than air travel for design

and available space. One section is marketed as Business Premier, with hot meal catering priced at airline business class levels. The rear portion is marketed as Standard Premier, with a modest premium over the standard fare. This includes a continental breakfast before Brussels and a snack and a drink after Brussels. The staff were welcoming and



**BIKES GALORE:** 30% of commuters ride to their local station. 10% ride into the city from Centraal

accommodating. Initially for the Brussels to Amsterdam section Thalys staff were used. Eurostar has now recruited its own staff for this leg, based at Brussels.

Our train was full throughout, very few people alighting in the short 10-minute stop at Brussels. The train arrived on time at Amsterdam Centraal.

Major stations in the Netherlands have barriers but the self-printed QR encoded Eurostar tickets worked perfectly.

Overall, based on this experience Eurostar compares favourably with air in this direction, except for people wanting a morning departure who cannot reach St Pancras in time for an 08.16 departure. The additional planned midday departure should address this.

You can read a fuller version of this article with a contribution from Jerry Alderson and with more pictures on the Railfuture Go and Compare web pages. Click on Campaigns then click on Go and Compare.

## Amsterdam to London City airport by BA City Flyer

The journey from Amsterdam Central by air took four hours 15 minutes, longer than the outward Eurostar but quicker than the return Eurostar journey of five hours which includes a wait at Brussels.

A direct comparison is difficult as the journey time depends on how much time you leave for airport check-in, but it is fair to say that journey times by rail and air are similar on this route.

The normal argument for travelling by air is speed, but this argument is certainly not convincing when travelling to Rotterdam and Amsterdam. From Amsterdam to Schiphol Airport, the new *Inter City Direct* service uses the high speed line from the airport to Rotterdam and takes 15 minutes. The small end doors caused queues



**INTER-CITY:** Amsterdam to Schiphol

when boarding, luggage piled up in the vestibules and it took several minutes to get off. The local trains take about 25 minutes and are far more suitable for people with luggage.

The local 125mph trains are better suited for Rotterdam to the airport and also operate the interim Amsterdam-Brussels service until a dispute over new high speed trains is settled.

Britain is not alone in experiencing difficulties introducing new trains. By contrast, Eurostar successfully introduced its new trains in four countries and was awarded the Train of the Year Award at the National Rail Awards in 2018.

Schiphol Airport is a bit of a nightmare. Getting to the check-in machine, security, immigration, the lounge, and the departure gate all involved long walks. Security is very well organised with no queuing despite being busy. Immigration is mainly e-gates and efficient. People queued for about 10 minutes to board and the plane left 45 minutes late.

BA City Flyer use the Embraer 170 and 190SR aircraft, with two-plus-two seating, just about the most comfortable economy air travel available. The Airbus going to Heathrow have cramped three plus three seating. British Airways has abolished free food and drink in economy on short flights, but BA City Flyer continues to serve drink, including spirits, and a snack. The flight with 170 seats was full. Flying time was only 45 minutes. Arrival at London

City was efficient, e-passport gates were in operation but there are probably not enough of them if two or three planes arrive at the same time. The transfer on to the Docklands Light Railway to Bank took four minutes. The journey from Amsterdam to Central London required three ticket purchases (train, air, DLR) or two purchases plus Oyster for the DLR.

Overall this experience was acceptable for a relatively fit traveller or somebody who likes shopping at the airport, but not so good for a family, given the long walks at Schiphol. It is not quicker. I spoke to two people en route. Neither had tried Eurostar on this route but had travelled to Paris by rail. Both said they were aware of the new train service and were contemplating trying Eurostar.



**SNACK TIME:** At Schiphol airport

Pictures: IAN BROWN

Pictures: IAN BROWN

## World class station?

In what sense is it "world class" for the city of Worcester to have to rely on a parkway station outside the urban area to access the CrossCountry train network?

Parkway stations have a role in complementing established town and city centre rail facilities, but they are not a substitute for them. For example, Worcester currently has a very infrequent train service to and from the south, which urgently requires improvement. A car-oriented station on the outskirts is unlikely to be of use to those wishing to visit the city, from outside, but one fears that the forthcoming parkway facility will siphon off business, making it less likely that other rail improvements will then take place.

There are always going to be limits on the amount of car parking that is available at town and city centre stations. Surely the answer to that is to greatly improve access to such stations by public transport and other sustainable modes.

Britain seems almost unique in Europe in persisting with separate town centre bus stations, rather than re-focusing bus services around railheads.

Where bus stations do exist in towns on the Continent, they are often drive-through facilities that complement the major interchange at the central railway station. Colmar and Bonn are just two that come to mind.

Shrub Hill station in Worcester may be some way from the retail core, although I have walked it in the past, but in other countries such a distance would not be regarded as an insuperable barrier to bus-rail integration.

A primary cause appears once again to be bus deregulation (the 1985 Transport Act was described by one critic as viciously antisocial), with resultant lack of democratic control over the pattern of bus services.

Parts of the rail industry are compounding the problem by treating railway stations more like out-of-town shopping centres, a form of development focused on car access to maximise the amount of money coming through the door, rather than to achieve a desirable pattern of activity.

This commercially driven pattern of shopping has done a lot of damage to town and city centres, and it would be similarly harmful to develop the rail network on the basis of



## Greta leads the world to trains

**Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg, 16, travelled by train for 32 hours from her home to confront political and economic decision makers at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January and to demand that they tackle the global emissions crisis. By contrast, the global elite used 1,500 private jets to take them to Davos.**

**The previous month Greta addressed the UN Climate Change conference in Poland. Greta, pictured above on a train, has led school strikes in Sweden which have been copied in Germany, Belgium and Switzerland.**

**In Britain, some schoolchildren have supported Greta, including Holly Gillibrand from Kinlocheil who protested at Lochaber High School. Holly tweeted Prime Minister Theresa May to say: "I will not sit silently while you and the British government contribute to the destruction of our only planet."**

**Greta called on world leaders to prioritise climate change action, rather than profits. She said: "Some companies and decision makers have known exactly what priceless values they are sacrificing to continue making unimaginable amounts of money."**

**Greta also believes her Asperger's syndrome helps her to see the problem of climate change simply.**

**Road transport is one of the main obstacles to reducing pollution which is driving climate change. Rail is a big part of the solution to problems of emissions and road traffic congestion.**

giving primacy to those wanting car access to stations. The fact that car users can be charged to park on railway land, whereas individual bus passengers are not, has even been used as a reason for not providing bus-rail interchanges at stations, a perverse incentive if ever there was one.

Britain needs a properly coordinated and planned approach to rail and bus services, with public investment being used where necessary to deliver optimal social, economic and environmental outcomes. Current institutional frameworks are simply not delivering this.

*Philip Bisatt, Wiltshire Close, Taunton, Somerset philbisatt@gmail.com*

## Look to the future

Thanks for an informative *Railwatch* 158.

There has been criticism of Worcester Parkway station which was featured on the front

page. The upper line is single track but it would probably have been wise to build two platforms, in preparation for the line being doubled which will be essential at some stage.

There is so little car parking at Pershore that many car drivers will divert to the new station and as a result it could be that the car parking at the parkway station is inadequate in future.

Thirty years ago, Tiverton Parkway station in Devon was little used, but when I passed through it last week, the car park was almost full and the station was served by both buses and taxis. A good example.

I noted another good example on a recent day out to Exeter and Exmouth, an area well served by rail stations. Pinhoe station reopened in 1983 and it is wonderful that new developments east and south of the city are being planned with new rail halts. The whole of South East Devon is fairly well served by rail and is a good

example for other areas to follow.

But if Exminster, Stoke Canon, Willand (Tiverton Junction site) and Cullompton were also reopened, Exeter would be an even better example to much larger cities.

Luck has played a part for Exeter where I was born. It is the old story. Stations on inter-city routes tended to have their stations and halts closed by dear old Dr B but other lines retained them. There are notable examples in Wales. The Heart of Wales line retains most of its halts, with some request stops.

By contrast the "fast" Mid Wales line from Shrewsbury to Machynlleth and Aberystwyth could do with stations reinstated at Carno, Forden or Montgomery and a parkway station between Welshpool and Shrewsbury.

The good example of Exeter is a stark contrast to Exmouth. I was ultra-sad to arrive in the town of my childhood and find it so unwelcoming to rail passengers. Its lovely Victorian station was torn down years ago and the station was rebuilt in as unattractive a manner as possible it seems. Urghh! Horrid!

The nearby bus station has now also gone. There is no space for taxis outside the station and no information about buses. A giant step backwards. The station ticket office seems grim and unapproachable. This is an example of the worst service for public transport users.

It is a lovely trip to Exeter alongside the attractive river Exe. But when I visit next time, I will probably avoid Exmouth.

*J Evered, Goylands Close, Llandrindon Wells LD1 5RB*

**Editor's note: Pinhoe station reopened in 1983. Use of the station increased by 24% last year to a total of 116,626 passengers.**

## Bimode potential

The new bimode trains being delivered for services in East Anglia have been described as a waste of resources.

But they are intended to make some journeys easier, such as Norwich-Stansted Airport and Lowestoft-London.

The diesel engines in the bimode trains are not underfloor but in a central module that can, at a future date, be removed if and when more routes are electrified.

Using diesel locomotives is not really an alternative. Stations such as Sudbury, Felixstowe, Lowestoft, Sheringham, and

## Crossing solution



**Network Rail has been intent on closing many pedestrian level crossings on grounds of safety.**

**In Japan, however, safe operation is achieved with automatic barriers and lights at many footpath crossings.**

**The level crossing pictured above is in Kyoto, between Randen Saga and Randen Arashiyama stations.**

Stansted Airport have no round facilities.

I hope the new bimode trains will attract extra passengers for rail.

*Trevor Garrod, Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ chairman@eastssuffolktravel.org.uk*

## Locos make sense

Further to Rex Hora's letter (*Railwatch* 158) about bimodes, if you look back to the West Coast main line electrification in the 1960s, the practice then was to haul the train by electric locomotive to the end of the wires (Crewe at first, then later Preston as electrification progressed), where a diesel locomotive (or two) would replace the electric one.

Once the wires reached Glasgow, the class 50 locos were re-deployed to the South West. I am in agreement with Mr Hora. If the new intercity trains had been specified as loco-hauled stock (like the Intercity 225s on the East Coast main line), electric, diesel or even bimode locos could now be used with identical coaches in push-pull formation. Then, as electrification progresses, it would be easy to change the diesel or bimode locos for electric ones. Instead we have a

short, noisy, complicated diesel multiple unit with a pantograph, which will need substantial work to convert to a pure electric train.

One interesting solution to the bimode conundrum is Greater Anglia's new class 755, which is primarily an electric multiple unit, but has a diesel power car for bimode operation.

This arrangement simplifies maintenance and mitigates cooling problems. As lines are electrified, the diesel unit can be simply removed from the formation, leaving you with a pure electric train, without the spanning that would be required on the underfloor-engined class 800s.

*David Willey, Blairholm Drive, Bellshill ML4 2JS davidwilley@hotmail.com*

## Smell cheque

I was amused to read about the New Cavity bimode units, on the back page of *Railwatch* 158.

Should be Civity, but a known dictionary word has been substituted by someone's computer. These smell chequers have a lotto answer four.

*Peter Absolon taberna.inn1@btconnect.com*

## Modern measure?

I am amazed that reporting on new rail developments around the world in *Railwatch*, online and the magazine, is often quoting distances, speeds and dimensions in Victorian units.

The new rail line in Saudi Arabia is 450km long and the trains can travel at speeds "in excess of" 300km/hr.

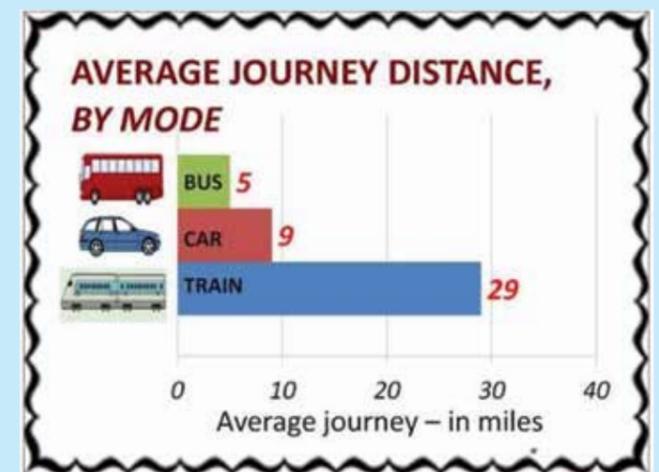
I am 65, was taught metric units at primary school and am so disappointed that the UK fails to drag itself away from antediluvian units.

Railfuture should be about the future not the past. It is only by ceasing to use the old that the new becomes adopted.

*Stephen Barnes, High Street, Mistley, Manningtree CO11 1HD stephen.barnes54@btinternet.com*

## Pace of change

Your article in *Railwatch* 158 headed the "Pace of change speeds up in Wales" sounded promising. About the same time, the BBC reported frustrations among passengers about cramped conditions on short-formed trains between Shrewsbury and Birmingham which are operated by Transport for Wales. This was not a very good start for TFW (east of the border) and was just what some people had feared would



**This graph was produced by Dr Allen Armstrong of Levenmouth Rail Campaign to show that there are good reasons for investing in rail. The campaigners want to see passenger trains running again from Edinburgh to Leven via Thornton Junction, as they did until they were cut 50 years ago in a "betrayal" of a British Rail promise to retain Leven as a railhead for the east coast of Fife.**

**The campaign represents the largest community in Scotland not served by rail. The "heavily deprived" former mining area, with a population of 47,000, has a compelling case for reopening passenger services, with studies showing a strong business case and an estimated capital cost of between £37 and £56 million.**

**Passenger trains still run through Thornton Junction but the six miles to Leven is "mothballed".**

**Dr Armstrong told Railwatch: "I produced the simple graph myself based on info contained in official UK Government statistics. Car or van remains the dominant mode of travel except for the very shortest journeys. Rail tends to be used for longer trips: the average rail journey was 29 miles whereas the average car journey was about nine miles.**

**"One reason for us to use it was that we have been fobbed off previously with 'improved bus services' instead of reconnecting the railway line. Yet, as we all know, bus and train journeys usually serve different purposes and the major difference in average journey time emphasises this fact.**

**"The benefit to cost ratio far exceeds that of the Borders line. Yet we are trapped in a tortuous cycle of unending consultancy studies because there is a failure of leadership and policy.**

**"The preliminary report of the latest Levenmouth Sustainable Transport Study has just been received by Transport Scotland so a further chapter in this extended saga is now awaited."**

happen. TFW blamed damage to trains caused by storm weather.

*Donald Payne, Dudley Road, Tipton DY4 8EE donpayne@btinternet.com*

## Space for buggies

Perhaps the answer to accommodating children's buggies on trains is to have a designated space for them.

*Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby DN31 2JP. timmickleburgh2015@gmail.com*

## Pass it on

**The best way to recycle Railwatch is to pass it on to a friend who may be interested in railways and tempted to join Railfuture.**





Picture: MATT PUGH

## Wessex

tony.smale@railfuture.org.uk

### ■ ■ Gateline gets in the way at Portsmouth

Installing new ticket gatelines at stations with multiple exits or public rights of way is easier said than done, as South Western Railway is finding out. At Fratton, passengers heading to the football stadium or to Southsea are unhappy that they no longer have direct access to the southern exit. In future, they will have to cross the new footbridge to the gatetime on the north side, then double back across the railway using the old footbridge.

The newly installed gatetime at Portsmouth Harbour proved contentious, with ferry operator Wightlink crying foul. There has traditionally been free passage for pedestrians between the city and ferry terminal, a right of way now blocked off by ticket gates. Wightlink advised passengers they do not need to show a ticket to pass through. Railfuture supports measures to prevent ticketless travel, but rail operators should consult properly before installing another ticket gatetime.

### ■ ■ Partnership hopes for Purbeck

There are technical issues to overcome before the Swanage Railway can announce a date for the resumption of its regular passenger service between Swanage and Wareham using heritage diesel units. However, charter trains are booked to operate over the line this summer, and it is likely South Western Railway will run an augmented service of summer specials on to the Swanage branch line in 2019. Please watch for announcements.

The Purbeck Community Rail Partnership, which was set up to support the reconnection of the Swanage branch, has just taken on its first paid officer, Kelly Marshall. Following a suggestion from Railfuture, the remit of the CRP was widened to cover four main line stations: Moreton, Wool, Wareham and Holton Heath. We look forward to working with Kelly to ensure the railways in south Dorset reach their full potential.

### ■ ■ Fast track way for West of England

The Salisbury-Exeter Rail User Group, supported by Railfuture Wessex, is currently working with rail industry partners to push through some essential infrastructure projects such as redoubling track in the Tisbury area west of Salisbury and at Whimple near Exeter. The idea is to use Network Rail's new planning process for enhancements, which circumvents some of the ponderous Governance for Railway Investment Projects stages.

### ■ ■ Projects to improve life for passengers

Work has begun at the site of Reading's new Green Park station. On the Isle of Wight, Railfuture is assured that Network Rail has committed funds to renovate Ryde railway pier and to bring the second platform at Pier Head back into use to improve operational resilience. At Pokesdown station near Bournemouth, workmen were reported to have "prised open the rusted doors leading to the disused lift shafts", prior to installing new lifts. We trust they did not find the skeletal remains of a group of 1980s holidaymakers, still clutching their luggage!

### ■ ■ Railfuture Wessex AGM

The Railfuture Wessex AGM will be held on 6 April 2019 at the Cathedral Discovery Centre, Bishop Crispian Way, Portsmouth PO1 3QA at 14.00.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+Branch)  
Twitter @RailfutureWessex

**EXTRA CAPACITY:** Workers near Lawrence Hill station reinstating four tracks from Bristol Temple Meads towards Bristol Parkway last year. The tracks are the equivalent of the M5 motorway, connecting England's South West with the Midlands and the North. The six-mile long section of track up Filton Bank had to be shared between inter-city, regional, local and freight services, and was a real bottleneck. Now four tracks should bring better reliability, as well as clearing the way for more trains to run along the Severn Beach line. The tracks were expanded to four in 1888 but reduced to two in 1984. Sadly electrification of the route has been deferred

## Severnside

nigel.bray2@railfuture.org.uk

### ■ ■ Four-track victory celebrated in Bristol

Bristol now has a four-track main line in the direction of South Wales and the Midlands, following the quadrupling of the route over Filton Bank, which was completed in early December. This follows campaigning by Railfuture and Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways since 2007. In 1984 when economics took preference over efficient segregation of faster and slower trains, two of the tracks were removed over a 3.5 mile section. Nearly 30 years later, in 2013, campaigners presented the then Mayor of Bristol with a petition calling for the tracks to be reinstated. Six years later, in February this year, FOSBR celebrated victory with a ceremony at Filton Abbey Wood, which has also gained a fourth platform.

### ■ ■ Better news for the Henbury loop

Hopes for a Henbury loop passenger service, rejected by consultants in 2015, appeared brighter after West of England Combined Authority Mayor Tim Bowles was reported in late November as saying that Councillor Mark Weston had made a strong case for the loop. Mr Weston, who is prospective Conservative parliamentary candidate for Bristol North West and his party's group leader on Bristol City Council, said connecting the Henbury and Severn Beach lines would link the three major employment zones of Avonmouth, Filton and Temple Meads via one circular rail route. Avoiding gridlock in northern Bristol would, he said, require more ambitious transport solutions to convince commuters to forsake their cars. The current Labour MP for Bristol North West, Darren Jones, has expressed support for a loop service. MetroWest Phase 2, due for completion in 2021, would introduce a spur service with trains turning round at Henbury from the east, but not continuing via Avonmouth and Clifton Down.

### ■ ■ Rail is key to a sustainable future

Railfuture responded to the West of England Joint Spatial Strategy Technical Evidence consultation at the end of December.

We praised its objectives for sustainable development and better health outcomes but criticised its underestimation of the potential of rail. The consultation document pinned its faith on bus services while ignoring the massive increase in rail usage over two decades. We emphasised the growth in recorded passenger journeys at the 27 stations in the Greater Bristol area, from 9.5 million in 1997/98 to 26.9 million in 2017/18 according to the Office of Rail and Road. Many people use rail for cross-Bristol journeys and not just for access to urban centres as implied by the document.

### ■ ■ Potential for stations to serve housing

The Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation invited comments on the plans for development in central and northern Gloucestershire up to 2031 but made no mention of railways apart from a brief reference to Ashchurch station. Our response in January noted that the three largest sites earmarked for additional housing were well placed in relation to two existing stations and one proposed by Gloucestershire County Council at Hunt's Grove, south of Gloucester. Access by public transport should be the prime consideration in siting housing and industry. Reduced car dependence (which is county council policy) would meet the JCS objective of improved health.

### ■ ■ Footbridge opportunity for Pilning

People who responded to the Department for Transport's consultation about closing Angel Road station in London suggested the footbridge should be re-erected at Pilning station, which lost its footbridge to clear the way for overhead electric wires, since when it has had trains only in one direction! Olga Taylor of the Pilning Station Group has called on Transport Secretary Chris Grayling to order the Angel Road bridge (high enough to clear the new wires) to be relocated to Pilning.

### ■ ■ April AGM date

Railfuture Severnside's AGM will be on Saturday 6 April at 14.00 in Dilton Marsh Village Hall, close to the station.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/SevernsideBranch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/SevernsideBranch)  
Twitter @RailfutureSSide

# New challenges for Welsh franchise

By Peter Kingsbury

peter.kingsbury@railfuturewales.org.uk

Members who attend the Railfuture national AGM on the 18 May will have the opportunity to learn about the award of a 15 year contract to Keolis Amey for the Wales and Borders rail network.

Keolis Amey now operates under the title Transport for Wales Rail, and Railfuture Wales has reassessed its campaign priorities.

### Campaign successes

The franchise, which was operated for 15 years by Arriva Trains Wales, extends from Fishguard Harbour to Manchester Piccadilly.

Before the 2018 award of the new franchise, Railfuture Wales published *On Track for the 21st Century*, a comprehensive vision for improvements across this large network.

So we were delighted that the entire ATW rolling stock fleet is to be replaced, 95% of it with completely new trains.

£194 million is to be spent on station upgrades, and new services will run, such as Cardiff and Llandudno to Liverpool via Chester (via the reopened Halton Curve).

There will be improved frequency on several routes including Wrexham to Bidston and the Ebbw Vale branch, which will both see two trains per hour from December 2021.

Sunday service frequency is to be improved from next year.

Many of the other franchise changes go some way to meeting Railfuture's aspirations for a markedly better rail system in Wales and the Borders.

### The way forward

But there is some way to go. We want to see a reduction in journey times between Cardiff and our second city of Swansea, as well as Cardiff-North Wales.

We also want a two-hour minimum frequency on all routes. This could make rail first choice in rural areas.

On the well-populated South Wales Metro network, there should be four trains per hour, a turn-up-and-go frequency.

So Railfuture Wales' new campaigning focus will be on train frequency and speed, as it is felt that these areas are where most can be achieved in attracting new users to the rail system.

How can the faster journey be achieved from Cardiff to Swansea? At present, Cardiff-Swansea takes an

◆◆◆◆ Railfuture 2019 AGM at Sport Wales National Centre, Cardiff, on Saturday 18 May



WELSH CAPITAL: Cardiff Central station, which will be at the heart of the South Wales Metro network



CARDIFF CENTRAL: Ceramic sign



CARDIFF: Electrification will displace these diesel Pacers. This is Queen Street North junction with the line to Pontypridd, Treherbert, Merthyr and Aberdare, left, and to Caerphilly, Bargoed and Rhymney, right

unacceptable 55 minutes for a journey of 45 miles. This would have been partly addressed by electrification, but the Government has decided to stop Great Western electrification at Cardiff. A big mistake.

However, it would still be possible to achieve a 45 minute travel time without electrification. Network Rail must improve the infrastructure so speed restrictions can be eased and more of the route can be operated at 90 mph.

In my opinion, with creative timetabling, faster services could be run by eliminating stops at some intermediate stations on a limited number of services. The new Hitachi class 800 bimodes are capable of delivering this goal with superior acceleration relative to the retiring IC125s.

On the Cardiff-North Wales route, the two-hourly direct service involving reversal at Chester should be accelerated, with the aim of reaching Bangor in less than four hours.

By allowing the new CAF units on this route from 2023 to run at maximum speed, and by omitting calls at some intermediate stations, a time saving of up to 30 minutes over some current timings might be achieved. The new Cardiff-

Liverpool service could stop at the smaller Marches stations, to maintain frequencies there.

### Rural frequency improvements

Three lines in particular need attention to upgrade frequencies.

The Swansea-Shrewsbury Heart of Wales line will get an additional service under the new franchise from 2023, bringing the daily total to five trains each way.

No frequency improvements are assured for the Conwy Valley line from Llandudno Junction to Blaenau Ffestiniog but we believe a second train needs to be allocated to the branch to provide a two-hourly service.

The service to Fishguard which connects with ferries to Rosslare has improved but is still irregular with long gaps in the middle of the day. This could be filled by a shuttle from Carmarthen, probably without additional rolling stock. On the South Wales Metro, the new

franchise should transform the extensive network of services around Cardiff to create an integrated high frequency public transport network.

Electrification of the lines to Merthyr, Aberdare, Treherbert and Rhymney is planned.

However, the outer parts of the metro network, the loop via Barry to Bridgend, the main line to Bridgend, the branch to Maesteg and the Ebbw Vale branch have inferior services.

With additional rolling stock and train crew, a 15-minute frequency could be provided on all these routes without significant infrastructure work, apart from the Maesteg route where passing loops are needed.

### Learn more

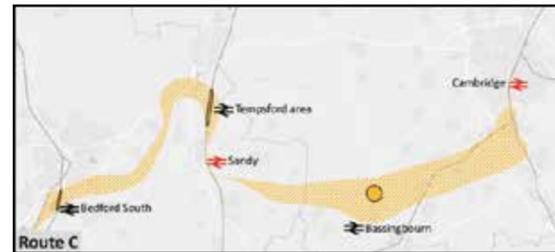
You can learn more about and discuss the franchise during the AGM afternoon session in Cardiff. Railfuture Wales branch would like to welcome as many Railfuture members as possible.



**BASSINGBOURN: £2bn predicted cost. BCR 0.42**



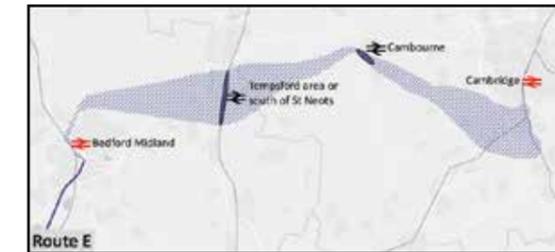
**CAMBOURNE: £2.6 billion. BCR 0.32**



**TEMPSFORD: £2.6 billion BCR 0.27**



**TEMPSFORD-BASSINGBOURN: £2.5bn BCR 0.25**



**TEMPSFORD-CAMBOURNE: £2.6bn BCR 0.24**

Maps: NETWORK RAIL

## Brand new railway for Bedford to Cambridge

A completely new section of railway is proposed from Bedford to Cambridge which virtually ignores the former Bedford St Johns to Sandy trackbed now taken up by a Sustrans cycle track and a country park.

Route options for the Bedford-Cambridge section are currently being evaluated after a public consultation exercise.

The six-week consultation closed on 11 March after meetings in several of the places between Bedford and Cambridge. Railfuture made a written submission.

The Government re-stated its commitment to Bedford-Cambridge in the 2018 October Budget, when it agreed to provide £20 million for the East West Railway Company to develop a strategic outline business case.

Cutting road traffic and enabling housing and economic growth are the key aims for the Government, but value for money is also significant.

This final section of East West Rail is projected to be completed in the mid 2020s, and services will then be able to run the complete length of the line between Oxford and Cambridge, reinstating a rail link which closed more than 50 years ago.

Cynics would say that such an ambitious scheme is unlikely to be completed by then.

Most of EWR will be on existing rail routes but the Bedford-Cambridge

section will be a largely new railway. It is expected that it will be designated a nationally significant infrastructure project and that the planning application for the finally agreed route alignment will take the form of a development consent order (not a TWA order which is being sought for Bicester-Bedford).

The Government is expected to choose its preferred route and then stage a further consultation in 2021.

At the moment the best benefit to cost ratio is for route A: 0.42. Parts of the route corridors are 10 miles wide.

**Route A** is the quickest route (76 minutes Oxford-Cambridge). It would involve relocating Sandy station to the south near ancient meadows.

**Route B** (80 minutes) would see Sandy station relocated to the north, nearer to Tempsford.

**Route C** (80 minutes) could require a new station at Tempsford while retaining the existing Sandy station.

**Route D** (83 minutes) would come north out of Bedford, rather than east.

**Route E** (82 minutes) could mean an interchange station somewhere between Tempsford and St Neots with another station at Cambourne.

North East Bedfordshire MP Alistair Burt said: "This is an exciting and ambitious project. It will help create jobs, and support housing growth in the area."

# At last, the sun is rising on plans for East West Rail

After years of Railfuture campaigning, official inaction, delays and false starts, 2019 will be a crucial year for East West Rail.

A public inquiry is under way with the aim of work starting soon on the Bicester-Bedford section.

At the same time, consultation was carried out for six weeks over February and March to work out which route a new railway should take from Bedford to Cambridge.

These two processes come after the Oxford-Bicester leg was reopened in 2015 to provide a through service from London Marylebone to Oxford.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling visited Bicester in October to see how enabling works are proceeding, and the Department for Transport said it hoped work could start in September 2019.

Mr Grayling said then: "Rapid progress on the project means we will see construction under way on direct, fast and reliable services from next year."

He met Rob Brighouse, chair of the East West Railway Company, who said: "East West Railway Company is working hard with Network Rail to open this line as soon as possible."

Patrick Cawley of Network Rail said: "The preparatory work we are currently carrying out will ensure we are ready to start construction as soon as we can."

The Government has accepted advice from The National Infrastructure Commission that local authorities along the entire EWR corridor will aim for one million new homes to be built by 2050. Milton Keynes is expected to grow to a population of 300,000, with 30,000 new homes.

England's Economic Heartland, an alliance of local authorities, is working on plans to install 5G or fibre broadband along the line to improve the area's digital connectivity.

Railfuture sees EWR as a vital part of the British rail network so it has to perform both a strategic and local role. For example, it can be viewed as an outer London orbital route linking seven main lines radiating from London. Journey times need to be as fast as possible. That is one reason electrification is advisable at the earliest possible opportunity.

The inclusion of long distance and freight services is vital to the success of EWR.

## Cheese-paring by the Department for Transport

By Martin Smith

Railfuture Thames Valley was concerned to see the reduced specifications which the Department for Transport has imposed on the Bicester-Bedford section of East West Rail.

At Bletchley, planned four-coach platforms at high level should be designed to cope with six or seven car trains. Nothing will be done to raise the 25mph speed limit at Denbigh Hall South Junction, where East West Rail joins the West Coast main line slow lines.

This will restrict the capacity of the junction and be a potential cause of delays. The proposed service of through trains

between Milton Keynes and Marylebone via High Wycombe is replaced by trains between MK and Aylesbury only.

The line between Calvert and Aylesbury will not be doubled, and upgrading and partial doubling of the Aylesbury-Princes Risborough line has been dropped. There should be provision for a service between MK and Old Oak Common, providing connections to the Elizabeth line and Heathrow.

East of Bletchley a more frequent service would require redoubling of single-track sections and replacement of level crossings at Bow Brickhill

and Woburn Sands by bridges. The DfT does not see the potential of East West Rail for cross-country services or for freight, but it is willing to spend anything between £3.5 billion and £7 billion on an Oxford-Cambridge Expressway road.

Railfuture was represented at the public inquiry, and urged the inspector to recommend to the DfT that works must include passive provision for future upgrading. The Ebbw Vale line and the Borders Railway provide examples where future upgrading is made difficult because the DfT underestimated demand for growing traffic on reopened lines.

## Get on with it!

### Bicester-Bedford East West Rail inquiry

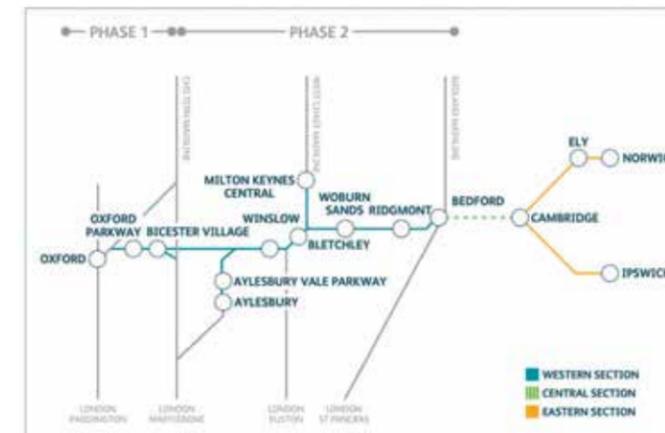
Get on with it! That was the message rail campaigners took to a public inquiry into the Bicester-Bedford section of East West Rail.

Network Rail is hoping for the new service on the Bicester-Bedford section to start operating in 2023, with the Aylesbury service added in 2024.

The importance of a speedy decision on granting a Transport and Works Act order allowing the Bicester-Bedford section to go ahead was explained by Martyn Angus of Network Rail.

The project could be delayed for a year if contractors are not allowed on site for de-vegetation before the bird nesting season.

Network Rail would like to have the order by September 2019, but inquiry chairman Martin Whitehead said the current expectation was that his report would not go to the Secretary of State for Transport until the end of 2019. It was hoped however that the inquiry could



**EAST WEST RAIL: An overall view and the connections**

be speeded up. Although there were 239 objectors, few were against the railway in principle, and 27 were withdrawn. Later one rail campaigner estimated the public sessions of the inquiry could be completed in April. Then the inspector would have to analyse the evidence and write his report to the Government. Many of the objections were seen as a way to get fair compensation for land acquisitions or changes on safety or convenience grounds.

Buckinghamshire County Council is an objector but supports EWR "after 20 years of campaigning for it". It supports the overall aim to create an inter-urban railway with limited stops (and fewer level

crossings) to allow for efficient commuting by rail. Level crossing alterations planned for Lidlington and Woburn Sands will be problematical. There are 100 objectors at Lidlington alone.

The Bicester-Bletchley section will be limited to 100mph but the Bletchley-Bedford section would remain restricted to 60mph. The original strategic aim for an Oxford-Cambridge journey of 60 minutes has been degraded to 80 minutes.

Railfuture was represented at the inquiry by Nigel Rose, who supported the project but warned that the specification cuts could jeopardise the long term success of the project.

"Longer platforms will be needed from day one," he told the inspector. It is important to have platforms long enough for six-car trains rather than four, and for the platforms to be built so as not to make later signalling improvements difficult.

Lessons of cheese-paring on the Borders Railway had not been learnt. Traffic growth on the new Chiltern Railways link from Oxford Parkway to Marylebone has been phenomenal and eight-car trains are the norm.

Similar growth is expected on Bicester-Bedford because of planned population expansion, yet electrification had been dropped. Alan Francis of the Green Party supported

Railfuture's approach and said he was surprised that the initial service was planned to be operated with three-car trains insufficient for the demand.

He said there were six bridges on the Bicester-Bedford section that were not high enough for future electrification. They should be raised now rather than disrupting the railway later.

He asked the inspector to consider specifying a more frequent Aylesbury-Milton Keynes service and a Milton Keynes to London service too.

Railfuture is keen that the line is used for freight and although the existing line is cleared for W10 containers, it cannot cope easily with trains with large W12 containers unless provision is made right from the start.

Railfuture urged that, as a minimum, passive provision is made in the TW order for longer station platforms, freight loops, increased frequency of services, double-tracking of Princes Risborough-Claydon Junction, higher line speeds and future electrification.

## Ditch the motorway

The mistaken plan to build a £3 billion "expressway" road from Oxford to Cambridge to compete with East West Rail should be ditched, the Government has been told.

Roger Smith, editor of *Rail User Express* said: "The expressway plan should be abandoned."

Where Network Rail is transparent in its plans for EWR, Highways England is criticised for its opaque engagement with stakeholders.

If the expressway is built five years after EWR, it will undermine investment in the railway and in attempts to provide a sustainable alternative to roads. Highways England usually fails to provide proper walking and cycling facilities on new roads and ignores buses altogether.

[martin.smith@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:martin.smith@railfuture.org.uk)

■ ■ Oxfordshire still besotted by roads

Railfuture Thames Valley had another useful meeting in December with County Councillor Yvonne Constance who welcomed our intention to participate in the public consultation on the joint statutory spatial plan, since renamed the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Sadly, it appears to welcome the proposed Expressway road as presenting opportunities. Controversially the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is being drafted by district councils and Oxford City Council as planning authorities, but excludes the county council which is responsible for transport. The districts have a history of approving housing development without reference to public transport needs. Planning public transport should come first, and housing should be planned with transport infrastructure in mind. Councillor Constance told us that the county hopes to have some indirect influence. Rail has an important role and reopening the Cowley branch is recognised as a priority and is the most realisable. Rebuilding Hanborough station with two or three platforms and double tracking between Wolvercote and Hanborough are rated a second priority. Didcot-Oxford electrification, rebuilding Oxford station, and the new station for Grove/Wantage are still included but with no detail.

■ ■ Video highlights Witney-Oxford traffic

With financial support from Railfuture's Fighting Fund, the Witney-Oxford Transport Group has produced a short video entitled *Daring to Imagine* to be circulated on social media, proposing a new railway line from the Cotswold line at Hanborough to Carterton via Witney. The video highlights traffic congestion on the A40, which carries 32,000 vehicles a day, and shows new housing estates under construction in the A40 corridor, where 10,000 new dwellings are planned for Eynsham and Witney. It comments on the lack of coordination between development and transport planning. The proposed railway would be mostly new, as it would not be practical to restore the old branch line. It would start from Hanborough rather than Yarnton as originally envisaged, and could serve park-and-ride stations at Eynsham, Ducklington (for Witney), and Carterton.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/ThamesValleyBranch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/ThamesValleyBranch)  
Twitter @RailfutureTV

[peter.walker@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:peter.walker@railfuture.org.uk)

■ ■ Horden station work to start soon

Network Rail is expected to start work in the summer on the new £10.55 million Durham Coast station at Horden after the project was given planning approval. The county council is building the station car park. Local people are looking forward to the station opening next year when an hourly service is expected. A station adoption group is likely to be formed.

■ ■ Grand future for Morpeth station

The ornate portico of Morpeth station will be restored along with the building's impressive chimney stacks. Greater Morpeth Development Trust, enthusiastically encouraged by the South East Northumberland Rail Users' Group, has raised £2.2 million to repair, restore and redevelop the magnificent 1846 station by pioneering railway architect Benjamin Green.



Picture: BACK-ON-TRACK

**BERLIN:** Launch of a new OBB Metrolight service in December from Berlin to Budapest and Vienna, with a sleeping car to Przemyśl on the Polish/Ukrainian border, was accompanied by campaigners from Back-on-Track who believe cross-border passenger trains and sleepers provide an environment-friendly answer to air travel

■ ■ Teesside first in the queue, for once!

It is a rare event for a Teesside rail service to benefit from completely new trains. TransPennine's new CAF-built trains are expected to include services to Teesside among their duties from May. The five-coach trains will link Middlesbrough, Thornaby and Yarm directly to York, Leeds and Manchester. The locomotives have already begun working Direct Rail Services freight, as a way of accumulating test mileage, before transferring to passenger work. Yarm's short platforms have been extended to cope.

■ ■ Tyne Valley stations get longer

Several stations on the Newcastle-Carlisle Tyne Valley line have benefited from extended platforms, prior to welcoming class 158 diesel trains in place of the Pacers that too often turn up. The improved stations are Wetheral, Bardon Mill, Riding Mill, Prudhoe and Dunston. Northern Rail hopes to increase service frequencies to three per hour between Hexham and Newcastle, with two of them extending also to Carlisle. The starting date depends on completion of electrification in the north-west, which will clear the way for diesel trains to be transferred. The community rail partnership has hosted meetings in Haltwhistle station's Old Booking Hall, to gather ideas to include in its 2019/20 action plan.

■ ■ Unloved Pacers ready for retirement

The retirement of the unloved class 142 Pacer trains later this year has meant that several class 158 diesel trains have been seen on route-learning trips for crews on Saltburn-Middlesbrough-Hartlepool -Newcastle-MetroCentre, MetroCentre-Morpeth, Morpeth-Hexham and Hexham-Heaton depot. Class 156 and 158 trains are also to be tested for gauge conversion between Stockton, Stillington and Ferryhill (goods only at present), ready for a Northern Connect service.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthEastBranch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthEastBranch)  
Twitter @RailfutureNEast

'Trains not planes' protest

Railfuture members Trevor Garrod and Simon Hope joined a meeting at the office of the Community of European Railways in Brussels in January, organised by Back-on-Track and also involving rail professionals, parliamentary advisers, and consumer and environment organisations from eight countries.

The meeting considered how night trains, as part of an international 24/7 network, could provide an attractive alternative to short and medium distance air travel.

A report of the meeting is available from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ ([trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk)) or see [www.back-on-track.eu](http://www.back-on-track.eu) for more information.

Some sleeper services in Germany, France, Italy and other countries in Europe have been withdrawn over the past 10 years.

However Austrian Railways has been proactive by improving its sleeper trains and promoting NightJet services. British travellers can pick up one of the NightJet services at Cologne.

You can find a map of the European sleeper network at <https://bit.ly/2StbEmo>. For example, there are NightJet services from Cologne to Vienna and from Munich to Rome.

In Britain, a Save our Sleepers group had to be formed when the London-Penzance sleeper was threatened in 2005.

Rail operators blame the rise of low-budget airlines for a fall-off in demand for sleeper trains, while campaigners say the companies have failed to invest in the night services to offer an attractive alternative to flying.

For many people, the Caledonian Sleeper is the best way to travel between London and Scotland and according to the operator it is going from strength to strength with newly built CAF Spanish coaches entering service this year.

Two thirds of the fleet have already arrived at Alstom's depot in Glasgow.

DB Cargo in deal 'to boost rail capacity'

By Lee Davies

[lee.davies@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:lee.davies@railfuture.org.uk)

An agreement "to increase capacity for rail freight in Britain" has been signed by Maritime Transport and DB Cargo UK.

Maritime Transport describes itself as the UK's leading container transport company and will operate the SEGRO East Midlands Gateway rail freight interchange which opens this year.

The rail interchange, currently under construction, will be able to handle 16 trains a day and connect to the Castle Donington freight line, giving direct access to Britain's network of rail freight interchanges and all the major ports.

The terminal is almost equidistant between the major regional centres of Derby, Nottingham and Leicester, and is also close to the proposed HS2 alignment between Coleshill and the East Midlands Hub at Toton.

Maritime Intermodal has launched a new division called Maritime Intermodal which will initially contract four dedicated services from the two major container ports, Felixstowe and Southampton.

DB Cargo UK will operate Maritime Intermodal's trains from both Felixstowe and Southampton.

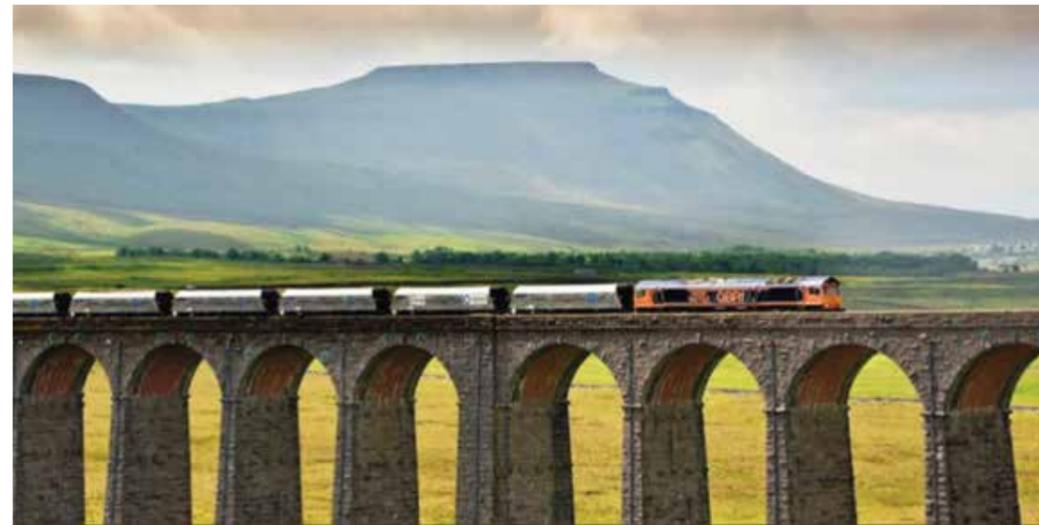
Maritime Intermodal will take on responsibility for DB Cargo UK terminals in Trafford Park, Manchester, and Wakefield, West Yorkshire, where it plans significant investment to improve turnaround times and increase container storage.

DB Cargo UK will retain its remaining intermodal business including flows to and from Scotland. Hans-Georg Werner of DB Cargo UK said: "Intermodal is the fastest growing freight market, yet our terminals were under-utilised. Maritime is a very successful logistics business and has the volumes and desire to turn these assets into sustainable and profitable distribution centres."

Tilbury-Daventry

A new freight service from Tilbury to Daventry has been launched by Eddie Stobart Logistics. John Clark of ESL said: "This service allows our customers to get fresh produce into regional distribution centres or stores across the UK on the same day.

"This careful timing is essential to retailers who otherwise lose much of their products"



Picture: MIK CARDUS

**RIBBLEHEAD:** The twice daily aggregate train from the Tarmac quarries at Helwith Bridge pictured on Ribblehead viaduct with Ingleborough in the background. This follows the reconnection of the quarries to the Settle-Carlisle line

freshness and value. Our rail-freight offering is extensive but it is also strategic and flexible, designed to be the perfect complement to Eddie Stobart's road transport fleet."

In a pilot, the new Tilbury rail service saved more than 920,000 road miles and 102,000 gallons of diesel, while also reducing journey times and congestion in and around the London area.

Mr Clark added: "Trains do not get stuck in traffic jams so the service is extremely reliable."

Felixstowe-Midlands

A new five-days-a-week intermodal rail freight service connecting Felixstowe to the Birch Coppice terminal in the Midlands was launched by GB Railfreight in January.

It travels via Ipswich, Peterborough and Leicester. Freightliner, a subsidiary of Genesee & Wyoming Inc, is planning to build a new maintenance and fuelling facility at its existing Ipswich freight yard in Suffolk, close to Felixstowe, Britain's largest port, from which Freightliner operates 22 trains a day.

Regular rail services are run from Felixstowe to Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Teesport, Birmingham, Doncaster, Selby, Hams Hall, Wakefield, Ditton (Widnes), Rotherham and Cardiff.

"There is a growing demand from the Government to move more goods by rail," said Tim Shakerley of G&W.

"Each freight train takes up to 76 lorry journeys off our congested road network and is a far safer means of transport."

PINCHPOINTS NEEDING ATTENTION

Rail freight removes the equivalent of 8.2 million heavy lorry journeys every year, the industry has told the Williams inquiry.

Overall, rail freight performs well, with 94% of freight trains arriving within 15 minutes of their scheduled time in 2017-18, according to the Rail Delivery Group.

Moving goods by rail is accepted as the most environmentally friendly way to move bulk goods on land.

In addition it is estimated that rail freight prevents around 600 road casualties each year.

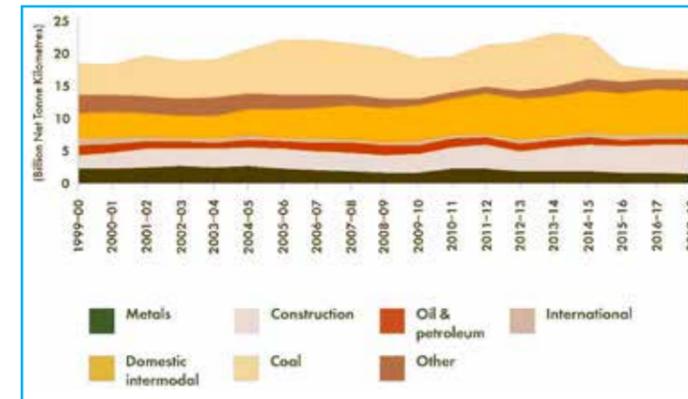
Despite this rosy picture presented by the RDG, rail campaigners know that freight operators are hampered by a lack of suitable intermodal terminals. They have difficulty with "just-in-time" deliveries for their customers when forced

to operate outside passenger peaks or other blocked periods. Many parts of the network are struggling when it comes to new capacity, and there is constant pressure on freight timetable paths on key routes and through network "pinch-points", such as Manchester-Castlefield and Ely North junction.

A study by MDS Transmodal, commissioned by the UK Major Ports Group, identified seven railway junctions that needed upgrading. The report will go to the National Infrastructure Commission.

In the south-east, alterations are needed at four key junctions in an arc from Kensal Green in the north-west of the capital around to east London.

Changes are also recommended at Diggle Junction, Whittlesea-Ely-Soham and Bramley-Reading.



**CARGO:** The types of material carried by rail freight. Coal has dropped sharply since 2015, while intermodal increases

Graph: OFFICE FOR RAIL AND ROAD

rowland.pittard@railfuturewales.org.uk

### ■ ■ Tourism hit by leaf-fall cuts

Railfuture Cymru/Wales has expressed its concern that the effect of service cuts caused by the autumn leaf-fall disruption on passengers, tourism and the Welsh economy generally was not considered properly. We pointed out that the Conwy Valley line had no trains for several weeks. Lines serving all-year tourist areas such as Pembrokeshire and the Cambrian Coast were badly hit. Railfuture discovered that for some time the National Rail Enquiries website failed to work for Betws-y-Coed, Blaenau Ffestiniog and other stations. We presented our evidence to the inquiry in January held by the enterprise, infrastructure and skills committee of the Welsh Assembly.

### ■ ■ The way ahead for better rail services

Railfuture submitted a detailed response to the inquiry into ways to improve Transport for Wales, staged by the Welsh Assembly's enterprise, infrastructure and skills committee. Railfuture called TfW to develop an integrated transport network for all, including all forms of public transport. It suggested that many developments should match Scotland where there has been extensive electrification.

### ■ ■ Accessibility is top issue for rail

Railfuture participated in Network Rail's *Railway for Everybody* workshop study in Cardiff. The aim is to identify and solve passenger problems, particularly how to improve accessibility at stations and on trains.

### ■ ■ Travel problems facing young people

Railfuture attended a Transport Focus event at the Pierhead Building in Cardiff, which aimed to assess travel problems faced by young people and identify their priorities.

### ■ ■ Pacers may have future role

Transport for Wales has 30 Pacers, which are expected to remain in service during 2019. Although they are now derided, the Pacers deserve a place in Welsh history as they saved the rail services in the Cardiff Valleys by cutting operating costs, enabling passenger growth. Railfuture considers there is tourist potential for these units during 2019. Suggestions have been made that some could be converted for carrying bicycles in the future.

### ■ ■ Doubts over plans for Cardiff Parkway

A development consortium is proposing to part fund a new £30 million St Mellons Parkway station east of Cardiff to serve a business park and population of 31,000. The Welsh Government is being approached to make a financial contribution because the station will need a newly electrified and resignalled section of four-track main line to be modified. Railfuture welcomes the principle of a new station but believes a study is needed into the effect on rail services including cutting journey times from Swansea to London Paddington. Railfuture has suggested a less ambitious station scheme aimed at local commuters.

### ■ ■ Swansea area resignalling

Railfuture Cymru/Wales would like to see the Bridgend-Cardiff line upgraded for reversible line working, following the completion of resignalling from Swansea to Baglan, near Port Talbot. Combined with reversible working from Bridgend to Swansea, it would avoid time-consuming diversions via the Vale of Glamorgan line.

[www.railfuturewales.org.uk](http://www.railfuturewales.org.uk)  
Twitter @RailfutureWales



Yorkshire

Development director Matt Johnson stands on the platform of the former Goldsborough station on the York-Harrogate line. His company, which wants to build 2,700 homes at Flaxby Park, has bought the former station house which it wants to reopen as Flaxby Parkway for park-and-ride traffic to Harrogate, Leeds and York. Network Rail has agreed that there are no significant technical obstacles to the delivery of a new station and Northern Trains has supported the idea. One aim is to reduce road traffic on the A59 and to get drivers from the nearby A1(M) to use rail for

part of their journey. Goldsborough station closed to passengers in 1958, and freight services to the station ceased in 1965.

### ■ ■ £39 billion plan for rail

A new rail line linking Leeds and Manchester via Bradford, including the option for a Bradford city centre station, is one of the projects Transport for the North is calling on the Government to back as part of its £39 billion rail proposals, launched in February.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch)  
Twitter: @RailfutureYorks

North West

arthur.thomson@railfuture.org.uk

### ■ ■ Cross-Manchester service to Southport

Campaigners are optimistic that Southport to south Manchester trains can be reinstated in December following protests about the diversion of Southport to Manchester Airport trains to Victoria in May last year. Northern Trains is working on extending the existing Stalybridge-Wigan-Alderley Edge service to Southport. The plans were outlined after a meeting in January with the train operator, attended by representatives from the Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Association and Southport Rail Transport Forum. The improvement will be dependent on using class 769 Flex trains which can run in either diesel or electric mode. Both groups also want to upgrade services from Southport into Manchester Victoria, including a Victoria departure between 17.00 and 17.30.

### ■ ■ MPs split over 'trains not trams' plan

The two Blackpool MPs disagree over the best way to improve local rail services. Blackpool South MP Gordon Marsden agrees with local rail campaigners who say that heavy rail, rather than light rail, is the best way to get more visitors into Blackpool. He agrees with Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users' Association and Waterloo Councillor David O'Hara who want to see a passing loop installed on the existing single-track South Fylde line to boost its limited capacity. The say it would be much cheaper than converting the line to a tramway and would enable many more visitors to come direct to the resort rather than having to change to a tram at Lytham or Kirkham. However former rail minister Paul Maynard who is MP for Blackpool North and Cleveleys has been promoting the idea of a Fylde Loop tramway, which would use part of the existing South Fylde line to make a new light rail circle.

# Now, where else can tram-trains go?

By Paul Abell

[paul.abell@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:paul.abell@railfuture.org.uk)

The tram-train service from Sheffield to Rotherham has proved popular with passengers, following its launch in October.

The shopping centre at the Rotherham Parkgate terminus has benefited from more customers arriving by tram-train, while rail passengers from Rotherham can now gain access to Sheffield city centre without a strenuous uphill walk from Sheffield station.

But what else can tram-train offer Railfuture campaigners?

We have to remember that the Rotherham operation is officially a pilot, with the intention of exploring the implications for other British areas.

It would have been convenient if the lessons of German experience operating tram-trains could have been transferred directly to the UK. However there are sufficient differences between main line track and signalling in the two countries for this not to be possible.

Anyone else contemplating a tram-train service can now refer to the UKTram *Guide to promoters planning to operate Light Rail and other non-mainline vehicles on Network Rail-managed infrastructure*.

The UKTram guide is worth studying. In addition to Rotherham-type tram-trains it considers other circumstances, such as the class 139 Parry People Mover as used for the shuttle between Stourbridge Junction and Stourbridge Town, the Tyne & Wear Metro operation through Sunderland, and the use of refurbished heritage vehicles.

One important factor is whether there is any capacity on Network Rail track for tram-train services and whether lines are used by freight. Reserved paths for



**ALL CHANGE:** A mid-morning tram-train for Sheffield city centre calls at Rotherham Central. Seven new tram-train vehicles were built by Vossloh (now owned by Stadler) in Valencia, Spain



**SPOT THE DIFFERENCE:** Tram-train operation through main line stations is liable to involve the provision of lower platforms to match the lower platforms on the tramway. The difference is shown in this view of the Parkgate-bound tram-train platform at Rotherham Central (platform 4) compared with the main line platform 2 to the right.

freight trains may cause capacity problems if a tram-train service is introduced.

What about future possibilities? Transport for Greater Manchester has considered tram-trains, perhaps on the lines out to Atherton, Marple,

or Glossop. Congestion on the link from Manchester Piccadilly through Oxford Road has prompted suggestions that Atherton and Marple might be linked by a tram-train service running in tunnel under Manchester city centre, though

## Cash and power problems give way to operations

The original capital cost of the Sheffield tram-train project was expected to be £15 million but the final cost was £75 million. It is unfortunate that the cost and timescale became so inflated, much of this being down to the problems with running on 25Kv AC power, when the line seems unlikely to be electrified at this voltage for the foreseeable future. The Department for Transport funded its operation for the first two years and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive hopes to enter into an agreement with Stagecoach to operate the service for a further four years. Tram-trains have a maximum speed of 50 mph in tram mode and 55 mph in train mode and have to pause briefly on the new Tinsley chord while the driver changes from one mode to the other. The tram-trains are divided into two operating



**POST PACER:** One line that has been suggested for tram-train operation in Greater Manchester is the Atherton route to Wigan.

Looking east from Hag Fold station we see what was once the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway's four-track main line.

The two remaining tracks follow the old slow lines, while the bridge girder (foreground) and equipment cabinet on the left show the course of the old fast lines.

such thoughts may well provoke wry smiles from readers with memories of the fate of similar proposals in the past.

The recent *Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 Draft Delivery Plan 2020-2025* includes the preparation of business cases in the next five years for tram-train "pathfinder" options for three extensions of the present Metrolink network: Altrincham to Hale, Rochdale to Heywood, and Manchester Airport to Wilmslow.

Options will also be developed for proposals such as the possible Atherton, Marple and Glossop tram-train routes, and the city centre tunnel. The future progress of these proposals will depend on the success of the "pathfinder" projects.

The imminent replacement of Pacers by conventional trains on many local Manchester services may make tram-trains seem less attractive. In South Wales a plan to use tram-trains would extend the present Cardiff Bay service in 2023, aiding regeneration by running along the streets beyond Cardiff Bay station (formerly Bute Road).

It is expected that tram-trains to Cardiff Bay will run from Aberdare, Merthyr and Treherbert, although the section of track between Heath High Level and Queen Street may be a challenge.

Will Cardiff be the next place we see tram-trains in the UK?

## Fuel for future

Chris Austin in *Railwatch* 158 does a thorough and useful job in explaining why the phasing out of coal-fired power stations will affect the supply of coal for steam locomotives on heritage railways, but does not mention that the main reason why coal is being phased out is because the problem of climate change is now understood to be very much more urgent than was once thought.

So the burning of coal for any purpose is now seen as wrong. Nobody will want to ban the burning of coal on a small scale by heritage railways, but it would be good for the image of these railways if they were seen to be making efforts to reduce their dependence on coal.

Wood-burning steam locomotives operate on some heritage railways abroad and can be a better alternative if the fuel comes from sustainable woodland.

The renewable fuel pellets now occasionally burned in industrial boilers (and at Drax power station) are unsuitable for firing locomotives, but research and development on a comparable renewable fuel would be desirable.

Some heritage railways would also gain in public esteem and interest if they were to display the future of motive power as well as the past.

Hydrogen-powered trains are under active development in Germany and, if a cheaper source of hydrogen could be arranged, would be a wonderful advertisement for any heritage railway that hosted trials before



Picture: NORTH WEST EVENING MAIL

**RESPECT: Patricia Marshall, Roger Blake and MP Tim Farron, right, with the Railfuture award**

such trains were introduced on main lines in Britain.  
*Arnold Pacey, North Street, Addingham, Ilkley LS29 0QY  
arnold.pacey@mypostoffice.co.uk*

## Eurostar: Do better

While Eurostar services suffered from the financial downturn in 2008-9, their customer levels have gradually increased again since then, not least due to the rising tourist numbers from China and elsewhere, and the decline in the value of the pound after the 2016 referendum. However Eurostar

seems to have been reluctant to increase its service levels, with completely full trains running at summer weekends and at other holiday periods.

Indeed when extreme bad weather, industrial disputes (such as the SNCF actions from April to July 2018), accidents, train or power failures, trespass incidents, lineside fires, etc. cause cancellations or even complete service withdrawal, passengers find that the next alternative services are often fully booked for a day or many days! Of particular concern especially to those living anywhere in Kent or East Sussex is the lack of services from Ashford, which saw 10-12 trains daily when Eurostar services started more than 20 years ago.

Now on most dates, apart from the seasonal ski trains, Marseilles, and Marne-la-Vallee services, only two trains a day run to or from Paris, and only one a day to or from Brussels! Even Ebbsfleet has seen a decline in services stopping

there, with only five to/from Paris and four to/from Brussels. With the introduction of a third service to Amsterdam from 11 June this summer at 11.04 non-stop to Brussels (none returning yet), the 10.58 St Pancras to Brussels serving both Ebbsfleet and Lille will be withdrawn.

We can also expect that when direct return services are eventually introduced, Lille and Ebbsfleet stops will suffer the same fate on those journeys too.

So, convenient connections at Lille for the south of France or elsewhere will also be lost, as well as the ability to travel to/from Kent without travelling via London to access the remaining services. The operational dates of services to Marne-la-Vallee and Marseilles have also been reduced from previous years.

Whenever I travel at any time of year there are always few spare seats available, or none at all. While the economics of international railway operations can be demanding, such rigid adherence to predicted peak demand with little spare capacity

## 'Can do' attitude rewarded

Railfuture board member Roger Blake travelled to Carnforth in January to present an award to Patricia Marshall, managing director of the heritage train operator West Coast Railways, and Tim Farron who is MP for Westmorland and Lonsdale.

West Coast stepped into the breach on the Lakes Line after the official franchise holder Northern suspended services between Oxenholme and Windermere for a month in the chaos after the May timetable.

The MP worked with Network Rail and the Department for Transport to clear the way for the reliable and free Lakeland service provided by Carnforth-based West Coast, which carried 17,000 passengers in a fortnight.

The Railfuture Judges' Special Award was handed over in a ceremony at the Carnforth station museum on 18 January 2019. Patricia said: "The award

is such an honour both to West Coast and also the fabulous support Tim Farron gave too."

Tim said: "I was absolutely delighted to receive the award from Railfuture alongside West Coast Railways. The service that the guys at West Coast provided was absolutely first class and they showed our multi-million-pound rail companies a thing or two about how you run a train service.

"We were overwhelmed with the amount of people that got in touch to say how glad they were to have this service and it was just great to see people enjoying travelling on the Lakes Line again. It was a common-sense solution, and a victory for the can-do over the can't-do.

"But more than anything, it showed that when our community gets left behind by those in power, we do not just give up – we come together, roll up our sleeves and get things done."

for absorbing displaced or new passengers is disappointing, and undoubtedly the short-haul airlines are grateful for this. I hope Eurostar can resist these further service deteriorations.

*Ian McDonald, Douglas Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8ES  
ifsmcdonald2000@blueyonder.co.uk*

## Luggage space

I fully sympathize with the three rebuttals of Tim Mickleburgh's attack on buggies on trains.

The main issue is that there is simply not enough room for luggage on today's trains. The train companies are more

concerned about getting as many bums on seats as possible to increase their revenue, with less concern about luggage space. What is really needed is a return of the old guard's van which catered for bulk luggage, (including bicycles), together with adequate dwell time at stations to allow disembarking passengers to remove their luggage. Sadly, since privatisation this level of service tends to be overlooked, as the companies put profit before passenger welfare!

*David Bailey, North Lodge Close, Dawlish, Devon EX7 9QD  
davidpbailey77@hotmail.com*

## WIN WITH RAILFUTURE

THE Railfuture Lottery is a vital fundraising scheme – and it can also benefit members! The Lottery raised over £1,300 for our campaigning, and also paid out a similar amount in prizes, with six available every month, ranging from £40 downwards.

It only costs £1 per month for each entry – though there is nothing stopping you having more than one! You can pay by PayPal (see [www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery)), internet banking or by cheque . . . and you can receive your winnings using any of these methods too.

For more information, check [www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery/](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery/) email: [lottery@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:lottery@railfuture.org.uk)

or send a cheque for a multiple of £12, payable to Railfuture Lottery to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattlingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND.

RECENT WINNERS: **September 2018:** Philip Odell, Janice Uphill, John Bugler, Philip Bisatt, John Henderson, Graham Collett. **October:** Mike Kneen, A.T. Hill, John Barfield, Frank Connolly, David Brady, John Davis. **November:** David Peters, Anthony Cleveley, Elizabeth James, Lindon Stone, Peter Wilson, Charles Appleby. **December:** Roger Blake, Elizabeth James, Robert Burrows, Mark Edgell, Ian & Jane Appleyard, Michael Savage. **January 2019:** A T Hill, Keith Porter, John Barfield, Nigel Perkins, Martin Adams, Elizabeth James. **February:** Roger Bastin, Alan Colquhoun, Martin Yallop, William Morrison, Peter Hutchinson, John Davis.

## EVERY PASSENGER MATTERS

Railfuture's inaugural annual national conference is being planned at an exciting new venue only three minutes walk from Bristol Parkway Station. Speakers are being sought from the rail industry who have the expertise in delivering for passengers. The conference, with the theme *Every Passenger Matters*, will be open to members and to members of the public. Please book the date in your diary: 21 September 2019. More details later.

## RAILFUTURE NEEDS YOU!

Railfuture seeks to recruit more active campaigning members to ensure it continues to be an organisation of significance within the railway industry. So it is also looking for people with specific skills to help in this transformation.

We need people to work with us to drive this transformation process.

If you have specific skills or interests in areas such as event management, recruitment or social media training then we would love to hear from you.

We are currently looking for members to join our Conference Organising Committee.

You will join a small team who oversee the organising of Railfuture's Annual National Conference and future AGMs.

If you are experienced in event management, enjoy the challenge of finding interesting



**APPEAL: Wendy Thorne**

speakers and venues or are willing to help with tasks on the day please get in touch.

We also need to ensure that our branches have the support and training they require in all aspects of social media, so if anyone is able to provide this much needed resource, again we would love to hear from you.

Please contact Membership Director Wendy Thorne by email: [wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk)

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## Media enquiries

Bruce Williamson, 29 Granby Hill, Clifton, Bristol BS8 4LT.  
Tel: 0117 9272954 Mobile: 07759 557389  
Email: [media@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:media@railfuture.org.uk)

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# Going for growth in sustainable style

Throughout Railfuture's history there has always been a good reason for campaigning.

The reason has, however, varied from threats to rail including several rail reorganisations, to recession and political change.

Occasionally, opportunity has presented itself, resulting in new stations or even new lines.

Up to 1984, however, the trend was a gentle decline in ridership and the accepted view was that rail was going nowhere in the modern world.

I still have a 1985 "All systems BR timetable" which I keep as a reference point for the most boring timetable ever produced in terms of rail service on offer in Britain.

Nine years earlier came a bright spot, the High Speed Train or InterCity 125 diesel train, which was a BR invention.

The HST appeared because the Government believed electrification was expensive, over-specified and slow in coming, while replacement trains were needed urgently.

It is worrying that, 30 years on, this situation exists again.

Any fair commentator would agree that BR did the job of "hanging in there", providing the basis on which to expand.

Growth was not expected and there was no national recognition that rail could form the basis of a strategic and comprehensive transport system for the future.

So what has changed? The railways killed the canals, buses killed trams, the motor car killed regional railways and air travel killed long distance passenger trains. Or did they?

We tend to think about this in terms of the technology, with each development being faster and more flexible than before.

Autonomous cars are currently bedazzling the media.

## City growth

But the railways remain the most effective answer to problems created by the growth of cities and population while also providing the answer to environmental concerns.

We need to show rail can solve problems and is not just a problem – requiring subsidy for the perceived minority of users who rely on rail, or like to use it. Wider developments such as the increase in general mobility, more wealth and the



**PADDINGTON 2019: British Rail's IC125 diesel is still providing good service among the newer electric trains built by Hitachi (background) and Heathrow Express trains built by Siemens**  
**INSET: Bedford station queue as hard-pressed ticket office staff struggle to cope with demand**

IAN BROWN



growing economics of once-declining cities are crucial. The very thing that caused rail's decline, the motor car, has in a strange way caused its resurgence.

The business case for Crossrail in London was all about sustaining city growth, and the most cost-effective way of sustaining the growing city.

These factors, probably not the performance of the railway itself, nor privatisation, are the reason why journeys on Britain's rail network have doubled in the past 15 years.

The rail system was able to respond to demand, which has now increased to the point where the available infrastructure is fully taken up, and pinch points limit the capacity and performance of the whole network.

We have seen various fiascos such as the Northern timetable debacle, and crew shortages

in Scotland and elsewhere. Everybody is jumping up and down about these, but there will be more, even with the Williams Review.

There is a structural reason. Yes, the industry must work harder on cost efficiency, and we need to organise for a seven-day-week, more resilient railway.

## Response

Railfuture's response to the Williams Review ("search: Railfuture williams") provides our considered response to the question areas raised.

There is a lot to be done to improve the rail industry and incentivise it to provide good value for passengers and freight customers. We will continue to campaign in these areas, particularly given the knowledge base within the membership of Railfuture.

The big worry is that all this is really necessary but patently

not sufficient to secure a proper place for railways in addressing these wider issues. Railfuture has tabled its *Blueprint for the North* ("search: Railfuture blueprint").

This is a bit controversial and not to everybody's taste, but it is designed with a specific purpose, particularly at a time when the industry is agonising about current problems.

We propose doubling the capacity of the rail network in the next 15 years and providing effective governance to implement a railway that meets regional objectives.

Railfuture branches in the North West, North East and Yorkshire will be tabling specific proposals.

Outside Railfuture, we have seen a series of strategies such as Transport for the North's £70 billion plan to transform the North's economy, Greater Manchester's *Blueprint for the North* and the West Midlands' *Draft 30 year rail strategy*.

Manchester's strategy calls for new stations and routes but the capacity has to be there for such developments. We know it is clearly not there at the moment. It is rewarding to see so many bodies planning

rail development but it must be recognised that strategic improvement relies on the twin issues of capacity and governance being addressed.

Currently we have strategy without funding, as well as project and service delivery without proper governance and organisation.

Railfuture intends to have a strong voice in addressing strategic issues so that our campaigning at local level on specific initiatives, such as line openings, can be seen as part of a national initiative.

Reopenings, including Portishead, Ashington, Wisbech and Levenmouth, can cover operational costs, contribute significantly to the economics of the rail system and regional economies.

This opportunity for rail to play a greater part in the nation's transport system and the economy comes at a time when our railways are seen by some commentators as a political nightmare, with the Government short on solutions while holding tightly on to the purse strings.

Leadership from government, from the trade unions and from the industry itself is at rock bottom.

In the immediate future there are many real threats, some self imposed. The opportunities are potentially much greater. This puts meaning into Railfuture's campaigning, particularly through our branches.

Railfuture's membership has a tremendous knowledge base across the country and the local, regional and increasingly national contacts to go with it.

Please join in and use this strength wisely as we campaign for a much bigger railway that can facilitate a much better one. I look forward to seeing a further doubling of use of the rail network over the next 15 years.

Railfuture contends that a rail system achieving its true potential is part of the solution to the UK's economic, transport and environmental issues.

Thankfully, our voice is increasingly being heard.

□ **Ian Brown CBE FCILT is Railfuture policy director**

## Scotland

janeann.liston  
@railfuturescotland.org.uk

### ■ ■ New stations

Results of the third stage of the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide investigation into the plan for new stations at Beattock, Thornhill and East Riggs are expected soon.

### ■ ■ Strathclyde

Railfuture welcomes reports that the busy Westerton-Milngavie line is to be doubled with a new station at Allander. This would be a great help to Glasgow commuters.



**RELIC: An old station sign from Reston unearthed by campaigner Barrie Forrest**



**RESTON: Closed 1964. Now the Rail Action Group, East of Scotland is campaigning to ensure it is reopened**

### Contacts:

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES):  
[www.rages.org.uk/](http://www.rages.org.uk/)

Beattock Station Action Group:  
[www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/](http://www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/)

St Andrews Rail Link campaign (StARLink):  
[www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/](http://www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/)  
[facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign](https://www.facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign)

Levenmouth Rail Campaign:  
[www.lmrc-action.org.uk/](http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/)  
[facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/](https://www.facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/)

Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG):  
[www.capitalrail.org.uk/](http://www.capitalrail.org.uk/)

Newburgh Train Station campaign:  
<http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/>

Forth Rail Link (Dunfermline-Kinross-Alloa):  
[www.forthrailink.com](http://www.forthrailink.com)  
[facebook.com/forthrailink/](https://www.facebook.com/forthrailink/)

Thornhill Station Action Group:  
[chrisandmimi@supanet.com](mailto:chrisandmimi@supanet.com)

Bonnybridge Railway Campaign:  
<http://www.bonnybridgerailway.scot>  
[www.facebook.com/bonnybridgerailway](https://www.facebook.com/bonnybridgerailway)



## StARLink's signal of hope for reopening

Campaigners marked the 50th anniversary of the last train to arrive in St Andrews, close to the exact spot where the train arrived. Left to right: John Purvis, patron of STARLINK, the campaign to reinstate the railway to St Andrews, wielding the silver shovel used by his ancestors to cut the first sod on the St Andrews-

Anstruther railway; secretary Dita Stanis-Traken; treasurer Richard Batchelor, holding a photograph of the last train's arrival; and convenor Jane Ann Liston. The signal is the distant signal from Edenside near Guardbridge, found in a ditch back in 1989, where it had probably lain undisturbed for the previous 20 years.

## Battle for Borders Rail also clocks up 50



**18 Dec 1968**  
**Madge Elliot with David Steel MP and the Earl of Dalkeith MP with the Waverley line petition**

**1 Jan 2019**  
**Campaigner Greg Cuthbert addresses villagers at the site of the former Newcastleton level crossing**

**PIPES OF PROTEST: Young Kim Elliot and his mother Madge on the way to No 10 Downing Street in 1969**

Campaigners fighting for the Borders Railway to be reopened beyond its current Edinburgh-Tweedbank route to Hawick and Carlisle have recalled the closure of the line 50 years ago which was marked with a barrage of protests, including halting the final train by barricading a level crossing at Newcastleton in the middle of the night.

This year campaigners relived the dramatic event, gathering at the same level crossing to show how strong the feeling is for the return of the railway.

There was also a rally organised

by the Campaign for Borders Rail at Stow, which is on the section of line which reopened in 2015.

It was attended by David Steel (an MP in 1969 but now Lord Steel, aged 80) who was on the last train. He fought against the closure and now supports the reopening campaign.

Other speakers included Kim Elliot, who, as a schoolboy, accompanied his mother Madge to present a petition to 10 Downing Street.

Campaign for Borders Rail:  
[www.campaignforbordersrail.org/](http://www.campaignforbordersrail.org/)

## Appeal for more Highland rail investment

**MSP Kate Forbes has called on ScotRail to invest further in the Highland rail network after the latest figures from the Office of Rail Regulation showed a six per cent annual increase in station use across her Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency.**

roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Railfuture's input to key schemes

Railfuture members have recently presented a united front on several key issues. We backed the Department for Transport's proposal to close Angel Road station in May to make way for the new Meridian Water station, which is predicted at some stage in the future to handle four million passengers a year, compared to Angel Road's 33,000. We also supported Network Rail's proposed Croydon area remodelling scheme and Transport for London's idea for a Sutton Link tram extension to Merton.

The first-ever transport strategy produced by the City of London Corporation won our support. We also contributed to Railfuture's national response to the Williams Rail Review and to Railfuture Thames Valley's work on East West Rail's Bicester-Bedford plans. Submissions can be found on the Railfuture website. Search the website for "consultations".

■ ■ Take your partners please

The Hastings & Rother Rail Users Alliance of local rail user groups goes from strength to strength in East Sussex. It has received a Railfuture award and has built a good partnership with train operator Govia Thameslink Railway. Refinements were made to the Railfuture-inspired Ashford-Eastbourne timetable in December, which helped commuters to London. More improvements are expected this year.

Railfuture attended the first of three stakeholder workshops organised by Transport for the South East (an alliance of local authorities). We also recommended other rail user groups be invited. TfSE is compiling a draft transport strategy for the years up to 2050.

Railfuture collaborates with five community rail partnerships which are involved in 20 different lines in Railfuture's London and South East area. The CRPs' work is guided by the DfT's *Connecting Communities with the Railways* development strategy which was launched in November. Sussex CRP's North Downs line has spawned three sub-groups to address local rail development issues in Guildford, Dorking and Reigate. The Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity has recently added a new Bedford-St Albans CRP to its portfolio, joining the Abbey Line and Marston Vale CRPs.

■ ■ Maps for better interchanging

Railfuture members have notched up some "small but beautiful" successes with changes to the latest maps for *London & the South East rail services* and *London's Rail & Tube services* (formerly London Connections). Interchanges are now shown for the likes of Ash Vale-North Camp and Dorking-Dorking Deepdene (less than 15 minutes walk). London interchanges are shown for the likes of Camden Road-Camden Town and Kent House-Beckenham Road-Clock House (less than 10 minutes walk).

■ ■ Monthly updates from Railfuture

Railfuture members, and others, can subscribe free to our monthly e-newsletter *inter-railse* which fills the gap between the quarterly *raise*, sent to branch members with each *Railwatch*. You can find them on the Railfuture website by searching for "inter-raise".

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East>  
 Twitter: @RailfutureLSE



CORBY: EMT's Millie Purton displays 10

# Reopened Corby celebrates 10

The tenth anniversary of Corby reopening saw BBC Radio Northampton join in the celebrations with a breakfast show from the station on Saturday 23 February. The previous day, MP Tom Pursglove joined Lawrence Bowman of East Midlands Trains and Ed Akers of Network Rail at Corby.

Corby station opened its doors in 2009 with a service of one train per day to and from London, but by April that was boosted to a train every hour, plus a through service to Melton Mowbray. Since then, the station has seen in excess of 2.3 million journeys.

For decades Railfuture campaigned for the reopening – and it finally happened in 2009, largely thanks to Railfuture members Elisabeth Jordan and the late Jim Wade, plus the station's current champion, Railfuture member David Fursdon.

At the moment the line from Bedford to Corby is being electrified, with the prospect of even better services for the town in future. From December 2020, the service will be doubled to two trains per hour in each direction between Corby and London St Pancras in each direction. Railfuture's David Fursdon said: "There can be no doubt the reopening of Corby station has boosted the town's ongoing regeneration and given Corby citizens access to the greater UK rail network."

Steve Jones, secretary of Railfuture East Midlands, said: "The Corby reopening was a major East Midlands rail network development. Corby was one of the largest towns in Britain without a rail service, so the return of regular trains was very welcome. The town gained an impressive new station and a high-quality through service to and from London. These have played a major part in Corby's recovery after the loss of its traditional industries."

A downside of the Corby reopening, however, is at Luton and Bedford where one rail campaigner said: "All well and good, but the consequence of Corby reopening was the loss of two trains per hour semi-fast services from Luton and Bedford northwards to Market Harborough, Leicester and other destinations. Under Corby electrification it is more than likely that Luton Airport Parkway, Luton, Bedford and Wellingborough passengers will have to change out of electric services at Kettering for stations north along the Midland main line."

**Railwatch welcomes articles and pictures from rail users and rail user groups**

Send your material to: The Editor, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 07HU

Email: [editor@railwatch.org.uk](mailto:editor@railwatch.org.uk)

Please use email if possible but include your postal address. Postal and email addresses may be published unless writers ask for them to be excluded.

Picture: EAST MIDLANDS

# Why are we still waiting for Portishead railway?

By Dave Chillistone

Portishead is 10 miles west of Bristol on the Severn estuary, with only one A-road (A369) in and out of the town, and frequent traffic jams at junction 19 of the M5.

The B3124 runs south-west from the town, a direction with little traffic demand. An unclassified road runs south-east from the town but is unsuitable as a commuting route.

Portishead's traffic congestion and pollution problems have been dire for more than 20 years and are getting worse.

Like most British cities, Bristol once had a network of railways, including a line to Portishead with a station at the end of High Street.

The line opened in 1867 but closed to passengers under the 1960s Beeching cuts, when Portishead's population was a little over 7,000. Freight traffic ceased in 1981.

The need to reopen the line is now desperate. Here is why:

By 1999, Portishead's population had trebled to 21,000 but it was about to undergo a single massive transformation, the like of which had not occurred outside of a British city environment.

Portishead's huge "brown field" dock area would be redeveloped as a marina, with houses and flats all around it.

A large tract of adjoining land would also be developed for housing. The overall scheme was at one time the largest single urban development in Europe – in a town of (then) 21,000, with limited access. Portishead's population is now approaching 30,000.

The 1999 prospectus for this massive development included reopening the railway to Bristol. As a result, thousands of people bought their new Portishead homes believing the railway would reopen.

The wider population of Portishead believed the same. Twenty years later there is still no railway, for want of £32million – just 28% of the total required funding. The other £84 million is ready and waiting, sourced from devolved West of England development funding and money provided by the four local councils: Bristol City, Bath & North-East Somerset, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire. The need to reopen the Portishead line has been obvious since 1999.



2017: Official notice at the Avon Gorge, Bristol, alerting people that a new station is to be built at Portishead and Pill station reopened



The existing single-track section of the line in Avon Gorge, Bristol, to Pill (and Portishead) which is now long overdue for reopening



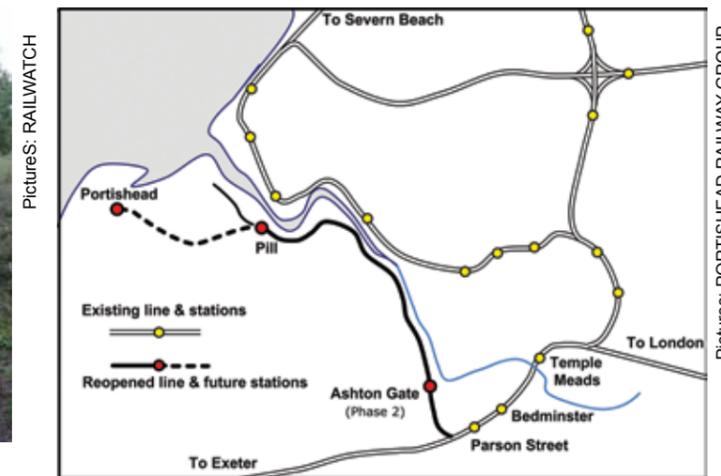
Green, Easton-in-Gordano and Portbury have also grown significantly over a similar period, and they too would be served by the reopened railway.

The reopened line would serve a catchment population of 50,000 and rising. It would also benefit an additional 180,000 people along the route. Best of all, the profit from the line would help fund other rail regeneration in the wider Bristol area.

Although reopening the Portishead line is long overdue, it remains in limbo because of insufficient funding.

Central government has made numerous encouraging statements but seems unwilling to provide part-funding, despite having clean air obligations which reopening the line would help make attainable.

Portishead's inadequate transport infrastructure causes massive traffic queues,



BRISTOL RAIL LINES: Portishead could be reconnected

pollution and health damage. Much of the traffic is along the route between Portishead and Bristol. Despite this widely known situation, on 22 January 2019 the Government criticised Bristol for unacceptable pollution in the city. Joined-up thinking?

Where is the funding for alternative transport infrastructure in the wider Bristol area? Local finance, including devolved regional money, is insufficient to close this funding gap.

Meanwhile, Portishead's development continues, thus increasing environmental and health damage. For example, a recent proposal seeks to demolish a trading estate (removing sources of local employment) and build yet more homes to meet the Government's housing target.

The traffic capacity assessment refers to the inhabitants of the proposed new dwellings commuting predominantly by rail – but the railway is derelict! With few other employment opportunities beyond high street businesses, the vast majority of Portishead's ever-growing working population will continue their daily commute by car.

More journeys + lower journey speeds = much higher pollution levels.

This long-standing toxic mix of traffic and pollution led the local MP, Dr Liam Fox, to state in the House of Commons back in 2005: "The consequence of the growth in housing and population in Portishead, combined with inadequate transport infrastructure, has resulted in what is now probably the

most overcrowded cul-de-sac in Britain." Portishead's population has increased by over 40% since 1999 and the point Dr Fox clearly stated back in 2005 is now more obvious.

Is the massive environmental and health damage caused by all these developments in any way acceptable? The continuing lack of full funding for reopening the Portishead line suggests that some in power think it is.

To others, it is obvious that rail regeneration schemes, justified by well-researched, healthy business cases, should be co-funded by central government and local sponsorship.

Only then can rail regeneration schemes, using a mix of heavy rail and light rail solutions, play their part in reducing the environmental and health damage of private motoring.

Central government continues to set targets for house building, but funding for additional infrastructure must be provided if rail is to help reduce the reliance on individual carbon-fuelled transport.

Local authorities can usually find ways to fund road improvements. However, those same authorities who also need to reconnect their now much larger local area communities by implementing rail regeneration schemes should take heed of the funding impasse that currently prevents reopening the Portishead line, despite its obvious "no brainer" status.

■ Dave Chillistone is a committee member of Portishead Railway Group [www.portisheadrailwaygroup.org](http://www.portisheadrailwaygroup.org)

Picture: RAILWATCH

Picture: PORTISHEAD RAILWAY GROUP



**DEBATE:** Jane Ann Liston addressing the Scottish Lib Dems conference. Inset: StARLink and Railfuture badges on her jacket

# Rail reopenings boost the economy

Railfuture campaigner Councillor Jane Ann Liston addressed the Scottish Liberal Democrats' conference at Hamilton in February, persuading delegates to back a call for the Scottish Government to carry out a review into reopening railways.

Speaking towards the end of the debate and wearing badges of Railfuture and StARLink (the St Andrews rail reopening campaign), she summed up the debate and also called for new stations to be opened on existing lines. The motion listed Levenmouth, Glasgow Crossrail, Alloa-Dunfermline, Grangemouth, St Andrews, Borders railway to Carlisle, Peterhead, Edinburgh's Abbeyhill Loop and South Suburban Line as prime candidates. MSP Mike Rumbles said: "Expanding our

rail network is of huge social and environmental benefit to Scotland, particularly for those who live in rural areas that have been cut off from public transport for too long."

The clamour for rail reopenings is getting ever wider and louder. More than 30 rail lines should be reopened, argues the Campaign for Better Transport in a report *The Case for Expanding the Rail Network*, published in February. Reopening a line can transform an area, boosting the local economy, creating better places to live and reducing carbon emissions, said CBT.

The CBT identified three as top priority: March-Wisbech, the freight-only Totton-Hythe-Fawley line in Hampshire, and Ashington, Blyth and Tyne. Steve Chambers, public transport campaigner at CBT, said: "We are asking the

transport secretary to create a Network Development Fund specifically to help the most beneficial projects to get built."

Railfuture's Bruce Williamson supported the CBT idea: "We hope this fund could help kick-start a new wave of rail revival.

"The money would fund the research needed to identify the most economically viable schemes, which will then give local authorities the confidence to invest further. It is about breaking the log jam that has held up so many reopening schemes over the years."

Railfuture has a proud history of campaigning for rail reopenings but has targeted those with a cast-iron business case. We want to see speedy action on 12 schemes, including Skipton-Colne, Kirby-Skelmersdale, Oxford-Cowley and Bristol-Portishead. Others include Bere

Alston-Tavistock, Heathrow southern and western accesses, Thornton-Levenmouth, Leuchars-St Andrews and Cambridge-Haverhill.

Railfuture has also issued a ten-point Rail Challenge to Government, industry and campaigners:

1. **Customer service.** Put rail users first, be proactive and responsive, keep promises and show you care.
2. **Industrial relations.** Find solutions!
3. **Punctuality.** Focus on operation.
4. **Seven day railway** with no cancellations. Reform rostering.
5. **Fares and ticketing.** Move from RPI to CPI on regulated fares in January 2020.
6. **Information.** Provide real help to passengers.
7. **Resilience.** Focus Network Rail investment on maximising resilience.
8. **Projects.** Manage with intelligence and authoritative leadership.
9. **Devolution.** Transfer powers to bodies such as Transport for the North and Transport for the South East
10. **Williams Rail Review.** Make tactical improvements and focus on performance delivery.

For more detail, search: railfuture challenge

## Maths genius who campaigned for trains

The funeral of Railfuture member Simon Norton took place in February, attended by many transport campaigners as well as family and friends. Recognised as a mathematical genius, he died aged 66 after a lifetime of passionate campaigning for better train and bus services. He left £3 million to the Foundation for Integrated Transport which he set up and chaired.

Simon's story was told by Alexander Masters, his former Cambridge tenant, in his book *The Genius in my Basement: The Biography of a Happy Man*.

He belonged to a wealthy family with Iraqi origins, won a maths scholarship to Eton, and went to Trinity College, Cambridge, after gaining a first class degree in maths at London University.

He worked at Cambridge University until 1985. At Cambridge he is believed to have suffered some sort of breakdown, but he continued to publish papers on mathematical problems – and to campaign for trains and buses.



**WINNING WAYS:** Simon Norton with Summer Dean, left, and Emily Yates of the Association of British Commuters at the Sheila McKechnie Foundation awards in 2017. Simon was a judge while the ABC pair were runners-up

Picture: JAMES S WELING

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