



Scotland

By Mike Harrison

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There have been a some follow-ons from the pre-feasibility study on the far north line held in Dornoch in May. Highland Council, the railway consultants Howard Pack and Rob Gibson SNP MSP for Highlands and Islands have met. Important issues are speeding up the journey time between Caithness and Inverness, and to get positive commitment from the council. Mr Gibson has commented that the progress of the Stirling, Alloa Kincardine line owes quite a lot to the wholehearted support given by Clackmannanshire Council. Suggestions are that an express service could do Thurso/Wick to Inverness in two hours as opposed to the current four hours. In addition to providing a commuter service between Tain and Inverness, there would be spin-offs in freight expansion with wage and fuel savings. Included in the topics discussed were the possibility of the Lairg loop being retained as a steam train heritage loop, but one which would still be able to continue to carry freight to Lairg.

Like everyone else in Railfuture, in Scotland we were alarmed by the statement in *The Future of Rail* referring to "the replacement of expensive and under-used regional [rail] services with more flexible bus services". We have written to David Begg asking him to provide representative examples of cases which he had in mind in making this recommendation.

While Network Rail is busily lengthening platforms to accommodate longer ScotRail trains, there is still a major problem with GNER trains. Almost every Scottish station is incapable of fitting the GNER trains with their extra coach on to the platforms so that the luggage van is accessible. There are what would be comical if they were not sad instructions to cyclists (who of course in the newly-refurbished trains now have some racks to hold their cycles) instructing them to remember to move cycles from the vans to the lobby of the catering car at the station before they wish to detrain, or vice versa to put them in the catering car and move them to the van at the next station. In addition to this, they have to know at which stations and in which directions they need to go through this procedure!

Edinburgh-Glasgow

For the uninitiated, currently there are two routes – via Falkirk and via Shotts. The third route has been broken for many years now, but could be reopened. Neither route is electrified. Via Shotts is about 90 minutes and stops at every station. Via Falkirk is 48 minutes and while all stop at Falkirk, alternate ones stop at Polmont & Linlithgow or Croy to keep within the 60-minute turn-



Trevithick comes to life

Merthyr Tydfil's Trevithick 2004 Visitor Centre opened its doors in June with the Penydarren Locomotive replica taking centre stage. Back in Wales for the first time this decade, the replica is one of a variety of exhibits dedicated to the industrial age at the new visitor centre.

A competition to design the transport of the future captured the imagination of the young. Danielle Johnson, 12, of Pen Y Dre High School and Rachel Davies (7), Nia Anthill (6), Corey Datta (6) and Bradley Walker (7) of the Year 2 class at Trelewis Primary School scooped top place for their artwork. They are pictured with Terry Victor, an actor who played Richard Trevithick.

Chairman of the Trevithick 2004 Working Group, Councillor Leon Stanfield said: "The centre really allows people to celebrate the rich history that we have here in Merthyr and we hope plenty of people will visit us over the next few months." The centre is open as a free attraction until mid October.

The year of celebrations in Merthyr Tydfil commemorate the achievements of Richard Trevithick. On 21 February 1804 his locomotive hauled ten tonnes of iron, 70 passengers and five wagons on a nine and a half mile journey from Penydarren in Merthyr Tydfil to Abercynon. Two hundred years on, it is still hailed as one of the great engineering achievements of all time.

around time. The new Edinburgh Park station, while on the route is not a stop on the Edinburgh-Glasgow service because of the time constraints.

There are several options being considered:

■ Via Shotts (Caledonian Express). Proposals to upgrade this (£6m), but mining subsidence a problem.

■ Via Bathgate-Airdrie. Has been closed for years, suggested opening 2007 at cost of £104m.

■ Electrification of all or any of these. Issue constantly being fudged.

■ Bullet train Edinburgh-Glasgow. 50% of passengers don't travel directly between Edinburgh and Glasgow so a non-stop service would probably not be viable. Consultants suggest that a bullet train would require a completely new

and separate track and there's no funding for this (£4bn estimated). Is it possible to have a mixture of fast and stopping trains – possibly stopping at more of the stations – on the one line with a 15 minute service within the 60 minute envelope?

Stranraer

When the new ferry terminal at Cairn Ryan opens in 2006 and Stranraer Harbour terminal is closed (because of depth problems and the longer ferry journey into Stranraer) the Stranraer Harbour railhead will be closed. Stranraer Town station will be reopened [?]. Travellers to the ferry will be expected to transfer to a bus in Girvan. Fairly empty trains will continue to Stranraer. There was once a rail link to Cairn Ryan during the war. Most of the trackbed is still available. This line could be reopened, and a short bus link provided into Stranraer town.

Most ferry passengers would prefer a few extra minutes on the same train to a transfer to a bus.

Stirling Alloa & Kincardine

The Third Forth Bridge

After being knocked on the head some years ago, this project seems to have had a phoenix moment. It appears on the FETA (Forth Estuary Transport Authority) local transport strategy. There are four options, the most expensive of which is for a multi-modal bridge which would include both road traffic and heavy rail. The intention is that it would be primarily for public transport, but could include some HGVs and could also be used to accommodate traffic at times when the current road bridge was under repair. The cheaper options include light rail rather than heavy (though we don't know of anyone who has suggested that trams might run from Edinburgh to Fife), or no rail at all – the cheapest option. Of course once the Stirling-Kincardine line is opened the coal trains currently using the bridge will go that way and free some paths on the Firth Bridge so the new bridge may not need to have rail provision, and as far as the road element is concerned, a better public transport system for Fife people wanting to go to Edinburgh would free up capacity on the bridge for those going into West Lothian. So who needs a new bridge?

How to win friends

A friend of mine (ex-railwayman) was upset a few months ago on a journey between Edinburgh and Carlisle to be shunted into a siding at Lockerbie for some time. The reason which he observed – to allow the untimetabled passing through of the Pendolino on its publicity launch ride containing non-paying VIPs, journalists and selected railway buffs, etc. He considered that this was something of an insult to the fare-paying passengers in his train who were kept waiting.

ScotRail franchise

First Group takes over from National Express-owned Scotrail on October 17. The new franchise will run for at least seven years, will cost taxpayers £1.9bn and will ensure all existing train services in Scotland, including cross-border sleepers, are retained. The franchise will also allow extra services to be added as and when necessary at a reasonable cost and to help deliver the Scottish Executive's future plans for the rail network in Scotland.

Transport minister Nicol Stephen said: "There will be significant investment in new trains, new rail lines and better stations." First is to invest £40m in a package including station improvements at Stirling, Aberdeen, Edinburgh Haymarket and Glasgow Queen Street and an extra 5,900 seats will be available to passengers as new trains enter service shortly.



Air-rail link

Consultation has started on a proposed £505million rail link from Edinburgh Waverley to Edinburgh airport.

Thames

By Chris Wright

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East West Rail continues to be a key campaign, working with the Oxon and Bucks Rail Action Committee.

The latest bid for £1.5 million to develop specifications to the tender stage and for £68m to upgrade the Oxford to Bletchley section and the Aylesbury link remains with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Services would be hourly to Bedford. A decision was expected after the Spending Review but further prevarication has arisen and the impact of the Rail Review is unclear.

The Public Inquiry into the expansion of Milton Keynes has reported and recommends that the lines be reinstated and recommends Aylesbury North be progressed quickly. The link to Cambridge is not seen as fundable within the foreseeable future and notes that the Secretary of State ordered work to be stopped. At the inquiry the Strategic Rail Authority recognised the potential of the route and accepted the findings of the latest studies but could not fund the scheme and other priorities may be preferred in any case. OBRAC see the issue as a test case for funding infrastructure for the expansion of the area. No doubt road schemes will go ahead!

Tony Baldry MP for Bicester has taken up the issue with Lord Rooker and is working with the new Oxford and Bicester Rail User Group. Further debates and questions in Parliament have occurred.

Bletchley to Bedford line closed for modernisation (although line speed remains at 40 mph) over the summer and a formal re-opening takes place on 15 September at which we will be represented.

Wolverton, after years of campaigning, is the subject of plans being issued for a new station.

WCML upgrade and the new timetable has not been well received by commuters as there are cuts to Virgin services and Silverlink is confined to the slow lines. Local MP Phyllis Starkey has helped organise a meeting with managers. We were assured there would be no major problems.

Bourne End-Wycombe trackbed has been bought by developers in spite of intervention by Wycombe Council and our representations.

Midlands

By Peter Cousins and Peter Hughes

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Local services

Central Trains announced in March this year that three local services;



This single track line from Leamington Spa to Coventry now carries most of Virgin CrossCountry's more frequent services between Birmingham and Reading, including this CrossCountry service passing Park Junction. The single line also carries freight and is a constraint on the capacity of the Midlands network. Midlands branch welcomes Network Rail's intention to consider re-doubling the route from this point towards Kenilworth which will open the possibility of future local services.

Picture: ALAN BEVAN

from Stafford to Stoke-on-Trent, Stafford to Nuneaton, and Nuneaton to Coventry would be replaced by buses as a result of continuing work on the West Coast Main Line Upgrade and that these services would not be reinstated until June 2005.

The reason given was the company's need to release drivers for training on the new Class 350 Desiro electric units. These local trains provide the only rail service to the substantial towns of Stone (Staffordshire) and Atherstone (Warwickshire) as well as a link into main line services for at least five other communities.

Unfortunately the replacement buses take up to an hour longer for some journeys – a most unwelcome extension of people's working day.

Although these trains are often lightly loaded the extended substitution will disrupt commuters' lives for far longer than seems necessary. The Trent Valley and North Staffs diagrams are generally worked by a single Class 153 unit for most of the day.

Surely a joined-up railway could have hired in staff from First North West or Silverlink – particularly as the former will be cutting some services in September.

Station car parks

Members of three local rail user groups have been helping Midlands RPC to distribute questionnaires at selected station car parks around the region. The initial objective was to compare passengers preferences at the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive controlled stations with those in the shire counties. Further work highlighted the fact that many of the region's station car parks are now full before 08.00 – effectively discouraging both shift workers and many other potential off-peak passengers from using the train. This is a problem which needs to be addressed in a regional context.

In addition to a lack of car park

space, Network Rail has a major problem at Bromsgrove where the short northbound platform limits services on the busy Hereford to Birmingham route to three-coach units.

The turnout from the freight loop prevents a platform extension at the south end of the station and a road

bridge restricts the width available at the north end. We think that it is high time the industry found a solution to the problem of extending the platforms at this station.


Stone station

This station was built for the North Staffordshire Railway in 1849 by H A Hunt and is now Grade II listed. The booking office at Stone closed over 10 years ago and the impressive Jacobean style building was becoming derelict. Last year the station buildings were purchased by the local town council with the help of a grant from the Heritage Lottery fund. The refurbishment of Stone station was completed earlier this year and this historic building has now re-opened as a thriving local community facility. Central Trains also contributed by upgrading the station platforms and waiting shelters; but sadly, although the frequent Virgin Cross Country services crawl though the now brightly lit platforms at only 10 mph, no trains will stop at the station this year. We believe that the busy market town of Stone deserves better.

Winter timetable changes

September is expected to see more reductions in Virgin Cross Country

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Local action



services at Burton-on-Trent and Tamworth, supposedly to improve timekeeping on this busy north-east to south-west route.

This follows the culling of all Virgin CrossCountry stops at Solihull last year, although some services still pass through the station. While we understand Virgin's reluctance to overload their trains with peak-hour commuters, they seem to have overlooked the value of out of town stops to the wider travelling public. Many passengers carry luggage, prefer to avoid changing trains and would certainly prefer to avoid the rigours of changing trains at crowded Birmingham New Street, a station which still has no down escalators.

The option of joining a long distance service at their local station, without first travelling to the main regional node, is valued by many passengers. In the Manchester region, all services stop at Stockport or Stalybridge and many at Bolton. We believe that a similar pattern should be developed around Birmingham with Bromsgrove or Barnt Green joining the Virgin network together with a reinstated Solihull.

The September timetable also brings radical changes to the local and semi-fast services between Wolverhampton and Northampton.

The locals from Wolverhampton will now terminate at New Street using a new bay platform bizarrely numbered 4C, although it has been cut into the face of platform number 5. With the demise of the through Silverlink service to London, Central Trains will run a semi-fast service from New Street to Northampton stopping first at Birmingham International and then all stations to Coventry.

London & South East

By Richard Pout
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Crossrail

Government announcements in July had good and bad news for rail projects in and around London.

Crossrail goes forward into yet another consultation phase, to refine the scheme that could be presented to Parliament as a hybrid bill.

The "Maidenhead" lobby has won over the "Kingston" lobby. But why only to Maidenhead? Surely electrifying those 12 miles to Reading would bring in much more potential traffic? The wires should go at least to Reading, once the optimum track layout has been worked out for future modernisation there.

East of London we are sceptical about the viability of the Dartford and Ebbsfleet route. How this route will dovetail into other services is not clear.

Quadrupling the track from Plumstead through Slade Green to Dartford is essential if services to



One of the reasons for the delay to the Thameslink 2000 scheme was said to be that the new station to be built over the River Thames was too high to allow a good view of St Paul's cathedral. The station roof has now been redesigned as shown in this picture. In the foreground are the supports for another - older - railway bridge. The tracks and decking have long since been removed.

existing London terminus stations are to function sensibly, particularly through trains on the Woolwich-Greenwich route to London Bridge.

Railfuture will be seeking a meeting with the Crossrail team and the London Thames Gateway Forum.

North London Line

The NLL will be cut back to Stratford. This goes against Railfuture's "Orbirail" proposal, as the Docklands Light Railway takes over the Stratford-Canning Town section with through trains from Woolwich Arsenal. The remaining section from Custom House to Silvertown goes to Crossrail. This means North Woolwich and Silvertown stations may be closed. We should oppose attempts to close these stations as Crossrail could incorporate a new station serving the catchment for both stations. But it would cost more money.

East London Line

The East London Line extensions are to proceed under Transport for London management. Sadly proposed ELL links to the North London Line and Finsbury Park are on the back-burner. Islington council has woken up to this problem. The route must be extended to Camden Road at least, and eventually to Willesden Junction, along with re-opening Primrose Hill station.

Cheshunt

Cheshunt station is to have an extended terminal platform, following a Railfuture suggestion. This facility will allow an eight-car Southbury line train to terminate and reduce conflicting junction movements on the Lea Valley Line.

Lea Bridge

There is still no commitment to reopen the station here, although the line will see regular trains restored

from December 2005. Restoring this station and the Hall Farm link for the Chingford to Stratford route remains one of our campaign priorities, and necessary if Britain gets the 2012 Olympics.

Thameslink

Thameslink 2000 will now be Thameslink 2010 at the earliest, and there are still doubts over that target date. There is a case for interim infrastructure changes to improve existing services, if the main scheme has to be delayed for a rebuild of London Bridge station. These upgrades could include track alterations at Kentish Town, doubling the restricting "single lead" junction at Metropolitan Junction in Southwark, and Herne Hill, where track capacity and flexibility to the south of the station could be improved and capacity increased.

York Road Underground and Maiden Lane stations

Railfuture is supporting a local campaign to get the Piccadilly Line Tube station at York Way reopened, between Caledonian Road and King's Cross. It is hoped that this station which closed in 1932 could be restored and meet current access standards. It could help distribute new residents and workers as the King's Cross lands are redeveloped. Similarly we have campaigned for nearby Maiden Lane station on the North London Line to be rebuilt.

Luton-Dunstable

The branch will be working with ADAPT (Dunstable rail reopening campaigners) and Luton Friends of the Earth to oppose the busway plan. We want Thameslink trains every half hour, integrated with local buses.

Former Network SouthEast manager Chris Green planned this reopening, and Dunstable was on

the train's destination indicators back in the 1980s. Some government officials seem determined to use either Dunstable or St Ives as a busway test bed. We can show rail is a better option.

Watchdog barks

The London Transport Users Committee, the official watchdog, has told First Great Western Link that its December 2004 timetable plans for services at a number of stations in west London are unacceptable.

Director Rufus Barnes said: "The proposed FGWL timetable will make commuting in the morning peak considerably worse for those using Hayes and Harlington, Southall, Hanwell and Acton Main Line stations. We are very disappointed that despite meetings expressing our concern with both FGWL and the Strategic Rail Authority, the reduction in services is still planned."

Passengers using Hayes and Harlington in the morning will see the service drop by 25% in the morning peak, and Hanwell and Acton commuters will see the number of the trains in the morning drop by half.

To make things worse, the timing of the trains from Hayes and Harlington, Southall, Hanwell and Acton will be changed resulting in an uneven pattern of service with long gaps between some trains.

Rufus Barnes continued: "As a result of the re-timing, passengers will have to wait up to twenty minutes in the morning rush hour, while there will be a cluster of up to three trains arriving at the stations within a few minutes of each other. This is not acceptable on a vital route for West Londoners, and includes the important employment area at Park Royal served by Acton Main Line station.

"We have fought hard on behalf of passengers to prevent these changes which are going to be very unpopular with local people. Unfortunately our representations have had no effect. Passengers now need to be made fully aware of the substantial deterioration of morning services they can expect to face from December."

Lincolnshire

By Brian Hastings
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Central Trains leaf action plan

Lincolnshire Branch has received details of Central Trains Autumn Contingency Timetable due to be initiated on Sunday 17 October and last for around five weeks. It is designed to maintain the punctuality and reliability of services during the peak leaf fall season. The Citylink Liverpool-Norwich service will start five minutes earlier than booked and be timed to terminate five minutes later at each terminal point. This service calls at Stamford. Similar re-timings will occur on the Crewe-Skegness service to



provide a recovery margin on that route. On the Birmingham-Lincoln route, three morning trains leaving Nottingham at 10.33, 12.26, and 13.26 will miss their calls at stations Carlton to Fiskerton, being replaced by a bus link operating from Nottingham to Newark. This effectively gives each train a recovery margin of 10 minutes on this journey.

We note that a key element of the "leaf fall" timetable is to be passenger information. Provided that this is indeed forthcoming, Lincolnshire branch has no objection. It is however important the users of the seven wayside stations are fully apprised of what is intended by flyers, posters, local authority publicity and the local radio station.

We are advising Central Trains of our concern that both the early departure, later arrival and skip stop procedure is properly advertised.

Sharing survey information

The East of England Rail Passengers Committee based at Peterborough is to undertake a member survey in 50 selected stations in Eastern England, nine of which are in Lincolnshire. The RPC plans to share the results of its survey with us. For our part, Lincolnshire branch is to undertake an updated audit in a survey it carried out in 2002 and to this end we will survey each station again by autumn 2004 and submit our findings concentrating our evidence on vandalism, graffiti, general state of repair, amenities provided or needed plus the general ambience in the respective station environment. Stations to be dealt with are: Ruskington, Metherringham, Saxilby, Market Rasen, Gainsborough Lea Road, Swirehead, Wainfleet and Skegness.

Reliability

The branch is maintaining a regular dialogue with Central Trains director of network services Tony Brown over continued problems with service reliability. Scarcely a morning goes by without one or more services or routes radiating from Lincoln being subject to cancellation. Members have especially fed in examples of a Birmingham-Grimby service being turned back or cancelled on the last leg, for instance Lincoln-Grimby, so as to achieve a right-time return departure from Lincoln for the return run. We accept this may sometimes be necessary but not as a regular occurrence, affecting as it does commuters and shoppers from Market Rasen and Grimby. It should be more of a last resort.

Market Rasen Troubles

Considerable anger has been experienced by town, district and county councillors over the use of single car 153 units on key Grimby-Lincoln-Newark North Gate workings especially the 09.30 ex Grimby. It has regularly left behind potential users at Market Rasen, both commuters and shoppers as



Loco on Roman way

Rail passengers were able to go 'Roman' from York to Carlisle on Saturdays this summer thanks to the introduction of a new train service by Arriva Trains Northern.

The service provided the first ever direct train linking the two historic Roman cities, and ran over the Leeds-Settle-Carlisle line.

To launch the new summer service Arriva recruited a Roman soldier for the first service in May. Centurion Maximus Gluteus, was joined by his Roman family, wife Lusha and sons Primus and Dextrus, for the day trip.

On arrival in Carlisle the Mayor of Carlisle, Councillor Judith Pattinson, met the train and Maximus presented a scroll with a special message to mark the new link between the former Roman cities Eboracum (York) and Luguvalio (Carlisle).

Commenting on the new service Dyan Crowther, Arriva Trains Northern's managing director, said: "We initially introduced the loco-hauled service to the network to increase capacity on weekday commuter services between Knaresborough and Leeds. To make greater use of the train we also created a weekday Leeds to Carlisle service.

The new Saturday service left York at 09.06 and arrived at Carlisle at 12.14 calling at Leeds, Bingley, Keighley, Skipton, Kirby Stephen and Appleby.

The train provided inter-city style comfort with four mark II air-conditioned carriages.

well as business users travelling to London. The latest situation is that Central Trains Tony Brown was hoping to get back to us with a solution. This is eagerly awaited. Railfuture Lincolnshire says Central Trains must appreciate that although Lincolnshire is peripheral to the core network, inhabitants of the county have demonstrated that they recognise the value and benefit of a rail service. They want the trains and demand a more reliable and punctual service than is being provided. We await developments!

Fare evasion fears

Railfuture Lincolnshire is concerned over clear evidence of fare evasion on routes into Lincoln notably from Market Rasen, Sleaford and from Gainsborough. Volume of business at unstaffed station and overcrowding on trains make it impossible for on train conductors to cope. We are suggesting a blitz by the Nottingham Revenue Protection team on an *ad hoc* basis

on a Saturday morning to act as a message to deter would-be evaders and collect what at present is missing revenue.

New membership leaflet

Mindful of the ever-present need to encourage new membership growth, Lincolnshire is about to publish a new local recruitment leaflet. Copies were planned to be available for the Railfuture presence at Grantham Rail Show on 4-5 September.

Barnetby-Gainsborough route

This route continues to sleep for most of the week, coming to life on a Saturday for Arriva's once a week service of three up and three return trains. Some freight is also diverted over the route on this one day no doubt to maintain freight train drivers' route knowledge. Over a number of recent weeks, the line has been open from 22.00 to 06.00 for freight train diversions necessitated by engineering possession on

the Scunthorpe route. Railfuture is pushing for the route to be open 6 days a week to accommodate the pending further growth of freight in and out of the Immingham complex. And a bonus would accrue line capacity is almost at a maximum on the Scunthorpe and Lincoln routes out of Barnetby.

Rail/road integration: Positive moves

Purchase of two new minibuses financed by the Rural Bus Challenge is to allow two innovative local bus services by North Lincolnshire Council. Respectively "the Isle Villages" and the "Wolds Bus" the two new vehicles will operate new semi demand responsive and core routes serving inter alia Crowle station and Barnetby station and feeding in passengers from their respective hinterlands. The projects deserve success to achieve a modal shift from the car. Railfuture will publicise the services in our next local rail guides which we plan to issue at Crowle and Barnetby. Starting date for the new services is mid October.

Branch publications

Station guides which also publicise Railfuture are to be produced in September and December to publicise local services at Saxilby, Market Rasen, Crowle and Barnetby. A line guide once planned by Railfuture alone may now be a joint publication in 2005 to publicise the Nottingham-Skegness line. Meetings between the branch are taking place with South East Lincs. travellers Association and East Lindsey District Council to discuss content, layout and funding.

Our next go-it-alone publication will be a line guide/strategy leaflet for the joint line (Doncaster - Lincoln - Peterborough).

Finningley Airport

Contact has been established with Doncaster Metropolitan Borough over the issue of a new station for the airport due to open in April 2005. It is now clear that in the initial months (we hope not years!) the link will be a connecting shuttle bus from Doncaster station. As anticipated the issue is complicated by franchising in the rail industry. The opening involves the SRA, South Yorkshire PTE, Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, rail operators and Network Rail. The station proposal has already been delayed by the national background including the publication of the Rail Review.

East Anglia

By Trevor Garrod

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ESTA anniversary

In November and early December, the East Suffolk Travellers' Association will be involved in events to mark the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Halesworth Beccles and Haddiscoe Railway, the precursor of the East

Local action



Suffolk Line (Ipswich to Lowestoft). For a leaflet including details of the events, which include museum and library displays and two historical lectures, please send SAE to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ.

On Saturday 20 November (the actual anniversary of the opening of the line to freight), ESTA will hold a public meeting in the King's Head Hotel, New Market, Beccles (a few minutes walk from the station) starting at 14.00. Guest speaker will be Mr Clive Morris, ONE Anglia's manager with responsibility for rural lines. By fortunate coincidence, the anniversary happens as the line is about to see the introduction of the new timetable in which the number of through trains to and from London is to increase from one to six per day. The anniversary events thus provide an excellent opportunity to promote the new service.

Stansted airport

Railfuture has long campaigned for the Stansted rail link to be extended eastwards. Now a report prepared for deputy prime minister John Prescott suggests extending the Tube's Central line from Epping to Harlow and possibly to Stansted.

North West

By Trevor Bishop

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Stockport reopens on time

Train services were scheduled to start again through Stockport from Monday 6 September following the completion of major engineering work. The work involved significant signalling and civil engineering works, with the signals and points in the area replaced in modern equivalent form, but retaining the existing signal boxes. The retention of the boxes, rather than the planned integration into the new Manchester South signalling centre at Edgeley, was because the safety case for connection of the new Ansaldo system to adjacent boxes could not be achieved in time for the implementation of the new Virgin Pendolino timetable at the end of September. The famous Stockport viaduct has also had work done on waterproofing, to improve its resilience.

Goodbye Midland

The popular Midland Mainline service between Manchester Piccadilly and London St Pancras, which has been provided during the upgrade of the West Coast main line, operated for the last time on Friday 10 September.

Northern franchise

Serco-Nedrail is expected to take over Northern rail franchise in late October and looks like having to implement service cuts demanded of its predecessor by the Strategic Rail Authority. Some stations that presently have an hourly service in the off-peak, may become two-



Train operator Midland Mainline teamed up with TV weatherman John Kettle to launch a Factor 15 campaign to promote its special summer offer and encourage passengers to apply sun cream when holidaying in the UK. Jamie Burles, sales and marketing director from Midland Mainline explained: "The Factor 15 campaign tied in really well with our £15 return offer to London."

John explained: "It's really important for people to realise you don't have to be abroad to apply sun cream. Even when sight seeing in London you need to be aware of the sunshine and apply a sensible factor to protect you and your children from harmful rays." For other details of Midland Mainline, go to www.midlandmainline.com

hourly, notably on the Manchester-Liverpool via Warrington Central line, to enable a fast service from Liverpool to Manchester Airport.

Metrolink : The fallout continues

The decision by the Secretary of State for Transport not to approve the final funding package for Metrolink phase 3 expansion is having consequences elsewhere, not least of which is the Oldham loop line which will remain heavy rail unless and/or until the decision is reversed.

However as it was planned that it would close to heavy rail shortly, with conversion to Metrolink happening soon after, the plans for rolling stock on the new Northern Franchise did not include provision for the line. Hence some hasty decisions are needed to enable the line to continue to be served.

Elsewhere, part of the funding package was for improvements for the existing lines, which have seen little work since the changeover to Metrolink. Some areas are known to have severe line noise, causing residents to complain, and these were scheduled for replacement. Now the funding package has gone, further work will be needed to find sources of funding for what was seen as essential works, though interestingly, as the operation was initially set to run without public subsidy, many will question why.

Works have already started for the

Ashton line, with various bridges being built including one over the river Medlock just outside the city centre and one under the Phillips Park line, as well as cuttings and tunnels, so it is even more difficult to understand why the Transport Secretary has cancelled the project at this late stage.

Branch AGM

Next year's AGM is scheduled for the Stretton Hotel in Blackpool on 12 February. Members are welcome at all meetings which start at 11.00.

South Wales De Cymru

By Julian Langston and Peter Clark
Arriva responds

Railwatch 100 outlined our response to Arriva's proposed standard pattern timetable. Arriva has responded with significant improvements for Pembrokeshire. The hourly Manchester-Carmarthen service will extend every second hour to Milford Haven, and it is hoped that small adjustments in timing will improve the connection with FGW's London service at Cardiff. But by no means all aspirations can be met. Arriva doesn't agree with some but in others lack funding or rolling stock.

Vale of Glamorgan reopening

Contracts have been let for two new stations, at Rhoose and Llantwit Major, for a passenger service to

start in May 2005. This will be six months before the introduction of ATW's Standard Pattern Timetable, in which the VoG service is integrated with that on the rest of the Valley Lines (or 'Cardiff Locals' as ATW prefers to call them!). Rumbblings have been heard in the media about whether Rhoose station really can serve Cardiff Airport. In 10 years of campaigning, we have always maintained the trains should not terminate at Bridgend but should run through at least as far as Swansea. But the new service will be very attractive for the residents of Rhoose and Llantwit Major.

A vision for the future

A new, updated and expanded edition of our publication *On Track for the 21st Century: a Development Plan for the Railways of Wales and the Borders* is due to be published by the time you read this. As the title suggests, the new edition covers the whole of Wales and borders, not just south Wales. It can be viewed on our website: <http://www.char-tist.demon.co.uk/rds/rdsindex.htm> Hard copies are available, in limited numbers, at cost price of £3 incl. p&p for Railfuture members (price to non-members is £5). Order from 84 North Street, Abergavenny NP7 7ED.

Ultra is not dead

Despite the negative reception received for Ultra, the proposed driverless taxi pod system, the council still wants to build it. The council wants to close and demolish an existing railway to make way for the elevated track needed for Ultra. We shall be seeking further information on this, but intend to counter this proposal sharply.

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay

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New hope for Corby

Phil Hope, the MP for Corby and East Northamptonshire (the only constituency in the country without a railway station), is hopeful that the transfer of the Strategic Rail Authority's responsibilities to the Department for Transport may improve prospects for a new station in Corby. The technical case and the business case for reopening the line to Corby have been agreed, but the SRA decided it was not a priority. Mr Hope is now calling on local stakeholders to get together to lobby the Government. Railfuture's Elisabeth Jordan has been a leading figure in the campaign for the Corby reopening for around 20 years.

No improved access at Melton

Melton Access Group has been rebuffed in its campaign to improve access for disabled and elderly people at Melton Mowbray station. Network Rail installed phones linking the station to signal boxes in January, but has now announced that it would not be safe for passengers to use these to



check whether they can walk across the tracks. Passengers who are unable to use the footbridge will need to give at least 24 hours' notice to ensure that there is a member of staff available to escort them across the tracks.

Yorkshire

By Peter Davies
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Northern franchise

In July, it was announced that Serco-Ned had been awarded the franchise to operate rail services in the north of England. The period of the franchise is up to nine years. The company has indicated that it is very interested in maintaining punctuality, reliability and cleanliness of the trains. Arriva Trains Northern has already achieved this objective, and it will be very sad to say farewell to them following the improved performance over the past two years. It is sad to report that there will be no new investment in the rail network, and no new trains to relieve overcrowding at peak periods are to be provided.

Bradford

Improvements planned for Interchange station include a covered pedestrian link between the upper bus concourse and the platforms, together with the replacement of canopies, new ticket machines, shelters and seating. The entrance to the station, only reopened in 2001 after major surgery, will be altered again, and new shops opened.

Castleford

West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive is holding a public consultation about a new bus and rail interchange for the town. There would be a new covered central concourse, similar to the designs at Huddersfield, Bradford and Keighley. New pedestrian links to the town centre would be created, and the existing bus station site released for redevelopment.

Harrogate

The station will be relocated under a five-year town centre development plan promoted by the council. The multi-million pound scheme will also provide a new bus station, shops and affordable housing for key workers.

Doncaster

Passengers can expect disruption to station facilities until September while the travel centre is reconstructed.

Skipton

The Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership has received a £3,000 grant from Pendle Community Network, which will enable it to raise the profile of its campaign for the reopening of the former Skipton-Colne line.

Ribblehead

Guided tours have been conducted around the site of the shanty towns near the viaduct that grew up during construction of the Settle-Carlisle line by the Midland Railway. The visits which have taken place during June, July and August, include inspection of the former brickworks, lime kiln and hospital.



The Case for Rail

This is the illustration on the cover of a new Railfuture booklet designed to give rail campaigners "killer facts" to silence uninformed comments which so often make up the debate about transport both in private and public.

If you would like a copy send a cheque for £2.75 (made payable to Railfuture) to cover post and packing to Railfuture, Room 205, The Colourworks, 2 Abbot Street, London E8 3DP. Written by Norman Bradbury and edited by Keith Dyal, it contains several colour pictures and is packed with information which helps to undermine the half truths peddled by both the road and aviation industries.

Bicycle express

A dedicated Bike Train could be introduced to encourage more people to travel by bike and train, said the Association of Community Rail Partnerships in July.

"This could use a surplus two-carriage train specially adapted for carrying large numbers of cyclists and their bikes," said ACoRP general manager Dr Paul Salvesson.

"We were impressed by the 'Bicycle Express' on the Karlsruhe light rail system. It uses an old tram which is no longer required for regular service.

"The seats have been taken out

and it carries about 100 bikes. Cyclists can relax in the adjoining car on their journey up into the hills – and have a great ride cycling back down!"

ACoRP outlined its ideas in a submission to the Strategic Rail Authority's consultation on bikes and trains.

It welcomed the SRA's draft Cycling Policy consultation on which closed on 14 July.

Railfuture also produced a comprehensive response to the SRA. It can be downloaded from <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=Railfuture+cycles+on+trains>

Future Rail 300

Railfuture is spearheading attempts to get the Government to think again about building high-speed rail lines in Britain.

Although France, Spain and Italy have built 1,375 miles of high-speed rail, Britain can only boast 74 miles from the Channel Tunnel to North Kent.

Eurostar, which has received a significant boost in business with the opening of stage 1 of the Channel Tunnel rail link, is now calling for more high-speed lines to be built in Britain.

"This is the start," said Paul Charles of Eurostar when the CTRL stage 1 opened. "It could clearly be a blueprint for other lines in the future."

It is also likely that high-speed lines can be built more cheaply in Britain than previously thought.

The CTRL has proved to be seven times more expensive to build than high-speed lines in Spain.

Other European high-speed lines are 30% to 70% cheaper than the CTRL, even allowing for the large amount of tunnelling on the CTRL stage 2.

A report from Steer Davies Gleave points out that TGV lines offer high capacity and also free up capacity on conventional lines.

High-speed railways are "essential if we are to deal with capacity restraints that are building up on our inter-city network" said Professor David Begg of the Commission for Integrated Transport.

Don Heath of Virgin Trains said money spent on upgrading the West Coast main line would have been better spent on a new line.

Building a new line results in only limited disruption to the rail network and has a strong value for money return, said Patrick Bateson of the Strategic Rail Authority.

To highlight the case for high-speed lines in Britain, Railfuture publishes a regular newsletter called *Future Rail 300*, written and edited by Graham Nalty. It is distributed free by email to rail campaigners, academic researchers and senior rail managers.

Graham points out: "In Britain we do not have a framework to identify what ought to be built, and more importantly the contribution to the national economy.

"The British system of selecting infrastructure projects is different for road and rail. New roads get built while new railways are held back."

If you would like to receive the newsletter, contact Graham by email at graham@grahamnalty.co.uk