

is edited by Robert Stevens and Ray King, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU

Tel 020 8985 8548

Fax 020 8985 8212

editor@railwatch.org.uk

robert@railwatch.org.uk

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Road, Bracebridge Heath, Lincoln
LN4 2LD

Media enquiries

President: Peter Lawrence,
3 Hellesdon Road, Norwich
NR6 5EB Tel: 01603 627217
pandwlawrence@waitrose.com

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All membership enquiries to:

David Harby,
6 Carral Close,
Lincoln LN5 9BD
david.harby@ntlworld.com

Policy

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

Elections

The board is elected annually
and nomination forms can be
obtained from the Returning
Officer, PO Box 7690, Hinckley
LE10 9WJ.

You can also download a form
from www.railfuture.org.uk

Left in the lurch

National Rail operators virtually
abandoned their passengers on
Boxing Day.

Only Southeastern ran any kind of
service, with three trains an hour
from London Charing Cross as well
as hourly trains from London Victo-
ria to Orpington.

Train operators should provide
more services on Boxing Day,
according to 70% of respondents in
a Passenger Focus website poll.

Cambridge Heath and London
Fields rail users have asked whether
London TravelWatch should be call-
ing for a proper Boxing day service
on all lines in the London area.

Transport for London ensured there
were Tubes and buses running in
London.

In the rest of the country the Depart-
ment for Transport "rail group" let
us down.

Boxing Day rail services disap-
peared in the late 1960s but they
were re-introduced by British Rail
for three years 1974-76. Although
services were sparse, they were
well patronised.

Boxing Day is a big day for travel,
particularly to sporting events and
for family visiting. In *Railwatch* 109,

we asked whether MPs should
only be allowed to claim travel
expenses if they travelled by pub-
lic transport. We have since learnt
how much money is spent on their
travel claims.

What other ways are there to
remind them of their responsibility
to provide a public transport service
for people without cars and people
who don't want to use cars?

Perhaps they want to retain the
freedom to carry air around the
country in their empty heads, just
as most motorists carry air – cer-
tainly not fresh air – around the
country in their cars.

National Express, which on nor-
mal days runs many of the trains
in East Anglia, did not run any
trains on Boxing Day. But its buses
and coaches did run. At the time
National Express took over the
franchise in 2005, the Competition
Commission undertook an invest-
igation. Railfuture at that time
believed it did not create a monop-
oly.

When Passenger Focus was asked
about its policy on Boxing Day
trains, passenger contact adviser
Laura Groves said: "Passenger
Focus do not have a policy regard-

ing Boxing Day services, though
after a recent poll on our website
71% of passengers said they would
prefer more trains, 15% said they
wouldn't and 14% said they did
not mind. This information will
be passed to train operating com-
panies for their consideration on
future Boxing Day services."

The runners

Southeastern ran hourly trains
on four routes: Charing Cross-
Greenwich-Slade Green (return via
Eltham), Charing Cross-Eltham-
Slade Green (return via Green-
wich), Charing Cross-Orping-
ton-Tonbridge-Ashford and
Victoria-Orpington.

Southern ran trains from West
Croydon to London Victoria, and
Scotrail ran trains only in the Strath-
clyde area.

The former Thameslink, which has
in the past run trains, was a train-
free zone on Boxing Day. The fran-
chise is now run by First Capital
Connect.

As well as running services on Box-
ing Day, TfL sponsored free travel
on many National Rail services
out of London from midnight until
05.00 on New Year's Day

The electric way

Railfuture vice chairman Jerry
Alderson was intrigued to see – on
the back cover of *Railwatch* 110 – the
British Rail electrification map from
1980, which Reg Harman presented
at the Railfuture conference in
Reading.

He said: "What a pity that the rail
industry today, whether Network
Rail or the DfT, has no equivalent
map.

"I'm sure readers will be pleased
to know that Railfuture's Network
Development Committee is pro-
ducing a leaflet to promote further
electrification on routes where the
benefits would outweigh the infra-
structure, maintenance and disrup-
tion costs.

"I would be pleased to hear from
anyone who can provide me with
fact-based evidence to support fur-
ther electrification."

Graham Larkbey, of the Bark-
ing-Gospel Oak Line rail users
said modest fill-in electrification
schemes, like Ashford-Hastings
and Barking-Gospel Oak, were
important.

Philip Shelton, however, emailed
(philip@rooksfarm.fsnet.co.uk) to
say that he was appalled by the
map because it did not show either
of the two direct routes from Lon-
don to the South West, from Water-
loo via Salisbury (already electri-
fied for about a third of the distance

to Exeter) and from Paddington via
Westbury.

He said these routes do not appear
to be even "longer-term prospects"
for electrification.

He said: "It's a classic case of those
in the rest of the country think-
ing that the south west peninsula
begins and ends at Bristol, so it's
perfectly reasonable to "shove them
all round via Bristol", whereas in
fact Bristol is nearer to London than
it is to Penzance.

"Presumably the idea is that a
second-rate slower service should
be provided on the two routes I
have mentioned."

He asked: "Does Railfuture wish to
keep the members which it already
has in the South West, let alone
attract new ones?"

It obviously was not clear that the
map was not a Railfuture publica-
tion or meant to reflect Railfuture
policy. However, it also coincides
with reawakening interest in elec-
trification by policy makers.

Gerard Duddridge, chairman of
Devon and Cornwall branch sup-
ports moves to promote more elec-
trification of Britain's railways.

The map on the back cover of
Railwatch 110 shows the main line
from Penzance proposed for elec-
trification, but only on the longer
route via Bristol to London. We
are campaigning for an hourly

Penzance-Paddington service via
Castle Cary, Newbury and Read-
ing. If Penzance to Plymouth is
electrified, so must the direct route
to Paddington via Castle Cary. Only
this shorter route, with its mostly
100 mph line speed, is able to offer
Plymouth to Paddington timings of
around three hours.

The Plymouth business commu-
nity considers that journey times of
less than three hours are essential
for the local economy and inward
investment. Faster journeys should
be possible.

Plymouth to Paddington in two
hours 45 minutes is achievable.
The line needs some upgrading,
mainly east of Westbury, for a one-
hour schedule between Taunton
and Reading at an average speed of
107mph.

By comparison, a one-hour time
from Taunton to Reading via Bristol
would require non-stop running at
speeds of up to 137mph. It would
be difficult to negotiate the busy
Bristol area without delays.

Without speed improvements
east of Exeter, to compensate for
the mainly 60mph railway from
Penzance to Exeter, more and more
people will drive to Exeter to catch
their train. "We cannot support the
apparent suggestion to downgrade
the Castle Cary main line from
Penzance to Paddington," said
Gerard.