



## First step to build station

Railfuture campaigners attended a ground-breaking ceremony in February, the first step towards building a new station for Corby, Northamptonshire.

The man with the spade is Phil Hope, MP for Corby, and the dignitaries include Corby's chief executive and borough councillors, representatives from the North Northamptonshire Development Company, the contractors Mainland, and Network Rail, which has committed £1.2million to the scheme.

The new station will be part of a transport interchange for the town where buses and taxis will connect directly with the trains at the new station, which will be a modular design, in December. Corby has been said to be the biggest town in Europe not to have a rail service.

The Government is still in the process of thrashing out details of the timetable with East Midlands Trains which run Midland main line services.

Bedford Commuters Association has been campaigning to ensure that services from Bedford to the north are not adversely affected.

As the popularity of rail increases, there is likely to be more competition for the country's scarce railway resources.

Even the Association of Train Operators is now thinking strategically and talking about rail reopenings.

Another new station that will probably open in December is Aylesbury Vale Parkway station.

This could be the launch pad for the reopening of the former Great Central line as far as Daventry or even Rugby.

At Wolfhampcote a chord could be dropped on to the former railway line through Daventry to gain access to the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal.

This could help to switch freight from road to rail. A connection to

the West Coast main line could also be created south of Rugby. The time has come for even road-biased politicians to realise that Railfuture's long-running campaign to protect former rail routes for possible reopening should be recognised as a sensible basis for future policy and planning.

Sadly its current policy is not good enough: "The Government's planning guidance requires local planning authorities to consider the potential of disused railways for future transport use and procedures exist to ensure that, before redundant railway land is sold, its possible further use for transport purposes is properly considered.

"Formal protection for all disused railway lines, on the other hand, is both potentially very expensive, because it may give rise to claims for compensation for blight, and may prevent economically desirable development on former railway land".

It needs to wake up to the changing transport environment.

As Railfuture member Malcolm Smith points out: "The Government is spending billions on increasing capacity on the existing network, when it could be spending millions on a host of small reopening schemes.

"The Government places responsibility for this with the local authorities. As a result, big authorities such as London, Scotland and Wales can do reopening while the rest of England cannot because the county councils, boroughs and unitaries simply aren't big enough to put such simple proposals together."

Most road schemes are vastly more expensive than rail equivalents with widening of the M25 costing £25billion.

The East-West rail link is only £100million, Portishead branch reopening £28million, and Uckfield-Lewes rail reinstatement £50million.

## Wessex

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LOCAL ACTION

### ■ ■ Isle of Wight

The branch meeting on April 26 was a visit to Brading Station where we were briefed by Bobby Locke on the Isle of Wight Community Rail Partnership and hosted by Cathy Mills of Brading Town Council.

Great progress has recently been made towards achieving the partnership vision – "to create a sustainable future for rail on the Isle of Wight" – since the period immediately post-privatisation when its very future was in doubt. Now part of the South West trains franchise, Stagecoach Rail is committed to refurbishment of trains and stations but the CRP is providing a crucial catalyst role in developing community goodwill and encouraging increased use of rail.

Tangible results include an imaginative Rail Trail signage scheme in Sandown and involvement of local youth groups in station environmental projects, with the valuable by-product of eliminating vandalism.

The 70-year-old ex-LT Tube trains are being repainted in original red livery and stations Southern Railway green and cream. Ingenious use is being made of the stations by local interests and Ryde Esplanade station is next for redevelopment.

Anyone who has not visited the Isle of Wight recently would find a day on the Island Line most enjoyable (full through ticketing – including the Wightlink catamaran from Portsmouth Harbour – from all mainland stations). There is also a direct link at Smallbrook Junction to the excellent Isle of Wight Steam Railway.

### ■ ■ Bournemouth

A successful AGM was held in Bournemouth on 15 March. Mr Phil Dominey, Stakeholder Manager for SWT, was our guest speaker and he gave a realistic report of how the company is managing its new franchise (we agreed to differ over contentious issues like Class 450s on the Portsmouth line), and he answered many members' questions concerning future developments fairly and frankly. The welcome news of extra services on the Waterloo-Salisbury-Exeter line was covered in *Railwatch* 115 by Devon & Cornwall. These move some way towards meeting our suggestions for improvements to this important route. A table of Wessex branch proposals for all aspects of rail developments in this area was agreed at the AGM and it will be circulated widely during the summer.

### ■ ■ Cross Country – long distance

Several branches commented in *Railwatch* 115 on the unimaginative new Cross Country timetables. Through journeys from the South Coast to NE England and Scotland will be almost impossible in 2009, with just one Bournemouth-Newcastle train daily and none to Scotland. Restoration of a proper long-distance cross-country network should be a high Railfuture priority. And we should also press ATOC to produce a booklet similar to the old blue *Guide to High Speed Rail Services*.

### ■ ■ Transformation

Bournemouth Station is well worth a visit by anyone interested in station architecture. The new glass roof has helped transform it from a dreary chasm to a pleasant place.

**WAGONS ROLL** Freight trains will again be entering the UK from Spain, France and Germany this year following the takeover of EWS by Deutsche Bahn. DB intends to create a long-haul freight rail network in Europe with the new high-speed rail link also being used for freight. But, delivering this year's CILT rail lecture, in memory of the late Sir Robert Reid, Keith Heller, chief executive officer of EWS, warned that there were not enough electrified lines in Britain.