

Bikes on trains plea

A petition designed to encourage the use of trains by cyclists has been put on the 10 Downing Street website by York Cycle Campaign.

It points out that "there is no minimum requirement for train operators to carry bicycles and each operator has a different set of rules and booking procedures. This makes the system extremely complex to use, especially where multiple operators are used.

"It's not possible to book bicycle reservations online and hence one does not know whether there will be room for a bike on a train when a ticket is purchased (note, advanced tickets cannot subsequently be altered to a train with available bicycle carriage space). Some operators have extremely poor provision. The Crosscountry service has reduced the capacity of its trains from four bicycles per train to two bicycles.

"Clearly, a national policy is required with a fully integrated booking system with incentives and requirements for operators to improve capacity."

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/bikes-on-trains/>

Win with Railfuture lottery

There are six great reasons to join the Railfuture Lottery – six prizes every month with a current top prize of £40. Half the money raised goes in prizes, with the remaining funds, less expenses, helping our society's campaigns.

It costs just £1 per entry per month and you can get more details by writing to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk, IP9 2ND, or email lottery@railfuture.org.uk.

Recent prize winners are: June:

Bryan Ranwell, David Stocks, Alexander Macfie, Alan Koolman, John Ward and William Brown.

July: Colin Rayner, Gareth Davies, Susie Morrow, Keith Porter, David Porter and Felix Schmid.

August: Neville Bramhall, David Bushell, Keith Bullard, John Ward, Henry Brougham and Michael Oakley.

September: Francis Thomas, Mike Kewell, P J Rowland, Alan & Hilary Everett, Alan Thorpe, H R F Mills.

Railwatch

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Copy to: editor@railwatch.org.uk

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Membership £21 per year. Family: £21 plus £2 for each extra person. Pensioners, students and unemployed: £14. User groups, community and parish councils: Please apply for rates. New members apply to David Harby, 6 Carral Close, Lincoln LN5 9BD membership@railfuture.org.uk Renewals and other membership queries: Lloyd Butler, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND. Email: renewals@railfuture.org.uk

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Elections Board elections are held annually. Nomination forms can be obtained from Returning Officer, PO Box 7690, Hinckley LE10 9WJ. You can also download a form from www.railfuture.org.uk

Who's Who: Many other useful contact details can be found on the Railfuture website

LOCAL ACTION

Railfuture has regional groups which are involved in local issues and come together to support Railfuture on national campaigns. Here we give news of local action in the Railfuture regions.

Wales

By Rowland Pittard

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■ ■ Welcome development

Railfuture welcomed the draft Network Rail Wales route utilisation strategy that was issued in July and has responded to the consultation.

The strategy included many of the proposals included in *On Track for the 21st Century*, Railfuture's development plan for the railways of Wales and the borders. Railfuture comments include the need to meet the demands of additional freight and passenger services on the Newport to Shrewsbury Marches Line, the inclusion of unused freight paths between Margam and Newport that restrict the introduction of additional passenger services, the continued disruption of services on both Saturdays and Sundays for engineering work especially for Cross Border journeys, the need for faster North to South services (including the restoration of services taking three hours between Manchester and Cardiff), the continued changes to First Great Western and Virgin West Coast services that adversely affect the Arriva Trains Wales standard pattern timetable and the need for a greater integration of services between both rail and bus operators.

■ ■ Four ways forward

Railfuture has commented upon the four draft regional transport plans (SEWTA, SWWITCH, TAITH and TrACC) again stressing the need for coordinated integrated transport with good bus and rail interchanges and connections, and the continued need for transport for leisure purposes including transport from towns to countryside such as the four national parks for recreation with its health and well being advantages. The regional transport plans will inform the Wales Transport Plan that is being developed for consultation in the autumn.

■ ■ Cash aids expansion

Summer service improvements by ATW, in some cases assisted by Welsh Assembly Government funding, have included the use of class 150 units instead of single unit class 153, on the Pembroke Dock and Blaenau Ffestiniog branches, and an additional class 158 for the Cambrian Coast services.

■ ■ Speed-up ahead

The upper section of the branch to Rhymney was closed during August for embankment strengthening which will remove a longstanding speed restriction. Resignalling work continues at Newport.

At last, the go-ahead for Crossrail

London's Crossrail was approved in July when the parliamentary Bill received Royal Assent. When work gets under way it will be the largest civil engineering project in Europe. A £16billion funding package was announced in October 2007. After being talked about for decades, Crossrail should be in operation by 2017. It will mean faster journeys and a £20billion boost for the UK economy.

Railfuture campaign conference

Saturday 15 November 2008

CDSC, 24 Stephenson Way, Euston Square, London NW1 2DP.

High-speed rail: What does it mean for the passenger?



Oxford's £200m London link

Oxford could get a new regular train service to London in a £200million scheme that would also provide direct trains to Wembley stadium.

Chiltern Railways wants to run a service every half an hour from Oxford to London Marylebone via Bicester.

A quarter of a mile of track would be needed in Bicester, linking the Oxford-to-Bicester line with the Chiltern line.

Chiltern also wants to build a new station at Water Eaton to serve the existing bus-based park-and-ride provision there.

There could be 35 services from Bicester to Oxford a day, compared to the four currently. The scheme would give Oxford a train link with High Wycombe for the first time since 1964.

Chiltern Railways will meet the estimated £200million development costs itself and hopes the line could be up and running before the London 2012 Olympics.

Chiltern says the scheme would strengthen the case for the proposed Oxford to Milton Keynes East-West rail link.

Alison Mathias, a founder member of Oxford passenger group Ox Rail Action said: "We are unreservedly delighted."

Bob Langton, chairman of Bicester Vision, said: "This is terrific news."

Chiltern chairman Adrian Shooter said: "We have done a lot of work to develop this plan. It will greatly improve rail connections between London, Oxford and Bicester."

Let's hope the Department for Transport will grasp the opportunity to improve rail services to Oxford, which have been lacklustre for several years, as well as to expedite the East-West rail link.

Currently it seems the DfT does not recognise the unique economic, social and environmental benefits of rail. It apparently would be happy to build a road or a busway over the route of the East-West rail link if any scheme met the DfT's own appraisal criteria.

It is these criteria which have justified road building and airport expansion but have been holding back rail expansion

The DfT attitude was revealed on 10 March when Stephen Clark, head of national rail strategy at the DfT, gave a presentation entitled *The railway industry's high level output Statement 2009-2014* to the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport in Reading.

Members of Railfuture and the CILT made very clear the lack of progress on serious reopenings (EWRL, Oxford-Cambridge, the section from Bicester Town to Milton Keynes), and it seems DfT is not against them, but is worried about costs they may bring to the rest of the network as more traffic

is introduced over existing lines. We obviously still have a lot of work to do in bringing the DfT into the 21st century.

Progress on the East-West rail link has been incredibly slow although it seems the Oxford-Bletchley section is at last looking likely.

Following the successful completion of a "GRIP3" study and funding being committed to the next phase, the East West Rail consortium has been discussing with the DfT and Network Rail the scope of the next phase which includes pre-contract submission work.

This is expected to last a year and start in September. An East-West rail funding study group has been set up to identify a funding mechanism and how developers would agree a contribution.

The Regional Assembly is expected to play a lead role in this group. Railfuture and the Oxford to Bletchley Rail Action Committee continues to monitor the situation.

Representatives have met Dr Starkey, MP for Milton Keynes South West, for an update.

At Milton Keynes Central work is under way on a new bay platform which could service East-West trains. Also at Milton Keynes there is a new platform six (although platform five is now closed until signalling is upgraded at Christmas). Platform one has also been extended.

Another positive development will be the reopening of Corby station, Northants, in December.

Railfuture members are intending to be in Corby town centre before the opening, to give out information including railcard details and timetables.

The service may include a few peak-hour trains from Melton Mowbray and Oakham to London via Corby.

The problem of getting money for rail projects remains a big issue despite Government advice in Planning Policy Statement 12 which requires developers to enter into a section 106 agreement to contribute to the cost of infrastructure and services needed to support a development.

The process appears to have worked where developers of land to the west of Aylesbury have made a contribution to the new Aylesbury Vale Parkway station, providing the land for the new station, car park and approach roads.

However, in Oxfordshire, the county council has applied for and obtained outline planning permission for Grove/Wantage station, but has refused to ask for a developer contribution towards the cost of the station from the proposed development of 1,500 dwellings at Grove.

When Councillor Ian Hudspeth was asked about this at the First Great Western stakeholder conference on 5 March, he said that the

Charles Taylor rail champion

By Trevor Garrod

It is with sadness that we report the death on 10 August 10 of our member Charles Taylor, aged 91. A former teacher, he was credited with saving Felixstowe's passenger train from the axe. He had been a member of Railfuture and its predecessor since 1972 and was one of the founders of Felixstowe's East Suffolk Travellers' Association in 1972, which is one of the largest local public transport users' associations in East Anglia.

He was a modest man who was a born leader and visionary, said the current chairman of ESTA John Woollan.

For 36 years he worked hard to promote the use of public transport," he said.

Mr Taylor, who leaves a widow Joan and three children, was a great grandfather and great-great grandfather. He married in 1943 while he was serving in the Royal Navy.

He was secretary, chairman and later president of ESTA.

The Felixstowe association became a model for many others, and Charles participated in RDS-Railfuture meetings and conferences regionally and nationally giving the benefit of his wide experience. He was not afraid to cross swords with managers, politicians or other decision-makers, but always did so with sharp wit and old-fashioned courtesy.

Characteristic of Charles was the occasion when a railway manager at an East Anglia branch meeting was accused of presiding over untidy and neglected stations. He tried to respond by impressing us with his and his colleagues' elaborate system of form-filing and report-filing, only to be told politely by Charles: "But surely, sir, all that you have to do is to clean it!"

A service of thanksgiving for his life was held at St Andrew's Church in Felixstowe.



council could not ask for a contribution for the station, because there was no certainty that the station would be built.

He trotted out the usual arguments about lack of capacity on the Great Western main line, and no train service which could serve the new station.

But there will be extra capacity soon. When Didcot power station closes in 2015, there will be no more coal trains from Avonmouth on the main line, and with four tracks between Wantage Road and Challow it would be possible for trains stopping at Grove to be overtaken by non-stop trains.

A suitable train service could use a reopened East West rail link, running from Northampton and Milton Keynes to Bristol, while serving Grove and Corsham.

Two or three years ago, developers proposed building houses on the site of the old cement works at

Shipton-on-Cherwell and offered to pay for a new railway station, but this was rejected by the county council on the grounds that it was in the green belt.

The county also repeated the usual argument about lack of capacity, ignoring the fact that resignalling could increase capacity.

The proposal from developers for an eco-town of 15,000 dwellings around Weston-on-the-Green, 10 miles from Oxford and next to the A34/M40 Junction 9, includes their promise not only to build a new railway station but to pay for the complete cost of reopening the railway line from Bicester Town to Bletchley (£190million), and to build a tramway to the new station.

The Government has short-listed this proposal, which is on a green-field site, and rejected the proposal for Shipton-on-Cherwell, which is a brownfield site.