

Sporting line

A new £2billion railway is being built to Johannesburg's Tambo International Airport, and is expected to play a key role in South Africa's plans to host football's World Cup which is being staged in June and July next year.

The 50-mile Gautrain network has been under construction for three years and will eventually link the airport with Johannesburg's business centre as well as Pretoria.

The Gautrain is one of the few ways to mitigate the massive environmental impact of an event which involves staging 64 matches in nine cities.

Most visitors are expected not only to fly long-haul to South Africa but also to use air transport between the match venues. It takes 17 hours to drive the 880 miles from Johannesburg to Cape Town.

The event will generate 2.75million tonnes of carbon emissions, according to an international football association report, eight times more than the 2006 World Cup in

Germany where fans were able to use the high-speed train network.

But the Gautrain is at least a step in the right direction. Trains will run every 12 minutes in peak hours and there will be a network of feeder buses which will provide links within a 10-mile radius of each of the 10 stations with a bus every 12 minutes during peak hours and bus stops every half a mile.

Smart card tickets will work for train, bus and car parking at stations.

The four-car trains are being built in Derby by Bombardier and are based on the Electrostars already operating in Britain. Some are being assembled in South Africa using parts made in Britain.

The line's tunnels were completed in September but there were fears that the whole public-private project might not be completed in time for the football festival.

High-level talks were under way in November in a bid to speed up the work.

Keeping on track with Railwatch

The October 2009 issue of *Railwatch* was wrongly numbered 120. It should have read 121. The version uploaded to the Railfuture website was corrected to read 121. This issue is 122. We are sorry for the confusion.

Railwatch

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is edited by Robert Stevens and Ray King
4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU Tel 020 8985 8548
editor@railwatch.org.uk robert@railwatch.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

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

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Wales

■ ■ Rail for the future

Railfuture's Rowland Pittard appeared before the enterprise and learning committee of the Welsh Assembly Government in October to give evidence to its inquiry into future railway infrastructure in Wales. Railfuture urged that significant reductions in journey time can be made on the main line from London to South Wales before a high-speed line needs to be built. Journey times of one and half hours have been achieved by the present IC125 trains between Cardiff and London. This time can be achieved on a regular basis with electric trains using an upgraded main line and reduced numbers of stops. The slow approach speeds to Newport and Cardiff stations could be removed by track and platform improvements.

He also highlighted the need for improving the north-south line from Newport to Chester to use the 100mph capacity of the class 175 trains. The line should be doubled between Wrexham and Chester, signalling sections shortened, more passing loops provided, and improved station track layouts created at Hereford and Shrewsbury. Railfuture believes consideration should be given to the reinstatement of a western corridor line, which would see the Carmarthen-Aberystwyth and Afonwen-Bangor lines reinstated. This route, similar to one being developed in Ireland, could provide for limited stop services from Swansea to Bangor.

Railfuture's paper entitled *Progressive Electrification of the Railways of Wales* was presented. The progressive stages should be the Cardiff Valley lines, including the Vale of Glamorgan line and the Maesteg and Ebbw Vale branches. The Vale of Glamorgan line provides for a diversionary route. The Maesteg branch provides a turnback facility, reducing the pressure on Cardiff Central, and uses the electrified main line between Cardiff and Bridgend. New electric rolling stock will provide faster services and replace the existing life expired diesel units.

The next stage would be the North Wales coast line (from Crewe) and the Llandudno branch to provide direct electric services from North Wales stations to London and Manchester. This should be followed by the Marches line, West Wales lines and the Cambrian lines.

On a more general note, Rowland called for a progressive plan for speed upgrades and capacity improvements for the rail network across Wales and pointed out that the capacity of the Severn Tunnel can be doubled with better signalling and it can also be adapted for electrification.

He called for the construction of light rail networks in Welsh urban areas to be considered. Consideration should also be given to inter-urban tramways, for instance between Cardiff and Newport and in the Swansea Bay area.

Railfuture's development plan recommended the introduction of passenger services over the following lines which are at present out of use or only used by freight traffic – Pontyclun-Beddau, Ystrad Mynach-Nelson, Gaerwen-Llangefni and the reinstatement of the Bangor-Caernarfon, Grovesend-Pontdulais and Aberbeeg-Abertillery lines.

It suggested the following sites for new stations – Chepstow line (Magor, Celtic Lakes, St Mellons), Maesteg line (Llangynwyd, Brackla, St Fagans), Marches line (Caerleon, Pontrilas), Cambrian line (Bow Street, Carno), Shrewsbury-Chester (Baschurch, Whittington, Weston Rhyn, Cefn, Johnstown, Rossett, Chester Business Park), North Wales Coast (Queensferry, Connah's Quay, Bagillt, Greenfield).

To help transfer freight from road to rail, Railfuture suggests a network of mini terminals should be created across the rail network for the transfer of goods, and a fleet of diesel multiple unit freight trains to convey the traffic.

Railfuture also called for a Passenger Transport Authority for Wales and extra transport powers for the Welsh Assembly Government.

■ ■ Rail reopening hope

The BBC reports that the Welsh Assembly Government has asked Network Rail to study reopening two lines – Llangefni in Anglesey and Hirwaun on the Cynon Valley line, north of Aberdare. Both lines still have their tracks intact.