

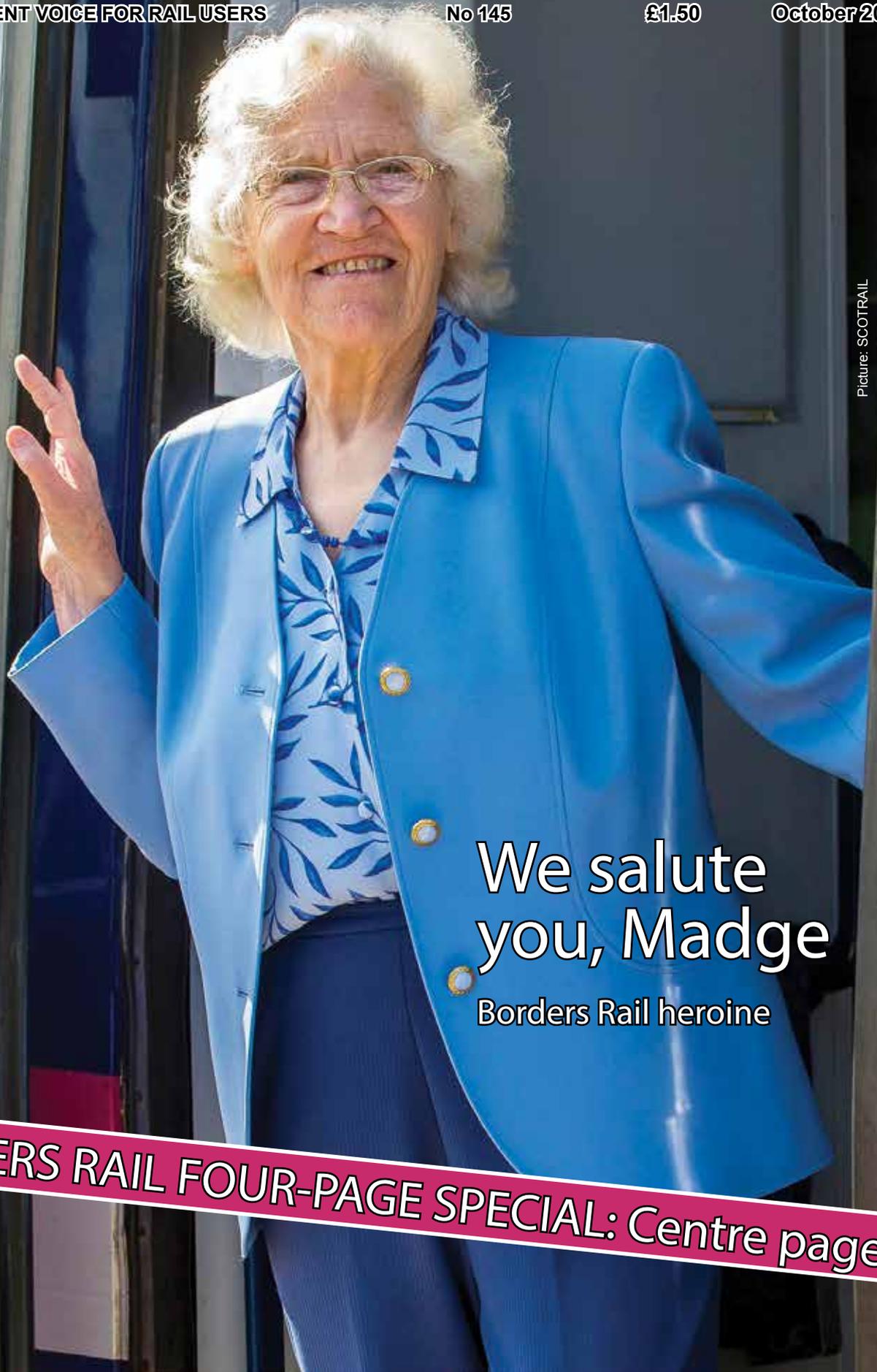
railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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Picture: SCOTRAIL

We salute
you, Madge

Borders Rail heroine

BORDERS RAIL FOUR-PAGE SPECIAL: Centre pages

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Madge Elliott is one of the campaigning heroines who fought long and hard for the reopening of the Borders Railway, which welcomed its first passengers on Sunday 26 July 2015, more than a month before it was officially opened by the Queen on Wednesday 9 September.

Mrs Elliot MBE, accompanied by her husband Bob, sons Kim and Sean, as well as other friends and family, joined a driver training service at Tweedbank station, making her one of the first people in the country to travel on the new route.

Born in Hawick in 1928, Madge is renowned for her fight to save the Waverley route from Edinburgh-Hawick-Carlisle.

Our four-page supplement, produced by Railfuture Scotland, celebrates the opening of the 30-mile-long Borders Railway and can be found in the centre of this *Railwatch*. More than 40

years ago, Madge led a petition to keep the line open and, on 18 December 1968 – along with son Kim – hand delivered it to Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Sadly, despite her efforts, the line closed on 6 January 1969. Not one to be put off, in 1999 Madge helped found the Campaign for Borders Rail, a grassroots group which pushed for the restoration of rail services to the Scottish Borders.

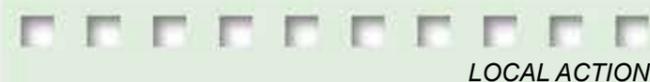
Kim said: "Experiencing the route first-hand is something we've all been looking forward to since the Borders Railway deal was concluded in 2012, and it's great to see my mother being honoured for the role she played in the reopening."

Infrastructure Secretary Keith Brown said: "It was a real privilege for me to meet Madge when we named a locomotive in her honour. Madge Elliott is a legend of the Borders and the railways."

How rail can help cities

Book review: *Rail and the City* Roxanne Warren has written a beautifully produced book. Written from the standpoint of the architect, it is aimed at a United States car-orientated audience but contains plenty of examples of good practice elsewhere – such as in Zurich. The waste of city space devoted to car parking is emphasised. Only 2% of the US population live near railway stations and park and ride has perverse consequences. The capacities of rail systems are limited by the size of the station car parks! Car

parcs are heavily subsidised and though free to motorists, costs are passed on to factory and supermarket customers. With 87% of US trips currently by car, emphasis must be placed on walking and cycling as well as developing land near stations. The book is an inspiring source for rail development activists and a pertinent message to politicians. Roxanne Warren *Rail and the City: Shrinking our carbon footprint while reimagining urban space*. Cambridge Mass, MIT Press (2014). ISBN 978-0-262-02780-9



LOCAL ACTION

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes

chris.hyomes@railfuture.org.uk



Picture: NORTHERN RAIL

Work starts on a new rail station for Bradford

Construction work on a new £10.8 million rail station at Low Moor, Bradford, was officially launched in August. It is the third new station to be built in West Yorkshire, following Apperley Bridge and Kirkstall Forge which are expected to open later this year. Low Moor is on the Calder Valley Line between Bradford Interchange and Halifax and is close to the M62/M606 road junction. It is expected to attract park and ride passengers which will reduce road congestion when it opens next year. Pedestrians and cyclists will have direct access to the station from the adjacent Spen Valley Greenway which uses a disused railway line between Cleckheaton, Dewsbury, Heckmondwike and Bradford. "It has been a long journey to get to this point, with a number of difficulties that have had to be overcome, but persistence and hard work have paid off and I look forward to the opening of the station," said Councillor Val Slater of Bradford Council. There will be 130 car parking spaces as well as cycle parking. The new station is expected to be open in spring 2016. The Friends of Low Moor Station are now hoping that Grand Central will serve the station, as well as Northern Rail. Initially there will be no direct service to Manchester. The Leeds-Bradford-Halifax-Huddersfield service will serve Low Moor with only one train per hour in each direction.

The picture shows, from left: Natalie Loughborough of Northern Rail, Councillor Val Slater, Cllr David Warburton, Cllr Sarah Ferriby, Cllr Keith Wakefield, Network Rail's Dan Guiher, MP Judith Cummins, Steve Butcher and Graham Walker of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Network Rail's Steve Watson.

Wensleydale celebrates with Revolving Words Revolving Words, the festival of railway literature, is being staged at Bedale from 23-25 October, as part of the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Wensleydale Railway. More information: www.revolvingwords.com/

Officials move to Leeds to join Rail North Department for Transport officials are to be based in Wellington House, Leeds, to keep in touch with day-to-day rail operations when management of franchises is shared with the Rail North group of 29 local transport authorities. Cities in the north of England are also involved in Transport for the North, which is trying to improve on the original plans put forward by High Speed Two.

Yorkshire Post in battle to kickstart electrification The *Yorkshire Post's* Back on Track campaign is calling on the Government to reinstate the TransPennine and Midland main line electrification projects and to give a clear timetable for their delivery following the Government's announcement in June of a "pause" in the programmes.



THE CAMPAIGN FOR RAIL FREIGHT by Peter Wakefield

Searching for rail freight construction growth

The rail freight construction sector is experiencing strong growth as a result of increased demand for building materials. This demand is being met with a daily average of 60 bulk trains linking quarries, works and factories to regional terminals and depots. Typically these terminals are served on a just-in-time basis with cement, stone, sand, building blocks and steel products and are

located in a variety of sites from urban areas such as Bow in London to rural areas next to strategic trunk roads such as Kennett in Suffolk.

Fewer, longer trains give rail freight an efficiency edge that can be unbeatable so the focus has been, as far as possible, on providing much longer and heavier trains. However, such is the demand that new larger locations are

also being sought where bulk handling as well as storage, processing and distribution can take place. These sites must be able to accommodate high capacity wagons, with minimum train lengths of 450 metres that carry 2,000 tonnes of payload, have sufficient land available for product storage, road access for onward delivery by lorry, and be suitably zoned in the district plan. Industry is

actively seeking places where such activity can take place. By incorporating a physical link to the railway network, a site becomes an access point to rail. We welcome local knowledge from branches, groups, individual members and other interested parties who could suggest suitable locations for further detailed examination by the society's freight group. Please email: freight@railfuture.org.uk

peter.wakefield@railfuture.org.uk

Wagonload and trainload

Recent work to establish new railway passenger services uncovered a pent-up demand for rail freight from multinational companies. These companies appear to be taking their obligations to operate sustainably and reduce carbon dioxide emissions seriously and want to use the railway. Of course they need a good old-fashioned canvass to tell them how, when and at what cost. That does not seem to happen nowadays for the more difficult to carry finished goods – which can be less than a train load.

Reading through DB Schenker's excellent in-house magazine, it is encouraging to learn how valued wagonload services are, both for the customer and DBS itself. These services work well for the environment and the economy. That is, until you read the catch! All this positive development takes place in Germany and its neighbours but not in the UK. Why no innovation here? It is sad to learn that DB Schenker (formerly EWS), is to make 118 drivers redundant around the country. More than 230 staff altogether will go, including managers, clerks and fitters, depots may be closed, including Tyne Yard.

Coal is going slowly so change is necessary but rail services are needed for all of industry here as much as in Germany. It is good news that DB Schenker is developing land at Barking Ripple Lane into a state-of-the-art freight hub but let us have some real innovation and investment to develop new domestic traffic and create more skilled jobs.

Innovation is occurring in other parts of the country. There is work to load timber along the Far North Line, and to get bulk whisky back on rail. Progress is patchy though. Companies are interested in using the new terminal at Georgemas Junction but so far cannot. The rail freight companies find it difficult to risk capital to get a new service up and running to cater for this latent demand. If it is not on rail, it is clogging the road network further.

Out with the old, in with the new

Rail freight has to adapt to changing times, as we all do. Coal mining in Britain is virtually extinguished – as gradually will be the burning of our traditional energy source.

Imported coal is still important but much of it will also go. Meanwhile the demand for electricity is increasing and as a part of the future mix, there will still be huge power stations. Some, such as Drax, will be fed by biomass pellets, currently imported from Georgia, USA, and taken by train from northern ports such as Tyne Dock and Liverpool.

To ensure the transfer of biomass from ship to train to power station, ports are investing large sums in equipment that also keeps the biomass pellets dry.

Apart from Tyne Dock, several million tonnes a year will be transferred to rail in new facilities at Hull, Immingham and Liverpool. At Liverpool, a facility is to be constructed to enable three million tonnes a year of biomass to be taken by rail across the Pennines to Drax.

The old fleet of coal wagons will probably be converted into new biomass wagons. It is worth remembering that biomass is

less dense than coal so for every one coal train, there needs to be one and a half for biomass. More local sources of biomass are being identified and rail freight could play a big part in that too. A company called Pelco is seeking planning permission for five factories to convert straw into pellets to burn in power stations. Currently wending their way through the planning system in East Cambridgeshire and Norwich are two applications, one for a factory to convert wheat and certain other straws into pellets at Potter Group's intermodal terminal at Queen Adelaide, Ely, Cambridgeshire.

The other is for a district heating power station at Generation Park, Norwich. This power station and connected developments are on the site of a former coal-fired station on land behind Crown Point railway depot in Norwich. Three trains a week will connect the Ely and Norwich plants using sets of former coal wagons converted to the new product.

Railfuture East Anglia, with the help of the freight group, has supported the Ely planning application. The reasons why are worth reiterating as they demonstrate the strengths of rail freight:



POWER: A class 70 diesel locomotive at Ipswich

1 We endorse the proposed movement of the finished pellet products by rail. This secures the future use of the rail sidings and network and contributes to wider sustainable transportation objectives.

2 The use of rail enables the final product to reach a wide renewables market at relatively little additional cost, minimising the transportation of product by road. Each train will carry 1,180 tonnes of pellets. This is equivalent to over 40 heavy lorry movements in and 40 heavy lorry movements out per train. On the basis of the proposed three trains per week this is equivalent to around 12,500

total heavy lorry movements per annum which will be offset.

3 The straw required to feed the pellet production plant already moves by road and a facility such as this will ensure that straw movements are minimised to a sustainable radius and that the product can be transported by rail.

4 The proposed site and adjacent site has a long history of haulage by road and rail. There is currently limited aggregate-handling rail use and the development site itself was formerly a rail-fed container-handling facility. The proposed pellet plant would

Scotland

By Jane Ann Liston secretary@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Challenge to Abellio over Club 50 substitute for Club 55

The big news for Scotland and the rest of Britain is the Borders reopening. However, other campaigning has been carrying on, from staffing a Railfuture stand at model rail exhibitions in Perth and St Andrews, to challenging the new ScotRail franchise holder Abellio on its proposals to replace the popular Club 55 flat-rate £19 return fare between any two Scottish stations on off-peak trains in off-peak months, with the less generous Club 50 offer of 10% (20% if booked online) deduction all year round.

■ ■ Go-ahead for Mossend rail freight terminal

Some good news on the freight front is the go-ahead for the international rail freight terminal in Mossend, which may help compensate for the loss of business from the soon-to-close Longannet power station.

■ ■ Census statistics could aid Glasgow Crossrail battle

For the Glasgow Crossrail campaign, RailQwest is examining 2011 census data for information on east-west travel patterns, especially from Ayrshire, Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and south-west Glasgow suburbs to central and east Scotland, particularly Airdrie, Bathgate, Livingston and the Edinburgh area, to identify the location and volume of commuting journeys not currently made by rail. The gap between Glasgow Central and Queen Street stations is a disincentive to rail use for such journeys.

■ ■ Dunbar switches from Virgin East Coast to ScotRail

Rail Action Group East of Scotland welcomes the end of the historical anomaly of Dunbar being outwith ScotRail jurisdiction. It has been transferred from Virgin East Coast's domain to Abellio.

■ ■ Postcard protest over station reopening delays

Postcards protesting about the delay in opening of East Linton and Reston stations from 2016 to 2018 (caused by the shortage of rolling stock) have been delivered to the Scottish Government. The delay could have implications for the protection of the train paths, because of open access proposals for London-Edinburgh trains. Railfuture wants to see the Scottish Government's station investment fund used for the stations.

■ ■ An extra convenience for North Berwick passengers

In 'loo' of no toilets at the station, North Berwick community rail partnership has negotiated access for rail passengers to conveniences at Westgate Galleries.

■ ■ Coffee call to aid campaign for station at Beattock

Beattock Station Action Group is holding a fundraising coffee morning in Moffat Town Hall on Saturday 21 November. The regional transport planning authority SWesTrans is assisting the group to identify the funding for the required STAG report (Scottish Transport Action Guidance).

■ ■ Road trip route for campaign for rail reopening

Fife Council has agreed to fund a second STAG report after Transport Scotland decreed the results of the 2008 version out of date. With the help of a roaming road-show, LevenMouth Rail Campaign is collecting signatures on a petition demanding reopening of the line from Thornton on the main East Coast Line to Leven.

■ ■ Starlink in focus as Borders Railway inspires the media

St Andrews Rail Link has enjoyed media attention thanks to the Borders reopening, including a two-page spread in the *Daily Mail* and an item on BBC Radio Scotland. The campaign now has a Twitter account and a Facebook page where it is collecting 'likes' and is grateful for the assistance and advice of veteran successful Alloa campaigner Cameron Little.

■ ■ New stations in Dundee's strategy for the future

New stations at Newburgh and Wormit, subject to STAG, have been included in the latest strategic Dundee-centred Tayplan.

Contacts: Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES) <http://www.rages.org.uk/>, Beattock Station Action Group (BSAG) <http://www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/>, St Andrews Rail Link (Starlink) campaign <http://www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/>, <https://www.facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign> [#STARLinkRail](https://twitter.com/starlinkrail), LevenMouth Rail Campaign: <http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>, Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG): <https://www.capitalrail.org.uk/>, Newburgh Train Station campaign: <http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/>

Rail may have to rely on antique cast-offs

By Ian Brown

ian.brown@railfuture.org.uk

Before the general election on 7 May, announcements flowed on investment in our railways. Rail had joined health, education and the economy as a big issue.

Railfuture had issued its manifesto for a bigger, better railway. Optimism was high, but even then there were doubts.

Why for instance did Network Rail keep saying yes to so many electrification schemes without effective resources in place to deliver?

Even North West electrification, which started with such optimism, has foundered, with contractors pulling out and the Farnworth Tunnel scheme delayed because of the "discovery" of voids, usually caused by water seepage. Yet every civil engineer knows that old tunnels have voids and subsidence issues.

On the operational side, solving some of the rolling stock problems depended on cascading electric trains to replace ancient diesel multiple units and Pacers.

With project timescales slipping and others, such as Midland main line and Trans-Pennine electrification being abandoned for now, the rolling stock plan is also in jeopardy.

We can be sure that if and when some of these schemes restart, the delay will be measured in decades not months.

The Government has blamed Network Rail, and its chairman has obediently stepped down.

The Government has called for a stop to "incompetence" and waste and ordered reviews, which will inevitably cause more delay.

There is also talk of Network Rail being reorganised and even privatised. None of this will help to create a bigger, better railway.

After another election, a very different Labour leadership emerged on 12 September which could mean the resurgence of an effective opposition.

Again railways are high on the agenda, with calls for nationalising the railways, bringing back British Rail and scrapping HS2.

We should be very worried, because these political approaches will not deliver the bigger, better railway that we need now, particularly in the area of capacity. More plans could be put on hold just at the time of greatest opportunity.

An effective opposition might however moderate some of the more extreme privatisation options such as selling off the stations, which risks taking – fragmentation to new levels of



IAN BROWN

complexity. Network Rail may have serious leadership issues, particularly in the area of project delivery, but rail service delivery on the ground is more impressive as the network copes with more trains on a constricted network.

Punctuality may be slipping because the pipes are squeaking as congestion increases and, in some cases, as a result of much-needed capacity upgrades such as London Bridge.

Another problem with the pre general election promises was the focus on inter-city and routes serving London.

More welcome was the invitation to tender for the Northern franchise which stipulates replacing the wretched Pacers with a combination of new build and a cascade of electric trains from Thameslink.

However, this is becoming more difficult by the day, given the cancellation of TransPennine electrification and delays with the North West electrification project, compounded by a further tranche of transfers of the TransPennine class 170 diesel fleet away from the north.

The Northern Hub is also looking flaky. The Manchester Victoria rebuild is fabulous, but with only four through platforms is hardly adequate for existing services, never mind the massive growth of the northern quarter of Manchester and the resurgence of Salford.

The rail supply industry has of course picked up on this, particularly the need to accommodate growth without depending on an ill-thought-out cascade of electric trains and fewer electric wires than anticipated.

To fill the gaps, we now have London Underground D78 Tube trains built in 1980 being converted by Vivarail into prototype diesel multiple units.

Rolling stock company Porterbrook is also revamping some Pacers to make them suitable for the disabled, but with fewer seats. The market for such initiatives now looks enormous given the failures elsewhere. Compare



VIVARAIL'S TRAIN OF TOMORROW? Electrically powered former London Tube trains being rebuilt as diesel multiple units could solve some of the problems caused by the shortage of diesel trains. See page 11 for more details

this hand-me-down approach on the railway to Ryanair. The management of Ryanair (love its style or not) makes money by providing ever more capacity for passengers at competitive fares.

Ryanair succeeds by leasing the most modern and most efficient planes and the most cost-efficient crewing practices.

As recently as 11 September, Ryanair bought 100 new Boeing 737-800 aircraft. Did anyone expect Ryanair to buy refurbished Viscounts?

To take advantage of this growing market, respond to demand, and to plug the gap caused by post-election failures, the railway needs an order for 100 new diesel multiple units.

These are serious problems but there are some bright spots. Light rail, sponsored by devolved authorities, is thriving. Two new extensions – to Toton Lane and Clifton – give Nottingham a city-wide rail system.

In Manchester, work has started on the Second City crossing and attention is turning to further extensions.

In Edinburgh, passengers love the new trams, which took so long to deliver. On a recent integrated journey from Glasgow to Edinburgh Airport, I was unable to board the first tram at Edinburgh Park because of overcrowding. Expect extensions to the system here too.

Also in Scotland we have just seen Network Rail successfully complete the Winchburgh Tunnel six-week blockade for electrification of the Glasgow-Edinburgh line. Proper arrangements were put in for diverted passengers and the project was finished and reopened on time and to budget. I wonder what the people who accomplished this think about

the negative press and political approach to railways.

We have also just witnessed the reopening of the Borders Line as far as Galashiels and Tweedbank, which we hope will be the first stage of reopening the entire Waverley route to Carlisle.

The Borders Railway is a triumph, even if the specification for the project was rather limited. It is also a triumph for those campaigning for so long. Sustained targeted rail campaigning has worked, and despite current industry and political difficulties will work elsewhere when potential demand and the economic business case is strong.

Railfuture is increasingly focusing on those campaigns which are economically sustainable. Campaigns such as Lewes-Uckfield, March-Wisbech, Skipton-Colne and Oxford-Cambridge may well also succeed in the same way as the Borders reopening as they meet sustainability and ridership criteria, provided we can avoid politics and stay focused. Interestingly, three of the four listed above also significantly increase the general resilience and capacity of the rail network as will the Borders line when it is extended to Carlisle.

Nearly everybody loves railways. Railways now have the added burden of sustaining our cities and our economy and also have become a political football.

Our job as rail campaigners is to break through this, show and tell what can and is being achieved, engage with politicians who go with the tide, and continue to campaign for a bigger, better railway.

■ Ian Brown CBE FCILT is Railfuture's director of policy. He is a former managing director of London Rail and was awarded the CBE for services to railways.

North West

By Arthur Thomson arthur.thomson@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ North of England set to lose even more electric trains

Railfuture North West has learned that Porterbrook, the owner of 17 class 323 electric trains operating on Northern Rail services south and east of Manchester, has declined to offer them to the bidders for the new franchise, and may offer them to London Midland and Centro in the West Midlands, citing reductions in operating costs by having all units in one depot. This means replacement trains will be needed for the new Northern franchise in April next year. Although Northern now has some refurbished four-car former Thameslink class 319 units on Liverpool-Manchester Airport, Wigan and Manchester Victoria services, there would not be enough to cover all 323-operated services. South East operators are also bidding for the remaining class 319 fleet. New trains were suggested by the Government in its invitation to tender, although these would not be available at the start of the new Northern franchise. Bidders might rely on class 315s from London which will be replaced by new trains in 2019. But there are reports that the 315s have already been earmarked for the Valley Lines electrification in South Wales. Some class 317s may also become available in 2016 when they are replaced by class 377s, but any four-car units will require shortening, as Flowery Field and Godley stations on the Manchester-Glossop/Hadfield line have only three-car platforms. Travelwatch North West has already raised the issue with local stakeholders and there is a petition against this change at <http://chn.ge/1LzMdY8>.

■ ■ Heritage line could provide direct link to Manchester

The *Rossendale Free Press* is campaigning for a commuter service to be introduced to Rawtenstall, using the existing heritage East Lancashire Railway. However, it has criticised a recent 45-page report, the East Lancashire Rail Connectivity Study by the county council, for failing to consider reopening rail lines even though the study accepts the area's economic development will be stifled by a lack of investment in train services. The *Free Press* says Rossendale Borough Council and MP Jake Berry, who have been campaigning for the revived rail link, have been left out on a limb by the county council. The appetite for more train services has been whetted by the £8.8 million reopening of Todmorden Curve in May making it possible to travel direct from Burnley to Manchester by train for the first time in 40 years. The reopening though was held up by a shortage of diesel trains.

■ ■ Skelmersdale rail service is firmly on track

Plans for bringing the railway back to Skelmersdale are firmly on track and not just pie in the sky, insists County Councillor Julie Gibson. Cllr Gibson told the *Southport Visitor* that a rail station would have a positive impact on the town's economic regeneration and encourage businesses to view the town as an ideal location to move to. "We want a commuter rail system that will enhance opportunities for people to work and live in Skelmersdale," she said. The aim is to link Skelmersdale by rail to Manchester, Liverpool and Preston. Cllr Gibson said that Lancashire County Council will soon be going out to consultation on the development of the station. "This will not only be the biggest development to happen to Skelmersdale in my life time, but the biggest in West Lancashire," she said. Skelmersdale, six miles from Wigan, was designated a new town in 1961. It now has a population of around 38,000.

■ ■ Another electrification delay likely for Blackpool

Electrification of the Preston-Blackpool line is likely to be delayed, following the withdrawal by "mutual consent" of Network Rail's main contractor Balfour Beatty from the project in August. The line was scheduled for completion in May next year but had already been put back to 2017. Electrification between Manchester, Liverpool and Wigan was completed earlier this year. Meanwhile the ORR recently approved an application by open access operator Alliance Rail Holdings for six return services from Blackpool to London from 2018.

Cymru Wales

By Rowland Pittard
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■ ■ Cardiff Central station

Cardiff Central station, currently used by 13 million people a year, unveiled improvements in August to help it cope with expected growth to 23 million by 2023. A new south entrance was brought into use, linking directly to the main subway. A corridor connects to the smaller subway which gives access to the platform lifts and also to the east stairway to platforms 6 and 7. The new platform 8 is complete with shelters and information screens but there is no track and it is not expected to be brought into use until late next year. The new entrance hall has five entry gates including one wide gate, a booking office, ticket machines and an office for unpaid fares. New staff rooms for train crew have been built adjacent to the new platform and will be brought into use in the autumn. The existing temporary buildings on platforms 3/4 for First Great Western staff and on 6/7 for Arriva Trains Wales staff will be removed. It was, at first, anticipated that the new entrance would be brought into use for the rugby internationals in 2014 but it was ready for the first rugby international in 2015 on 5 September and football international on 6 September.

■ ■ Double track will speed up north-south journeys

The new double-line section between Wrexham and Chester (Rossett Junction to Saltney Junction) will be brought into use from November, controlled from Chester power signal box. A single-line section remains between Rossett Junction and Wrexham North but the £44 million project, commissioned by the Welsh Government, is designed to speed up journeys from Holyhead to Cardiff.

■ ■ Diesel train shortage prevents timetable improvements

Railfuture branches responded to the Arriva Trains Wales consultation on December 2015 timetable changes. However, no significant changes are possible because no additional rolling stock is available. Improvements on the Heart of Wales and Cambrian lines will be evaluated before the May 2016 timetable. To mitigate the problem of scarce diesel multiple units, ATW deployed its locomotive-hauled train to provide extra Holyhead-Chester services during the summer holidays.

■ ■ Flaws in delivery of Welsh integrated transport plan

The national transport finance plan was published in August, listing schemes the Welsh Government expects to deliver. The aim is to provide a more integrated and sustainable transport system for all. However, the revised government-funded Traws Cymru 'connecting people and communities' bus timetable from Wrexham to Barmouth does not offer good connections with train services at Ruabon and Barmouth.

■ ■ Railfuture aids Assembly inquiry into bus links

Railfuture Wales has responded to the Welsh Assembly's enterprise and business committee's inquiry into bus and community transport services in Wales.

■ ■ Screens, loudspeakers and humps to help passengers

Station improvements are taking place across Wales and all stations now have information screens and, except at the larger stations, are supported by loudspeaker announcements. Raised platform sections, known as Harrington Humps, have been installed at many low-platform stations. Bridges with ramps or lifts are being installed at Port Talbot, Llandaff, Radyr and Machynlleth and have been installed recently at Chirk, Pontypridd and Ystrad Mynach.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk



Ticket for Europe

By Trevor Garrod

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MEPs on the transport and tourism committee studied the prospect of a European-wide multimodal ticket earlier this year. A subsequent report by Dr Dieter-Lebrecht Koch MEP was accepted by the full European Parliament in July.

Dr Koch stressed the need for Europe-wide multimodal tickets and challenged operators and the digital industry to develop innovative systems to introduce cross-border real-time information so EU citizens can "get to their destination in the most sustainable, cheapest or quickest manner".

The European Passengers Federation welcomed this initiative.

EPF has decided to produce its own report on good and bad practice with existing ticketing. Good practice could be the Dutch Flyer rail-sea-rail ticket between any station in East Anglia and any station in the Netherlands, or the Eurostar add-on from London to "any Belgian station".

Bad practice could be a journey from Oxford to Montpellier via Paris requiring separate tickets from separate outlets for up to five different stages of the journey. Please log on to www.epf.eu or contact Trevor Garrod if you can help with this project. It is hoped to produce a report by the start of 2016.

Annual conference

The annual conference of the European Passengers Federation

will be held on 8-9 April 2016 in the Stadtmision, Berlin, only 10 minutes from the central station. One of the topics will be ticketing and information, as part of a session on cross-border travel, as well as reports on the work of EPF member associations will also feature. You can book on the EPF website www.epf.eu

Visit to Parliament

The European Passengers Federation is organising a trip to Brussels on Monday and Tuesday 9-10 November, including a meeting with an MEP and the chance to listen to a debate in the transport and tourism committee. A translator will be available. Four Railfuture members have already expressed an interest in the trip.

Nice or Nantes

Following a short September break in Rheims, the next week-long visit of RDS Group Travel will also be to France, in late April or early May.

It will be either to Nantes in the west or Nice in the south, travelling from London by Eurostar and then onwards by TGV. There will be an advertisement in the December *Railwatch*, with booking forms being sent out immediately after Christmas.

Please contact Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ, trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk if you are also interested in the Parliament visit or for more information about the French trip. Please include an SAE.

MORE PUBLICITY FOR INTERRAIL

By Donald Payne

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Railfuture's international group has been concerned for some time about the apparent lack of publicity for Interrail in Britain.

This was reinforced during the research for our international travel leaflet. Simon Hope and I have investigated the possibility of a Railfuture leaflet to promote Interrail travel.

Simon produced some designs while I conducted online research into how Interrail was publicised in Europe, assisted by contributions from some EPF colleagues. The results varied widely from very good in countries like Germany, France and Norway, to abysmal in others.

In July, Trevor Garrod, Simon Hope and I met in Utrecht with members of the Eurail Group, which is responsible for promoting and administering the Interrail ticket scheme for European residents and Eurail tickets for

travellers from outside Europe. We met Eurail's Carlo Boselli, Christina Maier and Anne-Sophie Vaxelaire who told us that Interrail attracts 500,000 passengers per year, and has developed a route-planning app and provides a booking facility at www.interrail.eu.

Surprisingly, 23% of Interrail sales are in Britain, while the highest proportion of older people using Interrail are from Sweden and Norway.

The Interrail team showed us their leaflet *Interrail Information - Inspiration and Prices* which is distributed to some train operators. We had never seen these. Has any *Railwatch* reader?

We plan to submit suggestions for the 2016 leaflet and poster revisions, and will provide information about where they could be displayed. We also recommended that the Association of European Rail Agents be sent publicity.



ROSTOCK: The image of a steam train appears on this tram as it passes cars and a cyclist

Picture: PHILIP BISATT

To the Baltic and back

By Philip Bisatt

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Railfuture members visited Rostock on the coast of the Baltic, better known by the Germans as the Ostsee.

We took the 10.58 Eurostar from London St Pancras to Brussels, where we planned to continue to Köln by a connecting inter-city express service, and thence to Bremen for an overnight stop.

Unfortunately, a broken-down train at Liège, industrial action by one of the German drivers' unions and freak weather in the shape of a tornado took us on an alternative route using secondary lines, via Verviers and Aachen-Duisburg. We were impressed though by the way Deutsche Bahn staff printed out alternative routes and schedules.

After an interesting walking tour of Bremen, we continued to Rostock via Hamburg, using secondary routes via Schwerin and Wismar because of the dispute.

Rostock is a Hanseatic city and was the major port of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany).

Despite bombing in 1942 and 1944, the city retains fine buildings, and there have been considerable new developments since German reunification in 1989.

The city also has an excellent public transport system, well integrated as one expects in Germany, with a network of trams at its core. The tram system has been extended to serve new suburbs south of Hauptbahnhof, via a 2007-built tunnel.

We visited the offices of the Rostocker Straßenbahn AG (RSAG), the Verkehrsverbund (transport authority) for the city area.

RSAG's chief executive Andrea Doliwa and the operating department's Nico Falke gave interesting presentations. We were told the city's population fell from 250,000 to 150,000 after 1989 but then climbed back to 205,000. The decline was largely

caused by people moving from the city to suburbs and rural areas, although people have also moved away to find work elsewhere. Unemployment is relatively high at around 11%.

There was a corresponding fall in the use of public transport, but in recent years patronage has been growing again.

Impressively, people can normally take bikes on trams and buses. In the most recent travel survey (2013), the modal share of journeys in Rostock was shown to be 35% car, 17% public transport, 14% bike and no less than 32% on foot.

While the general picture seems rosy compared with much of the UK, there have been some cut-backs. An S-Bahn service in the eastern part of the Rostock area was withdrawn when the Land (regional) authorities refused to continue subsidies.

Within RSAG, the transport operators make mutual decisions on fares, service levels, and with the Verkehrsverbund acting as a mediator.

There is a zonal fare structure with 18 rings, and revenue is pooled between operators.

We explored Rostock's coastal offshoot of Warnemünde, and also travelled to Schwerin, Wismar, the resort of Kühlungsborn (using the 'Molli' steam train from Bad Doberan) and the island of Rügen.

On Rügen, a branch line is operated under what might in Britain be called a microfranchise, currently the Pressnitzalbahn, which runs an hourly service using a modern and impressive single-unit diesel railcar. It was suggested that this could be a model for consideration by heritage railways and for potential reopening schemes in Britain.

Thanks to Marcel Drews and Christian Teske from our German sister organisation, Pro Bahn, to RSAG and to Trevor Garrod for his sterling organisation.

Thames Valley

By Martin Smith
mrsmith1934@gmail.com

■ ■ Witney-Oxford twists

Oxfordshire County Council has decided to spend the available funding for the A40 corridor on the construction of an eastbound Eynsham-Wolvercote bus lane. A developer planning new housing at Hanborough has offered to give land for an additional 400-space car park at Hanborough station, on the down side of the line, which is scheduled for redoubling. This would more than double the existing parking at the station, but local people are worried it will increase car traffic on the narrow and twisty A4095 from Witney.

■ ■ County council continues push for Cowley reopening

Railfuture Thames Valley members had a further meeting with the policy and strategy manager of Oxfordshire County Council. We were assured a service on the Cowley branch would be viable, even without further housing development, but it would be dependent on quadrupling and resignalling between Oxford and Kennington Junction accompanying electrification work now "paused" by the Government. The outline planning permission for Grove-Wantage station lapsed in 2011, but the council is now looking for a site further west of Wantage Road, nearer to the planned housing at Grove airfield. Earthworks for the new A338 road bridge swallowed up half of the former goods yard at Wantage Road.

■ ■ High hopes for Buckinghamshire new rail links

Railfuture Thames Valley had a useful meeting with the senior planning officer at Buckinghamshire County Council which at present has no comprehensive transport policy, but sees its core issues in the south of the county, with inadequate parking at Taplow and Iver stations. It wants a new car park at Iver. The other main rail arteries in the county are served by Chiltern Railways. On the north-south route, plans are in hand to close the gap between Milton Keynes and Aylesbury. That just leaves the gap between Bourne End and High Wycombe.

■ ■ East West Rail reopening dependent on legal process

The reconstruction of the line from Bicester to Bedford and upgrading the line from Claydon Junction to Princes Risborough have been included in the application for a single Transport and Works Act order. We hope this will not get bogged down with endless objections and legal procedures, as happened with the Bicester-Oxford order.

■ ■ Planners clear way for Marylebone to Oxford service

The final section of the reconstruction of the Bicester-Oxford line from Oxford Parkway to Oxford North Junction, with two new bays at Oxford station, has been granted planning permission. Work can now start as soon as possible. Objections from some North Oxford residents who wanted the imposition of a 40mph speed limit to reduce noise and vibration were overruled.

■ ■ Trams could transform Oxford area with Metro network

A Metro service from Bicester to Didcot or Cowley, and light rail on lines serving Kidlington, Headington, East Oxford, Abingdon, Botley and Eynsham, but not using the track of the Witney branch line, are being proposed. Urban design academic Nicholas Falk and transport consultant Reg Harman propose a network of rail lines serving the suburbs and outlying settlements around Oxford which would be essential for sustainable growth of housing in the area. They set out their case in the May 2015 issue of *Tramways & Urban Transit*.





Pollution shocker

I am indebted to the writer of the article about road and air pollution in *Railwatch* 144. Ever since 1997, I have known diesel exhaust is a major cause of lung cancer and that 10,000 deaths a year are likely to be caused by this and smoking.

But I did not know it also causes bladder cancer, hardening of the arteries, cognitive impairment in children and probably type 2 diabetes, fractured DNA in sperm, nor that it can cause brain shrinkage, leading to premature ageing, dementia and strokes. What a foul catalogue.

As a step towards reducing pollution, I believe diesel buses in towns should be phased out in favour of trolley buses or trams which are electrically powered and cause minimal pollution at the point of use.

Colin Rose, Little Houghton, Barnsley S72 0HG

Far North rail plea

Referring to the correspondence about the Far North Line in *Railwatch* 144, I too would like to see a more reliable and improved service on this route.

I use the line whenever possible, despite its problems. In the past 12 months I have suffered delays, points failures, broken rails and substitution. It is also becoming increasingly difficult to access the railway and maintain ferry connections. The connecting bus service between Scrabster and Thurso railway station was withdrawn some time ago. A taxi service is available to passengers with through ticketing to/from Stromness, but this has to be arranged by the passenger.

Unfortunately Serco Northlink, operator of the subsidised Stromness/Scrabster ferry, has withdrawn the mid-day sailing except during peak periods, making the use of this service almost impossible if one has connections to or from Orkney's

outer isles. The independent and non-subsidised Pentland Ferries offer a mid-day sailing all year to Gills Bay with bus connections to and from Inverness. There are also bus connections available to and from Thurso station, but these are not well publicised.

Travelling north on the 07.02 train from Inverness, there is a bus to Gills Bay in good time for the 13.30 sailing. However, using the bus from Inverness for this sailing, one could leave Inverness 1½ hours later.

Travelling south from the 12.50 arrival at Gills Bay there is a 1½ hour wait for the bus to Thurso and another one hour wait for the evening train departure – arriving in Inverness at 20.10. Using the bus connection from the same ferry arrival at Gills Bay one arrives in Inverness at 16.43, some 3½ hours earlier!

The Far North Line serves both Caithness and Orkney and both communities deserve a better rail service. Easier access to the railway for Orcadian travellers could increase rail usage and benefit Caithness users too by making the rail service more viable.

Robert Grainger
Shapinsay, Orkney
r.r.s.grainger@btinternet.com

Be more flexible

When I travelled on the Kyle of Lochalsh line to Inverness in June, I was appalled to see tourists, who presumably would have been paying customers, made to get off the train with their bikes because all reserved spaces were taken.

There seemed to be provision for only four cycles in each train and there are only four trains a day in each direction.

Somehow, it seemed more shameful that they were Dutch and ironic that the ScotRail service is now run by a Dutch company. You cannot book a cycle place online but are required to ring an operator. ScotRail is clearly operating

an inflexible policy. The lack of cycle provision suppresses demand and discourages many cycle tourists, who would be of benefit to the area. It shows Scotland and the UK in a bad light, especially when there is a dismal lack of good cycle routes off the main roads (for example, A82, A87).

Providing rolling stock suitable for bikes has not been addressed since the removal of old style guards vans in the 1980s. Very few services in the UK can be relied upon for travel with bikes.

Rail operators should modify trains to include more flexible space, and rail staff should be encouraged to be more flexible. The two Dutch people mentioned could have stood in the vestibule or been asked to remove their bike wheels.

The system on both trains consisted of two bars upon which to hang bikes, making it impossible to lean three or four bikes together. Removal of these bars would increase flexibility and bikes could be squeezed together if necessary.

John Hanahoe, Fordd Rhyd y Ceirw, Graianrhyd, near Mold, Denbighshire CH7 4BS
jhanahoe@aol.com

Lanark could be key

We were told in *Railwatch* 144 that the Carstairs-Edinburgh train service had been so successful that a new car park was needed at Carstairs.

As the largest community in the area is Lanark, would it not be more logical to build a new station at Cleghorn, just beyond the junction with the Lanark branch, so that people can travel by rail all the way with a single change? This would be of even greater benefit to visitors, including those to the World Heritage Site at New Lanark.

Even more helpful to cross-border travellers, in either direction, would be for Anglo-Scottish trains to serve the new station, which could be used as an interchange not only for Lanark but also, by extending the existing route between Motherwell and Cumbernauld, stations from Motherwell to Stirling.

Add direct bus links to Edinburgh Airport via Livingston, Galashiels via Biggar, Peebles and Innerleithen/Abbotsford, Sanquhar via historic Leadhills and Wanlockhead, Dumfries & Galloway via Thornhill, Ayr via Muirkirk or Strathaven, possibly extended to meet the Irish ferries, and possibly Bo'nness via

Bathgate and Linlithgow, and we would have a key interchange that would tie together the whole of southern Scotland.

Simon Norton, Hertford St, Cambridge CB4 3AG
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Main attraction

I was interested to read in *Railwatch* 144 about the Government-funded enhancement of the Joint Line from Doncaster to Peterborough via Lincoln. The article concentrated on the benefits of the improved capacity to carry freight and relieve congestion on the East Coast main line.

Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce is a keen supporter of passenger and freight rail services benefiting Lincolnshire and improvements to the Joint Line have been welcomed in terms of enhancing capacity and reducing journey times. We did, however, campaign long and hard for central government to adopt, as formal policy, a commitment to upgrading the East Coast main line at the earliest opportunity to a full four-track route.

Discussions with rail freight operators made it clear they would much prefer to keep freight on the main line, which is shorter and faster, and diversion of some services on to the Joint Line is only a short-term solution if there is to be a continuing increase in the growth of north-south rail freight services.

There are sections where four lines still exist. There are other sections where lines have been taken up and could easily be re-laid. There are, however, obvious bottlenecks such as Stoke tunnel and the crossing of the Trent. Nevertheless, the cost of tackling these bottlenecks pales into insignificance compared to the costs of schemes such as High Speed Two, and there is no more direct route from Scotland to London than the East Coast main line.

Passenger services in Lincolnshire are limited, although demand is growing fast. We do not want improved services to be frustrated by additional freight services, although we accept the short-term logic of some diversion and indeed have aspirations for a freight hub in the Spalding area to benefit the local food industry.

What we are concerned about most is that the current diversion is seen as a permanent solution, which it is not, and as a result communities along the Joint Line suffer an unacceptable level of disruption, in particular

Your letters

Lincoln and Spalding. We have the benefit of passenger rail services into the very heart of historic Lincoln. In Victorian times freight was sent around the city centre on the old High Line, now dismantled and sold off. Freight through the centre was not acceptable then. It is less acceptable now in a modern high-quality urban centre.

Peter R Banks, Banks Long & Co, Lincoln, LN5 7EQ
Peter.Banks@bankslong.com

Railfuture Lincolnshire chairman David Harby comments: If we are going to add two more tracks to the East Coast main line, we need to think what happened to the West Coast main line. Passengers were put on buses for many weekends and there were huge cost overruns. The ECML would be even more difficult with two tunnels involved and crossing the Trent at Newark where it is in effect two rivers. It could also involve a lot of property demolition in Grantham, Newark and Retford.

A new 140mph two-track railway bypassing Grantham, Newark and Retford, as Virgin were suggesting back in the early days of privatisation, would be my ideal solution. It would take all the fast York-London and Leeds-London trains out of the way and leave plenty of room for freight and local connectivity.

Pay complaint

When complaining about rail fares, Railfuture should speak out about the excessive pay rail staff have received since privatisation.

J M Berry, Prescott Road, Aughton, Lancashire L39 5AQ

Onboard tickets

People are sometimes penalised for not having a ticket when they have not had time to queue at a ticket office. More often than not they are not trying to evade paying, but they have busy lives that do not always go to plan. They should not be made to feel like criminals. Tickets should be sold on trains at ticket office prices, and trains should be

Send your letters to:

The Editors, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU
Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk
Railwatch also welcomes articles and pictures
Please use email if possible

staffed to enable this.

Conductors should have time to check tickets and collect fares as needed, and sometimes two conductors are needed on busy routes. Of course, the sooner we have Oyster type cards across the network, the sooner people will be able to pay easily.

Nina Smith, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire
nhrawsons@googlemail.com

Tax the polluters

Electric rail travel causes less of the more obvious forms of pollution than air travel, and is also free of the climate-change impact of vapour trails (*Railwatch* 144). If the true environmental cost of aviation were taken into account, for example by significantly increasing short-haul air passenger duty, continental travel by rail would become more cost-competitive with air. Taxing aviation fuel would be sensible too but is hamstrung by international agreements. APD is however under UK control.

John Davis, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 5UD
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Stratford-upon-Avon

I agree that Stratford-upon-Avon is a major destination for tourists but gets a poor service from the south (*Railwatch* 144). Are the few through services to Marylebone now to be reduced? The capacity of the Marylebone to Banbury line does not appear to be overloaded and I do not remember proponents of the new Oxford-Marylebone service saying that it would adversely affect existing services on the line.

Peter Fleming, Lovers Walk, Dunstable LU5 4BG
peterff100@gmail.com

Channel lorries

The situation with regard to accompanied cross-Channel freight on the Dover Straits axis is even worse than you describe in *Railwatch* 144. Apart from the 1.44 million trucks using Le Shuttle last year, almost 2.5 million trucks used the ferries to/from Dover (an all-time record), of which 1.82 million were via Calais (also a record) and the balance via Dunkirk. These figures are set to grow and are, as you say, unsustainable as they are. They reflect the commercial success of Le Shuttle and the Dover Straits ferry operators. On top of that, price competition on the Dover Straits has decimated unaccompanied trailer traffic in the southern North Sea (Haven



London Bridge is a winner

London Bridge station is being reshaped at the moment in a massive rebuilding project as part of the Thameslink scheme. It will never again look quite like this aerial photograph by Stephen Bright who was the 2014 winner of the Lines in the Landscape contest.

Entries for the 2015 contest closed in July and this year's winners will go on show in November. The Network Rail Lines in the Landscape special award is part of the overall Take a View – Landscape Photographer of the Year competition.

Ports-Rotterdam/Zeebrugge/Esbjerg) and this trend is being further abetted by tougher shipping emissions regulations. *Vincent Champion, Consulting Editor, World Cargo News, vchampion@wcnpublishing.com*

Trains need bus link

I was intrigued by a number of items in *Railwatch* 144. I agree that the lack of onward transport is often a deterrent to rail travel. The recent collapse of Western Greyhound in Cornwall is very detrimental to my family visits to Wadebridge.

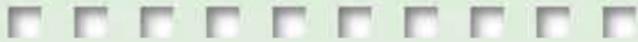
It is now much more practical to drive from London so as to be mobile once you get to Cornwall.

Please do not promote Pendolinos to Plymouth and beyond (P6). The minimal improvement in journey time does not justify "Pendolino

Purgatory". I have switched my London-Glasgow trips back to air – just to get a more comfortable seat. And who in their right mind would recommend 3+2 seating on long distance trains? That configuration is just about acceptable to Guildford, Windsor or Shepperton, but hopeless beyond. Surely longer trains are the answer. Dumping First Class accommodation south of the Thames might be the answer. It amazes me how much diesel operation there is under overhead wires. I use Thirsk as a "Park & Ride" and at least 50% of the trains through that station are diesel.

Terry Bray, Clarence Road, Teddington TW11 0BN
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More letters: Page 18



LOCAL ACTION

Wessex

By David Brace
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Keep Island Line in franchise

A new cross-party group named KILF (Keep Island Line in Franchise) has been set up on the Isle of Wight to oppose the plans of Island MP Andrew Turner and his transport adviser to remove the Island Line from the Wessex franchise and hand it over to a local consortium, possibly operating it as a tourist attraction. Through our affiliated member, the Isle of Wight Bus and Rail Users' Group, we are involved in this campaign. KILF held a public meeting in August attended by 250 councillors and members of the public in Shanklin theatre. There they unanimously voted in favour of keeping the franchise as part of a wider regional franchise. From the franchise point of view, two urgent problems need to be solved: Improving the revenue collection and introducing a regular 20- or 30-minute interval service. Improving revenue collection is within the control of the franchisee, as is provision of a 30-minute interval service.



A 20-minute interval service would require infrastructure improvements to reintroduce the passing loop at Brading. A longer term issue, again the problem for the next franchisee, is what can be introduced to replace the 1938-built Tube stock (pictured above) as this will almost certainly require replacement in the next six to eight years. The Government published new proposals on 11 September. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-proposals-for-isle-of-wight-rail-services-announced>

Network Rail and South West Trains abandon alliance

The Deep Alliance is no more. Network Rail and South West Trains have agreed to abandon their alliance with no reason given. Is it because of the recent pressure that NR have been subject to at national level? We all had high hopes that vertical integration might make train and track work together more sensibly. NR has now appointed a new route director to manage maintenance renewals and enhancements. However NR has retained SWT to manage the enhancement projects at Waterloo possibly until 2019, even though SWT's franchise is being terminated in 2017. Will the new franchisee take over responsibility?

Arriva bids to take on new Wessex franchise

As the Government failed to reach agreement with SWT to extend its franchise to 2019, tenders are being invited for a new franchisee to take over in 2017. Quick off the mark, Arriva Trains are already consulting with stakeholders such as Railfuture. Arriva, in the form of CrossCountry Trains, already works into our territory from Basingstoke to Southampton and Bournemouth and from Reading to Guildford. CrossCountry is not the most welcome operator with its Voyager trains being unpopular. It has few reduced fare tickets and has abandoned quiet coaches. It has also allowed reservations up to 10 minutes before departure to override earlier bookings.

Railfuture Wessex AGM to be held in March

Railfuture Wessex AGM will be on 12 March 2016. We will notify branch members of the location nearer the time.



Web shop window

By Chris Page
chris.page@railfuture.org.uk

Railwatch is read by members and allies in both politics and the railway industry. Some members circulate copies of Railwatch to potential members and friends, but Railfuture needs to make contact with a wider audience.

The website is open to all, people casually surfing, professional researchers and journalists intent on finding facts, and anyone who has heard of Railfuture and wants to find out more. Increasingly, people, including potential new members, hear of Railfuture through Twitter messages directing them to the website. The website is our shop window. We dress it to impress, and update it regularly so that it is fresh each time people visit.

News, which is the most frequently changing section of the website, has been expanded to include opinion. The menu in the top right hand corner shows the 10 most recent articles, while clicking the more button gives access to all articles since 2000.

I write news articles relating to our campaigns, and other recent contributors include: Nigel Bray on MetroWest, Roger Blake on Lea Bridge station, Paul Hollinghurst on fares, Nick Dibben on the Newark conference, Ian Brown on airport rail links, David Horton of the Abbey Flyer rail user group on the threat of converting the St Albans branch to a busway, Jerry Alderson on international topics, Chris Austin on opening Newcourt station and our message to the new parliament, Allison Cosgrove on the campaign to reopen Beattock station, John Band on how the Treasury keeps projects honest, Phil Smart on Norwich in 90, Wendy Thorne on Portishead

and Philip Shelton on Okehampton. It is now possible for members to post comments on news articles - contact me if you would like to do this and I will give you the login that you will need.

We have three audiences: existing members, potential new members, and stakeholders. The menu in the top left corner aims to make it easy for everyone to find what they want.

Within local action, Railfuture branch pages are created by branch media representatives to publicise events and campaigns. The East Anglia branch pages are a particularly vibrant example. There are also pages for Scotland and Wales.

There is a help section for rail users, explaining the best ways of planning a journey in Britain or abroad, finding the cheapest tickets, making the journey easy and dealing with problems which may arise. It is updated with the latest offers from rail companies. Even if you are new to using the internet, finding your way around the Railfuture website should be easy. In addition to the menus in the left and right hand columns, clicking on any heading or text in green will link you to another page with more detail.

If you are looking for something specific, you can use the search box in the right hand column.

Take a look at www.railfuture.org.uk and let me know what you think. You may be surprised at how much it has changed since you last looked. If you have any news that you would like to upload to the branch, campaigns, or news pages, please get in touch. I can either give you access and explain how you can do it yourself, or I can upload it for you.

AROUND THE WORLD AT HIGH SPEED

Morocco high speed Africa's first high speed train, an Alstom Duplex, was delivered to Tangier in July, for use on the Tangier-Casablanca route. A new 113 mile long section is being built for 200mph running while the remaining 85 miles is being upgraded for 135 mph running.

Florida high speed hopes A privately owned high speed rail line is being planned from Miami to Orlando, with stops in Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach, and is expected to open in 2017. All Aboard Florida claims three million vehicles will be removed from the roads each year.

High speed China The 500 mile long high speed line from Hefei

to Fuzhou opened in June after a five-year construction programme through mountainous terrain. Journey times have been halved, with trains running at 185 mph, although the line has been designed for 215mph running.

Slow speed politicians A proposed Amtrak passenger rail service along the Gulf of Mexico between New Orleans and Orlando, cut by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, is waiting for the US Congress to approve a transportation bill.

Talgo trains for Russia Talgo trains began running at up to 125 mph between Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod in June.

railwatch

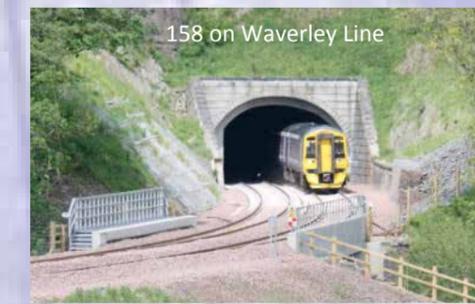
Celebrating the Scottish Borders Railway

October 2015



Edinburgh Waverley

Midlothian



Scottish Borders



Back to the Future? Full steam ahead on the old Waverley line approaching the Eildon Hills



Gorebridge



Gorebridge old station

Laying new track at Newtongrange



The new Eskbank station



Early days at Tweedbank

Brunstane

Newcraighall

Shawfair

Eskbank

Dalkeith

Bonnyrigg

Newtongrange

Gorebridge

Lauder

Stow

Earlston

Galashiels

Tweedbank

Melrose

Newtown St Boswells

To Selkirk

Bringing Rail back to the Borders

....and the people who made it possible

The Politicians

From Lord Steel of Aikwood
David Steel was a young MP when the Waverley Line closed



"We are all looking forward to the opening of the Border railway. Having been on the last train out of Galashiels in 1969 it has always been my ambition to be on the first train out again in 2015. That I shall achieve, the original closure having been the greatest single disappointment in my parliamentary life."



Right on Track

Scottish Borders council chief has an enthusiastic welcome for the new railway

Allison Cosgrove talks to Scottish Borders Council Leader David Parker



Councillor David Parker presides over the 1800 square miles that form the Scottish Borders, an area with a turbulent history of ancient battles, ruined abbeys and the Border Reivers. The world famous Borders textile industry is a more recent and peaceful addition to the manifold charms of this unspoiled area.

However, until September 6th 2015 it has also had the distinction of being the largest area in Western Europe without access to a railway.

Since the Waverley Route closed in 1969 as a result of the Beeching cuts, the Border towns have seen a loss in jobs and lack of connectivity to Edinburgh year on year.

Councillor Parker explained "The Scottish Government funded a feasibility study after a major employer in the area closed down in 1998, and in 1999, Campaign for Borders Rail started a petition to reinstate the railway. There were some objections as time went on – the likelihood of increased housing in the area was of concern to some local people – but in 2003 the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament."

The Bill was the longest-running piece of legislation ever in the history of the Scottish Parliament and was the biggest planning application seen, with the Bill Committee having to scrutinise 1,918 separate plots of land which would form part of the new Railway. Councillor Parker paid tribute to Tricia Marwick MSP, and the other members of the Waverley Railway Bill Committee in steering the Bill through the years of negotiation in order to bring it to fruition. He added that the complexities of scrutiny of the Bill had caused the system to be simplified for the future.

Looking to the future, does Councillor Parker think that there would be a case for extending the Railway on to Hawick and ultimately Carlisle? He points out that it would provide an alternative route to the East and West Coast Main Lines when these routes might be unexpectedly closed.

He is very upbeat about the benefits he expects the Railway to bring to the Borders, and is hoping for a population increase to the Border country as a whole, an increase in tourism, and the prospect of new businesses setting up in the area, saying "a number" of companies and developers are already interested. He is also enthusiastic about the Great Tapestry of Scotland coming to Tweedbank in March 2017, and the increased traffic expected to the newly refurbished Abbotsford House.

Reasons to be cheerful? I would say that on 6th September 2015, after waiting almost 50 years for the return of the railways to the Borders, Councillor Parker will be a very happy man!

The Contractors

Rebuilding a railway that has been out of use for almost 50 years brings its own challenges. In some areas the trackbed has been built on, or roads have taken its place. Some stations have disappeared almost entirely. As Councillor David Parker noted, more than 1000 separate portions of land required to be assessed by the Waverley Rail Bill Committee. In addition, there were changes to the contractors who would undertake the work, so it was with some relief that the final contractor was named and works began.

The Scottish Executive had concluded that reinstating the entire route would offer few benefits and be expensive due to significant breaches south of Tweedbank. It also concluded that a passenger service between Edinburgh and Tweedbank was likely to be viable.

This Act gave the Promoter powers to acquire the land required to build the new railway. It also included a unique "I've started so I'll finish" or Mastermind clause. This addressed concerns that future funding issues might result in the line only being built to Gorebridge and so required the promoter to complete the line once work started.



Track laying at Tweedbank

The Mastermind clause was triggered in March 2010 with the start of advance works, including scour protection and utility works, managed by Transport Scotland, which had taken over the role of authorised undertaker from Scottish Borders Council in August 2008. For the main works, their procurement strategy was a design, build, finance and maintain (DBFM) contract which made the contractor responsible for the railway after it had been built, instead of it being part of Network Rail's infrastructure. The intention was that the contractor's design and build practice would be influenced by his responsibility to operate and maintain the line.

Three consortia expressed an interest after Transport Scotland started the DBFM tender process in December 2009, expecting to let this contract in autumn 2011 and have the line re-opened in December 2014. However, when two of the original three consortia withdrew, possibly because of finance issues in the then economic climate, Transport Scotland decided that Network Rail should manage the project.

Thus, in September 2011, Network Rail started to manage the project with Transport Scotland remaining the authorised undertaker. Before Network Rail could take over this role, the design had to be developed and constructability assessed to produce a robust estimate of cost and programme. In November 2012, this was agreed with Transport Scotland and the Office of Rail Regulation (as it then was) so that Network Rail could become the authorised undertaker. This agreement included a September 2015 opening date.

Prior to the agreement being formalised, Network Rail could only undertake advance works. This was done under a

framework contract awarded to BAM Nuttall in March 2012 that included vegetation clearance, fencing, environmental mitigation, mining remediation and property demolition.

In December 2012, the design and build contract for the main works was let to BAM Nuttall and it was announced that the construction cost would be £294 million. This included track materials, engineering trains and BAM Nuttall's contract cost. The contract was target cost with a pain-gain share arrangement. At the time, Gavin Gerrard of BAM Nuttall advised that the company's involvement in the previous DBFM process had forced BAM Nuttall to think about maintenance as never before and so the final design featured reduced maintenance costs. So although DBFM was dead, it had a positive influence.

After the main works started in April 2013, major earthworks were largely completed by the end of October after which the focus shifted to structures such as the 137 bridges on the route of which 42 were new. The line's largest new structure at Hardengreen took shape in February 2014 with the installation of four 107-tonne beams. This caused some significant disruption on the A7 with the re-alignment of the Hardengreen Roundabout, but as with the earlier temporary re-alignment of the busy Sheriffhall Roundabout, this was a positive sign that work was progressing. Track laying was completed in a comparatively short time, from October 2014 to February 2015, often watched by interested residents. After completion of signalling and station work, the line was commissioned on 6 June.

Hugh Wark, Network Rail's project director, advised David Shirres from *Rail Engineer* magazine (for whom we are indebted for the major content of this article) that the physical work done during the commissioning weekend was relatively simple as the signalling is only at the loop ends. This entailed re-programming the Millerhill SSI and minor physical work such as removing derailleurs and buffer stops at the start of the line after a route proving train checked the line. The big challenge was ensuring that all relevant certification was in place to demonstrate that works were properly designed and were built in accordance with the design, such as stressing certificates and certificates of compliance for switches.

Only class 158 and 170 DMUs have blanket approval to run on the line. Any other rolling stock, such as steam hauled special trains, requires a special instruction before it can run on the line that may specify limitations such as speed limits over certain bridges.

The sign off included handing over the stations to ScotRail during the weekend of 14 June.

Finally, the environmental element of the project was a big challenge. South of Falahill, the project ran through a Special Area of Conservation for the River Tweed that includes its Gala Water tributary. Hence, particular attention had to be paid to construction silt run off after heavy rain. There were many protected species including river lamprey, otters, badgers and bats, with one hundred and sixty badger setts being affected. Summing up the project, Hugh Wark advised David Shirres of the degree of satisfaction in bringing old railway infrastructure back into use, especially the Gala Water's many wrought iron bridges. One of his most memorable moments was the phenomenal number of people who greeted the track laying train.

Source – *Rail Engineer* "Borders Railway Complete" by David Shirres, 2015

Photographs: Barrie Forrest



Stow Station Rebuild

The Campaigners

Madge Elliot



Everyone who knows about the fight to reinstate the Waverley Line will have heard of Madge Elliot from Hawick. Back in 1969 she did something unheard-of – she went to Downing Street with a petition to challenge the Government of the day on their decision to close the line after a recommendation by Dr Beeching. With today's email, Twitter and easy access to Scottish parliamentarians, it is hard to believe how revolutionary this was. Back then, the Government was the authority that must be obeyed. People, especially ordinary people like Madge Elliot, did not challenge decisions made in London – rather they accepted what they were told. But it was a measure of Madge's determination to save the line that made her act as she did more than 45 years ago, in the hope that the railway that connected small and scattered communities in the Borders would not be allowed to die.

Sadly, Madge's campaign fell on deaf ears, despite her petition having a record 11,768 signatures. But her persistence saw the growth of the Campaign for Borders Rail rise up and eventually become an unstoppable force in the Borders resulting in the announcement that the Borders Railway would be reinstated as far as Tweedbank.

Madge's long term commitment to the Railway has been commended by the naming of a train after her – a well-deserved honour for a lady who has stuck to her guns in the knowledge that one day, trains would run again to the Borders. Madge – we salute you!

Petra Biberbach



Petra Biberbach, pictured with fellow campaigners I-r, Claudia Beamish MSP, David Spaven and Bill Jamieson.

Petra Biberbach was the first Chair of Campaign for Borders Rail which was launched in January 1999 and encouraged Borderers to believe

that they really could get their railway back. One of their first actions was to obtain 17,200 signatures on a petition presented to the new Scottish Parliament in 2000, calling for the return of rail services.

As well as the core strategic achievement of the return of a railway from Edinburgh through Midlothian and Galashiels to Tweedbank (agreed by the Scottish Parliament in 2006), local rail campaigners – notably CBR, Stow Station Supporters Group and the Waverley Route Trust – can take credit for other successes, including Stow as a station stop. (Source – CBR website)

Simon Walton



Simon took over as Chair from Lorne Anton in 2012 and was still in post when the works on the Railway were coming to fruition. By working together, he sees the Borders Railway as not just a transport link, but an inspiration for greater collaboration in the Borders, and an example of the value of commitment and collective endeavour. He's committed to seeing restoration in the light of modern needs, and fully supports the push further south. (Source – CBR website)

BORDERS RAILWAY EDINBURGH – GALASHIELS – TWEEDBANK

SERVICES

Mondays to Saturdays

Half hourly departures from 05.20 to 20.00 then hourly to 23.54 except for Stow Station which is half-hourly in peak hours but mainly hourly departures.

Sundays

Hourly departures all day from 08.45 (Tweedbank), 09.11 (Edinburgh) to 23.11 (Edinburgh), 23.28 (Tweedbank).

Because of the track layout departures are not fixed times past the hour but vary by a few minutes.

Until October 15th individual trains may be cancelled on Wednesdays and Thursdays to provide paths for steam and diesel excursions.

For details of train times 'phone 08457 48 49 50 or www.scotrail.co.uk

SUMMARY OF SERVICES (to 12th December 2015)

STATIONS:

Edinburgh Waverley
Brunstane
Newcraighall (Park and Ride)
Shawfair (Park and Ride)
Eskbank
Newtongrange (Scottish Mining Museum)
Gorebridge
Stow
Galashiels (Public Transport Interchange)
Tweedbank (Park and Ride, route to Abbotsford)

ABBREVIATED TIMETABLE GUIDE to 12 DEC 2015

Mon to Friday

EDINBURGH to TWEEDBANK

Edinburgh	05.43	06.22	06.51	then 24 and 51 mins past the hour to	19.54	20.53	21.54	22.54	23.54
Newtongrange	06.12	06.45	07.14	then 46 and 14 mins past the hour to	20.16	21.16	22.16	23.18	00.16
Stow	07.08	07.37		then at 08 mins past the hour to	20.38	21.38	22.38	23.41	00.38
Galashiels	06.45	07.16	07.46	then 17 and 45 mins past the hour to	20.47	21.47	22.47	23.49	00.47
Tweedbank arr	06.49	07.21	07.50	then 21 and 50 mins past the hour to	20.51	21.51	22.51	23.54	00.51

Saturdays

Edinburgh	05.55	06.25	06.51	then 24 and 53 mins past the hour to	19.53	20.56	21.56	22.55	23.55
Newtongrange	06.17	06.47	07.15	then 46 and 17 mins past the hour to	20.17	21.18	22.18	23.18	00.17
Stow	07.02	07.37		then at 08 mins past the hour to	20.39	21.40	22.41	23.41	00.39
Galashiels	06.46	07.18	07.46	then 17 and 46 mins past the hour to	20.48	21.49	22.49	23.49	00.48
Tweedbank arr	06.50	07.22	07.50	then 21 and 50 mins past the hour to	20.52	21.53	22.53	23.53	00.52

Sundays

Edinburgh	09.11		then at 11 mins past the hour to	20.11	21.11	22.11	23.11		
Newtongrange	09.33		then at 33 mins past the hour to	20.34	21.34	22.35	23.33		
Stow	09.55		then at 55 mins past the hour to	20.56	21.56	22.57	23.55		
Galashiels	10.04		then at 04 mins past the hour to	21.05	22.05	23.06	00.04		
Tweedbank arr	10.08		then at 08 mins past the hour to	21.09	22.09	23.10	00.08		

Mon to Friday

TWEEDBANK to EDINBURGH

Tweedbank	05.20	05.59	06.28	then 58 and 28 mins past the hour to	19.28	20.28	21.28	22.28	23.28
Galashiels	05.24	06.03	06.32	then 02 and 32 mins past the hour to	19.32	20.32	21.32	22.32	23.32
Stow	05.33	06.41		then at 41 mins past the hour to	19.41	20.41	21.41	22.41	23.41
Newtongrange	05.53	06.31	07.01	then 31 and 01 mins past the hour to	20.01	21.01	22.01	23.01	00.01
Edinburgh arr	06.15	06.53	07.29	then 59 and 24 mins past the hour to	20.26	21.24	22.24	23.24	00.23

Saturdays

Tweedbank	05.30	06.00	06.29	then 00 and 30 mins past the hour to	19.31	20.31	21.31	22.31	23.31
Galashiels	05.34	06.04	06.33	then 04 and 34 mins past the hour to	19.35	20.35	21.35	22.35	23.35
Stow	05.43	06.42		then at 44 mins past the hour to	19.44	20.44	21.44	22.44	23.44
Newtongrange	06.03	06.32	07.02	then 32 and 02 mins past the hour to	20.04	21.04	22.04	23.04	00.04
Edinburgh arr	06.25	06.54	07.24	then 56 and 28 mins past the hour to	20.26	21.26	22.26	23.26	00.26

Sundays

Tweedbank	08.45	09.45	then at 45 mins past the hour to	19.45	20.45	21.45	22.45		
Galashiels	08.49	09.49	then at 49 mins past the hour to	19.49	20.49	21.49	22.49		
Stow	08.58	09.58	then at 58 mins past the hour to	19.58	20.58	21.58	22.58		
Newtongrange	09.18	10.18	then at 18 mins past the hour to	20.18	21.18	22.18	23.18		
Edinburgh arr	09.40	10.40	then at 40 mins past the hour to	20.40	21.40	22.40	23.41		

Full list of stations: Edinburgh Waverley, Brunstane, Newcraighall, Shawfair, Eskbank, Newtongrange (Mining Museum), Gorebridge, Stow, Galashiels, Tweedbank

Stow Station: There are some additional peak hour stops

Edinburgh: There are early departures at 16.50 and 17.18 Monday to Friday

Due to the track layout there are slight variations (few minutes) in departure times through the day

Until October 15th some trains may be cancelled on Weds and Thurs to provide excursion paths

National Rail Enquiries at 08457 48 49 50 or www.scotrail.co.uk

Viva! Tube cast-offs or trains to fill the diesel gap?

As pre-election promises of investment in the railways evolve into a reality of cuts, attention is turning to how to keep old trains running.

Although passengers are always delighted to see new trains, campaigners have been impressed by an enterprising team intent on solving the shortage of diesel train units which is bedeviling plans to improve services on overcrowded rail lines throughout Britain.

The team's radical approach involves stripping redundant London Tube trains "to the bone" and giving them new diesel power packs, matched with a range of interiors more comfortable than many newly manufactured trains.

Enter the Vivarail D-Train

One aim is to provide larger areas of convertible space so baby buggies, bikes and luggage can be stored more easily than in the cramped interiors of many modern trains. A special luggage compartment has been designed to fit the popular Brompton folding bike.

Seats have received special attention, especially as the new Thameslink class 700 trains have been criticised for their minimalist, uncomfortable seating. The aim is to align seats with windows, which many modern train designs fail to achieve.

The easily accessible toilet is similar to that on the Chiltern Railways class 166 Turbo diesel trains.

In the past few months, the Vivarail team has invited campaigners, train operators, leasing companies, Government officials and other experts to see the trains taking shape and to ride the prototype around a test circuit at Long Marston, Warwickshire.

They say the aluminium bodies and modern Bombardier bogies made the Underground's D78 a classic design, but to enhance its safety, a reinforced cab has been fitted and the bogies and traction motors overhauled.

Most of the campaigners were sceptical of what could be achieved with second-hand trains, but after visiting Vivarail, they were impressed by the attention to detail and high standards being applied to the now renamed D-Train.

It is intended that two- and three-coach variants of the train will be produced. The centre car in the three-coach train would be a trailer, with the end coaches being powered.

Vivarail say the engines can be replaced as an entire module within 10 minutes, so the trains



Onboard coffee bar option



Seat unit and storage, left, specially for a folding bike



Tube train now a diesel

spend the minimum time in the depot. They will also be fitted with equipment that automatically reports mileage and equipment conditions so maintenance and depot visits can be pre-planned and minimised.

Rental, maintenance and fuel costs will be significantly less than both new and existing diesel units and there will be variants suitable for both branch lines and city commuter lines.

Vivarail chairman Adrian Shooter (a Railfuture vice president) is confident the train will be ready this year, probably by November. East Sussex Rail

Alliance chairman Ray Chapman said: "Once trialled, these highly efficient diesel-electric train sets would be an ideal interim solution on South Coast services.

"Carrying up to 150 seats per three-car train and a further 130 standing, these would provide just the extra capacity and comfort we need, by reinforcing the two-car sets currently in operation, especially during peak periods when they are heavily overcrowded.

"They would also add extra reliability for the increasing numbers of people who leave Eastbourne, Bexhill, Hastings and Rye for Ashford for the Javelin and Eurostar services to London and the Continent."

Railfuture's rolling stock design panel visited Long Marston in August. They found that since the train retains its original DC traction motors, it will be possible to engineer the train for bi-mode

operation on the third rail DC network.

The trains will have a maximum speed of 60mph but acceleration is good and it is anticipated that when used on journeys with frequent stops, journey time could be reduced. If used on branch lines where speed is restricted to 60mph or less anyway, maximum speed will not be an issue.

A comparison of anticipated costs and fuel economy was provided.

Rental was estimated at £7,000 per car per month, compared to £15,000 per car for a new diesel multiple car and £7,500 for a current class 150.

Comparative maintenance costs are expected to be 40p for the D-Train, 60p for new trains and 70p for existing trains.

Fuel consumption is estimated at 0.5 per litre per mile for the D-Train, 0.8 per litre for new and 0.75 per litre for existing trains.

Big gains from small steps forward

By William Whiting

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I returned from a week's holiday with my wife staying in a cottage near Axminster in Devon.

Axminster station, pictured right, is on the Waterloo-Exeter line and we travelled by train on three of our days out.

I grew up in Shaftesbury, Dorset and our local station was Gillingham (Dorset). I recall my late father helping to campaign against the line being severed west of Salisbury as this was the intention following the Beeching report.

What happened was that most of the line was singled west of Salisbury in about 1967 which led to considerable operational difficulties and a two-hourly service from Exeter to Waterloo. At the same time branch lines to Lyme Regis, Seaton and Sidmouth were closed. However the line



Picture: WILLIAM WHITING

at Axminster. The redundant platform has been reopened and there is now an hourly service from Exeter to London throughout the day. A photo of the new platform, left, shows the improvement to the station.

The rationalisation of the route was clearly regretted in view of the fact that towns such as Honiton and Yeovil have increased their population over the past 20 years. There is also a new town, Cranbrook, west of Exeter which will be served by a station expected to open this summer. It is also a diversionary route for the West of England main line.

My vision for the line would be to complete doubling the track west of Salisbury as towns continue to grow in size and the demand is there for further enhancements of the service. What a change in fortunes for the line since the 1960s.

North East

By Peter Kenyon
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■ Metro upsets MP Emma

The upgrading of the Metro infrastructure by Nexus continues but the GB Regio-operated trains have been dogged by cancellations, power failures and a spectacular crash of the automated ticketing system when adjustments were made in July to accommodate earlier concessionary travel. Just as the modernisation of the last of the Metro carriages was being completed, MP for South Shields Emma Bucknell initiated a House of Commons debate on the failings of the Metro which was "making passengers late for work and stopping them getting children to school on time". Transport Minister Andrew Jones responded that discussions "at the very earliest stages" were taking place with Nexus and the North East Combined Authority about funding new rolling stock. Nexus estimates that new trains will cost £350 to £430 million. Meanwhile the cleanliness of the trains again leaves much to be desired with litter left in overnight, grubby seats and stained dirty floors greeting passengers.

■ University's international conference in talent hunt

Railfuture North East members attended the July New Rail International Conference at Newcastle University, with the theme of attracting the best talents in the job market and making the (international) railway sector a career opportunity of choice. Plenty of imaginative ideas were forthcoming.

■ Rail Academy is a winner for its star pupil

Over at Gateshead, the Rail Academy held its first prize-giving to recognise the achievements of the first intake of students. The 23-year-old winner of the Rail Ambassadors award, a former doorman and labourer, said: "The Rail Academy has changed my life. I have grown and matured and feel as though I have a real career ahead of me."

■ Rail campaigners wait for reopening cash go-ahead

The South East Northumberland Rail User Group awaits commitment by Northumberland County Council to funding the GRIP 2 and 3 studies on the realities of restoring passenger services to the Ashington Blyth & Tyne line. The group also wants to extend passenger services via the privately owned freight line to Butterwell which, with the realignment of Stobswold junction, would allow trains from Alnmouth and the north to proceed via Ashington to Newcastle. This would free capacity on the East Coast main line. Further aspirations include the extension of local services north of Newcastle to serve stations in Northumberland, improvements at Cramlington, plus a new station at Killingworth.

■ Parking at Morpeth and Cramlington stations

The campaign by South East Northumberland Rail User Group to improve parking at Morpeth and Cramlington, which are not on an accessible bus route, continues. Land at Morpeth, which could provide 80 extra parking spaces has been identified, but construction requires co-ordinated action by Network Rail and the council. Northumberland County Council has a free parking policy but Northern Rail has introduced charges of £2 per day or £25 per month at Morpeth and Cramlington. The previously crowded car parks are now half empty. It is not clear if this led to a loss of passengers, or parking in nearby streets.

■ Billingham improvements could help pedestrians

Coast Liners are in discussion with Stockton Borough Council about improving the approach to Billingham station which could include a bus/rail interchange on an overbridge 100 yards south of the station with a ramp to the platform. At the moment pedestrians have to approach the island platform by a steep, inconvenient footbridge.



Picture: CHRIS AUSTIN

Back to the future and Britain leads the way

Britain was a pioneer of heritage railways with the Talyllyn Railway being run by volunteers from as early as 1953.

Today, we have well over 100, more heritage railways than any other country, and the operating season is generally longer and timetables more ambitious than those found in other parts of Europe.

Some countries have sadly already lost so much. While the Netherlands has an excellent railway museum in Utrecht, for example, and a classic steam tramway at Hoorn, standard gauge steam locomotives are scarce and the South Limburg Steamtrain Company based at Simpleveld has to use a Swedish locomotive for its steam service to Valkenburg.

In Britain, some 750 steam locomotives remain, albeit not all are operational.

Our preeminence is reflected in the leading role played by Britain in FEDCRAIL, the European federation of heritage railways and in WATTRAIN, the World Association of Tourist Railways and Tramways.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail recognised the importance of Britain's heritage railways in its report of 2013 on the value of these railways in economic and social terms.

Other countries have started to recognise this too, and the report has already been widely circulated in Europe and has been translated into Russian, and now into Spanish.

In July, the Heritage Railway Association hosted a group of visitors from Spain, including museum volunteers and officials from the Catalan government and the local authority of Mora la Nova in Tarragona.

They wish to expand the museum already established at this railway town and to run steam on the main line to Barcelona.

There is no tradition of volunteering on Spanish railways and no way of certifying volunteers as competent for safety critical work.

HRA was able to demonstrate in detail how this worked in

HAPPY IN THE RAIN: Heritage Railway Association and Spanish visitors line up in front of the Great Western locomotive Rood Ashton Hall which worked the Shakespeare Express from Birmingham Snow Hill to Stratford-upon-Avon. HRA president Lord Faulkner is in the centre and Vintage Trains chairman Michael Whitehouse is standing to his right



Britain, while David Key from the Railway Inspectorate told them about safety regulation at first hand. Nick Ralls, general manager of the Severn Valley had shown them his long and busy heritage railway operating on the Saturday.

On the Sunday, they rode on the Shakespeare Express from Birmingham Snow Hill to Stratford-upon-Avon to see steam working on the main line as part of a regular Sunday tourist operation.

On the return trip, the party visited Tyseley locomotive works where the locomotives and rolling stock are maintained to a high standard by Vintage Trains. In any other area of commercial

activity, such an international gathering would have been sponsored or supported by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills. Surely only in the world of railways could this have been done by volunteers based on their shared enthusiasm and experience.

It is good to know that the accumulated experience of 62 years of heritage railway operation is valued by colleagues overseas, and it is certainly good to be able to share the knowledge with friends who are just as passionate about putting their precious railway heritage to good use as those of us in Britain are.

Record entries for 2015

By Roger Blake
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Ten rail user groups are in the running for this year's awards, to be presented by our President Christian Wolmar at Railfuture's autumn conference in Bristol on Saturday 7 November. Twenty individual entries have been received in all six categories, coming from groups spread across five of our branch areas. Lakes Line RUG and Ribble

Valley RUG are entries from the North West, while Yorkshire sees entries from Friends of the Settle and Carlisle Line and Harrogate Line Supporters Group. Further south, Marlow-Maidenhead Passengers Association has entered from the Thames Valley, and in the London and South East branch area entries have come from Abbey Flyer Users Group and Dartford Rail Travellers Association. Saltford Station Campaign, Friends of

Rail User Group awards

Suburban Bristol Railways, and TransWilts Community Rail Partnership have entered from Severnside, which is the host organising branch for our November conference entitled *Rail Resurgence in the West of England*.

The judging panel of Railfuture vice-presidents can also, at their discretion, make their own Judges' Special Award. This year entries closed a month earlier

than before, to enable judging vice-presidents to visit award entrants and get to know more about them and the work behind the nominations. Bookings for the conference in Bristol can be made online. The standard fee of £30, which includes refreshments and lunch, is reduced to just £20 for 16-25 Railcard holders. For former RUG Award winners see the Railfuture website, via the Rail User Express button.

◆◆◆◆ Join Railfuture online at www.railfuture.org.uk/join

Severnside

By Nigel Bray
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■ Eye on station links

Gloucestershire County Council has won Local Sustainable Transport Funding to undertake passenger surveys, initially at Cheltenham, Gloucester and Lydney but which will later involve the six other stations in the county. The intention is to improve access at either end of a rail journey, the crucial "first and last mile" which can be a deterrent to using rail. Local travel plans are being developed with major employers to reduce car journeys. Network Rail has dropped its objection to plans to extend the station car park on its land at Lydney.



■ Bus-rail interchanges are failing to match demand

Railfuture was represented at a meeting in Weston-super-Mare on 22 June, convened by North Somerset Council and chaired by First Great Western station manager Mathew Morgan, to discuss bus-rail integration. There was concern that Yatton, a relatively well-appointed station with an independent buffet, had virtually ceased to be an interchange now that buses to Clevedon no longer serve it. The station nameboards still proclaim "Yatton for Clevedon" but only people with local knowledge or who buy the latest FGW guide to services will realise bus links now run from Nailsea station, where shelter is minimal. The need for relevant bus information at Bridgwater station was made clear to the First Bus representatives and the consensus view of the meeting was that onward travel posters at stations would be better updated locally than by a remote agency.

■ Community payback helps to upgrade station facilities

At our branch meeting in Bath on 27 June, guest speaker Keith Walton, chairman of Severnside Community Rail Partnership, gave an illuminating talk on the partnership's progress over 10 years. Involving local people in caring for unstaffed stations had reduced antisocial behaviour. The Community Payback scheme in which young offenders undo their damage to station premises has been effective. School artwork at suburban stations had remained free from attack because "children won't allow their brothers to ruin it".

■ Blinkered attitude leads to missed opportunities

Railfuture and Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways have campaigned for restoration of passenger services on the Henbury loop to provide fast and convenient transport between west and north Bristol as part of Metro West phase 2. Unfortunately the case was recently dismissed in a consultants' report to the West of England Partnership, which has endorsed only a spur service turning round at Henbury from the east. This conclusion was condemned as a diabolically missed opportunity by Bristol North West MP Charlotte Leslie. In a letter published by the *Bristol Post* on 14 July, I challenged the consultants' claim that a loop service would produce only 8,000 more journeys per year (under 25 per day) than would the proposed spur. This flies in the face of recent evidence such as the increase of 13,000 passengers recorded at Avonmouth in the most recent year for official station usage statistics, without any increase in train services, and the success of the enhanced TransWilts service (*Railwatch 144*) in attracting four times the official forecast of usage in the first year. A Metro West update meeting on 21 July generated a frank dialogue between campaigners and West of England Partnership officers, although there was agreement that Metro West required a phased approach. It was confirmed that a Henbury spur would not prejudice its extension to a loop service at a later date, but campaigners fear this might be long after thousands of new homes have been built along the route.

Devon and Cornwall

By Gerard Duddridge

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■ ■ Bus links from rail stations

Integrated transport took a hit when numerous subsidised buses were cut by Devon county council to achieve a £1.7 million saving. The summer Sunday 187 linking Okehampton rail station to Tavistock and Gunnislake station, as part of the Sunday Rover network, is not expected to reappear next year. Sunday 16 August was the last day the connecting route around the north and west sides of Dartmoor could be used, firstly due to rail strikes and then withdrawal of First Group buses in Devon from 6 September. The alternative service 46 from Okehampton to Tavistock will now run only Monday to Saturday, leaving no Sunday buses on this former rail-served corridor. The sooner a rail service can be restored the better. In Somerset, service 25 linking Taunton to Dulverton via Wiveliscombe and Bampton in Devon, acts like a rail replacement service for the first half of the long-closed Taunton to Barnstaple rail line. Unfortunately the evening bus service was withdrawn some time ago and now loss of subsidy from Devon has reduced the once hourly Monday to Saturday service to two an hour beyond Wiveliscombe. Through East Devon, the X53 Exeter-Weymouth service is much reduced, but a positive development is diversion between Seaton and Lyme Regis via Axminster railway station. From Axminster station, the X53 becomes hourly, and together with the X51 to Dorchester (formerly X31) this now gives a half-hourly link to Lyme Regis and Bridport. In South Devon Kingsbridge loses an early morning Saturday return service to Totnes railway station.

■ ■ Masterplan turns a blind eye to Ashburton rail service

The Dartmoor National Park planning authority has dismissed calls to preserve the Ashburton station site for future rail use (*Railwatch* 143). Its senior forward planner recommended that members approve the so-called Ashburton Masterplan. Section 2.27 says: "The proposal to safeguard the historic route through the Masterplan site would impact upon public parking, business parking, housing, traffic movement and the provision of the convenience store." Not even considered by the planning authority is protection of a site for a station up to about 200 metres short of the historic Ashburton terminus. Only 10 of the 67 houses would have to be relocated for this. It considers it would be unlikely that the South Devon Railway would be able to purchase land needed to complete the route. It concludes that with these "substantial hurdles" and "in the absence of a clear and robust exposition of how a rail link could be delivered", the potential benefits can be given little weight. This is disappointing as Ashburton represents an opportunity to restore a rail service to the town with the support of the railway heritage movement and minimal public expense. The Dartmoor planning authority claims that protecting land for the railway will sterilise land for several years, but it could be argued that protection will remove uncertainty and blight from the whole scheme. In the not-too-distant future, reopening of the line from Okehampton to Plymouth via Tavistock will demonstrate by analogy the strength of the case for an Ashburton-Plymouth rail service. At this point the case for Ashburton will gain momentum and the possibility of public authority support and compulsory purchase powers for rail reinstatement will open up.

■ ■ Rail Meeting in Crediton

Railfuture is planning a meeting on rail development at Crediton. The meeting will be at the Boniface Centre on Saturday 28 November 2015. There will be special emphasis on services between Exeter and Okehampton. No charge for attending, but donations welcome on the day. Further details to follow. To book a provisional place please email gerard.duddridge@railfuture.org.uk.



One giant step forward for the East West railway

By John Henderson

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A major milestone for East West Rail will be passed on 26 October 2015 when trains start running from a new station at Oxford Parkway.

Initially they will go via Bicester to London Marylebone as part of Chiltern Railways' Evergreen 3 plan to give Oxford an additional main line to the capital.

Next year the London trains will be able to run through the city's Parkway station into the main station in Oxford.

Four years from now, using the rebuilt line from Oxford to Bicester, and following work on the next stretch of the East West route, trains will begin running to Milton Keynes and Bedford.

The rebuilt line is opening several years behind the original plan but every aspect of design, construction and operation has been subject to intense scrutiny by local authorities, central government, conservation bodies, landowners, and people who live near the line – and in certain cases, not so near. A wide variety

of challenges has been thrown at the development teams, from the famous bats-in-the-tunnel issue, through whether horse riders can hear their instructor when a train goes by, to a very expensive private objection brought in the High Court.

The delays were frustrating as the objectors made enterprising use of the law. The lessons learnt are being used in early public consultation for phase two of the EW project to link both Aylesbury and Bicester to Milton Keynes.

Progress is also being made on the ground with overgrowth cleared, ecological and geotechnical surveys completed and topographical and structural surveys made.

Public meetings about closure or diversion of crossings are being held two years before construction starts.

A public consultation programme for phase 2 as a whole has just started. Learn more at <https://consultations.networkrail.co.uk/communications/ewr-phase-2> Design and planning work is



UNDER CONSTRUCTION: Oxford Parkway station in April

expected to continue until 2017. In May next year, a Transport & Works Act application will be made to Parliament. This will trigger a series of assessments and consultations, including a public enquiry.

If all goes smoothly the TWA order is expected in the autumn of 2017. That gives about a year and half to build essentially a new line from Bicester and Aylesbury Vale to Bletchley, where

there will be new platforms and a signalling upgrade. Phase 2 should also include electrification from Oxford and Aylesbury to Bletchley, and upgrade or diversion of the road crossings between Bletchley and Bedford.

However, there are issues over public support for the road diversions, and funding. Railfuture is campaigning for these enhancements to be included in phase 2 and completed by 2019.

Picture: MOTACILLA for Wikipedia

London and South East

By Roger Blake

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■ ■ Retirement and recognition at Hackney Interchange

Network Rail, Transport for London and Hackney Council co-funded a new step-free walkway directly linking platforms at Hackney Central and Hackney Downs London Overground stations. As transport planner and public transport officer for Hackney Council, I had co-managed the Hackney Interchange project. After the official opening, which coincided with my retirement from the council, I was given the honour of unveiling a plaque – and was stunned to see the walkway dedicated to me.



■ ■ Budget gives a boost to two key Railfuture campaigns

The Government's Budget in July should help two of Railfuture's key campaigns. First, a Department for Transport study will re-examine reconnecting the Uckfield line with Brighton and the Sussex coast via Lewes, and the wider question of improving rail links between London and the south coast. Railfuture has outlined the benefits of Bridging the Gap between Uckfield and Lewes as a first step to making later improvements. Second, the Kent area route study by Network Rail will consider extending Javelin services from Ashford International across an upgraded MarshLink to Rye, Hastings and Bexhill. Railfuture has pointed out that the project will boost tourism and enterprise in the coastal economies and we will take part in the stakeholder consultations in October. We want to see the benefits of reduced journey times and connectivity improved, as demonstrated by the Trains4Deal campaign.

■ ■ Signals of success for Ashford International's future

Railfuture welcomed European Union and British government funding which ensures the Eurostar service will continue to serve Ashford after the introduction of the new 200mph e320 trains. The funding will pay for a signalling upgrade at Ashford. Railfuture vice president Ian Brown said: "We look forward to seeing this investment facilitating an improved service from Ashford to Lille, Paris and Brussels."

■ ■ New rail strategy welcome but busway warning

Railfuture generally supported Hertfordshire's new rail strategy consultation draft which concentrated on the five main rail corridors across the county, access to airports, the opportunities presented by High Speed Two, and freight. But Railfuture is concerned at an "option" for bus rapid transit between St Albans and Watford. Railfuture supports what appears to remain the county council's preference for rapid transit connecting the city to the town by light rail.

■ ■ New station kickstarts Lea Valley line upgrades

After Chingford Line Users' Association affiliated to Railfuture, it was able to secure a grant from our fighting fund. CLUA commissioned a report from Jonathan Roberts Consulting making the case for reopening Lea Bridge station, for adding a third track to the Lea Valley line to double the service at the station from two to four trains an hour each way, and for direct Chingford-Stratford services. Lea Bridge station is being rebuilt and should be open in the spring. Two years later, the third track should be in place from Tottenham Hale to Angel Road and the service frequency in and out of Stratford doubled.

■ ■ More local news in Railfuture London and South East's quarterly newsletter *raile* at:

www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East+branch+news

Now the search is on for best way to East Anglia

By Phil Smart

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The East West Rail consortium moved towards linking Bedford and Cambridge as part of the East West Rail link by announcing two preferred broad corridors which will be narrowed down to a preferred route in the next few months.

One corridor is a direct route described as 'via Sandy' although East West Rail has confirmed that this is a broad corridor and could include a route as far north as St Neots and Cambourne.

This northerly route is the preference of Railfuture East Anglia, providing a balance between directness and helping solve Cambridgeshire's poor connectivity to the west of the county.

The other corridor links Bedford with Hitchin to join the existing line to Cambridge, an option which Railfuture East Anglia considers less preferable as it is less direct, would need major upgrading to take the extra trains, and would not add any new areas of Cambridgeshire to the rail network.

The news came in spite of the pause in many other projects around the network and signals the confidence that this project now enjoys. Campaigners may point out that we have been here

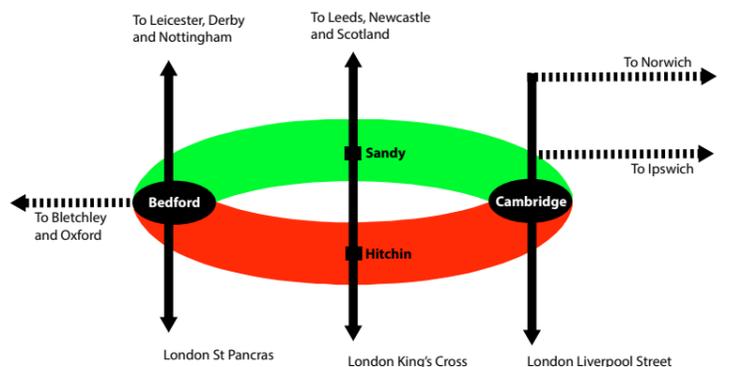
before, but we should remember that this work is now supported and funded by the Department for Transport, a far cry from where we have been in the past. It will also be a more ambitious scheme than many of us would have thought possible even a decade ago.

This is going to be a fully electrified line designed for up to 125mph running, which could offer a Cambridge to Oxford journey time of little more than an hour.

The Sandy option between Bedford and Cambridge would include a connection with the East Coast main line. It will include an investigation into how the line could serve new and existing settlements.

The Hitchin option roughly follows the former Midland line from Bedford to Hitchin to access Cambridge via the existing Great Northern route through Royston. This line would require capacity improvements to accommodate East West services.

The more direct the route, the better is its whole life cost/benefit ratio, because a shorter route, even if it has high construction cost, requires fewer staff and rolling stock to operate. Option 1 is therefore favoured but option 2 may be easier to deliver. Whatever happens, we need to ensure



that a sufficiently robust case is presented to any future examination in public.

Whichever is chosen, the route into Cambridge is likely to come in from the south where there are calls for a new station at Addenbrooke's to be provided.

The final selection will be made within a year in order to be included in Network Rail's programme of works in control period 6 (2019-24).

Eastern promise

Progress on the central section has generated considerable interest among local councils to the east of Cambridge with more expected to join the consortium.

District and county councils are expected to meet later in the year to share ideas for upgrading

rail services through to Ipswich and Norwich. Railfuture East Anglia is calling for a package of improvements including the electrification of both these routes, the re-doubling of the line from Cambridge to Newmarket and additional platform capacity at Newmarket and Ipswich.

Service frequency should be doubled with a mix of 'fast' and stopping services every hour with the 'fast' services continuing west along the new railway.

Our proposals have been presented to several authorities, to Network Rail and to the DfT as well as the three bid teams for the East Anglian franchise who will be required to work with East West Rail stakeholders during the expected lifetime of the franchise.

◆◆◆◆ Rail User Express can be downloaded from www.railfuture.org.uk

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
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and Roger Bacon
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■ ■ Electrification paused

Railfuture East Midlands is concerned about the recent announcement that the electrification of the Midland main line will be "paused". We are pleased Nicky Morgan, MP for Loughborough, has said she will keep the pressure on to ensure the project does not drift off into the indeterminate future. However, the pause may be useful if it allows other upgrades on the line, such as station improvements and curve straightening at Market Harborough, to be done in a more measured way. Network Rail has already announced that major investment in changes to track and signalling to increase line speed and segregate services through Derby station will be going ahead, with an expected completion date of 2018.

■ ■ Positive approach to attracting more people to rail

Ariadne Tampion represented Railfuture at an East Midlands Trains stakeholder event in Derby in July, which featured a presentation by the new managing director Jake Kelly. Mr Kelly had a very positive and ambitious approach to his new role, and in particular displayed awareness of how much suppressed demand there is for rail travel.

■ ■ MP backs rail reopening to Burton-on-Trent

Andrew Bridgen, MP for North West Leicestershire, has been making the case for reopening the National Forest Line from Leicester to Burton upon Trent in discussions with the Department for Transport and Leicestershire County Council, pointing out that the estimated £30 million cost of the reopening would be very small compared to the economic benefits to the region. Some local politicians at County Hall have expressed a preference for a fast service stopping only at Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch, but Mr Bridgen insists smaller communities along the route also need to have stations. There is no reason why the line could not accommodate both stopping and semi-fast services.

■ ■ Reopening campaigners put their case to Railfuture

Representatives from Lichfield Rail Promotion Group <http://www.lichfieldrailusers.org.uk> and the Ollerton and District Economic Forum <http://www.odef.org.uk> attended the Railfuture East Anglia meeting. The Lichfield group wants to reintroduce passenger services along the line between Lichfield and Burton upon Trent, with a new station at Alrewas, also serving the National Memorial Arboretum. There is a petition on their website, which needs more signatures. The Ollerton group seeks to improve the quality of life in the town following closure of the local colliery, and in particular wants to reopen the line from Ollerton to Shirebrook on the Robin Hood line. In relation to this reopening, the Government stated in its summer budget report that "the extended round of the New Stations Fund will be used to support a local bid for stations on the Robin Hood Line to Edwinstowe and Ollerton, subject to a business case."

■ ■ Chance to have your say and see tram extensions

Railfuture East Midlands' next meeting, in November, is expected to be at a venue on the Nottingham tram extension.

■ ■ Follow Railfuture East Midlands on Twitter: @RailfutureEMids



International line for Railfuture

By Ian Brown
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The ultimate test for Railfuture is to be successful in campaigning for a bigger, better railway. To achieve this Railfuture needs to raise its awareness and reputation. This means doing more things and doing them better.

As our work is done by volunteers we need to attract more members. Like any organisation we are increasingly focusing our efforts on realistic campaigns on sustainable issues where we are likely to be successful.

Primarily we need to make sure that all our efforts have a direct bearing on the railways in Britain, both main line and light rail. That is the reason our members join, stay members and leave legacies.

In the past we have had a separate group that looked at international rail matters which did not feed directly into our cam-

paigning in Britain that is performed by our specialist groups. However, we need to use our knowledge of international railway developments and comparisons to strengthen our message in Britain.

Following my appointment as Railfuture's director of policy, with an oversight of our campaigning, I have reviewed how we work. There is a clear need for our people with international knowledge to be involved with all our groups.

For any subject discussed in our specialist groups (passenger, freight and infrastructure & networks), we should always ask the question: "How do they do it in other countries?" That has not always been happening in the past but it will in future.

The Railfuture board has agreed a revised way of working that incorporates our people with international knowledge and

firmly embeds these strengths within each group.

To keep abreast of general European activity, Railfuture will remain a member of the European Passengers Federation.

Our Lincolnshire branch chairman, David Harby, was recently interviewed by the BBC about fare increases and inflation and the interviewer asked him specifically about what was done in other countries. We need to be in a position, throughout the organisation, to answer such questions.

I am looking forward to working with all of our volunteers in the policy directorate to make Railfuture an even better campaigning organisation that will have more successes and serve our members better.

We have contacted the European Passengers Federation to confirm that Railfuture will remain as a full member and asked for reassurances on certain issues.

An honour for Harry

Harry Maughan, who spent years as a rail campaigner and as a volunteer working for the Ridgmont station heritage centre and Bedford-Bletchley rail users, has been honoured just a few months after his death.

Harry, who died in March aged 79 and was also vice-chairman of the Leighton Buzzard Society, won a *Going the Extra Mile* award from SHARE Museums East. Harry was an inspiring and enthusiastic campaigner who was also chairman of Bedfordshire Rural Transport Partnership.

He saw many of his campaigns bear fruit but failed to convince Luton's blinkered politicians of the need to reopen the line from Luton to Dunstable as a light rail line and extend it to Leighton Buzzard. They ripped up the line to build a much-criticised busway.

West Midlands

■ ■ Very light rail for Dudley

Dudley Council has made an application for £14 million from the European Regional Development Fund to fund its plan to provide a light rail link from Dudley Port station, near Tipton, to Dudley town centre at Castle Hill, using a disused freight line. A national centre for the development of very light rail technology is also being planned by Warwick Manufacturing Group which will bring the total cost of the project to nearly £28 million. One of the two tracks will be used for a passenger service, while the second track will be used to test new tram designs. Councillor Khurshid Ahmed told the *Express & Star* that the council will need to raise £9 million from private sector investors. Railfuture wants to see the whole line opened for passengers and freight from Stourbridge Junction to Walsall and on to Lichfield so we are very concerned about this light rail plan. We are not against the use of light rail vehicles in principle for this line, although this does reduce flexibility of rolling stock, and to accommodate freight, the line would need to have heavy rail infrastructure.

■ ■ Walsall wants new rail links with Wolverhampton

Walsall Council wants to expand the town's rail station to provide faster links to Wolverhampton. The rail service was axed by London Midland in 2008 despite protests in Parliament, but the current bus journey can take over an hour for a seven-mile journey. Campaigners are worried however that no money has yet been committed to the project.

■ ■ Electrification project set to boost rail freight

Work is under way on the £36 million Chase line electrification scheme between Walsall, Bloxwich, Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley Trent Valley, which is expected to be completed in 2017. It will allow electric trains to run between Birmingham New Street and Rugeley via the Cannock lines. Clearances are also being improved for bigger W10 gauge freight trains.

■ ■ Real-time information system promised for Bescot

Centro is also planning a £75,000 improvement scheme at Bescot rail station which will include real-time train information. Campaigners say more trains are needed at the station.

■ ■ Tram link boosts rebuilt New Street station



New Street station in Birmingham was scheduled to reopen officially at the end of September, after a five-year rebuild. Electronic gates were being installed in August. In a £127 million project, Midland Metro trams are being extended through the city centre, giving a connection between Snow Hill and New Street stations. In August, the original trams had been completely replaced by new Spanish-built CAF vehicles. The original Italian-made AnsaldoBreda vehicles are being stored at Long Marston for possible future use.

■ ■ Regional West Midlands contact: westmidlands@railfuture.org.uk

Sustainable Sussex

Community Rail came to the South East a decade ago, and has proved remarkably successful. Starting with Ashford-Hastings and then including the Uckfield and East Grinstead lines, partnerships have now also been established for Brighton to Seaford, the picturesque Arun Valley line and most recently for Reigate-Tonbridge.

While an important commuter railway, Southern's CRP routes serve picturesque market towns, some quite remote rural areas and some fantastic tourist destinations such as Rye, Lewes and Chichester. This is great walking country too, with stations at frequent intervals and plenty of good local pubs in between to slake the traveller's thirst.

Can you identify the stations on the Sussex CRP lines above that are linked with: (a) the Bloomsbury Group, (b) the industrial archaeology of Sussex and (c) Anne Boleyn? (answers below).

One of the partners is the relatively new South Downs National Park, an agency keen to encourage car-free access to the wonderful countryside it contains. Gatwick Airport and 1066 Country Marketing are also partners. Throughout the Southern network, station adoption has taken off, with

many stations now looked after by an adopter or a station partnership. The CRP and Southern also work with Sussex-based charity the Aldingbourne Trust which helps to identify worthwhile community work for adults with learning difficulties.

Despite cutbacks in local authority funding, the partnership has grown and prospered and is now more secure with increased funds from Southern written into the franchise agreement.

The partnership is a well-established 'not for profit' limited liability company. It is the largest of the CRPs with a hard-working team of five paid staff (two of whom are part-time) and many volunteers including the board of eight people.

The partnerships do good work with schools, teaching a new generation of travellers to respect and make good use of the railway, and to kindle the flame that sometimes leads to a job on the railway.

Specific education materials have been produced in a project involving around 3,000 schoolchildren at Horsham and Chichester.

The Sussex CRP plays to all the strengths of community rail – economic development, sustainability, working with young people, engaging with the



EXPLORE BY TRAIN: Arundel Castle and the Arun Valley

community. Over a decade, the local railways of Sussex have become more embedded in the community and have thrived as a result. To learn more, see www.sussexcrp.org

Let us hope that we can soon extend the partnership to include Uckfield-Lewes as well, to make the most of this revived route as it starts to play its part in Sussex's strategic transport network. I will look at CRPs in Wales in the next issue.

Answers to my quiz questions: (a) Southease, a healthy walk from Charleston, the farmhouse owned by Vanessa Bell, sister of Virginia Woolf and frequented by the Bloomsbury Group.

(b) Amberley has a museum of industrial archaeology, including a narrow gauge railway and collection of Southdown buses, next to the station.

(c) Hever was the home of Henry VIII's wife Anne Boleyn.

Picture: SUSSEX CRP

Picture: NETWORK RAIL



LOCAL ACTION

East Anglia

By Paul Hollinghurst
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■ ■ Haverhill petition progress

Railfuture East Anglia is working jointly with the local campaign group Rail Haverhill to gather support through a petition for the reopening of the line from Cambridge via Sawston, Granta Park and Linton to Haverhill. A leaflet has been distributed to households in the area explaining the scheme and directing them to the online petition, and the local group is attending public events to gather signatures. Two thousand people have already signed but we hope to push this much higher to match the success of the Wisbech campaign. The transport corridor from Cambridge to Haverhill is one focus of Cambridgeshire's future transport plans and it is vital that the rail option is explored. There is more information and a link to the petition on our website.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Haverhill

■ ■ Cambridge station rebuilding

Rebuilding of the ticket hall at Cambridge station has finally started over a year late, which will eventually bring an end to the dreadful conditions that passengers currently face where a lack of ticket windows and machines (just four machines to serve a station used by nine million passengers a year) which sees the current ticket hall packed with queues stretching into the street, especially at weekends. The new ticket hall will double the space and significantly increase the number of ticket machines, which will transform the experience for passengers. Work on the surrounding station square is also starting, with the hotel and cycle park structure now very visible as the main structure reaches 3rd floor level. The station cycle park has 3,000 spaces and will be the largest in the country.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Cambridge+Station

■ ■ East Anglia franchise

The invitation to tender for the East Anglia franchise was expected to be issued by the Department for Transport in mid September 2015. In the meantime, members of the Railfuture East Anglia committee have met with representatives of the preferred bidders for the franchise: First Group, National Express and Abellio-Stagecoach. Their bid teams were already aware of our concerns and aspirations from Railfuture's detailed response to the DfT consultation so our discussions centred on the importance of reliability, increased capacity and issues that have arisen since the consultation. All the bid teams appreciated our professionalism and were very keen to hear what we had to say. We came away from each meeting with the positive impression that over the period of the franchise we will get a much improved network. It was recognised that during the recent series of very short franchises, East Anglia's rail network has not kept pace with the demands made of it and users are desperate for reliability and an improved timetable that provides more and better trains and really works for all aspects for the regional economy.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Greater+Anglia

■ ■ Peterborough-Ely set to be community rail service

The Government is planning to designate the 29-mile Peterborough-Ely Hereward line as a community rail service. Public consultation ended on 25 September. Network Rail will remain responsible for the line but CRP status allows local councils and volunteers to have more say in how it is run.

www.gov.uk/government/news/community-rail-plan-for-line-between-peterborough-and-ely

■ ■ Keep in touch at: www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia

■ ■ Twitter: @RailfutureEA



Cambridge tunnel

I agree wholeheartedly that the St Ives busway was a disastrous mistake (*Railwatch* 144). However, I guess the germ of rationality in it was that Cambridge station is inconveniently placed, whereas buses can get into the heart of the city.

I suggest it is time to rectify this problem. With talk of "bus tunnels" as a solution to the city's intractable congestion problems, should we not be looking into the feasibility of a rail tunnel, running from the station, under the city (with a city centre stop) and then out west. The East West Rail link could use this as its approach route to the city.

Costly I know, but I daresay bus tunnels are not cheap either. And East West Rail may be a case where the "spend a bit more, get a lot more" philosophy that underpinned the Overground redevelopment in London would apply again.

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Editors' note: Railfuture East Anglia is promoting the idea for the long term of a light rail line under Cambridge as part of the Cambridge City Deal: www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Cambridge+City+Deal See also: www.railfuture.org.uk/east/docs/Railfuture-East-Anglia-2015-07-29-Cambridge-City-Deal-Workshop-Slides.pdf

House prices

I did not agree with your printing a table showing the "top 10 areas where house prices have been boosted by Crossrail" in *Railwatch* 144. We should not be encouraging the notion that the rising cost of home ownership is a good thing. It helps to make property less affordable, and locks people into having to rent for longer than they wish.

Let us not forget that houses in the London area are already too high in the first place.

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Editors' note: Estate agents report that house prices go up when rail lines are opened or reopened. That fact is used by

Letters extra

politicians to justify investing in rail. Rising house prices also have negative effects on society in general but in London, proximity to good public transport is one of the keys to a "good life". It is claimed by Alex Neill, director of campaigns at Which? that only 6% of properties in London are more than 1,500 metres away from a rail station, with the boroughs of Camden and Tower Hamlets best served. Houses within 500 metres of a Tube station are said to cost £25,000 more than the rest.

Think *Railwatch*

How often have you sat in your doctor's or dentist's surgery waiting room and looked at those tired-out motoring magazines, women's periodicals and gardening books. Bring a bit of culture into these waiting rooms. Next time you pay a visit, take along with you a copy of *Railwatch* to brighten up your surgery waiting room. Excellent place to promote the rail campaign.

*Peter Lawrence, Railfuture vice president, Norwich NR6 5EB
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Freight capacity

Chris Austin's concern about provision for rail freight in the Leicester area (*Railwatch* 144) reminded me how short-sighted it was in the name of rationalisation in 1986 to reduce the double freight track between Syston and Wigston junctions to single, except through Knighton tunnel, south of Leicester station, where all the freight track was taken up.

If the freight line through the tunnel was reinstated, it would create a complete freight-only line between Syston and Wigston junctions.

This section will become more important following the implementation of two major schemes – the proposed electric freight spine and the upgrade of the Felixstowe-Nuneaton line to accommodate intermodal freight trains. It is imperative that there is a separate freight line between Syston and Wigston, either double track or a bi-directional single line.

Norman Liszewski, Woodville, South Derbyshire DE11 7JW

Railfuture leaflet

I received a Railfuture leaflet with the European rail timetable. I was appalled to see that you are promoting the Trainline. As far as I am aware every ticket which the Trainline sells can be bought cheaper elsewhere.

Railfuture, as an organisation which purports to support passenger rail travel, should reconsider their support for the Trainline and advise passengers better.

*Chris Lee
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Editors' note: This is the *Going Abroad* leaflet which the International Group arranged to be sent out with the timetable. You can see the leaflet at <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/DL777>

It contains a list of sources for tickets between UK and European stations which includes the Trainline, with a warning that some charge a booking fee and use premium rate numbers. The Trainline charges a booking fee and a credit card fee. So no, Railfuture is not promoting the Trainline.

The extra costs are pointed out more fully at: www.railfuture.org.uk/Planning+your+journey There is also a fares advice page at: www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+user+help.

Oxford Parkway

I was intrigued by reports of the new station at Oxford Parkway but because I do not know the local geography, I was puzzled as to how people arriving at Oxford station would connect with the new Chiltern train service to London Marylebone via Bicester and High Wycombe. Would they be expected to walk from Oxford station to Oxford Parkway?

There are already plenty of inconvenient places to change trains. Dorchester for instance should surely have a combined station. The present set-up at Yeovil is as crackpot as it is possible to devise. Changing trains there involves a taxi ride, or a long and dangerous walk.

But building a new parkway station at Lydford on Fosse where the Salisbury-Taunton line crosses the A37 road could provide a rail link to the Bath and West showground and help many people who do not have easy access to a station at present.

I do not like travelling through the Severn tunnel so I wonder has anyone ever considered rebuilding the old bridge across the river near Lydney? It could be useful as a diversionary route but it could also be used for a train service from Wales to London via Gloucester.

In the early 1980s, I bought a chair in Ash, Surrey, and

transported it by train to my then home in Torquay, Devon, changing trains two or three times. At that time, all trains had luggage space in the guard's van. Why can't modern trains have some flexible space to accommodate big items of luggage, cycles, buggies, dogs – and maybe even the odd chair?

*J Evered, Llandrindod Wells,
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HS2 and Stoke

Stoke is a weak point in the case for High Speed Two. (*Railwatch* 144). At present, two Pendolinos link Stoke with London and Manchester every hour. With HS2 as currently planned, the London-Manchester service would bypass Stoke and run in an arc via Crewe. If HS2 succeeds in attracting the bulk of London-Manchester traffic, it is inconceivable that anything like the current fast service would still run on the classic line. A likely outcome is a slow service for intermediate locations. Stoke, Macclesfield and Stockport would lose out.

HS2's *Rebalancing Britain* report has a nice chart on page 17 which shows that Stoke and Stockport together have about as many London trips as Nottingham, substantially more than Sheffield or Glasgow, and twice as many as Crewe. Why build a scheme which threatens this traffic?

But it is not just a question of train services. HS2 aims to support the economy and promote development, especially around high speed stations. Examples such as Lille are quoted. But if cause and effect play out as claimed, we can expect the cities which would lose connectivity with HS2 to lose jobs. Is this what Stoke needs?

Two further points.

1. The crow-fly routes to Manchester from both London and Birmingham pass between Derby and Stoke. Neither runs via Crewe.
2. If there is any likelihood of an HS3 link between Manchester and Leeds, HS2 in Manchester should enable through services such as Birmingham-(Stoke!)-Manchester-Leeds.

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Sheffield's value

I have much sympathy with Graham Nulty's article (*Railwatch* 144). I have petitioned HS2 Ltd twice with detailed proposals for serving Sheffield, including direct services for the city centre, but

I see no signs that these ideas are being taken seriously. I had a meeting in early 2014, covering various issues, with Andrew McNaughton, who said that Sheffield was well down the league table for rail passengers. Thanks to HS2's proposals it is likely to stay that way.

More recently, I challenged Sir David Higgins to justify why Sheffield did not deserve city centre services, just like those planned for eight other large cities in England and Scotland, but have received no response. There is already a station in Sheffield city centre, so what is really needed is a direct HS2 service to that station, together with necessary enhancements to the classic rail network, dovetailed in with the Midland main line electrification scheme.

HS2 has also put out incorrect information. It claims direct Sheffield-Nottingham existing services take 53 minutes, whereas the East Midlands

Trains service using class 158 diesels takes 50 minutes, including stops at Chesterfield and Alfreton. If this service was provided by class 350 110 mph electric trains, they could probably achieve 45 minutes, EXACTLY the time which HS2 claims (erroneously, in my view) for a journey city centre to city centre via Meadowhall and Toton. Which choice would a sensible person make? Mysteriously, electrification proposals are currently missing the Erewash Valley route. As currently proposed, Meadowhall will be an enormous park and ride option for large swathes of south west and north Yorkshire, but largely irrelevant for much of Sheffield. It is still not too late for HS2 to get a better balance between constructing infrastructure and developing realistic direct services for passengers.

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Future of the railway up in the air

By Chris Austin

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Network Rail's long-term plans are on hold and no new consultation document on route studies has been published since March.

How did we get here and what does it mean for Railfuture campaigning?

When Network Rail was set up in 2002, the Government was keen to keep its debt from falling on the public sector borrowing requirement and so it had to be a private company, borrowing (more expensively) from the markets.

Projects were specified by Government, the then Office of Rail Regulation determined efficient levels of spending on maintenance and renewals, and borrowings were underwritten by Government through an arrangement much like a credit card.

This enabled work to be undertaken based on what the railway needed, not limited to what it could afford. Clearing the backlog of renewals started and major projects such as Reading, Birmingham New Street and an ambitious electrification programme kicked off.

Even at this early stage, however, commentators such as our own Christian Wolmar, were predicting that this would lead to unsustainable levels of debt, and this indeed has happened.

The debt issued was £44 billion prior to September 2014 when NR was taken into the public sector and direct borrowing from Government started using a £30 billion loan facility. New debt was also raised to finance the repayment of earlier loans.



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

LONDON BRIDGE STATION: As it will be in 2018. This is a computer-generated view from the Shard, London's tallest building, next to the station. Network Rail is engaged on an amazing project to rebuild and re-shape the station while keeping most of the trains running. Associated work, creating a new Bermondsey dive-under, involved demolishing Victorian rail viaducts and realigning tracks. But privatisation zealots have used every problem to undermine NR's status as a not-for-profit enterprise. With the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, the calls for the return of British Rail are becoming louder and the future of HS2 may again be in doubt

The mounting debt, together with the revelation earlier in the summer that some major projects, including the electrification programme, were well adrift, triggered the announcement by the Secretary of State in June this year that, apart from the Great Western main line (where the new electric trains are already being built), electrification would be "paused" while the position was sorted out. Sir Peter Hendy was brought in to identify

a deliverable and affordable programme, helped by some others such as Richard Brown, whose report was instrumental in getting the franchising programme back on track.

Advocates of renationalisation need to remember what it was like in BR days – a railway starved of capital and with barely enough money to maintain the network. Renewals expenditure was regularly cut to meet cash limits, and speed restrictions,

unpainted stations and no funding for expansion were all features of that era. None of us wants to return to that.

Inevitably some projects will be deferred or extended to limit the burgeoning capital debt, and we will need to lobby hard for expansion plans, particularly reopenings, which are always vulnerable when the purse strings tighten. But, while the Treasury is back in control, the railway investment pot is so much bigger, even though free access to capital has now ended and the debts have to be paid. We have had a good run for five years with record levels of infrastructure investment and more importantly, the overall level of investment is now much closer to the needs of a growing network than those made available to BR.

A further report will follow after Sir Peter has reported to the Secretary of State in the autumn.

Railfuture board responds to AGM critics by consulting activists

Railfuture's AGM in Blackpool in May was described as a "shambles" by some members, but the board has since said it is keen to take criticism on board.

The issue of reconciling differing views of branches in Railfuture responses to official consultations was raised, with the Northern and TransPennine consultation being quoted as an example of communication failings.

Various members hoped that a new national chairman would be able to encour-

age constructive dialogue across the membership and the board is keen to involve the branches more. The branches and groups day in Birmingham in October is expected to concentrate on some of these issues.

Sadly Railfuture's new chairman Chris Brown, who attended the AGM, has since had to stand down because of ill health.

Vice chairman Chris Page paid tribute to retiring chairman David Berman. An AGM motion called on the board

to reconsider its attitude to international campaigning and the European Passengers Federation. An HS2 proposal from Colin Elliff and a Hugh Jaeger proposal dealing with the use of social media were defeated.

Stewart Palmer, Chris Page and Trevor Garrod were elected as board members while Ian McDonald and Chris Fribbins were not elected.

A report of the AGM can be found on the Railfuture website.

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