

railwatch

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Picture: RAILWATCH



Picture: STOKES SENTINEL

Prime Minister gives HS2 the seal of approval: Page 2

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■ ■ Good news for Wisbechrail

A business plan for restoring passenger train services between Wisbech and March was approved at the July meeting of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority Board and was greeted with delight in the wider community.

It was based on a train service of two trains per hour operating between Wisbech-March-Ely-Cambridge, a pattern of service deemed to produce "good value for money" with a benefit cost ratio of 4.4:1.

More than half of the predicted £160 million cost will be spent on improvements to the adjacent road network, including road-over-rail bridges, so that all the level crossings can be abolished. The rest will be spent on:

- A cycleway parallel to the restored railway
- A station at Wisbech together with a 200-space car park and bus interchange close to the town centre
- A passing loop at Coldham
- Restoration of the disused platform (number 3) at March, for Wisbech trains
- A 200-space car park on the north side of March station
- The historic building on the disused platform (number 4) repurposed to provide a new entrance from the car park
- A new footbridge and lifts across the central part of March station to platforms 1-3 to provide step-free access-
- Large-scale enhancements to the track layout and signalling at March to dispense with two manual signal boxes

The March resignalling may be controlled by a new panel at Cambridge power box or alternatively as part of the planned introduction of digital technology on the East Coast main line from London King's Cross to the north of Peterborough by 2024, the country's first major main line deployment of European Train Control System signalling. ECTS is expected to be extended from Peterborough to March, Wisbech, Ely and King's Lynn, allowing the elimination of 10 Victorian-era manual signal boxes and expansion of capacity. Trains should be running from Wisbech by 2028 once the resignalling and the Ely area capacity works are completed.

■ ■ Safeguarding a rail future for Great Yarmouth port

Railfuture East Anglia has objected to the new draft Great Yarmouth local plan because a previous commitment to safeguard a rail alignment to the port has been dropped. The new outer harbour was completed in 2009, and in the run-up to its construction the viability of a new rail freight link to the port was looked at. This would have been an extended version of the former harbour railway and, unusually in the UK, would have involved street running.

As things turned out, the new harbour established a core business around offshore windfarms rather than as a container facility as envisaged. So a new rail link was not pursued. Nevertheless there is potential to handle bulk goods suitable for rail transit. With climate change and decarbonisation of the economy favouring more rail freight, we have argued that this is not the time for Great Yarmouth to drop its commitment to safeguarding a rail alignment. On the contrary it should be strengthened.

■ ■ Greater Cambridge Partnership's Foxton Travel Hub

The Greater Cambridge Partnership which controls *city deal* funding worth up to £500 million supplemented by other funds, has three main remits, one of which is to improve traffic flows around the city. The partnership plans a series of "travel hubs" around the city to encourage interchange between train, bus, cycle and car. Railfuture has already commented on the proposal for the travel hub proposed for Whittlesford parkway station, and now another rail-based site has found favour, this time at Foxton. Foxton station is seven miles from Cambridge on the Royston line and is ideal for attracting Cambridge-bound car drivers from the adjacent A10. About 750 spaces will be provided in the expectation that many car drivers will switch to the two-trains-an-hour serving Foxton or to buses.

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■ ■ Welland Valley campaign

The Welland Valley Rail Partnership has been formed to seek the restoration of a short stretch of line that would greatly improve connectivity between the South Midlands and Peterborough. The 3.5 mile link from Seaton, north of Corby, to Luffenham between Oakham and Stamford would allow direct journeys from Peterborough to Kettering and beyond. It forms part of the former Rugby & Stamford railway, but would need a new chord at Seaton, and some deviation from the original route to avoid houses built on the trackbed at South Luffenham. It is suggested that a Kettering-Peterborough service could be operated by Vivarail Class 230 battery powered trains, charging from overhead wires at either end of the route. At the same time, there is renewed interest in making better use of the existing track north of Corby, which currently carries only two return services per day. Corby Rail Users and Corby Business Group have approached local MP Tom Pursglove for help in bidding for finance for a more frequent service to Melton Mowbray and beyond.

■ ■ Greengauge 21 report on HS2

Greengauge 21's report, *HS2's Eastern Arm*, seeks to deliver greater benefits to the East Midlands than the present HS2 plans, and earlier. The report argues that the need for capacity enhancement and journey time reductions both between Leeds and Sheffield and between Birmingham and Nottingham are far too urgent to wait 20-25 years for HS2. They are needed now, and the most cost-effective way to proceed is using routes already designed by HS2 Ltd. These parts of the HS2 Eastern Arm should be advanced as soon as possible, while the middle section can be re-examined and compared with an alternative route to the east, parallel to the East Coast main line, for later completion.



In the *Midlands Package* of upgrades, the currently planned HS2 route from Birmingham is used as far as Trent Junction where it follows the current route into Nottingham Midland. The route from Nottingham to Newark would be upgraded for higher speeds and a new SW to N connection made to the ECML at the same time as the much-needed grade separation over the ECML. Nottingham has always suffered from poor connectivity with the North East of England and this new connection is very effective. CrossCountry services could then run between Newcastle and Birmingham via Nottingham, giving improved connectivity and greater resilience against line blockage. This option would also eliminate the highly unpopular Long Eaton viaduct and the bisection of the Shimmer estate, while allowing London to Sheffield journey times of 75 minutes.

■ ■ HS2 station at Toton

Earlier, Midlands Connect had published its connectivity plans for the proposed HS2 station at Toton. Some of the proposals for diverting Stoke to Nottingham services via Toton, with extended journey times, are not a good idea. A proposed spur from the Midland main line, both north and south, to a station at East Midlands Airport terminal looked worthy of further examination.

■ ■ East Midlands timetable

In common with all train operators, East Midlands Railway has had its plans delayed by the Covid-19 crisis. Chief among these is the major overhaul of the Midland main line timetable, which has been deferred from December 2020 to May 2021. The main element of this is the opening of the electrification to Corby and introduction of a major uplift in frequency and capacity on the route. Railfuture provided a detailed response to the consultation on the timetable, as did various user groups including Harborough Rail Users and Kettering Rail Users. Covid-19 has delayed both the completion of the infrastructure work and the cascade of electric rolling stock, plus associated staff training. However, though it is regretted, Railfuture East Midlands recognises that this deferral is inevitable in the circumstances and looks forward to the promised enhancements being delivered in May 2021.

■ ■ Ivanhoe line campaign

The Campaign to Reopen the Ivanhoe Line (Leicester to Burton-upon-Trent) has been very busy, working with the Department for Transport *Reopen your Railway* support team towards the production of a minimum strategic outline business case. CRIL is in the process of arranging various pieces of research in support of the case. The attitude from both DfT and Network Rail support staff has been both positive and constructive. This is the best opportunity within the past 30 years of restoring a passenger service on the line, however, we must not take anything for granted. We are also pleased to announce that Blaby District Council have decided to contribute towards the feasibility study, bringing the total of contributing councils to eight and, if you include the four local MPs that support us, it does appear that the momentum is with us at the moment.

CRIL has not neglected campaigning activities, and we have revamped our display material which had its first outing at a small event in Swadlincote. We are hopeful of attending other local events, particularly in Coalville. We are also busy preparing a CRIL calendar (we quickly discounted a nude one!) to raise campaign funds. We look forward to being able to hold open public meetings again and hope to hold the meeting in Leicester that was deferred by Covid-19 later in the year.

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We will build back better!

LNER's managing director David Horne explains how he plans to attract passengers

I am proud of the way in which LNER has responded to the Covid 19 pandemic by providing timely information, reassurance and new measures to ensure the safety of our people and customers.

Coronavirus presented unprecedented challenges for our industry.

After working for decades to increase rail use, the weeks when public transport was restricted to essential journeys only were difficult to accept.

Thankfully we are now attracting customers back to travel safely by train once again.

For the industry's future viability, I believe that it is now more important than ever that we get people back travelling by train again.

Railway colleagues throughout Britain worked tirelessly to ensure key workers could travel safely at the height of the lockdown.

When many were anxious about the risks to their own health, our railway continued to function so NHS nurses and doctors and other key workers could get to work safely.

We have introduced new ways for customers to travel safely, from mandatory reservations and social distancing measures to launching our own range of regionally inspired face masks. There have been unprecedented changes to timetables. We have ensured direct services remained in place when other train companies were unable to operate, for example, between Hull and London.

We worked with Network Rail and the wider industry to keep customers moving safely.

Our cleaning measures are industry leading, and sharing information with customers on our approach to cleaning proved vital to providing reassurance and building confidence.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have delivered around 300,000 hours of cleaning across our stations and train fleet and



DAVID HORNE: Took over the East Coast route in 2015

used almost 100,000 litres of cleaning fluids. Mandatory reservations reduced anxiety among customers worried about maintaining social distancing – critical when we were rebuilding confidence in public transport. Flexibility remains because customers can book up to five minutes prior to departure.

The system allows us to forecast demand for catering and nobody is left standing, without a seat, in a crowded vestibule. Passengers expect a seat when they travel with LNER and I believe this approach could help signal the end of overcrowded trains. Our customers and communities remain at the heart of all that we do and our volunteer team of LNER Reserves was set up in the early days of lockdown to help the NHS, emergency services, charities and communities along our route.

One inspiring example of our LNER Reserves was the "Letter to a Friend" initiative where more than 9,000 care home residents received 19,279 letters, poems and quizzes from our volunteers.

The volunteers have given more than 6,000 hours of help.

To maintain our connection with customers, we have expanded our use of social media. We also released a series of in-cab journeys filmed pre-lockdown,

showing the beauty of the East Coast route. Technology has been used to enhance the LNER customer experience. Our teams have the latest smartphone technology, and our new LNER customer app provides live journey information.

Contactless car parking was introduced at all our managed stations to reduce touch points at pay machines and entry and exit barriers. During the early days of the pandemic, technology allowed some of our teams to work from home. We also concentrated on simplifying processes and systems. Progress will continue where we can make things smarter and simpler for customers and our people.

An example of this is the recent easing of Friday ticket restrictions to remove the peak time on a Friday, after we noted that afternoon trains were busier than the peak period itself. July saw LNER secure the highest overall National Rail Passenger Survey result for a franchise train company.

The Spring 2020 survey fieldwork was carried out before lockdown when LNER improved its score on train cleanliness, car park facilities and customer information. We are committed to building on this progress so we can offer the very best customer experience. Innovation

remains key to restoring confidence. Our latest "Eat at your seat" pilot is proving popular. Customers on selected services can scan a QR code on their smartphones to request a range of hot and cold snacks and refreshments delivered to their seat, avoiding the need for queuing at the Café Bar.

This is another new measure to ensure social distancing, but also to make it easier for customers who do not wish to leave the comfort of their own seat.

Making rail travel accessible is crucial in attracting new customers.

As the first train company to offer Sunflower Lanyards in March last year, we have now issued more than 10,000 lanyards for customers with hidden disabilities.

Our LNER locally inspired face masks have proved an effective way of encouraging people to wear face coverings as well as to reflect the iconic colours and landmarks of the LNER route.

To attract passengers back, we must provide a journey where people are safe but also feel safe.

We are taking care to protect the high levels of punctuality achieved during lockdown, by ensuring that network pinch-points do not become clogged with more train services than can be reliably accommodated.

We want our timetable changes to follow the maxim: "Build Back Better!" We are finding opportunities to achieve positive public relations for the railway too. Our latest addition to the LNER range of face masks includes the Yorkshire Rose, launched on 1 August Yorkshire Day.

To encourage some of our customers to return, our latest fares promotion has proved popular with those looking to travel midweek and at less busy times. With many people keen to holiday at home because of continued restrictions on international travel, we are continuing to do our bit to ensure people can travel safely.

By continuing to be innovative, transparent and passionate about encouraging rail travel, I look forward to more people returning to rail in the months ahead.

We will give them a warm welcome.

The rail industry will have to be pretty smart to get through the Covid crisis



By Ian Brown
Railfuture campaigns for a bigger, better railway in Britain including rail links from Britain to the European mainland, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

We do this essentially because rail, including light rail, can contribute to three areas crucial to the future of the country.

These are the economy, the environment and social mobility, which includes addressing social inclusion and regeneration issues.

The three political imperatives in all the textbooks are health, education and jobs. Transport is usually an also-ran.

Railfuture analysed all the political manifestos for the December 2019 general election and generally the conclusion was that transport, and the environment, had ridden up the agenda, alongside the big three.

Many would-be politicians however had not read their own manifestos, and a cynic might suggest that large sections of the manifestos had been copied and pasted in from other sources.

Sadly, we all believe that manifestos are largely forgotten after an election, apart from those items selected for inclusion in the Queen's Speech. These are the ones planned to be the subject of legislation. It is at this stage that transport gets ditched from the agenda unless the issue is one that

specifically requires legislation, such as privatisation and mega construction projects such as the Channel Tunnel and Crossrail. Lifting transport up the political agenda as an end in itself may be the wrong objective.

We have just seen how such a strategy was trashed at almost no notice at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. The Government showed a graph on television on a daily basis showing the decline of public transport use by mode.

These graphs showed rail use declining to around 5% of pre-pandemic levels when rail usage was continuing to grow. Few commercial entities could recover from shedding their complete business, yet our railways are not 100% commercial.

On the face of it the prospects for our railways are somewhere in a range from dire to even more dire, particularly if we look at transport as an end in itself.

Our world has reverted to health, jobs and education as priorities, with transport and the arts the losers. I do not think we will be successful in changing these priorities in the short or medium term.

We need to look at transport including railways differently

First, rail should be considered and organised as part of an integrated transport service. There is no way public transport can be put on a commercial basis (with making profits the main aim), except by artificial constructs such as franchises. And franchises are long gone. To achieve a new status as a

social service, public transport must have

a purpose and the purpose must be to facilitate the core objectives of supporting the economy, health and education. Towns and cities are key to all three and they can be sustainable only if serviced by effective public transport.

Yes, there are new trends such as video conferencing and home working, but basically our towns and cities will prosper only if people can and want to live in or visit them, whether for shopping, leisure, work or education. Railways can no longer be viably treated as stand-alone.

Devolution will be an important factor as railways are a potential solution to these specific requirements. In this context, towns and cities will have to decide how much they want to spend on railways in capital and operational expenditure terms, set against the benefits of sustaining them.

London long ago came to the conclusion that the city is not really sustainable as a world-class growing city without capital investment in railways. This attitude resulted in Thameslink, Crossrail and the Overground.

But these decisions were taken before the Brexit campaign. Other cities had similar aspirations, without the funding and governance to go with it, except in Scotland and Wales which have more devolved responsibilities.

This is becoming obvious in Scotland and also in the Welsh Valleys, although the rest of Wales has not benefited to the same extent.

The question is whether anything has fundamentally changed. The jury is out on whether the country is prepared to trash not only its transport system but the very fabric of our towns and cities. I think not, provided that, in

the case of railways, we see them as part of this wider context. The country needs to address these issues differently. Railfuture is not a party political nor trade union-affiliated body, key strengths when we are campaigning.

Railfuture is increasingly recruiting people with technical and business competence as the only way to be effective if we are to engage with the rail industry and to get our arguments respected by stakeholders.

Against these wider issues, the Government has kept Britain's rail system intact during lockdown, despite only a few people, such as key workers, being allowed to use it.

The franchise model was well past its sell-by date even before the pandemic and is now well and truly dead.

The future will be more targeted so it will probably involve concessions where the buyer, national, regional or city government, specifies what it wants and the potential supplier provides it in a competitive way.

This begs the question about the efficiency of our railways which must be addressed eventually, either by technology or by conditions of employment which provide a better work-life balance for staff and facilitate service when it is needed. This will find its own level. If rail cannot provide a competitive response, other choices will be made. The trend to light rail is partly in response to this, with

relative costs and perceptions of frequent, quality service becoming more important. The danger is that many local authorities, as evidenced in Cambridge and Bath, may turn to unproven solutions, buying the arguments of enthusiastic promoters who want financial backing to develop their ideas.

We have seen this in the United States, where local mayors want their own systems. Many unconventional ones such as monorails did not see the light of day or were subsequently replaced by conventional higher capacity automated systems. This is currently happening at Newark Airport, New Jersey.

Railfuture's position is not against innovative technology, but we want the rail industry to have a properly funded research programme to the benefit of the whole industry.

Cities as important as Cambridge, for example, should not have to pay for any lack of expertise in developing light rail schemes.

Nevertheless, we have seen renewed interest in reopening rail routes as a cost-effective way of increasing access to our towns and cities and increasing access to the network.

The rail link from King's Lynn to Cambridge is a good example of the need to create jobs by providing value-for-money rail improvements, which are better investments than creating jobs by filling potholes on the roads.

Railfuture knows upgrade schemes are important but the irony in the North East for example, of reopening the route to Ashington while the parallel local rail service to Cramlington is rendered useless by the current rail operator is not lost on many members.

It is important that the need for an effective local client is recognised, along with a better

understanding of what railways are for. There is a need for a strategic approach. Nobody is now expecting any effective output from the Williams review but the current arrangements, effectively underwriting the cost of rail operation, with a margin, are likely to run out this autumn.

The Government will no doubt market a move to concessions and a move to provide some form of strategic leadership for the industry as a result of the protracted Williams Review. Both these issues were known about when the terms of reference for the Review were drawn up, but will no doubt be badged as the Williams Review.

The key objective must be to get the right balance between nationally provided services, such as inter-city passenger and rail freight, and locally sponsored services.

Freight has transformed itself from local haulage (such as from mines to power stations) to long distance freight, particularly intermodal, which shares the infrastructure with frequent passenger services.

This is particularly in evidence on the West Coast main line from London to the Midlands, the North West and Scotland.

This emphasises the need for HS2, now actually being built, particularly now that HS2 is seen as all about network capacity and resilience as consistently advocated by Railfuture.

Devolution is important provided the devolved body is competent and properly funded. This does not lead to an argument to split up Network Rail either into regions or local city zones. Network Rail has shown good leadership during the pandemic and has got on with upgrading the network.

The benefit of having experienced transport

and rail leadership in Network Rail is clear. Devolution can build on this in terms of service provision. So what is the problem? The problem is that we are hopefully sustainably emerging from the worst situation our railways have faced even through two world wars. All the reasons for having a growing rail network remain but have been subordinated to getting through the immediate crisis. These reasons will re-emerge particularly if we consider rail as part of the wider economic imperative.

There is no orderly path to consider these issues as the money for rail runs out.

Operating a railway with no passengers during a pandemic at £40 million a day is one thing. Continuing to do so is another.

All the arguments about sustainability and the economy are hollow if nobody is using the trains and there is no money.

The present emergency measures offer little incentive to rail operators to get passengers back. So change is needed. Is there time to make such change?

We must see passengers return to using our railways safely for all purposes, including work and education, although the mix may be different and the peaks less pronounced.

The environmental challenge is still there and will return to bite us, but we urgently need a properly funded rail research initiative. World commitment to achieving carbon neutral status is set at 2050 (except for the USA which hopefully will change its stance by a promised announcement on 4 November – another manifesto

commitment). This effectively hands on the issue to the next generation. The flaw is that the requirement is for this to be achieved by 2030 to be meaningful in minimising climate change.

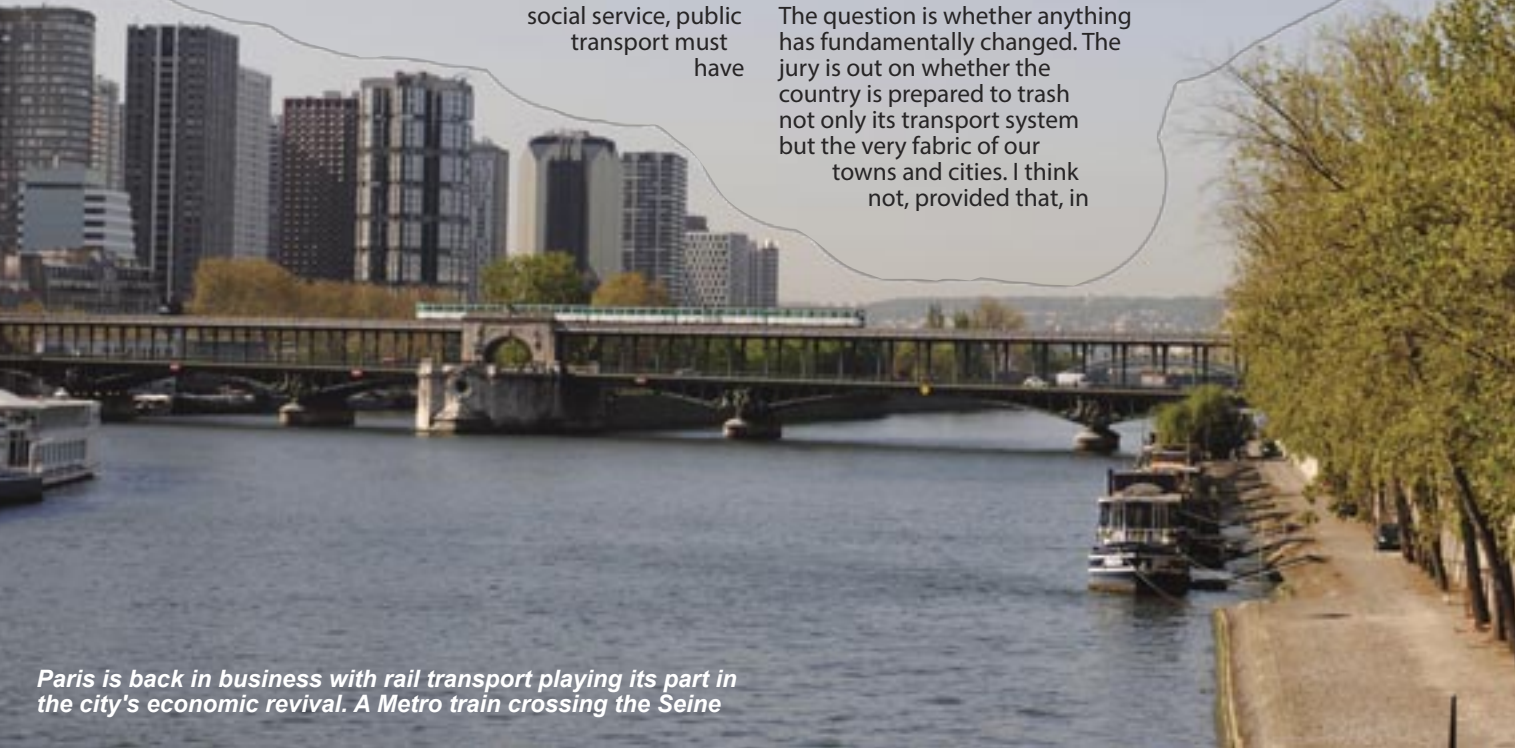
Many countries have committed to earlier dates, but in a changed economic world commitments may go the way of political manifestos. We have already seen our rivers and seas refilled with plastic waste, where pre-pandemic there was progress. We in Railfuture have a double challenge. We want to see our railways back in business addressing wider objectives, principally focused on the economy and jobs. Getting this right funds wider objectives. On carbon neutrality and associated environmental issues, we need research into railways at levels currently deployed in the automotive and aerospace industries for environmental reasons.

We also need investment in making our railways sustainable. We need a rolling programme of rail electrification and new rail technology for the next 10 years. If transport is to contribute to environmental targets, rail must pull more weight, with modal transfer to efficient railways.

Our long-term objective remains a bigger, certainly better, more sustainable railway carrying twice pre-pandemic levels of passengers and freight.

Railfuture and the rail industry will have to be pretty smart to achieve this.

■ Ian Brown CBE FCILT is Railfuture policy director



Paris is back in business with rail transport playing its part in the city's economic revival. A Metro train crossing the Seine



Linz, Austria, is a good example of economy and integrated transport going together

Welcome to rail?

The rail industry's response to Covid-19 has been overwhelmingly risk-averse and negative. If you want to see the difference in tone, compare the National Rail Enquiries website with that of National Express and British Airways. The latter are all about what you can do, the former is all about what you cannot do.

Rail frequencies were significantly reduced on many routes, and through services were often replaced by shuttle services which involved changes of train.

With luggage or a pushchair, never mind if you are disabled in some way, the experience was overwhelmingly negative. At the station, there were "Don't do this, don't do that" posters. Many station cafes were closed. The train guard was not visible and there was an alarming increase in fare evasion with the taxpayer effectively picking up the bill.

There will be calls for savings from the Treasury, and the Government might avoid closure procedures by running a Parliamentary train on each route once per day. This has happened before.

Research shows that Covid-19 risks are low when travelling by rail. The railways are under threat in a way they have not been since the days of Dr Beeching. Is the industry leaderless and out of ideas?

Stewart Palmer
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Mask deterrent

I am sorry that the Government insisted that people should wear masks on public transport because of Covid-19. We should be encouraging people to travel by rail. The effect on heritage railways has been severe.

James Knight, Church Road, Basildon, Essex SS14 2LD

Time to explain?

I suggest that the Transport Secretary or a rail minister should have been invited to Railfuture's online conference "Attracting passengers back to rail". If the Government was advising people only to use public transport if it was not possible to work from home, cycle or use a car, it would have allowed the ministers to explain how they want to improve air quality and reduce the use of fossil fuels. Surely people should be encouraged to use public transport if walking or cycling is not possible.

David Swan, Avon Street, Clifton-upon-Dunsmore, Rugby CV23 0DQ

Plan now for Access

I must say how interesting and informative I find Railwatch. Thanks for producing such a great

magazine. It is good to hear about more Access for All accessibility plans for stations being announced.

But the Access for All programme only helps get people from the public highway to the platform. We also need carriage floors aligned flush with platforms.

A happy spin-off is that flush train carriages speed up exit and entry by customers and make dwell times more predictable.

Almost every opportunity to upgrade station platforms in this way is missed. The London Bridge station £1 billion redevelopment kept the old platform heights.

I am sure there are many station upgrades that miss this simple opportunity. Network Rail and its predecessors have been too relaxed about platform heights. At one of my local stations, Denmark Hill in south-east London, the platform heights vary from 863 to 965mm above the rails.

UK-wide standards for platform heights would be a key step towards helping improve Access for All and dwell times and everyone would benefit.

This needs a long-term plan but the sooner we start this the better.

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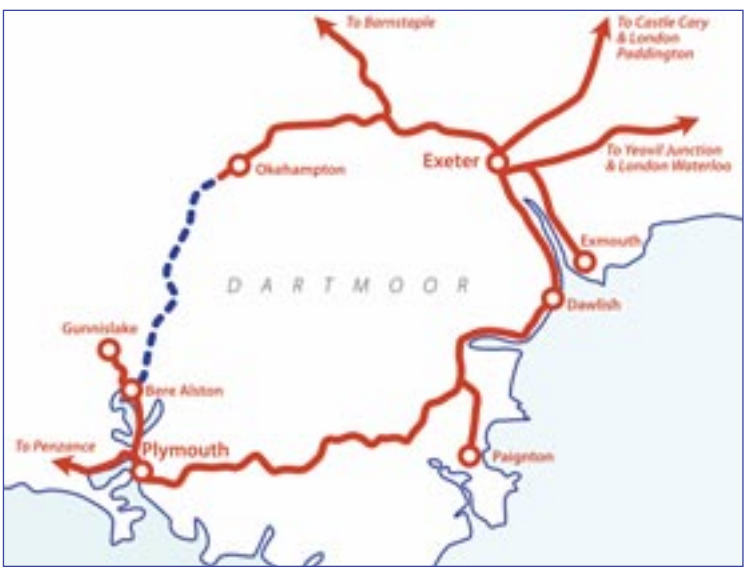
Out of Steps

I enjoyed reading the article by Jane Ann Liston in Railwatch 164. I have seen two versions of The Thirty-Nine Steps film but the incident on the Forth Bridge always annoys me when I see it. Mr Hannay was heading for an area near to Killin. How on earth could he get to Killin by crossing the Forth Bridge? Even in the 1930s, he would have had to change at Perth, Balquhider and Killin Junction. Also, he left London by LMS. If he was in an urgent rush, as he was, he would have got the train from Euston to Stirling. Keep up your good work.

Jim Pattison
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Rail not road

I enjoyed the Scottish flavour to the July Railwatch, including the illustration of renewable-energy wind turbines near the railway, and would hope the Scottish editors have been campaigning against the dualling of the remaining single carriageway sections of the A9 Perth-Inverness road. Expensive, visually intrusive (essentially a second road, possibly up the hillside) and, whenever I've looked out at its northern sections from the parallel rail line, almost empty of traffic. The cash should be used to double some of the remaining single-track sections of



Diversionary route round Dartmoor: See letter Devon Cream

the railway instead – much less visually intrusive and would ease the flow of the current, though modest, container freight traffic.

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Crash question

The interesting and informative article by Paul Abell in Rail Action confirmed my belief that although hydrogen has some merits as a fuel it is not the wonder fuel that many people think it is.

It will be interesting to see how it performs in practice in Niedersachsen and the Netherlands. The possibility of use on the Saltburn-Bishop Auckland route will be interesting, although I suspect that the hydrogen used will be derived from hydrocarbons and not by electrolysis, so not as clean as one might think.

The other issue that was addressed was crash-worthiness. The failure of a hydrogen connection in such circumstances could be catastrophic.

Donald Payne, Tipton DY4 8EE
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Devon cream

Although Mr Evered's letter in Railwatch 164 states that the Exeter-Plymouth line via Okehampton and Tavistock was single track, it was actually built double track and survived until the 1960s. The line across Meldon Viaduct was singled in 1966.

After Beeching in 1968, Plymouth to Bere Alston was singled, as was Exeter (Cowley Bridge Junction) to Okehampton and Meldon, while the 20-mile Bere Alston-Meldon Quarry line was closed.

Although Mr Evered also states that the Exeter-Plymouth LSW route was a long way round, it was only three miles longer than the GW route via Dawlish. I understand

travel. The rail network is now very busy. Some commuters say they would pay for a reliable service with a guaranteed seat. Others are concerned about likely staff cuts. Railfuture's sister organisation the Association luxembourgeoise des amis du chemin de fer plans to review the new system after six months of operation. The results will be instructive for all of us.

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Rail opportunities

I believe there is a case for electrifying the line south of Ayr, at least to Girvan, although beyond there the population is low.

There is now scope for providing a better train service for the locals, rather than for passengers travelling from Ireland. As the ferries to Ireland no longer use Port Rodie at Stranraer, the station should really be moved away from the port and closer to the town.

As well as possible new stations mentioned in the Case for Change report on SW Scotland, we need a new station at Mauchline.

Further south, there is also a good case for a reopened station at Cumnock where a new school and new homes are being built.

What we do not need is another appraisal. When Auchinleck station reopened in 1984, the paper case cost £110,000 while the station cost £30,000 to build.

Sadly logs from the Galloway hill forests are now being carried to Girvan along narrow roads by articulated lorries whose drivers seem to have little concern for other road users, including the Girvan-Newton Stewart buses.

At one time, there was a triangle south of Ayr which allowed a Stranraer to Dumfries service to operate via Mauchline. Removing the curve at Ayr was sheer bloody-mindedness. If the curve was reinstated, there would be enough passengers to make a Stranraer to Dumfries service cover its costs.

We will soon need new trains for the Glasgow and South Western lines from Glasgow to Dumfries and Stranraer. The class 156 trains are valuable because of their low weight, especially so because Pinmore viaduct south of Girvan has a 20mph speed limit.

There is talk of rebuilding the Dumfries-Stranraer line and building the rail link to the ferries at Cairnryan, but don't hold your breath. South-west Scotland would benefit from the Glasgow Crossrail

scheme which has been championed by Railfuture's Ken Sutherland.

Rail campaigners are thin on the ground in this area so we need to recruit some more members.

Could we recruit by having a special franking message on Royal Mail letters, even though fewer letters are being posted these days?

Railfuture members could write to any groups they belong to and suggest joining Railfuture. It does work. I know from experience.

Graham Lund
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Sheffield progress

The newly agreed devolution deal for South Yorkshire now brings the prospect of increased investment in rail. This is really good news.

Sheffield in the past had lacked investment in passenger services and facilities, priority being given to freight such as Tinsley marshalling yard. The closure of Woodhead was an appalling error of judgment and we are keen to see this reopened. The current Sheffield-Manchester service is slow, infrequent and overcrowded. However Sheffield did get one of the early (1994) tram systems.

Sheffield has also missed out on rail investment in the recent past. The redoubling at Dore and the Bamford loop are taking an inordinately long time to implement. Particularly disappointing is the failure to electrify the Midland main line.

Current London services are poor, with many people choosing to travel via Doncaster. Railfuture Yorkshire would like to see the Midland main line electrified through to South Kirby junction, to give an electric service to Leeds. The City Region, which is responsible for rail policy, is most supportive of rail. The tram train has been a huge success and there are discussions about how to extend it.

Railfuture Yorkshire's ambition for rail services in the area includes reopening local stations between Dore and Sheffield. We advocate reopening from Sheffield to Deepcar, and later to Penistone.

We also advocate improvements to the Hope Valley local service, as well as a frequent fast service to Manchester over a reopened Woodhead line. We are concerned that the Transport for the North proposal for passing loops on the Hope Valley will only give a marginal improvement in speed for



Better rail links for Sheffield: See letter Sheffield progress

Sheffield-Manchester trains and none in frequency. The Sheffield to Chesterfield via Beighton proposal is one of the 10 schemes going forward under the Reversing Beeching scheme. With HS2 coming as well, we look forward to increasing investment in rail in South Yorkshire.

Mike Rose, vice-chair Railfuture Yorkshire, Sheffield
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Guilty politicians

If Mr Elvin thinks that politics does not intrude into the railways, he is sadly deluded (Railwatch 164 Your Views).

Dr Beeching was specifically appointed (by politician Ernest Marples) to weaken and destroy the national railway network for the benefit of its main competitor, the road haulage industry.

This in turn led to the building of the motorway network, with one of the main contractors being Marples' own construction company.

Charges of corruption were laid against him and he fled to France, which at the time had no extradition treaty with Britain.

Railwatch exists to allow the expression of all shades of opinion on the railways. We call it "freedom of the press". By all means take your ball away, Mr Elvin. It leaves more space for the rest of us.

Michael Paine, Stow Road, Willingham by Stow, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire DN21 5LD

Political opinion

As a national body, Railfuture should obviously stay clear of party politics because it will be lobbying

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■ ■ Road building obsession

Although paying lip service to sustainable public transport, road building dominates the Western Gateway draft transport strategy, produced by the recently created subnational transport body.

A joint response by Railfuture Severnside and Wessex called in July for greater attention to achieving modal shift away from cars. We recommended examining the barriers to using the nine national rail stations in Gloucestershire, particularly for the first and last mile of a journey. This was the approach taken in 2015 by Harris Ethical, which produced station travel plans to encourage cycling and walking to stations as well as bus use. We also highlighted how people need to be made more aware of public transport. We commended Melksham Rail User Group's booklet promoting rail and bus services.

Consideration of rail's main conurbations is thin in the draft strategy. Railfuture by contrast calls for early delivery of MetroWest Phases 1 and 2, completion of electrification into Bristol Temple Meads, better north-south regional connectivity, especially for Cardiff-Portsmouth and Bristol-Weymouth routes, remodelling of Weymouth station to reduce conflicting moves, and safeguarding rail freight facilities.

■ ■ Stroudwater connection



Following Railfuture Severnside's meeting at Stonehouse in November, a working group set up to promote reopening of the town's Bristol Road station is preparing an awareness campaign to demonstrate how the station would serve a wider area than Stonehouse itself.

The group also responded to the Western Gateway draft transport strategy consultation, emphasising that the station would be the missing link between the Stroudwater conurbation (Gloucestershire's third largest urban area) and Greater

Bristol. In the absence of a direct service, it can take longer to travel by train from the Stroud Valleys to Bristol than to London.

The group's response points out that the station would meet the criteria in the rail strategy section of the consultation document by widening choice of travel mode, reducing car use and improving access to jobs. It would also improve productivity because Stonehouse is a major employment centre with five industrial estates. The group notes: "A direct link to the regional capital would help the area pull its weight in the Western Gateway region." Meanwhile the Department for Transport has told local campaigners that although Stonehouse Bristol Road was not shortlisted in the June round of *Restoring Your Railway* fund bids, it might be more appropriate for an application to the *New Stations Fund*.

■ ■ Devizes is a winner

We are pleased that the proposed Devizes Parkway station was among 10 winning bids which will receive £50,000 from the *Restoring Your Railway* fund towards the development of a business case. Elsewhere in Wiltshire, work has started on the first phase of improvements at Melksham station, supported by Railfuture and GWR, which will see a disused building converted into a café and community hub. This is the result of an agreement between TransWilts Community Interest Company and Wiltshire Council, with financial support from Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems UK, which is based in Melksham.

■ ■ Minehead rail link urgent

Railfuture Severnside chair John Hassall wrote to *Somerset County Gazette* in support of an independent report by Lord Berkeley and Michael Byng, which proposed £1.8 billion of rail enhancements in the South West including an upgrade of the infrastructure on the West Somerset Railway. Minehead Rail Link Group, which campaigns for a regular daily passenger service between Minehead and Taunton, also welcomed the report.

■ ■ Another step for Portway

Work is expected to start this year on a new single-platform station at Portway on the Bristol Severn Beach line, with help from a £1.5 million *Getting Building Fund* grant from the Government. Bristol City Council is providing part of the £3.5 million total cost. Labour MP Darren Jones tweeted that he had lost track of the number of times the Government had announced the go-ahead for the park-and-ride station. It will be the first new station in the Bristol area for 24 years.

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■ ■ Step to restore railways

Railfuture Wessex has long supported restoring a passenger service on the freight-only Waterside line between Totton and Hythe so when the Government announced its ideas fund as part of the *Restoring Your Railway* initiative, we wrote to Hampshire County Council urging it to bid for funding. The council agreed, effectively reversing a decision in 2013 to pause work on the project. Railfuture members were overjoyed at the success of the bid, enabling the council to prepare a strategic outline business case. With a planned vast new housing and commercial development on the former Fawley power station, support for a train service is widespread. Also among the shortlist of 10 successful projects in the first round of Government funding was a study into possible extensions of the Isle of Wight railway to both Ventnor and Newport. The Isle of Wight Council immediately got busy drawing up plans for stakeholder engagement ahead of a formal study.



Major infrastructure renewals were under way on the island in August with the lowering of track beneath a Ryde road bridge, **pictured above by Phil Jelly**. Looking ahead, there are two further ideas fund bids for the Railfuture Wessex area. One would accelerate Swanage Railway's ambition of running a regular passenger service on to the main line at Wareham. The other would address problems of congestion on the Basingstoke-Reading line via Bramley, a route heavily used by container trains from Southampton and passenger services.

■ ■ West England upgrade

Investigations into upgrading the Salisbury-Exeter line as part of Network Rail's "continuous modular strategic planning process" have been completed, and plans sent to relevant MPs urging their support. Government ministers need to be convinced about the merits of the scheme so they will release funds to enable Network Rail to develop an outline business case and take the project forwards via the "pipeline" process. Campaigners are delighted most MPs are fully supportive, especially those at the western end of the route as they know it will clear the way for the Devon Metro proposals to be delivered. An important benefit from the upgrade will be operational resilience. The plan involves a three kilometre extension of Honiton loop, a new loop in the Whimple and Cranbrook area, an additional platform at Cranbrook and an extension to Tisbury Loop. There has been good media coverage of the project and lobbying continues to persuade the Government to fund it.

■ ■ The Covid-19 effect

Rail services are slowly improving after the onset of Covid-19 but beyond Poole, the main line through Dorset was reduced to rural branch line status, with an hourly shuttle to Bournemouth for most of the week instead of two trains from Weymouth to Waterloo each hour. Between Salisbury and Exeter, service was reduced to a train every two hours. On the Isle of Wight, trains are running full but revenue is likely to be down, because guards have to maintain physical distancing. Railfuture members have raised their concerns with train operators and their MPs about measures frightening people away from trains.

■ ■ Infill electrification

Hopes are rising that the Basingstoke-Salisbury line could be electrified, following the Rail Safety and Standards Board decision to look again at the merits of extending third-rail electrification in southern England and on Merseyrail. Sensible infill schemes have been blocked for years because of safety worries. Third-rail DC electrification has a role to play along with overhead AC in reducing diesel use.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+branch
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Rail transport for new towns

By Roger Blake

Horden station on the Durham Coast line, advocated by Railfuture and supported by the Department for Transport's new stations fund, opened in June (see also page 14).

The station allowed a rail service to be restored for the 23,000 people who now live in Peterlee new town. Some of them have had to manage for 56 years without one.

The Department for Transport says 70,000 people a year will benefit from it.

The reopening righted a historic wrong, because its predecessor was closed in 1964, 16 years after the Peterlee Development Corporation was founded.

The closure left a 20 kilometre stretch of line without a station.

The town is named after the Durham miners' leader Peter Lee.

The £10.55 million Horden project, led by Durham County Council and Network Rail, used £4.4 million from the DfT's new stations fund.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, who is also Northern Powerhouse minister, said: "This is the biggest community not served by a station that has a railway line running right the way through and I think it is really important to get those connections back."

"We have ambitious plans to restore and revitalise the railways of the North East, build a railway that works for everyone, and kickstart our economy as we begin the recovery from Covid-19."

He added: "Horden is one small step. But it is an illustration of how transport investment can change lives for the better. Here's to many more Beeching reversals. The train, child of the 19th century, is key to the 21st."

Durham County Council leader Simon Henig said: "It has been a long-held ambition to have a station at Horden and has involved a number of years of hard work and commitment."

Sixteen miles north from Horden is Washington, which was designated a new town in 1964 with the aim of achieving "sustainable socio-economic growth".

It came one year after its station achieved notoriety as the first Beeching closure.

The town near Sunderland had a population of 20,000 then and the plan was for it to increase to 70,000. It now has a population



KEY ALLIANCE: The Horden site in January was visited by Ed Akers of Network Rail, Durham County Council leader Simon Henig, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps and Helen Golightly, chief executive of the North East local enterprise partnership

of 66,000 but the population has been in decline for the past few years.

Washington is on the mothballed Leamside line (Pelaw-Ferryhill) and had regular passenger services until the 1960s. Freight services continued until 1991. It is currently out of use but some infrastructure is intact.

It is also now one of the largest towns without an operational railway station.

In 2009, the Association of Train Operating Companies identified Washington as one of 14 schemes with a cost-benefit ratio of over 1. Now a bid is expected later this year to the DfT to restore a rail link to the town, from Tyneside or Sunderland.

As well as providing local rail services, the Leamside line could relieve the parallel East Coast main line.

The 1960s saw roads such as the A1 motorway prioritised to "serve" Peterlee and Washington, as railway lines and stations were being closed.

Now the focus is on bringing rail services back, especially for regeneration.

Restoring your railway

Ten of the 60 bids in the first round of the New Ideas Fund were confirmed in May as winners of £50,000 each to help develop their business cases.

The second round attracted a further 50 bids, with confirmation of a third bidding round due in November.

Several of the bids known to have been submitted were among those in Railfuture's

February submission to the DfT, which on 9 September published full lists of all 110 bids to both ideas fund rounds, but we still await news of what the 50 unsuccessful bids in the first round were, and we also await news on those picked under the heading of "accelerating existing proposals".

Encouragingly, Railfuture understands on good authority that reconnecting Tavistock to the existing network at Bere Alston is among them.

Winners of the second round, and of the new stations fund's third round, are expected to be announced imminently.

Meanwhile Railfuture is liaising with potential bidders to the ideas fund third round, including a station on the West Coast main line at Weedon which could serve Daventry (with a population of 25,000) as a parkway station on the new A45 bypass and the A5 roads.

There are no prizes for guessing the MP for Daventry. It is transport minister Chris Heaton-Harris.

Acceleration – new watchword

As well as the DfT "accelerating existing proposals" to restore former rail lines and stations, the Prime Minister announced in June that a new infrastructure delivery taskforce would be set up (named Project Speed) under the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

A Northern Transport Acceleration Council was announced in July, followed by a new acceleration unit in the DfT. Network Rail has identified six programmes for action: Croydon

area remodelling, TransPennine, Manchester reliability improvements (Castlefield corridor), Northumberland line reopening, Oxford, and Kettering -Market Harborough-Sheffield electrification.

See *Castlefield corridor* under *Campaigns* on the Railfuture website home page.

Midlands and the North

The National Infrastructure Commission issued a call for evidence in March to support its assessment of rail needs in the Midlands and the North, which would underpin the Government's integrated plan for the regions following the Oakervee review of HS2.

In July the NIC published its interim report and invited further comments. Railfuture's submissions can be read in *consultation responses* on the Railfuture website.

PEACE plan is launched

A *Peterborough Ely Area Capacity Enhancement* programme is being launched into a first-round consultation by Network Rail. One option is a new east-west bypass line to the south and west of Ely.

100 more by 2024

Railfuture's campaign for step-free stations wants the Budget next year to allocate more cash to the *Access for All* programme, launched in 2006.

■ Roger Blake is chair of Railfuture's national infrastructure and networks group.

■ More information on the Railfuture website and on Twitter: @RailfutureNetws

Essential tool to aid rail campaigners and politicians to reverse Beeching

Innovative online way to predict rail success

Producing a reliable forecast of passenger use is vital when assessing a proposal to open a new railway station or line.

It is the key driver of benefits in the benefit-cost calculation that will ultimately decide whether a scheme is given the green light.

Getting the forecast wrong can be disastrous.

A pessimistic forecast could mean rejection or the scaling back of a scheme that could have brought substantial economic and social benefits.

On the other hand, a station that fails to live up to expectations may undermine arguments for new stations.

The forecasts produced for stations opened since privatisation in the 1990s have been a mixed bag.

Many cases of substantially inaccurate forecasts were highlighted in a 2010 report by Steer Davis Gleave for the Department for Transport.

Most underestimated the real demand.

We can only guess how many proposals failed to secure funding because of overly pessimistic forecasts.

The forecasts for Tweedbank, Galashiels and Stow on the Borders Railway, which opened in 2015, were spectacularly wrong.

The number of passengers in the first year were up to eight times higher than expected.

The low passenger forecast led to a less ambitious scheme, with dynamic loops reduced by 6.5 miles, limiting the ability to run more services and impacting on service reliability. Road bridges were built to span only a single track, leaving little opportunity for additional loops or dual track in future.

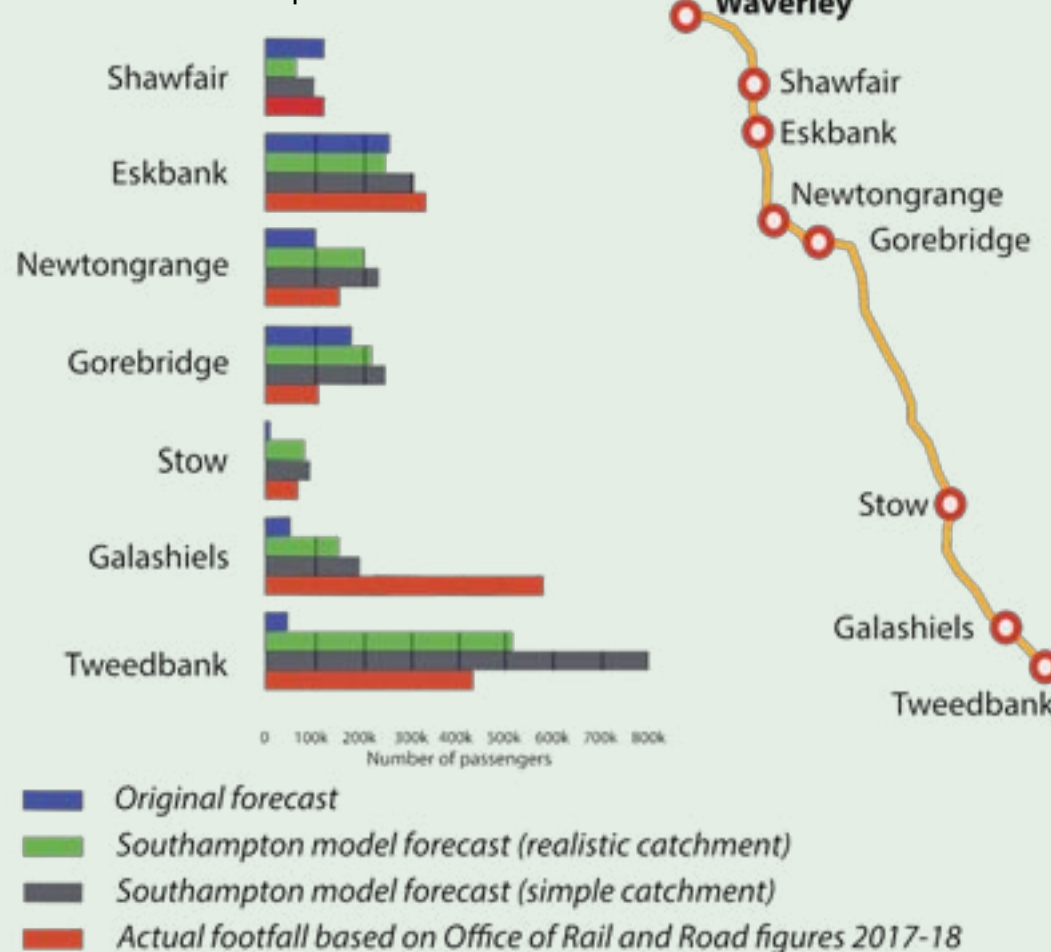
Too few car spaces were provided at Tweedbank, which has attracted car drivers from a wide catchment area to the south and east.

In his excellent book on the trials and tribulations of the campaign to reopen the Borders line, David Spaven said the "experience has discredited traditional railway forecasting for rural/regional corridors, and this should help campaigners press for more realistic projections which will improve the "business case".

The solution may lie in a new online forecasting tool that has

FORECASTING METHODS COMPARED

BORDERS RAILWAY opened 2015



Notes: Tweedbank demand was suppressed by inadequate car parking, while bus competition probably affected Gorebridge. The lower forecast at Galashiels is connected with the new transport hub where bus services from all over the Borders converge and it is being promoted as the gateway to the Borders for tourism. The model does not yet have tourism as a trip attractor

been created by researchers in the Transportation Research Group at the University of Southampton.

Building on over 30 years' experience, the new tool can quickly and reliably predict passenger demand at proposed new local stations or lines located anywhere in mainland Britain. It is also very accessible, with a web browser interface that requires no specialist knowledge to submit a forecast request or to view the results.

This contrasts sharply with the current way of doing things, where consultant transport planners are commissioned to develop an ad hoc model for each proposal – a very expensive and time-consuming process.

The new tool uses quality data about existing stations which produces reliable forecasts.

A new station is likely to have a similar number of passengers to

an existing station with similar characteristics – catchment area, population, location, travel card options, train service levels, the number of car parking spaces and nearby job opportunities. Information from the existing 1,800 small staffed and unstaffed stations (Network Rail categories E and F) allows likely passenger demand at a new station to be assessed.

The station catchment plays an important role.

In the past, simple methods were used to define the catchment, such as taking the area within two kilometres as the crow flies, or assigning census output areas to their nearest station.

To improve on this, we must recognise that people can have a choice of stations.

A passenger may use a distant station with more trains or more car parking spaces. Often several stations can compete to attract

passengers from a wide area, and the online tool can mimic that and also assess how many passengers the new station may draw from an existing station. This is important in calculating the benefit-cost ratio of a scheme.

The online tool is the culmination of five years work. The predictive model that underpins the tool was the outcome of PhD research carried out by Dr Marcus Young (pictured right) under the supervision of Dr Simon Blainey.

By this stage it had already been used to forecast demand for 12 potential new stations in Wales, as part of an initial sifting of options for the Welsh National Transport Plan.

But running the model was still a complex and labour-intensive process. There was a danger that it would rarely be used and fail to gain any traction outside academia. To avoid this, Dr Young and Dr Blainey decided to open up



SINGLE: It now seems obvious the Borders Railway should have been built as an electrified double track route. The diesel trains and single track have caused operating problems

access to the model, and they won a bid for additional funding to convert the model into an automated tool to be hosted on the UK's new £8 million Data and Analytics Facility for National Infrastructure (DAFNI).

This provides data storage, data analytics, simulation, modelling and visualisation facilities, and will become the UK's computational platform to support academic research into infrastructure systems.

To check its effectiveness, it was used to "forecast" passenger use at stations opened since 2011.



Compared with actual station data from the Office of Rail and Road, the forecasts are reliable and often better than the business case forecasts for scheme appraisal.

Anomalies can arise, for instance, if a station serves a large sports arena or concert venue, but testing means there is a good understanding of any limitations.

The tool is currently being trialled by Transport Scotland, early supporters of the project. It has also been demonstrated to transport planners and the rail industry.

Talking to *Railwatch* about the potential of the new tool, Dr Young said: "We think this could be really transformative."

"It is well suited to the rapid and inexpensive assessment of a large number of potential sites, as part of an early sifting process."

He also sees the tool as helping to democratise the planning process and thinks it "will be empowering, opening up the ability to produce forecasts to a wider range of stakeholders, including local campaign groups who can often feel powerless when arguing against an official forecast that they believe is unduly pessimistic".

The University of Southampton does not intend to charge for using the forecasting tool, but there is likely to be a fee for accessing DAFNI computing

resources, as part of a long-term funding model for the facility.

As DAFNI is still under development, the tool is not yet accessible to external parties. In the meantime, Dr Young is happy to consider producing forecasts on a case-by-case basis.

This will incur a fee for his time, dependent on the complexity of the scenario.

Looking to the future, Dr Young and Dr Blainey have ambitions to create an even more powerful tool that will build up the estimate of passenger usage by forecasting the number of trips between a proposed station and each destination station.

Progress on this will depend on obtaining funding for new research.

The automated model (but not the web interface) will shortly be made available as an open source project along with tools to enable relatively easy implementation.

A demonstration of the online forecasting tool including a narration, can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/449010572>

The code for the tool can be found at its GitHub organisation:

<https://github.com/station-demand-forecasting-tool>

■ Dr Young can be contacted at: m.a.young@soton.ac.uk

Sleeper train comeback in Europe

Sleeper trains are making a comeback in mainland Europe as people look for environmentally friendly ways of travelling – not by air or car.

Austrian Federal Railways launched a £36 million depot at Vienna Simmering in August to maintain its growing Nightjet train fleet for its 19 routes.

Government minister Leonore Gewessler said Vienna is the European Union city with the most night train services, but further expansion is planned.

Austria is co-operating with the Netherlands to offer a daily service from Amsterdam to Munich, Innsbruck and Vienna.

Thirteen Nightjet seven-car trains are being built by Siemens for £225 million and will be deployed from 2022, starting with routes to Italy.

This year, Austria approved a further 20 seven-car Nightjet trains for £450 million.

French president Emmanuel Macron has announced a massive expansion of the rail system, including night trains.

Two new night train routes (from Paris to Nice and Tarbes) will be launched in 2022 and the night trains will be refurbished.

Nicolas Forien of *Oui au train de nuit* said: "We are calling for a £1.5 billion investment in new night trains, which would allow a dense network of 15 national lines and 15 international lines."

Oui's vision for 2030 French night trains can be seen here: shorturl.at/mBEO9

The Swedish Government announced in July that Malmö-Brussels and Stockholm-Hamburg night trains will be financially supported with £36 million to start in 2022.

EU rules prevent Sweden subsidising services beyond the Danish-German border.

This is a ridiculous position considering the many blatant subsidies for air travel in Britain and the European Union.

The High Speed Rail Group has called for sleeper services from Britain, using the Channel Tunnel, 30 years after the Government dumped plans to run Nightstar trains.

Railfuture's Christian Wolmar said: "More and more people are reluctant to fly and a sleeper is such a pleasant experience."

"The Channel Tunnel Safety Authority must relax the rules which are far too onerous."

Picture: BARRIE FORREST

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■ ■ Motorway by stealth

Although the Government announced in March that plans for the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway costing £3.5 billion have been paused indefinitely, there are fears that the plan is being revived in another form. A new lobby group of planning and environmental experts called POETS (Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably) fears that the Government is planning a series of separate road upgrades and new road links to motorway standards which eventually will be joined together to create the Expressway. While the East West Rail plan has been de-scoped, reducing its capacity, the road lobby justifies the Expressway by the alleged need to serve the proposed megalopolis in the Oxford-Cambridge arc. East West Rail is a viable project in its own right capable of handling increased traffic and should not have been de-scoped. Why has double-tracking between Aylesbury and Claydon Junction been abandoned and the Bletchley-Bedford line limited to 60mph?

■ ■ Infill electrification wanted

Railfuture welcomes the proposals by Network Rail chief executive Andrew Haines, at a briefing on 8 June, for infill electrification schemes to follow on from the present programme. He called for wiring from Didcot to Oxford to be completed and then extended to Coventry. It would then require just the short gap between Reading and Basingstoke to be filled in for the CrossCountry service from Bournemouth to Manchester to be operated by dual-voltage trains, and to encourage rail freight operators to invest in dual-voltage locomotives.

■ ■ New Oxford station

In 2017 Railfuture Thames Valley supported the proposal for rebuilding Oxford station and suggested that a clock tower above the Botley Road bridge would provide a suitable gateway to the city. A new master plan has now been produced as the basis for a "scoping exercise", although we fear that it may turn out to be a de-scoping exercise, like East West Rail. Artist's impressions are not much to go by but the new design looks like a clutter of glasshouses, and the leaning pylons of the cable-stayed bridge over Botley Road provide the "gateway" – and no clock tower. The original proposal for a bus terminal in Becket Street seems to have been dropped in favour of a car park! However, we do welcome the proposal for a second entrance on the west side of the station, to cope with increased passenger circulation. Some people may remember the old station, which had separate entrances and booking offices for the up and down platforms.

■ ■ Oxfordshire developments

Plans for a new Oxford station will be thrown into the melting pot of other essential upgrades in Oxfordshire. The county council, Oxford city and district councils support plans for expanding from Hanborough station, double-tracking from Hanborough to Wolvercot Junction, rebuilding Oxford station, restoring the passenger service to Cowley. But why do we have to wait until 2028 for restoring the passenger service to Cowley and four-tracking from Oxford to Radley at least? Railfuture is pleased that the proposed station for Grove/Wantage, which was inexplicably omitted from the list of Beeching closures to be reconsidered, has been restored.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Thames Valley Branch
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Picture: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

OPENING DAY: A Newcastle to Middlesbrough service calls at Horden

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■ ■ Covid curbs new station launch

The new station at Horden finally opened for business on 29 June but, thanks to Government discouraging most travel, Durham County Council asked people not to use it. At first they obeyed, but even so, use soon exceeded expectations. The station itself is step-free, but the ramps are gentle to comply with accessibility regulations so non-disabled people may be frustrated by the time taken to reach the platform from the entrance.

■ ■ Help the campaign for Ferryhill

Durham County Council has now started a petition for a station at Ferryhill, thanks to strong support from its new MP. The full wording includes mention of restoring the Leamside line, as well as possible direct trains to and from Teesside via the Stillington route. Open for signatures until mid-October, it has not attracted many of the 10,000 that are hoped for. You can help the campaign by signing at: <https://bit.ly/3i6XmoR>. The website requires you to register, which probably accounts for the low response.

■ ■ Now a restored line from Consett?

The "Beeching Reversal" movement provoked a remarkable degree of optimistic activity in the Tyneside area, including suggestions for a station at Team Valley, a restored curve in the Bensham area, and reopening to Consett. However, Consett had at least two rail routes to Newcastle, one via Shotley Bridge and Ebchester and one via Annfield Plain, West Stanley, Birtley and Bensham. Both routes are now closed with parts turned into a path and some built over.

■ ■ Tyne Valley trespass warnings

Tyne Valley community rail partnership has been part of a national anti-trespass competition, aimed at the 11-18 age group. Prompted mainly by increased figures for trespassing on rail tracks during the early days of lockdown, it is entitled *Backtrack: Create it, Share it, Save Lives*. Anyone between 11 and 18 is invited to create an art work of any sort to capture people's attention on social media. Closing date was the end of September. See full details on <https://bit.ly/2F92IH8>

■ ■ Projects delayed by Covid

Some Tyne Valley projects have been postponed because of Covid-19 limitations. Among these are a Second World War commemoration where people evacuated from Newcastle along the Tyne Valley line

contribute their memories. The project will now be showcased next year, in collaboration with Wallsend Local History Society. TransPennine Express sees it as a way of promoting rail travel to the Tyne Valley, while helping tourism and hospitality to recover. A part-time officer will organise more publicity, visiting stations on TransPennine routes during 2021, to explore ideas for days out or longer stays in the Tyne Valley. Meanwhile work has begun to refurbish waiting rooms at Haltwhistle, and to create studios and office space.

■ ■ New Metro trains coming in 2022

The Tyne and Wear Metro is about to celebrate its 40th anniversary with all its original fleet of trains being refurbished. Some are now showing their age. Passengers expect to see the first of 42 new trains in 2022, with one train coming into service every few weeks until 2024.

■ ■ Coastliners respond to MPs

The select committee of the House of Commons called for responses on *Reforming Public Transport after the Pandemic*, so Coastliners (covering the line between Sunderland, Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough and Nunthorpe, also via Eaglescliffe towards York and London) are discussing how best to reply. Seeing the six-month propaganda campaign against public transport use, Railfuture campaigners were not surprised by the devastating fall in rail and bus passenger numbers. We are thankful that money is, for the time being, covering operators' costs, but it is now time to make rail travel simpler and more passenger-friendly. Fares need simplifying and rail travel itself needs to be reorganised to include far more through services to and from the many towns in Britain that at present may be reached only by worrying and time-wasting changes at main line junctions.

Happily for those living on the Coast line, Grand Central came back into operation at the end of July, and custom seems to be returning to its limited range of services quite well. The August bank holiday weekend saw Sunderland line services full – as far as social distancing rules allowed.

Now we shall be calling for these services to add Stockton to their list of calling places. It is the largest borough in the country, if not the whole of Europe, without an inter-city service.

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Picture: TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

ROAD TO RAIL: A trial load of timber at Georgemas Junction on Scotland's Far North line, destined for Dalcross, near Inverness

Comeback for freight in Scotland's Far North

By Lee Davies

A strategic rail freight fund grant has been provided by the Scottish Government for a "timber by train" project.

The £195,000 grant went to Vicia Railfreight to carry out tests in August and September to transport timber from the forests of Caithness.

The timber was taken from Georgemas Junction, which is close to Wick and Thurso, to the Norbord factory at Dalcross, 10 miles from Inverness.

Norbord is the world's largest maker of load-bearing OSB (board), often used as a replacement for plywood in the building industry, and is expanding production at Dalcross.

For the trial, wagons were supplied by DB Cargo while locomotives and drivers came from West Coast Railways.

Other potential loading points may be used, once the Georgemas trial is completed.

Anne MacKenzie of Network Rail said "Network Rail is committed to supporting colleagues in the railfreight industry to meet the Scottish Government's rail freight growth targets and we are pleased to see this co-operative venture getting underway."

Ruaridh Macintyre of Norbord said "Norbord Europe is delighted to be involved in this trial which will reduce the number of roundwood lorries using the roads in the Far North, which has obvious benefits to local communities.

"Norbord hopes that this is the beginning of a new era of the use of rail transport in the timber industry." The trial involved up



Picture: SIMON WALTON

BLACKFORD: Perthshire villagers hope their lives will be almost traffic free when Highland Spring opens its railhead this year

to three trains a week, with a capability of moving around 6,000 tonnes of timber and removing 250 lorries totalling 55,000 lorry miles off the road.

The trial trains ran from Georgemas Junction to Inverness freight depot. Lorries took the timber on to Dalcross. Norbord also has a factory near the railway at Stirling.

ScotRail runs four daily return services on the single-track Far North line, plus some commuter services around Inverness.

The Far North line has been financially undermined by a series of expensive



Picture: BARTOLOMEO GORGOGGIO

delivering the infrastructure to facilitate a new station at Dalcross, which is being progressed by Network Rail on behalf of Scottish Ministers.

"A second platform, which will provide additional passenger and freight capacity, will be funded by the Scottish Government."

Ever since Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon declared a climate emergency just over a year ago, the Scottish Government has actively encouraged rail connection for businesses.

The Scottish Government is actively looking at freight provision when Leven, Fife, gets back on the rail network.

One possibility is whisky distribution from the largest grain distillery in Europe, which is run by Diageo at Cameron Bridge.

The company has its own rail sidings connecting with the Levenmouth line, which is scheduled for reopening in 2023 as part of a £70 million scheme.

There have also been suggestions that, using the alignment of a former rail line, a rail freight link could be reinstated to Diageo's plant 12 miles away at Lochty.

Highland Spring

In Perthshire, Highland Spring is building its own rail terminal at its bottling plant at Blackford, between Stirling and Perth.

It is expected to open later this year, 15 years after the project was first mooted.



◆◆◆◆ Increase Railfuture's lobbying power: Recruit a new member

railwatch October 2020 15

julian.langston@railfuturewales.org.uk

■ ■ Severn Tunnel goes live after long delay

The Severn Tunnel electrification was switched on fully in early June, allowing trains to run continuously under electric power between Cardiff Central and London for the first time. This opening was late because it was discovered in 2017 that the harsh environmental conditions in the tunnel had caused severe corrosion, barely a year after the equipment was installed. The tunnel is 134 years old, four miles long, and two underground rivers let in over 14 million gallons of water every day which has to be pumped out. Remedial work by Network Rail was completed earlier this year, followed by extensive testing.

■ ■ Allies with a vision to combat climate change

TRANSFORM CYMRU Railfuture Wales has joined Transform Cymru, a new coalition of groups campaigning for a sustainable, accessible, safe and affordable transport system for Wales. All 13 organisations share a vision of a transport infrastructure for people, enabling movement other than by motor vehicles. Although established before the arrival of Covid-19, one of the first initiatives was to publish a vision on how Wales can recover from the lockdown. Railfuture Wales contributed to this, and it can be read at <https://tinyurl.com/y6j7oqm8>


■ ■ People need trains as they emerge from lockdown

Rail services in Wales expanded slowly from the darkest days of lockdown. Initially the Transport for Wales Rail website discouraged travel, except for essential purposes, but by September the message became: "Help us all travel safely". A "near-normal" service was expected to begin on 12 September. This came after Railfuture Wales warned that passenger confidence in public transport was being damaged. We appealed to Ken Skates, the Welsh Government's minister responsible for transport, urging him to change the message to one pointing to the contribution rail can make in getting Wales moving again. We have also made this point through Transform Cymru.

■ ■ Work starts on electrification of Cardiff Valley routes

The first major stage in the transformation of services linking Cardiff to the South Wales Valleys began in August. Lines from Radyr to Pontypridd, Treherbert, Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil were closed every evening from Sunday to Thursday, with buses replacing trains. Work continues until May. The upgrade, including electrification, will see tram trains replace diesel Sprinters and Pacers, which have operated for the past 35 years. Covid-19 has not significantly delayed a start on the ambitious £738 million South Wales Metro, a project broadly supported by Railfuture Wales, but TfW chief executive James Price has warned that Covid could cause delays. The work is being carried out by Amey, the civil engineering partner of operator Keolis. This follows the franchise agreement in 2018, with Network Rail ceding ownership of infrastructure on local routes north of Cardiff to TfW. It emerged at a meeting of a Welsh Parliament committee meeting in July that the transfer deal came close to failing. Mr Price (answering a question from Senedd Member Vikki Howells), admitted that "we only got it over the line I think two minutes before it all ran out of time". The transfer was completed on 28 March. Railfuture Wales hopes the project will keep to time and budget. The tram trains will connect with electric trains to London at Cardiff Central. BBC News online disappointed Railfuture by highlighting disruption, rather than the benefits of the upgrade.

■ ■ Driver training restarts for Rhymney line

 Driver training has restarted on the class 769 Flex units, bimodes created by adding diesel engines to redundant electric class 319s. They were originally intended to be introduced in May 2018, but conversion took longer than expected. Units were delivered earlier this year, but driver training was suspended as social distancing was not possible in cabs. Once the Flex units are in service on the Rhymney Valley line, they will progressively use the overhead line electrification as it is installed.
www.railfuturewales.org.uk
[Twitter @RailfutureWales](#)



Picture: FRIENDS OF ROSE HILL STATION

WOT NO TRAINS? Rail campaigners at Rose Hill Marple station

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■ ■ Rail users battle to stop cuts

Rail user groups were fighting Northern Trains' plans to remove all services between Manchester Piccadilly and Rose Hill Marple via Woodley for three months from September to December. The operator is short of staff and needs to train existing personnel and new recruits on new trains. Campaigners won a partial victory when Northern agreed to retain a limited service at Rose Hill Marple with two services in the morning and a return in the afternoon. A regular service every 90 minutes will be reinstated from 26 October

Rail users from Rose Hill Marple, Romiley and Goyt Valley had earlier won the support of MPs along the route. Northern (now run by the Department for Transport), told the MPs it was planning only an hourly replacement shuttle bus from Rose Hill, on a circuit calling at Marple, Romiley then back to Rose Hill Marple, with six buses per day extending the circuit to Woodley. Hyde Central, Hyde North and Fairfield stations would have lost all their services, and frequencies would have been cut at Romiley, Guide Bridge and Ashburys. Rachel Singer of Rose Hill and Peter Wightman of Goyt Valley said this would affect passengers badly at a critical time when they were being encouraged to return to work normally. Some people will decide not to travel by public transport, undermining Government plans to get the economy growing again. Peter added: "The longer this closure goes on, the harder it will be to persuade passengers to come back to rail. It also undermines the Government commitment to rebuild passenger confidence when it took over the running of Northern rail services in March." Several thousand people signed protest petitions and there was a storm of opposition on social media. For more information you can follow @forhs142 or @FoMarpleStation on Twitter

■ ■ Burscough Curves revisited

Reopening the Burscough Curves near Southport was suggested as a quick win in the first round of bids submitted earlier this year to the

Government's *Reversing Beeching* campaign. The plan would re-introduce through services from Southport direct to Preston and direct to Ormskirk and on to Liverpool. The bid made by Ormskirk, Preston and Southport Travellers Association was commended but was not selected in the first round. One of the four sponsoring MPs, Katherine Fletcher (MP for South Ribble), has also championed the case for reopening Midge Hall station in her constituency as a separate but related initiative. Having the two together will increase the benefits. For the second round of bids, the Department for Transport advised OPSTA late in the day that its bid did not need to be re-submitted. The scheme is promoted by Lancashire County Council and has active support from the sponsoring MPs, led by Damien Moore (Southport). A formal submission to reopen Midge Hall was also made in the second round, and although OPSTA was not involved directly, the *Lancashire Evening Post* credited OPSTA for its work in making the case.

■ ■ Campaigner Chris 1948-2020



Railfuture North West is sad to report the death of long-standing branch committee member and Travelwatch North West chair Chris Dale (pictured left). Chris was always the friendliest

campaigner, but never let that prevent him telling the truth to those who needed to hear. John Moorhouse from Travelwatch North West writes: "Chris will be widely missed by many people and organisations who benefited from his extraordinary knowledge and experience of buses and trains." Owning no car, he was a dedicated user of public transport. He was chair of TravelWatch NorthWest for the past 12 years, and was a former director of the Campaign for Better Transport. He also chaired the Crewe to Manchester Community Rail Partnership and was involved with the Cheshire Best Kept Stations competition.

www.railfuture.org.uk/North West Branch
[Twitter @RailfutureNWest](#)

If you care about your train services, join the Railfuture webinar

By Ralph Hilsdon

I have not travelled by train since the pandemic started.

Being of a certain age, Covid-19 has changed my life. I have been nervous to eat out or socialise – and to travel by public transport seems an unnecessary risk to take.

But I am a realist – I know we cannot go on like this forever, both for our sanity and the economy at large, so what is needed is to get people like me out and about again. If we do not, many services including railways risk being lost forever.

Confidence

Our trust in the authorities charged with looking after us has taken a bashing and it is not improving, but if I look at our local businesses and some larger organisations like the National

Trust and the Royal Horticultural Society, they have reacted quickly, putting measures into place and getting people back through their doors. Business may still be down but there is recovery.

Railways got off to a bad start in this pandemic, with chronic overcrowding, infrequent services and no masks or social distancing. "Stay at home" messaging and the success of home working added to the problem.

Getting us back on trains

Even if we have a vaccine soon, we are not going to see a bounce back to our old ways. Having got used to home working and home shopping, many will continue to do so. The trend was already underway, and Covid-19 just accelerated it. Safety is crucial. I believe the rail operators can learn

from the airlines, although airlines have been accused of spreading Covid-19. Mask wearing must be vigorously policed, both at stations and on trains. Operators need to be much more vocal about what they are doing to sanitise the system and to control distancing. Pricing and real time information on potential crowding can be used to encourage use at less busy times.

There will be less five day a week commuting and the season ticket is facing obsolescence.

New app-based ticketing giving flexibility with incentives for regular travel should be quick to deliver. We need to learn from innovative countries. In Helsinki, for instance, an app gives unrestricted travel on trains, trams, buses and metro for a bought time. To encourage the recovery of

leisure travel, there need to be incentives. I am getting emails from airlines promoting short breaks but have yet to see one from a rail operator.

The risk: Use it or lose it

If we stop using public transport, stop eating out or visiting town centres and tourist centres, they will die. Clearly the Government and its bodies need to up their game, but so do businesses and the public, by supporting organisations that are investing in keeping us safe.

If you care about your train services and what losing them would mean for you and your community post Covid-19, join the Railfuture webinar on 3 October 2020. Details at www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/#2020_webinar
See also: Back page

A brief look at some important rail campaigning issues

Railfuture submitted an updated 20-page report in August on how freight could be diverted to avoid causing delays to passenger trains on the congested Castlefield corridor in Manchester, highlighted on the front page of *Railwatch* 163.

Freight solution to the Castlefield problem was Railfuture's response to the National Infrastructure Commission's interim report published in July, explaining its approach to assessing Government rail improvement plans announced in February.

The NIC's 57-page report outlined how the Government's various initiatives – HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail, Midlands Rail Hub and other major rail schemes – could be integrated and sequenced.

Railfuture also presented a 15-page report from East Midlands branch to the NIC.

Railfuture's two submissions can be read in the *consultation responses* section of the Railfuture website.

Passenger group

Railfuture's passenger group liaison contacts with the various train operators met online to discuss the levels of service in each area. Although service levels were reduced, CrossCountry had provided longer trains to cope with social distancing and Northern had introduced flexible ticketing on one commuter route.

Generally the picture was of much reduced levels of ridership, although Wales appeared to have more normal levels than other areas. A poster had been observed at Torquay station, asking potential passengers to travel another way, which was seen as very discouraging.

A new Seatfinder app on South East Trains was helpful in assisting social distancing when boarding.

Stronger together

Ian Cook, who was crucial in getting *Access for All* funding for his local station, Flitwick in Bedfordshire, has launched a petition to get all stations made step-free.

He says: "Having to ask for help every time you get on a train – someone putting a ramp to the door of the train – is humiliating, embarrassing and totally discriminating.

"If non-disabled people had to ask for help every time they wanted to travel on a train, MPs, unions and the press would be complaining about it and something would be done,



The Welsh Government has approved plans to convert the former open cast mine at Nant Helen (above) and the washery site at Onllwyn, 12 miles north of Neath, into a unique global centre of rail excellence. It is appealing to the UK Government to support the plan. CAF's new British assembly plant opened in February, 40 miles away at Newport

immediately. We don't want help, we want to be independent, that means level access. The technology exists, and some franchises are embracing this, but not all. It is about time they all did." You can sign the petition at: shorturl.at/dgFPU

Ian is also sending a letter to every MP demanding action. You can read it at: shorturl.at/rQT48

Wordsearch solution

The solution to the Wordsearch in *Railwatch* 164 was: Aberdour, Alexandria, Alloa, Annan, Ardlui, Arisaig, Ayr, Balloch, Bathgate, Beaulieu, Breich, Brora, Carfin, Conon Bridge, Corroir, Crianlarich, Croy, Cupar, Dalreoch, Dalry, Drem, Drumgelloch, Dunbar, Dyce, Elgin, Fairlie, Fearn, Forbes, Galashiels, Garve, Girvan,

Golspie, Gourock, Haymarket, Howwood, Huntly, IBM, Insh, Inverkeithing, Inverkip, Invershin, Johnstone, Keith, Kilwinning, Kinghorn, Kirkcaldy, Kirkhill, Kirkwood, Laing, Lanark, Langbank, Largs, Larkhall, Laurencekirk, Leuchars, Linlithgow, Lochwinnoch, Lockerbie, Mallaig, Morar, Nairn, North Berwick, Oban, Perth, Pitlochry, Rannoch, Renton, Robroyston, Rogart, Rosyth, Saltcoats, Shotts, Springfield, Stirling, Stow, Stranraer, Tain, Thurso, Troon, Tweedbank, Uphall, Upper Tyndrum, Westerton, Wick, Yoker.

A full account of how to find these stations in the Wordsearch can be found at www.railwatch.org.uk

By Ralph Barker

More than 20 years ago, the Scottish Parliament was only one year old.

It decided to expand the Scottish rail network with line reopenings and electrification.

Political power in Scotland changed in 2007 when the SNP became the largest party.

Rail expansion projects were cancelled or postponed.

The new priority was to concentrate on reducing journey times between the main cities.

The electrification programme was continued quite successfully despite unhelpful retrospective design changes by the Office of Rail and Road in London.

Electrification of all four routes between Edinburgh and Glasgow was completed.

It was intended that a rolling electrification programme would then electrify the very overcrowded and steeply graded East Kilbride line, although a delay due to what appeared to be detailed design options has resulted in a gap in the programme.

In 2019 the Scottish Government declared a climate emergency with zero carbon emissions by 2045.

There are urgent moves to bring this date forward. Transport is the biggest source of emissions and Transport Scotland made a plan in May this year for complete decarbonisation of the rail network by 2035. The report explains that rail is already the lowest emission mode and accounts for only just over 1% of Scottish transport emissions.

Mode transfer to rail, and rail electrification, are the most practical means to reduce transport emissions. More than 40% of Scottish track is already electrified, with 76% of passenger and 45% of



The inter-city line from Glasgow to Aberdeen is single track at the Tay Viaduct, Perth. Would this be electrified as a single line?

freight volumes using electric traction.

Three quarters of electricity generation in Scotland is claimed to be renewable or nuclear.

The new plan is to electrify the rest of Scotland's inter-city routes (except Aberdeen to Inverness) by the year 2035, along with the city suburban networks.

The remainder will use a combination of battery and hydrogen propulsion, although Aberdeen-Inverness will be electrified later – by 2045.

The long rural and highland lines to the Far North, Kyle of Lochalsh, West Highland and Stranraer are unlikely to justify electrification even on environmental grounds but the Scottish Borders Railway (reopened in 2015) will be electrified.

Some 1,616 single track kilometres will be electrified, indicating an average rate of 115 km per year.

Capital costs are not estimated but electrification has the almost magical benefit of reducing running costs while increasing revenue.

Transport Scotland emphasises journey time reductions but fails to mention that electrification clears the way for intermediate stations to get a better train service because electric trains have much better acceleration. Transport Scotland

electrics can be a problem. All this is as nothing compared to any economic decarbonisation of road, air and sea transport in Scotland, which leads to the other big challenge, rail capacity.

Both Edinburgh's and Glasgow's rail routes to Aberdeen have sections of single track.

Edinburgh to Perth and to Inverness have very long sections of single track, with the Edinburgh to Perth route totally uncompetitive compared with road since the direct fast route was ripped up in 1970 to provide the trackbed for the M90 motorway! Double track will be required and direct routes restored before electrification.

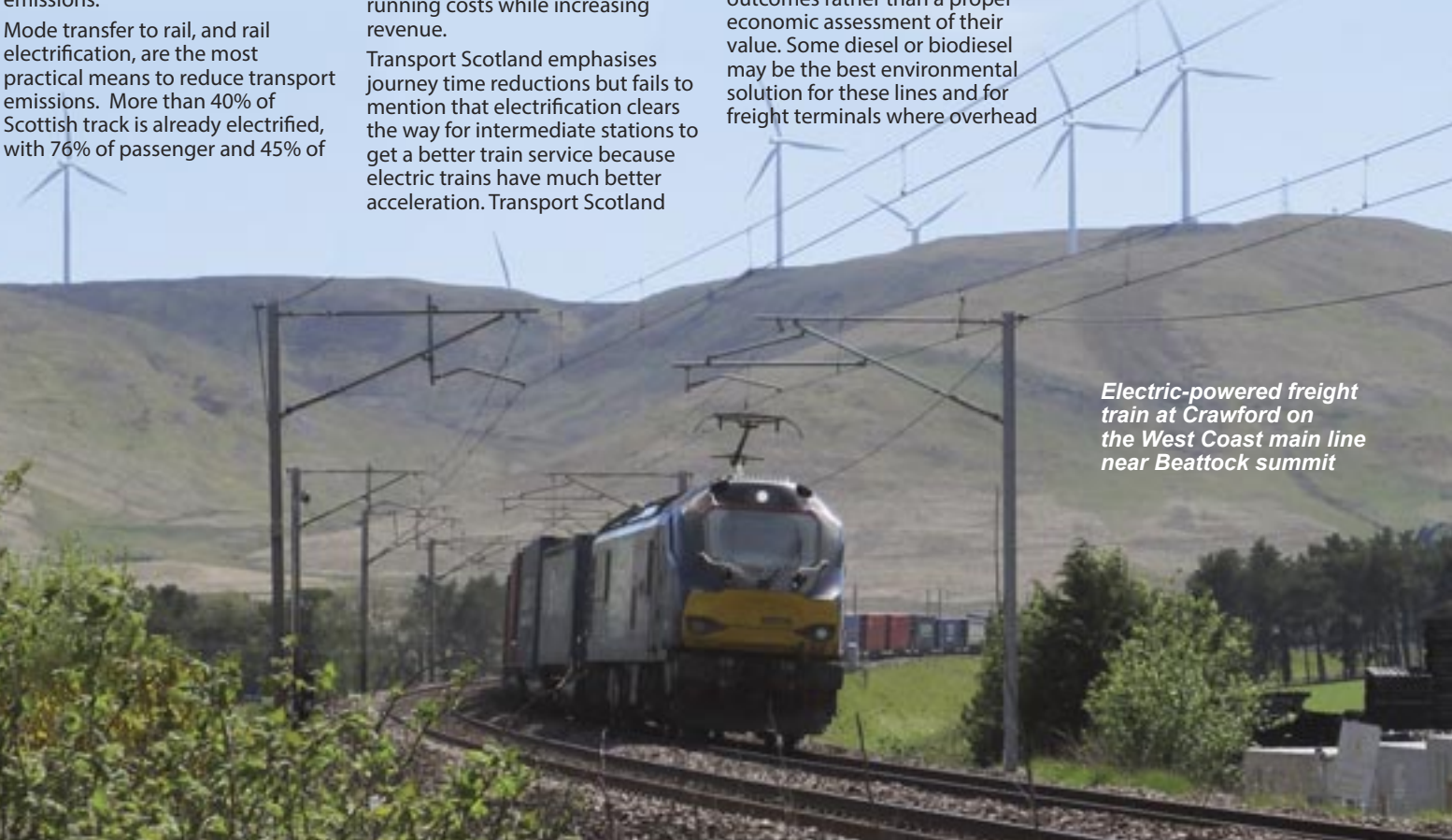
The Scottish Borders Railway was built "electrification ready" but (after a descope process to make it cheaper and politically acceptable) mainly as single line. Many of the new structures were built for single track only.

Railfuture strongly supports the electrification programme but will campaign against cost cutting if it means retaining single track, cutting out connecting chords or installing insufficient power supplies.

Beyond that, HS2 is not coming within a hundred miles of Scotland but HS2 "classic" trains will split at Carlisle for Edinburgh and Glasgow.

This has the downside of almost halving the available track capacity for freight and regional trains. A serious rethink is essential.

You can read or download the Transport Scotland decarbonisation plan at <https://bit.ly/326GmJX>



Electric-powered freight train at Crawford on the West Coast main line near Beattock summit

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■ ■ **Loch Lomond sail day has to wait**

Sadly, Railfuture Scotland had to cancel its AGM on board the paddlesteamer *Maid of the Loch* on Loch Lomond, because of Covid-19. We hope to hold a meeting on board the last paddle steamer built in the UK in the spring, including a talk on the history of "rail and sail".

■ ■ **Newburgh campaign wins approval**

The *Improving Transport for Newburgh* report, carried out by Newburgh Train Station Group, Fife Council, SEStran and Systra, has had its *Case for Change* pre-appraisal approved by Transport Scotland. One of the options is for a new station. An online survey into the options is being carried out and the whole report can be found at: www.newburghsustainabletransport.co.uk

■ ■ **East Coast stations move closer**

Rail Action Group East of Scotland is pleased that Network Rail is carrying out the necessary design work and surveys to support planning applications for new stations at Reston and East Linton. NR is also developing a web page on the Scotland's Railway site to keep the public informed. Reston and Auchencrow community councils have already been consulted on the planning application for Reston station made to Scottish Borders Council. Another 16-week consultation follows. The East Linton application is expected to be in the hands of East Lothian Council by the end of the year. The stations should be constructed next year, if not the following year. A new timetable to include the new stations is being planned for the East Coast main line. Train companies wishing to serve Reston station must submit bids to Network Rail by spring 2021.

■ ■ **Levenmouth community anger**

The GRIP 3 (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) process for the reopening to

Levenmouth is being carried out by transport consultant Atkins, and a project manager has been appointed. Although commitments were given from the Scottish Cabinet Secretary, Fife Council co-leaders, and Transport Scotland as well as councillors themselves that the community would be "fully engaged" in the planning and development processes, the Levenmouth Rail Campaign fears that these commitments are being ignored. Messages received recently from council officials have confirmed that there will be no community involvement in the Levenmouth Reconnected Leadership Group and no community involvement in the Levenmouth Working Group. The only involvement the community as a whole will have is possible membership of a yet-to-be-created stakeholder group which will be given an update every three months or so. LMRC considers these proposal are outrageous and far from the basic Scottish principles of community engagement.

■ ■ **97% back Bonnybridge station plan**

Following the identification of a new railway station as an option to assist transport in Bonnybridge, the executive committee of Falkirk Council voted to fund the next stage of the exercise. To the delight of the Reinstate Bonnybridge Railway Station group, 97% of residents voiced support for the return of rail travel in an earlier consultation.

■ ■ **Traffic builds up as StARLink waits**

The final enhancements and revisions to the *Case for Change* of the St Andrews Sustainable Transport Study by consultants Stantec have been submitted to Transport Scotland, according to STAG guidance. While St Andrews was remarkably quiet early in the lockdown period, visitors have been flooding back since the end of June in increasing numbers and unfortunately many are eschewing public transport in favour of private cars because they

are considered safer, leading to increased traffic problems within the town. In addition, more sets of roadworks and traffic lights on the main road into St Andrews show even more clearly how ludicrous it is that the town is accessible only by road.

■ ■ **Decision delayed on Beattock station**

Beattock Station Action Group was informed by the regional transport partnership SWesttrans that no decision will be made on possible stations at Beattock, Thornhill and Easttriggs until next spring, when the final STAG 2 (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide) is carried out for the Dumfries and Galloway area. After that, SWesttrans then Transport Scotland will decide the next stage.

Contacts:

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES): www.rages.org.uk/

Beattock Station Action Group: www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/

St Andrews Rail Link campaign (StARLink): www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/ facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign

LevenMouth Rail Campaign: www.lmrc-action.org.uk/ facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/

Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG): www.capitalrail.org.uk/

Newburgh Train Station campaign: <http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/>

Forth Rail Link (*Dunfermline-Kincardine-Alloa*): www.forthraillink.com facebook.com/forthraillink/

Thornhill Station Action Group: chrisandmimi@supanet.com

Bonnybridge Railway Campaign: <http://bonnybridgerailway.scot> www.facebook.com/bonnybridgerailway

Decision makers should pay attention to Nelson

BOOK REVIEW by Richard Lysons

Ever wanted to read a book by a rail industry insider that is jargon-free, honest and interesting? I may have found one. John Nelson worked in the British rail industry for half a century, and witnessed and participated in the huge changes over that time. There is a lot of information in this book and some of the longer chapters may seem daunting, but I am glad I completed the task during some cloudy lock-down days.

Three autobiographical chapters by the author ease the reader into this account of how our country's passenger railways have evolved. For me, these are the most successful part of the book. Nelson writes clearly and concisely and succeeds in creating a picture of those times without resorting to sentimentality or unnecessary detail. His opening sentence in chapter one sets the tone: "I joined British Rail as a graduate management trainee in 1968, a year in which to many the railways appeared to be in terminal decline."

The main part of the book describes the complicated story of rail privatisation. John Nelson keeps the reader on board through a very complicated series of events. I was almost tempted to start mind-mapping some sections to keep my head clear! However, Nelson's personal account of such tales as the Hull Trains saga is fascinating and the whole franchise story is made accessible for the reader. Names from the past such as Northern Spirit, Railtrack and Red Star leap off the page and remind us of the constant changes in the industry during Nelson's extraordinary career.

With so many books about our railways having a plethora of photographs of old trains, bridges, stations and sidings, it seems churlish to comment on



the absence of images (apart from a small photograph of the author) in *Losing Track*. Maybe this was a decision to keep the book's purchase price down. However, I would have liked to have seen photographs of key figures such as Sir Robert Reid, Sir Peter Parker, Robin Gisby, Mark Carne and Andrew Haines. As far as I can see, just one female rail industry figure – Nicola Shaw – is named in the entire book. I am aware that huge efforts have been and are being made to make the rail industry more diverse. (I support the work of Women in Rail and am involved in Women in Community Rail.) But this book shows how male-dominated the rail industry was and still is in many respects.

The book lacks an index and, at just under 300 pages, would have benefited from one. The contents page does have brief chapter summaries, but that was not enough for me. The sheer number of names of rail industry personnel, stations, depots, franchise bidders and train operating companies, as well as many, many dates, could overwhelm some readers. Even this history graduate felt the huge weight of information. As I write this review in August, all sorts of questions are being asked about the future of our passenger railways. I hope copies of this excellent book are on the desks of the decision makers. It may help them avoid some of the mistakes of the past and remind them that the most important resource in the rail industry is people with the integrity of John Nelson.

Losing Track: An Insider's Story of Britain's Railway Transformation from British Rail to the Present Day by John Nelson, New Generation Publishing 201 ISBN 978-1-78955-667-4

■ Richard Lysons is chair of the Friends of Littleborough Stations and co-organisier of the Electric Railway Charter.

A proper welcome to all passengers



Robert Gravelle explains why access is a priority for Transport for Wales

BUILDING a welcoming railway where all our passengers feel confident to travel on our services independently and safely is a key aim of Transport for Wales Rail Services.

While everyone in TfW will be playing their part, the strategy is being led by our accessibility and inclusion team.

With one in five people (17.9%) in England and Wales reporting a disability that limits their daily activities, many may be unable to use public transport because of mobility, communicative or cognitive impairments.

Access to public transport is, however, limited for an even larger population, including parents with children, cyclists, pregnant mothers and anyone with luggage.

All have unique requirements that need addressing to access public transport confidently.

By 2050, the population of Wales is expected to grow to 3.5 million and the proportion over 75 years old will double, so it is crucial that we at TfW set wheels in motion now to meet the challenges and to comply with Wales' 2015 Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

Our accessibility and inclusion team has been leading on several key new initiatives to help, as well as developing existing schemes further.

Our work is possible only through the willingness and support of our colleagues across the business.

Working with passionate people makes it easy to create change, and it is clear from my time here that this desire to build a truly inclusive railway is already in practice and not merely an aspiration. I am proud to be part of the business and the team!

Integral to the team is Sammie King, who joined from customer relations so understands the frustrations experienced by passengers.

New and existing initiatives being led by the team include:

Passenger Assist service

The Passenger Assist service can be booked free to help passengers travel safely and comfortably.

At Cardiff Central, which sees more than 12 million passenger



TfW staff members Elin Evans and Jonathan Goode welcome two passengers with assistance dogs at Cardiff Central station

Pictures: Geraint Morgan TfW



TfW's Osian Flaherty wearing the sunflower lanyard which alerts staff to people with hidden or less obvious disabilities

journeys each year, there are dedicated Assist meeting points and staff. Other staffed stations will be gaining these facilities over the next three years.

Access and inclusion panel

The access and inclusion panel has been bringing people together since 2018. It represents the whole community, including those with disabilities. The panel's remit is to inform TfW on ways to improve social inclusion for all.

Assistance dogs

The assistance dogs travel scheme for passengers travelling

with a guide dog is a partnership initiative with Assistance Dogs UK.

It is intended to help assistance dogs and their owners travel comfortably and safely on our trains by providing a protected space for the dog.

At Transport for Wales we have also given free travel to people training assistance dogs, to help the dogs get used to the railway.

Baby On Board badge

This year we introduced the Baby On Board badge for expectant mothers. Travelling on

the train can be tricky for mums-to-be, but our badge makes it easier to obtain a seat.

Orange Wallet scheme

In 2014 we adopted the Orange Wallet scheme, in partnership with local authorities and the Welsh Government. Originally it was intended for passengers on the autistic spectrum so they could get support from staff. It is now used by a range of communities.

Community awareness and integration

Community rail officers visit local groups to inform them of the assistance available before travelling, both at our stations and on board our trains.

British sign language app

In early 2020 TfW Rail Services launched a new live streaming communication tool called *InterpreterNow*.

Working in partnership with InterpreterNow, the app aids communication between British sign language users and staff.

Passengers can download this free app, which delivers immediate access to an online interpreter, an easy tool for BSL users to communicate with our staff.

■ **Dr Robert Gravelle leads TfW's accessibility and inclusion team.**

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■ ■ Missed opportunity at Exeter

Former railway land at Exmouth Junction in Exeter is set to have 400 new homes built very close to the operational railway, following a £130 million plan put forward by Eutopia Homes. The developers claim to have the environment as their priority, with the aim of encouraging walking and cycling rather than car use at the "urban village", 10 minutes walk away from Exeter city centre. Only direct impacts appear to have been considered by Network Rail and Exeter City Council, such as drainage on to railway land, and not the railway operation through the junction. Trains to Exmouth cross Waterloo to Exeter trains on the level at 25 mph and Barnstaple line trains go in and out of the sidings at 15 mph. Actual timetables are constrained on both routes by single line working and there is limited platform capacity at Exeter St Davids.

With aspirations for additional local services to Axminster stopping at the Cranbrook new town and diversionary paths for Great Western Paddington services, the junction would provide more efficiency if the lines were grade separated. The down Waterloo line could cross the Exmouth line on a bridge. The Exmouth line would be about 1 metre lower at the bridging point and the actual junction moved a little westward to the east portal of Blackboy tunnel. So in an objection to the plan (15 March 2020) Railfuture suggested that the new homes are built 25 metres further back from the railway, as this would give space for a short stretch with four tracks. The planning committee response was that Network Rail had been asked to respond and that it had confirmed it had no objection to the application as it had sold the land to Eutopia Homes in 2018, and had carried out consultation "revealing no impact on future rail projects". The junction may cope for the



Picture: GEOFF SHEPPARD

FUTURE BOTTLENECK: Two Pacer trains turn off the main line from Exeter to Salisbury at Exmouth Junction in 2015 so they can join the Exmouth line

moment, but it could be at the cost of improved cross-Exeter services made possible by projecting trains from Okehampton and Taunton (new local service stopping at Wellington and Cullompton) to places such as Topsham and Cranbrook. Few if any rail groups were consulted, despite Exeter City Council's extensive list of consultees including Sport England, Exeter Cycling Campaign and the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust.

■ ■ £1.2 billion rail expansion plan

A new £1.2 billion rail upgrade plan for the South West has been submitted to the Government and local authorities by Lord Berkeley and Michael Byng. The main suggestion is for redoubling Exeter-Salisbury and reopening Exeter-Plymouth via Okehampton to provide a second resilient route to the South West. It also calls for action to improve the Tarka line to Barnstable, Bodmin Parkway-Bodmin-Wadebridge-Padstow,

■ ■ Rail innovation at Goole

Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited Goole in July to see the start of work on a £200 million factory where trains for the London Underground will be built. The factory is expected to open in 2023, creating 700 jobs, plus another 1,700 jobs in supply companies. Siemens put its "Tube train of the future" on show in London as far back as 2013 and secured the Piccadilly line contract in 2018. It is hoping to follow up with contracts to build trains for London's Bakerloo, Central and Waterloo & City lines. Both Siemens and Birmingham University are planning to set up rail research departments at Goole.

■ ■ Rishi sponsors rail plan

The Upper Wensleydale Railway has applied to the Government's Ideas Fund for *Restoring Your Railway* to prepare a business case for reopening the six-mile line from Garsdale (on the Settle-Carlisle line) to Hawes. Their aim is to see the Manchester-Clitheroe service extended to Hellifield, Garsdale and Hawes. The UWR application was sponsored by Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak, MP for Richmond.

■ ■ Appeal for volunteers

The Wensleydale Railway is looking for volunteers to work on the line between Redmire and Leeming Bar. The railway was operating works trains in August along the line, which is also used by Ministry of Defence trains through Northallerton to Redmire. If you would like to become a volunteer, email volunteer@wensleydalerrailway.com

◆◆◆◆ Increase Railfuture's lobbying power: Recruit a new member

Devon and Cornwall

Lostwithiel-Fowey and creating a Newquay-St Austell "cut-off".

■ ■ Concrete pumping at Dawlish

Work continued seven days a week during July to build a concrete sea wall to protect the railway at Dawlish. One visitor said: "There was a constant procession of concrete lorries which serviced a machine pumping concrete under the track on to the walkway beside the track."

■ ■ MPs back plan for a Devon metro

Two MPs have spoken out in support of the Devon Metro plan, an hourly Axminster to Exeter St David's service calling at all stations which could be extended to Barnstaple.

It is part of Network Rail's continuous modular strategic plan which recommends improvements for the overcrowded Exeter to Waterloo line. It includes an extension of the Honiton loop westward for up to 3 kilometres, a new loop in the Whimble and Cranbrook area, and a second platform at Cranbrook.

The Salisbury to Exeter Rail Users' Group appealed to the MPs for support. Tiverton and Honiton MP Neil Parish said: "Better connectivity around the greater Exeter area, using the Devon Metro to improve local services between Axminster, Honiton and Exeter is important." Simon Jupp, MP for East Devon, said: "I am already working with MPs in the region and Devon County Council to push for this investment."

■ ■ Reopening info on Railfuture website

Devon and Cornwall branch pages on the Railfuture website are being updated with ideas and information for the reopening of the Exeter to Plymouth via Okehampton line.

■ ■ Plymouth AGM postponed

Railfuture Devon and Cornwall branch AGM planned for April 2020 in Plymouth had to be postponed.

Yorkshire

West Midlands

■ ■ Backing for Stoke station

Railfuture West Midlands supported several applications to the rail reopening schemes announced by the Department for Transport, including Honeybourne to Stratford-upon-Avon. The DfT agreed to fund a business case for reopening Meir as a park-and-ride station, four miles from Stoke-on-Trent. Proposals to reopen Etruria station, and restore the Stoke-Leek line were not successful.

■ ■ Cash for Very Light Rail

The Government announced in August that its Get Building Fund will provide £12.4 million for the Very Light Rail Innovation Centre in Dudley and £1.8 million for Coventry's Very Light Rail project.

■ ■ Redditch station upgrade

A grant of £1.3 million was announced in August by the Get Building Fund to turn the terminus station at Redditch, Worcestershire, into an interchange.

westmidlands@railfuture.org.uk
[www.railfuture.org.uk/West Midlands Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/West%20Midlands%20Branch)



Picture: RAILWATCH

TRAIN OF THE FUTURE: Railfuture's Maggie King and Paul Krebs inspect the Siemens concept in London Docklands in 2014

■ ■ S&C Staycation Express proves a success

A new three-times-a-day charter train operated on the Settle-Carlisle line from 20 July to 12 September. The £29 day return charter train ran in addition to the reduced Northern service. The five-coach inter-city style train was hauled by heritage diesel locomotives and proved a much-needed boost to tourism and businesses in the Yorkshire Dales and Cumbria.

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■ ■ Our bigger, better railway

Railfuture applauds those who continue, despite Covid-19, to deliver enhancements for our railway. Some examples include:

- Denmark Hill capacity improvement project, in the fourth of five stages in the rail network enhancements pipeline
- Peckham Rye's deferred Access for All scheme proceeds
- Coulsdon South, Crawley and Tring are added to the step-free street-to-platforms network
- Eridge footbridge is replaced, with a lift to come
- Stevenage opens a fifth platform
- Hither Green area re-signalling commissioned
- Newhaven Marine aggregates terminal recommissioned, keeping lorries off East Sussex and other South East roads
- Platform extensions for eight-car trains at Cooksbridge, Lancing and Goring-by-Sea.

■ ■ Restoring Your Railway

In May Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced the 10 winning bids for the first round of the new Ideas Fund, with a passing loop for Bricket Wood on the Abbey line being the winner in our area.

In July the 50 bids submitted for the second round included a new north-to-east chord between Arundel and Angmering, step-free access for Carshalton Beeches station, and reopening Camberwell station which was closed in 1916. Railfuture has shared its experience with local campaign group SE5 Forum.

■ ■ Railfuture anniversaries

This autumn sees these anniversaries:

September

London Fields, Welham Green 1986
Channel Tunnel Rail Link phase one (to Fawkham Junction, via Southfleet Junction) 2003
Shepherd's Bush 2008
Imperial Wharf 2009

October

Kentish Town West 1981
Arlesey, How Wood 1988
London Marylebone-Oxford Parkway via new Bicester Chord, Bicester Village and Islip (East West Rail western section phase 1) 2015
November
Southbury, Theobalds Grove, Turkey Street 1960
Basildon 1974 (25 years after Basildon was designated a New Town)
Channel Tunnel, Waterloo Curve/Stewarts Lane Viaduct, Waterloo International 1994

Braintree Freeport 1999

Luton Airport Parkway 1999

HS1 phase two (Southfleet Junction to London St Pancras International) and Ebbsfleet International 2007

Stratford International 2009

■ ■ Planning ahead

Railfuture LSE is preparing for future changes. A *Prospectus for Thameslink-Southern-Great Northern, post-GTR* is being developed across our divisions, and policy towards transfers of Department for Transport train operating contracts to Transport for London is being developed in view of official discussions about the future of Great Northern Metro (Moorgate) services.

We are also playing a strong role in national discussions about post-pandemic ticketing, and particularly welcome GTR's August announcement that their smartcard KeyGo can now include railcard discounts.

Railfuture LSE continues to collaborate with Network Rail in its plan making.

Following publication of the West Sussex Connectivity Modular Strategic Study, to which we contributed in workshops and through presentations and discussions at our Sussex and Coastway meetings, we have participated in initial workshops for a North and East Kent Connectivity Study.

■ ■ Rail comeback

Railfuture welcomed the return of rail services on the Abbey Line between Watford Junction and St Albans Abbey.

London Northwestern started running trains again on 24 August, after suspending operation of the line in March because of a Covid-19 shortage of train crews.

A similar closedown by the same operator affected the Bedford-Bletchley line.

Train services again resumed on 24 August after demolition work on spans of the Bletchley viaduct, to make way for new East West Rail platforms.

■ ■ Updates from London & SE

London and South East branch members can subscribe free to our monthly two-page e-newsletter *inter-railse*. It usefully fills the gap between issues of the quarterly eight-page *railse*, sent to branch members with each *Railwatch*.

Both newsletters can be viewed or downloaded from the branch website page, below.

www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East
Twitter: @RailfutureLSE



Picture: CHARLIE VERRALL

DOUBLE DIESEL: Rail freight begins to flow in and out of Newhaven's former Marine branch with this test train in June

The rail line to Newhaven Marine station has not been used by passenger trains as a ferry link since 2006, but it is being given a new lease of life for freight operations.

Ferries now dock a few minutes' walk away from Newhaven Town station, so Network Rail is working with East Sussex County Council to regenerate the port area. The track will be used for freight train access to Newhaven South Port, where a new dock and freight handling facility is due to open.

Network Rail was given approval to close Marine station in July, and expects the closure to save it around £1.9 million by avoiding the costs of upgrading it to modern standards.



Picture: RAILWATCH

MEMORIES: An earlier era is recalled as a steam train passes Newhaven Harbour station in 2014 to celebrate Seaford 150

Lincolnshire



Picture: RAILWATCH

Immingham freight train at Brocklesby Junction in September

■ ■ Bid for Barton-on-Humber

North Lincolnshire Council has bid for "Reversing Beeching" funding to subsidise a revamped train service. The council is supporting plans to extend the existing Sheffield to Gainsborough Central service to Barton via the curve at Brocklesby Junction, normally used only by Immingham freight trains. Regular timetabled buses leave Barton-on-Humber to Hull, via the Humber Bridge.

■ ■ Spalding improvements

East Midlands Railway plans to introduce more trains between Spalding, Peterborough and Lincoln on weekdays and Saturdays from December 2021. It is part of a major recast of all EMR Regional services with earlier morning and later evening services, more Sunday services and increased frequency on some routes.

Twitter @RailfutureLincs



Picture: RAILWATCH

CRISIS MANAGEMENT: This is how Hull Trains helped passengers stay safe on its 1508 Paragon bimode train to London King's Cross on 27 August. The seats with yellow labels on the left were for families and groups travelling together, while the green and red labels on the right allowed lone passengers to keep their distance. The open-access operator decided to suspend services from 29 March to 21 August at a time when franchised train operators were given financial assistance from the Government to keep running services under emergency measures agreements

Chair's column by Chris Page

Clear and present danger

Our railways are facing a clear and present danger. Following the Government's aggressive "essential travel only" message which scared passengers away from trains, rail passenger numbers in August based on ticket sales were static at around 30% of pre-Covid-19 levels. Although the Government had changed its message to say that anyone can use public transport, the publicity from rail companies was mainly about what passengers were required to do. This was hardly a warm welcome back.

Social distancing has meant that conductors were not checking tickets on trains and ticket gates were left open, so many people were travelling for free. Passenger counts on Northern indicated ridership at 40% of pre-Covid-19 levels so ticketless travel may have been as much as 25%.

Maintaining rail services under the emergency measures agreements (introduced in March) was costing taxpayers around £700 million per month, which is unsustainable.

Covid-19 has driven government debt to exceed gross domestic product for the first time since 1961.

The emergency measures agreements were due to expire on 20 September 2020, although in early September the GWR agreement was extended for a further 10 months on the same terms.

If the number of paying passengers has

not increased as children return to school and people return to work, the Treasury reportedly has plans to "temporarily" close rail lines and cut services because of a lack of demand. Closing lines and cutting services will of course suppress demand, so such temporary measures might well become permanent. People have found that they no longer need to travel as much, and some people are using their cars as their personal protective equipment rather than taking the train. If fares rise to match the retail price index in January as usual, some people will have another excuse not to return to rail, resulting in revenue falling further. City centres depend on public transport. If people do not travel into cities as much, then many service and support jobs are likely to go.

Railfuture has called on the Government and train operators to attract passengers back to rail with a campaign for a zero ticket price increase in January.

We also want to see more flexible ticket options for people who travel frequently but not often enough to warrant buying a season ticket.

This is also the time for aggressive marketing offers, more frequent services and a welcome at every station.

Use it or lose it!

Rail is still safer than road, even after taking account of Covid-19, according to RSSB which is responsible for rail safety and standards. Relying on your car as your personal protective equipment is more risky than going by train.

Please join Railfuture's *Attracting Passengers Back to Rail* webinar on 3 October, and invite your friends to join too. More details on the back page.

railwatch

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railfuture

campaigning for a bigger, better railway

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Attracting
passengers
back to rail

railfuture Webinar

www.railfuture.org.uk/webinar

Britain's railway faces its greatest threat since the 1960s Beeching cuts. COVID-19 caused patronage to collapse. It has only partly recovered. The government will not keep the railway afloat at vast cost indefinitely. Fare income from passengers is vital. The public must use the railway or risk losing it.

Rail travel must be safe, value for money, punctual, convenient and enjoyable. Our rail industry speakers represent organisations that can offer expert advice or take necessary actions to encourage people to use Britain's railway.

Webinar includes a Q&A – it's your chance to tell senior people in the rail industry what you want from your railway

Saturday 3 October 2020

#ReturnToRail

11.00 - 12.30

Admission FREE - booking essential



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**Director for National
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Network Rail



Jacqueline Starr
**Chief Operating
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**Director of Systems
and Systems and
Health**
RSSB



Malcolm Holmes
Executive Director,
West Midlands Rail
Executive



Linda McCord
**Senior Stakeholder
Manager**
Transport Focus

Road to a climate change disaster

The Government's £27 billion road programme is a disaster waiting to happen.

About 80% of the carbon dioxide emission savings from switching to electric cars, in itself a dubious policy, will be wiped out by the road building.

That is the calculation in a report by environmental consultancy *Transport for Quality of Life*.

Report author Lynn Sloman said: "More roads just mean more cars. Decades of road investment have not solved congestion.

"Sustained lobbying for more money for roads, leaving less for public transport, cycling and walking, is one of the reasons we now face a climate emergency.

"We cannot afford any more to indulge this model of mindless road building.

"There are people in the Department for Transport and Highways England who have built their careers on big road building budgets, and they won't easily give them up.

"But there are also some officials – and perhaps some politicians – who are starting to recognise that the climate emergency means we need a radically different approach to transport."

Chris Todd of Transport Action

Network said: "Road building is like someone who's morbidly obese insisting they can gorge on another cream cake, because no single cake will have a 'material impact' on their well-being."

Professor Phil Goodwin said the roads programme was still predicated on increased traffic, even though Transport Secretary

as is the Bakerloo line extension to Lewisham. Planning for the Sutton tram extension, the Crossrail Two line linking Surrey and Hertfordshire to the city centre, and a planned cycling and walking bridge over the Thames has also been paused. Pollution from road traffic is rising again, but the Government

has waved through Highways England schemes through despite committing publicly to progressive carbon cuts until 2050. The A428 Black Cat improvements

are widely suspected to be a stage in creating an Oxbridge Expressway by stealth, attracting drivers on to the road who might otherwise have used East West Rail when it is completed.

By contrast, environmental campaigners are urging Parliament to legislate for clean air.

In early September, Friends of the Earth Cymru called for a ban on new roads to achieve faster cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, aiming for a 100% cut by 2045. FOEC director Haf Elgar

said: "Wales has historically been a big polluter and produced a lot of emissions, and we need to do our fair share now and reduce our emissions very quickly."

One week later, the Welsh Government said it had identified new train services and stations which it wants to progress and called on the UK Government to "play its part".

The proposals include upgrading the South Wales main line, new trains, widespread electrification and action on bottlenecks.

Pass it on

The best way to recycle *Railwatch* is to pass it on to a friend who may be interested in railways and tempted to join Railfuture.

Eco-friendly

The see-through wrapper in which *Railwatch* is delivered by post is starch film and is 100% compostable and biodegradable.



Grant Shapps says we should be driving less. The Government can no longer claim there is not enough money for key projects when it is wasting it on road building.

In London, a Piccadilly Line upgrade that would allow more trains on the line was paused because of strain on Transport for London's budget amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Earlier this year, TfL boss Mike Brown described it as the network's "number one priority". But it is now on hold,

