

railwatch

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Campaigning for a bigger, better railway

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Ukraine's Iron People keeping the trains running: See page 2 and centre pages
Picture © Jules Slütsky

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Iron people defy war to run railway

After eight months of war, Ukrainian Railways (Ukrzaliznytsia in Ukrainian) continues to play a vital role in the struggle against the Russian invaders.

UZ has been Russia's second highest strategic target after military installations. Despite Russian forces repeatedly destroying infrastructure, keeping the trains running on time has been a massive propaganda victory and morale boost for Ukrainians. Yet railway workers have paid a heavy price. Known as "Iron People", over 300 have been killed since the start of the conflict.

Recently waves of missile and kamikaze drone strikes left cities across Ukraine without power and water but UZ has shown its ability to keep trains running, repair damage quickly and keep delays to a minimum.

Even on days of intense Russian attacks, over 90% of trains usually still arrive on time – a figure that surpasses many other European rail networks without wars to contend with, such as the UK. In addition to delivering tonnes of humanitarian aid and reconstruction supplies by rail, remarkably, UZ's grid has even been able to restore power to recently liberated villages in the east.

But Roman Senyshyn, the 38-year-old director of Lviv station, who was responsible for managing the evacuation of refugees, said: "The biggest fears people had were for their children."

The railway's inspiring response: Centre pages



HISTORIC DAY: Kyiv Independent journalist Iryna Matviyishyn celebrates with friends, after arriving in Kherson on 19 November, on the first Ukraine Railways train since the Russians abandoned the city a week earlier



Ukraine Railways chief executive Alexander Kamyshin at Kherson station, days after the Russian army withdrew from the city

Can Labour's rail plan be a vote winner?

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Christian Wolmar

While all the recent focus has been on the shenanigans of the Conservative government (who is transport secretary today?), it is worth devoting a bit of thought to what Labour might do in office for the railways.

It is unlikely that we will get another Tory administration. At the very least, it will be some kind of hung Parliament, although a Labour victory is the probable outcome of the next election which may happen sooner than scheduled. On the transport front, Labour has been pretty quiet lately. What it decides though may be crucial in winning votes at a general election. Labour has a strong transport team led by Louise Haigh as shadow secretary, supported by Tan Dhesi with the rail brief.

There have been the expected – and accurate – complaints from Labour about the chaos on the railways caused by the perfect storm of strikes, cuts and Covid. But there is precious little sign of any

real policy, apart from the renewed commitment to renationalise the railways which is pretty vague given that the railways are already effectively in public hands.

The dividing line between the parties is over what replaces franchising. The Conservative government has created a Great British Railways Transition Team, which so far has spent £17 million on trying to work out the structure of the railways to replace franchising. The team is hamstrung by the fact that the Williams-Shapps report (the basis of the model the team is working on) demands that the operation of the railway is contracted out to the private sector. However, the team also needs to find a model that simplifies the current very complex structure which led to the debacle in May 2018 over the timetable, the event that sparked off the whole process of chaos. These two requirements

are mutually exclusive. Once the private sector is involved, there is bound to be complexity as incentives to reward good performance are built into the model. The under-pressure transition team is, according to an inside source, working on a structure involving something



Christian Wolmar

called the Sector Target Operating Model or STOM for short – but for the most part, team members have kept schtum about it for the obvious reason that nobody knows what they are talking about. This presents Labour with an opportunity to put a stop to all this nonsense. As far as one can assess in the absence of clear policy statements, nationalisation for Labour means it would bring the operation of the railways in-house rather than, as the Tories have suggested, contracting out all the services to private companies

through passenger service agreements.

Labour could consign the whole complex Williams-Shapps process to the dustbin and instead develop a far simpler system, crucially base it on the integration of operations and infrastructure.

As long as the current government attempts to maintain that separation, it is impossible for the transition team to produce a simple working system.

There is plenty more that we would like to hear from Labour, such as how investment plans should be made, how the ticketing system can be reformed and how local and regional government would be involved in producing plans for rail.

But any such plans must start from the basis that there will be a simpler model based on an integrated structure.

That is the only economical way to run the system and the savings can be invested in a far more useful way – on the railway – than the millions being spent on consultants and lawyers by the Great British Railways Transition Team.

railfuture

Campaigning for a bigger better railway

Turning Point for the Railway:

Our Conference in Leeds

Thursday 30 March 2023

What is a railway for? And how can the railway meet the needs of its customers – and get more of them?



www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/

For members, the rail industry and anyone interested in the railway

Railfuture annual national conference

By Neil Middleton

Railfuture communications director

At a time when the railway needs to understand and influence what politicians want from the railway, but money is tight, where should the focus of campaigners be for a bigger, better railway?

What can justify money being spent – either on day-to-day support or investment – and how can best use be made of the money already being spent?

The railway can be a highly effective contributor to decarbonisation, to levelling up and as part of many wider initiatives – but only if it is successful in attracting passengers and freight to use the railway.

The post-Covid railway can no longer rely on commuters who “have” to travel to work each day – who can replace them?

Sessions at our rescheduled conference include the value of new railway lines and stations, making trains more family friendly, Railfuture on “Is the railway working for passengers?”, engaging young people in the railway, the Rail Freight Group on making better use of the railway for freight, encouraging more women to work in rail,



and making the railway more accessible and inclusive for all.

Our conference is priced to appeal to all at £50, less for students – and for everyone who books before the Early Bird offer expires. It includes lunch and refreshments. To learn more and to book, please visit

This conference had to be postponed from 15 September 2022 because a rail strike involving train drivers and signallers had been called for the day of the conference.

We hope that industrial action will have ended before the re-scheduled date on 30 March 2023.

Those who paid to attend on the original date have been given the choice of keeping their booking with a price guarantee, or receiving a full refund.

Speakers

(original line-up subject to change, but currently confirmed)

Nick Flynn and Abby Taylor, Family Friendly Trains (talking about **Campaign to make trains more family friendly**)

Stewart Palmer, vice-president and director, Railfuture (talking about **Railfuture's view on whether the railway is working for passengers**). Stewart was previously managing director of South West Trains

Karen Bennett, community rail education development officer, Community Rail

Lancashire (talking about **How young people can be engaged in the railways**)

Phil Smart, assistant policy manager, Rail Freight Group (talking about **Rail's role in the future movement of freight**). Phil is also a councillor at Ipswich Borough Council with a strong knowledge of transport matters

Anna-jane Hunter, partner, Winder Phillips Associates, Women in Rail (talking about **How Women in Rail see the future roles of women in the railways**)

Dr Manuel Ojeda Cabral, senior research fellow in transport economics and appraisal, University of Leeds (talking about **The value of new railway lines and stations**)

Alison Smith, head of accessibility and inclusion, Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT) (our Keynote Listener and updating us on GBRTT)

Conference chair: Brian Barnsley, deputy chief executive of Community Rail Network and head of support and development, Community Rail Network

Venue: St George's Centre, Leeds LS1 3DL

This venue is modern, attractive and the air-conditioned room chosen is designed to hold large conferences.

Enquiries about the conference: Please email conferences@railfuture.org.uk



Mike Rose: A pleasure to know

Farewell to Mike

Railfuture Yorkshire is sorry to report the death in October of Mike Rose, after two years of living courageously and privately with a rare form of cancer.

Mike enjoyed a rich life with many pursuits and will be sorely missed. He was a lover of folk music, real ale, a good book and good company.

Born in London, Mike moved with his family to Macclesfield. He graduated from Nottingham University with a degree in engineering and went on to manage infrastructure projects for local authorities and the National Health Service, bringing communication systems into the digital age.

Mike was joint vice-chair of Railfuture Yorkshire from 2018 and was co-opted to the Railfuture board in 2021.

His wife Mary said Mike had been suffering with myeloma (bone marrow cancer). In the final week of his life, he summoned up the energy to take one last stroll in his beloved Peak District National Park with Mary and his sister Janet by his side.

The funeral was on 3 November at Grenoside, near Sheffield. Mourners were invited to donate to Railfuture in lieu of flowers.

Mary said Mike had thoroughly enjoyed contributing to the Railfuture board. Railfuture chair Chris Page said: "Mike was optimistic about treatments, but found it very frustrating that he could not get engaged more with Railfuture board activities."

Mayors demand TPE action

A ridiculous number of TransPennine Express trains have been cancelled at short notice. David Hagerty, chair of Slaithwaite and Marsden Action on Rail Transport and a member of Railfuture Yorkshire branch committee, was quoted in the *Financial Times* in October: "It can't go on like this... the DfT and TPE need to come up with and share a plan for what they are going to do to make things right, and [explain] what difference it's going to make."

TPE said it was working flat out to deliver higher levels of service but highlighted problems of sickness,

persisting training backlog (due to Covid) and infrastructure issues. The DfT said poor services were unacceptable, and had offered to meet Northern leaders.

Earlier, West Yorkshire's Mayor Tracy Brabin hit out at a network "that's reliant on drivers not becoming sick and trains not breaking down." Five metro mayors across the North called on new Transport Secretary Mark Harper to sign off without delay a rest-day working agreement that was "on his desk". They called for TPE to be given six months to review and evaluate recruitment and management against clear standards. Again, an urgent meeting with ministers was proposed.

Castleford opportunities

Work on a new platform at Castleford, expected to open next year, is progressing well. A new crossover already installed at Cutsyke will allow trains to use both platforms at the station (formerly Castleford Central), increasing capacity at a point where Leeds-Knottingley trains have to reverse. New signalling with track improvements is being worked on as we write, along with a new footbridge which will include lifts.

More services will be possible on the Leeds to Pontefract and Knottingley line, with potential for services on the direct route from Wakefield Kirkgate through Castleford to York – avoiding Leeds. The works are being completed as part of the TransPennine Route Upgrade and the route is expected to be used for diversions. We hear that TPE plans to extend Manchester-Huddersfield local trains through Wakefield to York, starting next May.

The whole east-west route offers a direct connection from York to Huddersfield and Manchester. A potential second service via the Calder Valley line could go to Preston (dovetailing with the popular York-Leeds-Blackpool service). Wakefield district connectivity could be transformed. Halifax and District Rail Action Group says this could be part of a longer term project to improve services over the Brighouse route, where a new station at Elland should open by 2025.

The rail group of Pontefract Civic Society hopes for early progress on the Knottingley-Askern-Doncaster line under the Reopening Your Railway policy. More trains on the Sheffield-York line through Baghill station and the Knottingley-Goole route could add up to a big but totally reasonable package for the eastern end of Wakefield district.

Modal shift needed

North Yorkshire and York councils have put out devolution plans for consultation. Road schemes feature no plans for modal shift. We will call on the new mayor to produce plans to fill gaps and connect with rail.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch
Twitter: @RailfutureYorks

Goodbye to diesel age

By **Graham Collett**
Vice-chair
Railfuture Yorkshire

An ambitious plan for Scotland's railway to "decarbonise smartly" is a sharp reminder of the age of many of the diesel and electric train fleets still in daily use throughout Britain.

A recent Institution of Mechanical Engineers presentation about the plan points the way forward to a world beyond diesels.

Fleet plans

The Scottish Government has boldly committed to decarbonise all passenger rail services by 2035 and the industry is developing forward-thinking proposals to deliver this.

It will require 388 diesel vehicles to be replaced as part of decarbonisation plans, and 285 electric vehicles will also life-expire in this time frame. It is envisaged that the diesel and electric fleets will be replaced across three time periods:

■ **2026-28** Five different fleets, including the class 156 diesels and class 318 electrics (dating back to 1986)

■ **2030-31** The class 158 diesels, the HST diesels and class 334 suburban Alstom electrics

■ **2035-37** The Derby-built class 170 diesels

Only the electric 380s and 385s from the existing fleet will survive into the decarbonised future.

Overall, this adds up to 65% of the total fleet of 1,037 vehicles needing replacement.

The Scottish Government's intention is to electrify all its inter-city and suburban routes, with the rural ones switched to either hydrogen or battery operation.

Challenges

An older fleet creates challenges. These include:

■ About 45% of Scotland's train fleet was built before 1994, when crashworthiness standards for current rolling stock were introduced

■ Increasing equipment obsolescence means higher costs and longer repair times for spares

■ Reduced performance, availability and reliability

Other operators

Many of the diesel units which ScotRail run are used

by other operators – especially Northern, East Midlands and Great Western. While some of the older units have been replaced by more modern units, a lot remain, and all of them will need replacement in the next 15 years. The team in Scotland is engaging with industry colleagues, including Northern, East West Rail and Chiltern, to share learning on specifications for new decarbonised fleets.

There has been no sign of a forward plan by the other operators for replacing their diesel units, with the exception of Transport for Wales, which is already on track to replace its entire fleet over the next two years.

It is only fair to say that both Northern and Great Western's rolling stock orders were based on the then-approved government electrification schemes.

When these were deferred, both operators were forced to fall back on diesel units to cover the routes concerned. With the exception of the Bolton-Wigan scheme, which is now proceeding, there has been no indication when these schemes will be reinstated.

Wales and West

Despite this, the Wales and Western Region of Network Rail did produce its own regional traction decarbonisation strategy earlier this year.

It identifies six tranches of decarbonisation schemes, starting with the deferred elements of the Great Western Electrification Programme and, in broad terms, moving westwards, with main lines and routes with heavy freight use prioritised.

This sequence was identified based on the decarbonisation benefits (removal of diesel miles, passenger impact, dependency on decarbonising other routes and diversionary route capability) and deployment efficiencies (rolling stock, signalling and availability of power supply).

North of England

The Railway Industry Association North is calling for widescale electrification in the north of England. See next page.

■ *My thanks to the Institution of Mechanical Engineers Railway Division (NE).*

Electrification: Greener, faster, better

By **STEPHEN WARING**
*Railfuture Yorkshire secretary
 and Electric Railway Charter
 joint coordinator*

Transport is the largest UK emitter of greenhouse gases, asserts a new report by the Rail Industry Association's regional arm, RIA North.

In 2018, transport emissions were 28% of the UK total, 4% higher than 2013 and only 3% less than 1990.

Politicians have promised to end the UK's contribution to climate change by 2050.

The good news is that rail produces less than 1% of UK greenhouse gas emissions, despite only 38% of track being electrified. As electricity generation decarbonises, so will electric traction.

Low-carbon is not enough. We need zero-carbon, but at the moment, rail depends on high-carbon diesels. Rail must build on its green credentials. Rail needs to keep ahead by getting rid of conventional diesels by 2040.

There has been much talk of zero-carbon battery and hydrogen traction.

To be honest, both are still under development. Batteries will improve. Hydrogen will get more green as production by electrolysis from renewably generated electricity gains momentum.

But both will always waste more energy than using electricity direct from the grid via overhead wires.

This is why RIA North reasserts the need for a rolling programme of electrification so nearly all lines are electrified.

The word hydrogen – favourite of companies who see a profit, and governments who do not want to electrify – barely appears in the RIA report.

There is a suggestion that electrification could be financed from private sector funding, paid back by savings on carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, particulates and maintenance.



Map 1 – Recommended Priorities for decarbonisation (after MML and TRU)

Freight Terminals Key:

1. Carlisle Yard	10. Blyth	19. Tinsley Yard	28. Crewe Yards
2. Shap Beck	11. Tees Yard & Dock	20. Peterborough Yards	29. Northwich Works
3. Hardendale Quarry	12. Redcar British Steel	21. Ratcliffe	30. Ditton
4. Shap Quarry	13. Boulby	22. Toton Yards	31. Garston
5. Sellafield	14. Leeds Freightliner	23. East Midlands Gateway	32. Liverpool Docks
6. Arcow Quarry	15. Wakefield Europort	24. Castle Donnington	33. Lynemouth
7. Tyne Yard	16. Scunthorpe	25. Peak Forest	34. Ferryhill
8. Jarrow	17. Doncaster Yard	26. Hindlow	35. Drax
9. Tyne Dock	18. Doncaster iPort	27. Trafford Park	36. Immingham

PRIORITIES: Yellow shows lines deemed to be priority 1 by RIA North, supported by Railfuture

- Leeds-Hull
- Carlisle-Newcastle
- Doncaster-Immingham
- Wakefield Kirkgate-Drax/Leeds
- Sheffield-Lincoln-Peterborough
- Leeds-Harrogate-York

The RIA's plan builds on Network Rail's traction decarbonisation network strategy of 2020.

We should also remember the 2015 task force report *Northern Sparks*.

PRIORITY 2

The second level of priority includes a smaller group of routes

to transform bi-mode operation to pure electric, including the Cumbrian Coast, Darlington-Eaglescliffe and East Midlands branches.

PRIORITY 3

The third level of priority is long-term battery-hydrogen proposals including less busy routes in Cheshire, Lancashire, the North East and the Yorkshire coast.

Many electrification proposals are supported by heavy freight traffic. If proper action is taken by

government, it will transform a dense band of railways from Carlisle and Sunderland in the north to Corby in the south.

RIA North and Railfuture believe electric trains must play the leading role in rail's contribution to decarbonisation.

They are attractive to the public, efficient and cheap to run.

Let's make sure Railfuture members tell their MPs how important this is for rail, transport in general – and the fight against climate change.

Top 10

- Sheffield-Doncaster/Moorthorpe
- Manchester-Bradford-Leeds (Calder Valley)
- Northallerton-Middlesbrough-Saltburn
- Manchester-Sheffield (Hope Valley)

How to pass the exam on rail tickets



By Neil Middleton

Should I be asking an exam board to create a GCSE in “Buying the right railway tickets”?

It is certainly a complex task to work out what is the best ticket for a journey, particularly if more subjective elements are taken into account,

including your own price versus flexibility and timing decisions.

Some Railfuture members might well be thinking that it is so complicated that it could be a suitable field of study for a PhD.

UK rail fares can be fiendishly complex and getting to the point where you are comfortable that you have the best value ticket (to you) can be a real challenge.

Key factors include:

- 1 Can I move the times of my journey to save a bit, or sometimes a lot, of money?
- 2 Do I want to lock myself into specific trains to save a bit of money?
- 3 Might I save some money by splitting my tickets? How, if at all, does that restrict my journey choices?
- 4 Might a day rover ticket save money?
- 5 Might a Transport for London, or other transport authority, ticket or “pay as you go” system save me money?
- 6 Is a zonal ticket that covers other public transport, such as a London Travelcard, worthwhile?
- 7 Is it worthwhile me having a Railcard? Will that further influence option 1?

These questions need to be dealt with before contemplating ticket types.

Sometimes simple generalisations such as “an off-peak ticket is not valid in the morning peak” are not true.

The off-peak test is sometimes applied mid-journey, not at the start of it.

National Rail’s list of special offers is 12 pages long (or 26 pages with 14 pages listing the Plus Bus opportunities).

Railfuture has long campaigned for fares simplification and that will definitely continue as a campaigning objective.

But it will be a complex programme for the rail industry to deliver.

There also needs to be a long-term political will to deliver the changes.

So, what might be done more quickly? I believe a key step forward would be to change the way prices are presented.

Take a low cost airline. In my sample of 14 flights, there are 12 different fares – and a further five for flexibility.

The airline system uses a complicated pricing model, but the choices are presented simply to the potential passenger.

All I need to do, if I decide not to travel by train, is to make two price versus time decisions and a flexibility decision. The potential passenger is also prompted to think about alternative airports.

Compare that to the nightmare of the seven tests above for rail fares, topping it up by

easyJet choices as at 1600 on Sunday 23 October 2022

“Travel in the morning, return in the evening; I have a Senior Railcard” Harpenden to Brighton	
E93.60:	Travel each way any time First Class
E58.50:	Travel each way any time
E55.55:	Specific pre 9:15am train, return specific time
E43.95:	Travel out 09:21, return any time
E39.05:	Travel out 09:21, return any time on a service calling at Elstree & Borehamwood
E30.45:	Travel out 09:21, return specific time
E24.60:	Travel out 09:52 or later, return anytime
E24.30:	Travel out 09:38 or later, must use Thameslink, cannot pass through St Pancras 16:30 – 19:01, otherwise flexible return
E22.10:	Travel out specific service 09:52 or later, return specific time (Standard Class Travel unless indicated otherwise)

Prices need to include all split ticket possibilities – for research simplicity only two are priced

The choices which the rail industry could offer

noting that not one website brings all the options together in one place.

For instance, from my local station for a trip to central London, I need to get fares from one of the many rail fare websites and the Transport for London single fare finder.

Travel further to Gatwick and I need to add on one of the split-fare websites.

Sometimes I need to look at more than one split-ticket website because they do not always come up with the same choice.

Ideally, the rail industry needs to move towards a model that follows the low-cost airline example.

Basic information about the journey needs to be collated and then the fares information needs to be presented, for the user to make a decision probably largely based on price.

The information needs to be given in a logical and simple order, with the various price options for the potential traveller to choose from.

The various price differentials need to be seen, with key factors such as the importance of an earlier start.

It should be possible for the traveller to make decisions without being required to know exactly the differences between anytime, off-peak and advance tickets.

The focus should be on the travel consequences, not the ticket type.

For longer-distance journeys, the concept would be the same, but there would be a greater focus on advance fares or, in my terminology, tickets for a single train.

This approach could and should be combined with personalisation. Sign in and be offered regular journeys first.

This approach could also be applied to ticket vending machines.

Start with your credit card, not end with it, and the first two questions could be to ask “Do you want to go to London again?” and “Do you want to go now?”

The machine could be made intelligent enough to ask:

Do you want to go now?

Do you want to go as soon as it is cheaper?

Do you want to go later?

Simplifying fares, by moving towards single-leg pricing at half the return fare for all fares, would be a good start.

Single-leg pricing fares would make pricing more logical, but a key first step is simply to explain current fares in a more logical manner.

Part of this approach needs to recognise that split fares are no longer something known to just a small minority because of the complexity of the calculations and the need for inside knowledge.

If you put “uk rail split tickets” into a search engine, you will find many places to investigate options.

These options should be officially recognised by the rail industry.

My idea hides the additional complexity by simply focusing on travel choices.

■ Neil Middleton is Railfuture director with responsibility for communications who lives in Harpenden, Hertfordshire

Ticket round-up

Dales railcard

Northern has introduced a £10 Dales railcard giving people half price fares for five months on the Bentham-Leeds line and the Settle-Carlisle line.

Barcode season tickets

Northern is introducing mobile phone barcode season tickets which can be bought on its website or app.

Smart kiosks

East Midlands Railway is to install 29 smart kiosks across its network, making it “simpler and easier” to buy the cheapest fares. The machines can issue a printed barcode ticket as an alternative to the normal ticket.

Fare dodgers pay £500,000

East Midlands Railway has recovered £500,000 from passengers who tried to evade buying a valid ticket. Its revenue protection officers issued nearly 10,000 legal notices to passengers and took nearly 1,500 people to court.

£100 penalty fare

The penalty fare on the railway is to go up from £20 to £100, said the Department for Transport in October. It will be reduced to £50 if paid within 21 days.

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

Payback time after years of campaigning

By Roger Blake

It took 81 years of campaigning to get London's Crossrail (the Elizabeth line) completed, and Railfuture can claim at least some of the credit.

In October 2022, Bond Street station opened, although the original idea by railman George Dow was suggested in 1941, during the Second World War.

In November, Abbey Wood to Heathrow and Reading, together with Shenfield to Paddington, were scheduled to start.

We have to wait until May 2023 year (82 years) for Shenfield to Heathrow and Reading to be running.

Another long-term Railfuture campaign, East West Rail, continues to make progress, with work continuing on the Bicester-Bletchley section.

Oxford-Bletchley services are expected to start in December

Maggie King



2024, but when trains will start running into Milton Keynes Central is uncertain.

The upgrade of the Bletchley-Bedford section (the Marston Vale line) is currently under a Cabinet Office cloud, while the Bedford-Cambridge section is in the early planning stages.

Railfuture will carry on campaigning to get East West Rail and many other reopening projects on track.

Fife's Levenmouth link and the Northumberland line to Ashington are on target and are awaiting firm dates for services to begin. Several new stations are expected soon: Thanet Parkway, Brent Cross West, Marsh Barton, Edginswell, Winslow, Reading Green Park, Cardiff Parkway, St Clears, Portway Parkway, Inverness Airport, and East Linton.

Railfuture is keen to see the government's Restoring Your Railway initiative give the post-pandemic railway a boost and shift people from air and road to environment-friendly rail.

Railfuture is backing the strategic outline business cases for a new station to serve Welborne garden village, Hampshire, and for a new Windrush line to connect Salt Cross garden village, Witney and Carterton with Oxford.

In Devon an initial business case is in preparation, thanks to support from Great Western Railway's community fund, Railfuture's fighting fund and the Tarka Rail Association. The aim is to upgrade the Tarka line as the basis for extending rail services from Barnstaple to Bideford.

Railfuture is also involved in stakeholder engagement in Hampshire's Waterside line and the Bluebell Railway's extension to Ardingly. You can see the Railfuture submissions on the website. Check out on the campaigns and what's on tabs.

Stay in touch with Railfuture's national infrastructure and networks and freight groups on the Railfuture website. Search for campaigns or Restoring+Your+Railway @RailfutureNetws and @RailfutureFret

■ Roger Blake, right, is head of Railfuture's infrastructure & networks group



Paul Hopper (Hops)

Laura James, of The Voice local radio station for North Devon, with Tim Steer of ACE Rail Campaign after an interview dealing with plans to reinstate rail services from Barnstaple to Bideford.

Laura is holding Railfuture's gold Oliver Lovell RUG award for best new group, which was awarded to the Tarka Rail Association's ACE Rail campaign. Tim is a committee member of the Tarka Rail Association.

Tim is showing off the "Outstanding" certificate from the Royal Horticultural Society's South West in Bloom competition that was awarded to Barnstaple railway station for the joint work by Barnstaple in Bloom and Tarka Rail Association.

Keith York



Mayor of Barnstaple, Louisa York, pictured with Tim Steer of ACE Rail Campaign, right, and Andy Hedges of Tarka Rail Association, holding Railfuture's gold rail user group award

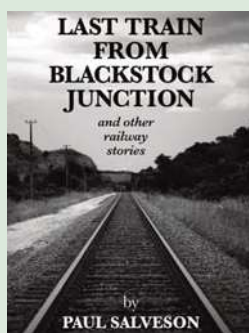
By Richard Lysons

Paul Salvesson is known to many *Railwatch* readers, railway campaigners and community rail volunteers. I previously reviewed Paul's book on Allen Clarke (aka Teddy Ashton) – *Lancashire's Romantic Radical in Railwatch* 169. Paul started his railway career at Horwich Loco Works and this was the setting of his first novel, *The Works*, which was published two years ago.

Paul's latest book is a collection of short stories written over the past four decades about life on Britain's railways. Inevitably, the huge changes that have occurred on our railways are reflected in this book. There is a generous foreword by Sir Peter Hendy, chair of Network Rail, who makes the important point that the railway is "... at the heart of the economic, social and political life of our country". I have personally been encouraged by Sir Peter about one of my own projects and wholeheartedly agree with

A tenderful of rail stories

his statement. He goes on to say: "No wonder it has such a strong place in the emotional part of our lives, too." Paul is a railwayman through and through, as anyone will vouch if they have met him, heard him speak at conferences and meetings or read his books and articles. Most recently, his article in *RAIL* on the future of railway ticket offices has been particularly important and useful. These short stories are likely to appeal mainly to rail enthusiasts. They are rather heavy on detail and facts and the sheer number of station names, dates, prices, rail routes, job titles and so on is a little overwhelming. The world of railways is full of facts and



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numbers, but so are cricket and football and I have read and enjoyed literature about both those sports, without necessarily being a "fan". The author is best when he writes about the characters themselves and moves away from the factual stuff: he has a very good ear for dialogue. Although the author stresses that his stories are "... fictional and none of the characters are real, living or deceased", he has inevitably remembered people and events from his lifetime in the railway world and used this insider knowledge to good effect. There has been a long tradition of this in other genres of fiction from crime and

espionage to horse racing and showbiz.

The stark monochrome front cover is very striking and appealing, and the photographs throughout the book are an interesting mixture of steam trains, railway staff and buildings. The photographs are linked to the text and have useful captions. Unfortunately, dear reader, this reviewer has to comment again on a book's font size. It is simply too small for me to read comfortably! Yes, I know that there are many magnification devices available and I could read *Last Train From Blackstock Junction* on a Kindle if I wanted to enlarge the text size. I rarely use my Kindle (even on rail journeys) and my magnifying glasses are used only for research in archive rooms. This somewhat spoils Paul Salvesson's interesting book.

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

Hamstrung Eurostar

As we face a climate emergency, why is it still so difficult and expensive to use Eurostar, the greenest way to travel to Europe?

Eurostar has been "strangled" ever since its birth when the first train ran through the Channel Tunnel in November 1994. The responsibility for all this clearly lies with the UK Government. This results mainly from its ideological obsession with privatising all major infrastructure projects. How has this happened?

1 The track access charges per kilometre that Eurostar pays to the owners of the Channel Tunnel have always been set much higher than the average across Europe.

2 The need for all passengers to go through airport-style security is not necessary. This is not done anywhere else in Europe for trains going through tunnels on land or tunnels under the sea.

3 The track access charges per kilometre that Eurostar has to pay to the owners of HS1 in the UK are three to four times higher than what it pays French railways from Calais to Paris.

4 The UK Government sold off its 40% shareholding of Eurostar in 2015 and refused financial support to Eurostar during Covid, even though it supported UK-based airlines.

5 The UK government's hard Brexit has made the departure process at London St Pancras less pleasant, with long queues around the station. This is so bad that St Pancras can now probably cope only with two departing trains each hour, which is 30% less than before Brexit. Unless Stratford International is opened, we may never be able to have any extra trains running to and from Europe.

What can be done?

At the very least, the UK Government must get the track access charges for HS1 reduced when they are set by the regulator. HS1 (the owners of London St Pancras) must finance a plan to expand capacity for passengers departing for Europe.

Random baggage screening should be introduced instead of wasting time forcing all passengers to have luggage screened.

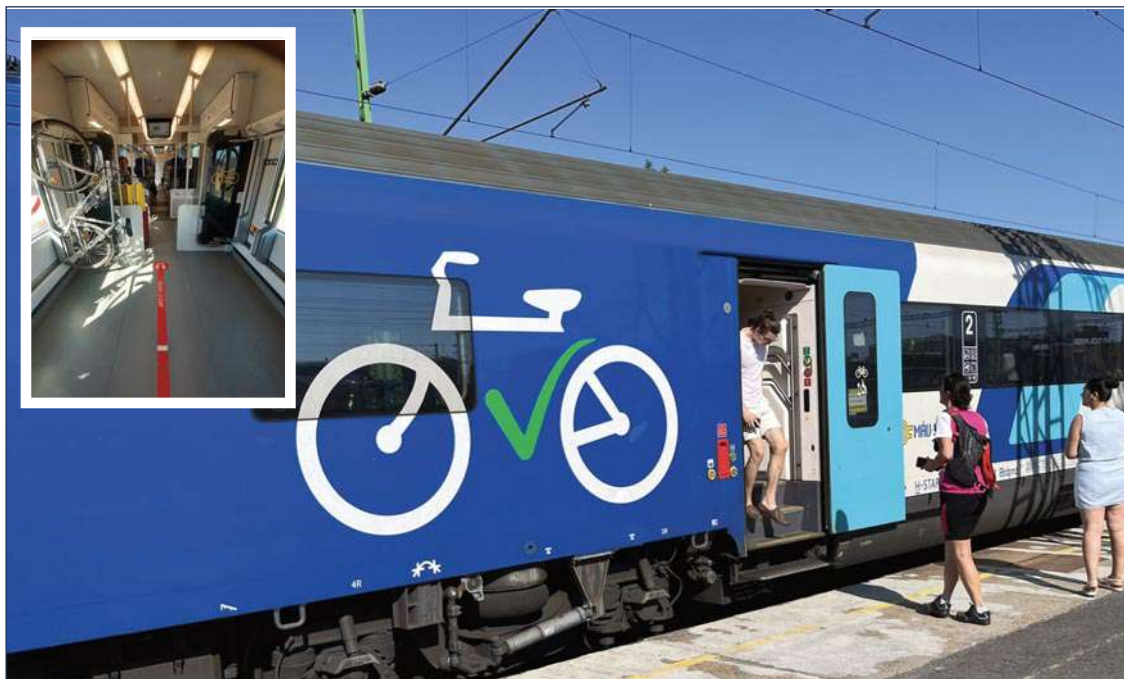
Ideally, we need to convince the UK government to have a softer Brexit and join the European economic area.

Nigel Perkins

*Chair European Rail Campaign (UK)
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Industry failings

I do not think I will be renewing my membership, through no fault of Railfuture. I am just disillusioned



Jon Worth/inset: Bill Davies

Where bikes on trains are welcome

This is one of Hungarian Railways' cross-border inter-city coaches with a bike carriage. Rail campaigner and blogger Jon Worth, who took the pictures, said: "Steps are a bit high, but once your bike is in there is an air pump and you can charge an e-bike."

Jon is campaigning for better cross-border train services throughout Europe.

Budapest is one of the key points of the European rail network and in August a rebuilt and expanded rail bridge (with three tracks) over the Danube was opened, after three years

of work. Transport minister David Vitezy said: "Three of Europe's most important trans-European railway corridors pass through here. They connect the Dutch ports and Spain with Romania, the Black Sea, the Balkans or Ukraine."

On average, about 100 freight trains and 140-150 passenger trains cross the bridge every day.

INSET: Bike facility on a local train operating around Bari, Italy.

with the rail industry for various reasons:

1 Over the past few years, progress on reopenings has been near zero when there are so many no-brainer schemes which should be going ahead, for example Stratford-Honeybourne. Even Bristol-Portishead has been a string of fiascos, delays and unexplained cost increases. Network Rail/Great British Railways seem to be trying to deter schemes, not encourage them. Soham station, an eye-watering price for one four-car platform. Kenilworth, another political fiasco.

2 The Department for Transport must be paying civil servants masses of money to block schemes.

3 The rail industry shoots itself in the foot by declaring strike action, thus transferring passengers and freight to road and making government even more wary of investing.

4 The Great Western electrification fiasco.

Enough said. I just feel that my subscription will make zero difference when faced with the

above needless obstacles, but I genuinely wish you all the best.

Simon Hill

Editor's note: Staying a member of Railfuture and adding to our campaigning strength is the best way to achieve improvements on the railway.

A cyclist's lament

It felt like a bereavement to read Tom Culver's nostalgic story of what it used to be like when travelling with one's bike on the trains, and then the tragic demise (destruction, really) of this after privatisation.

In those pre-privatisation days, common-sense reigned. Railways were run by rail professionals who, unlike today's ignorant cost-cutting egomaniac designer-centric train operating companies, simply got on with providing a public transport service for people who wanted to make a journey by public transport.

These professionals also seemed to have no issues with maintaining that most essential of essentials: a guard's van. With a guard's van, a

cyclist could pretty much just turn up with their bike loaded with panniers, and nearly always be able to just wheel this onboard, and prop it against the side of the van. One could even sit with one's bike in the van.

And at the other end, one could simply wheel one's bike off, and continue with one's journey by bike. Properly integrated transport.

Nowadays, on some trains, there is an almost toxic attitude to cyclists or anyone with luggage or baby buggies.

Getting rid of guard's vans was short-sighted and made modern trains unsuitable for many passengers. It was totally disabling for some and certainly demoralising for many.

On some trains, cyclists have to lift their loaded bike up a steep step and, when finally onboard, have to jam the bike into a ludicrous "broom cupboard".

On some trains, they have to lug it up on to a "meat-hook", running the risk of damage to the front wheel and having to remove bags and panniers. Is it any wonder that

many potential cyclist rail users now choose to go by car – or fly? Government policy is to encourage active travel, but many government ministers set a bad example with excessive car and air travel. Railway managers need to wake up to a changing world where bikes are an essential travel mode for both young and old. One way of creating more space for bikes would be to remove all those fussy partitions in train lobbies. It should be an absolute right to be able to – easily – take one's bike on to the train.

*Catherine Barber, Berkshire UK
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Editor's note: The introduction of Sprinter and Networker trains by British Rail in the 1980s largely put paid to brake vans.

Now though, in the era of active travel and climate change, should it be a concession or a right that you can take a bike on trains?

Rail staff are more understanding and sympathetic to cyclists than some were in the past.

The problem is train operators (who fail to provide space and proper signs), and the Department for Transport and rolling stock companies which both specify unsuitable trains.

Railfuture advocates the provision of more convertible space for cycles and buggies, and proper provision for luggage on ALL trains, especially on airport services.

Office closures

Mr James Knight of Basildon (*Railwatch* 173) is right to call for Railfuture to campaign against ticket office closures. There is no substitute for well-informed, well-trained, well-equipped and well-motivated staff, at a station and/or at the end of a phone line.

*Trevor Garrod, Lowestoft NR32
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Ticket staff essential

I must agree with all those wanting ticket offices to remain open (*Railwatch* 173). Recently Dad and I went to Doncaster by train, planning to stay a few hours and hopefully visit the Danum museum near the station.

On arrival there, we wanted to check what the trains were back to Grimsby, knowing that normally there is meant to be an hourly service. But there was not a printed timetable on display, while the electronic indicators showed only trains for the next hour. So Dad



The diesel multiple unit replacement in Japan, the HC85 train

Hybrid debut for Japan 150

A new fleet of hybrid trains entered service this year with Japan Central Railway, to replace 30-year-old diesel multiple units.

It coincides with celebrations for the 150th anniversary of railways in Japan. Augmenting the train's diesel-electric traction system with batteries has improved fuel efficiency by 15% and reduced carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide emissions.

Japan's first diesel-battery hybrid trains have undergone prototype testing since 2019 by manufacturers Nippon Sharyo which also builds bullet trains.

The 210-seat trains operate services on the picturesque Hida limited express services, and on the Takayama main line between Nagoya and Takayama.

The HC85 trains, with a maximum speed of 75 mph, have two 450 hp diesel engines plus

40 kWh battery packs. Batteries are charged during regenerative braking, and the diesel engines are switched off when the train is stationary to reduce noise and emissions. Battery power augments acceleration.

The trains have real-time monitoring of onboard equipment to enable defects to be spotted before failure, and a computer system adjusts temperature and humidity in relation to passenger numbers.

One of the speakers at the 150th anniversary event at Japan House in London in October was Steve Murphy, managing director of MTR Elizabeth line. He took part in the Anglo-Japanese Rail Exchange programme which he now coordinates. The programme enables British railway managers to visit and experience Japan's rail industry.

went to the information desk inside the ticket office to find out the train times, only to be told that there was a return service in just over 60 minutes time but, due to cancellations, the one after that would not be for another three hours. Without staff to answer our query, we would have likely gone back to the station for a train that was no longer running, and wished for over an hour that I was still a trainspotter.

*Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue,
Grimsby DN31 2J*

Slow progress

Thank you for an interesting, as usual, issue of *Railwatch* 173. I was pleased to see that a new station is

to open at Marsh Barton, near Exeter where I was born. It is a pity a new station was not provided there around 1950 when the industrial estate was first built. I reckon that is a good example of how not to get things done.

Just over two miles south of Marsh Barton, Exminster station should also be reopened.

North of Exeter, Tiverton should be reconnected to the rail network by reopening the Exe Valley line.

Already on the existing rail network but lacking stations are Stoke Canon, Hele & Bradninch, Cullompton and Wellington. Why they do not have reopened stations is a mystery to me.

In North Devon, best wishes to campaigners wanting to reopen Bideford. It was an extremely short-sighted decision to close it in the first place. It is sad to see that the

Central Japan Railway Company

long-established rail connections from Wales to Ireland are not very efficient or well-organised these days. It is also sad that it takes so long to achieve such obviously needed improvements to the rail network.

*J Evered, Goylands Close,
Llandrindod Wells LD1 5RB*

Hydrogen losses

David Dundas is right to say that electrification is not the right answer for lightly used lines (*Railwatch* 173). However, burning hydrogen in a fuel cell, which he advocates instead, is a poor alternative.

Using hydrogen to fuel trains is only 35% efficient at best, compared to over 80% for taking power from overhead lines. As events in Europe have shown, energy is precious, and we cannot afford to waste two thirds of it using an inefficient way of powering trains.

Batteries are better, achieving 65% or 70% efficiency, but have problems too, such as low energy density and scarcity of some of the raw materials needed.

The only sensible way is to electrify the vast majority of our network, so only a handful of routes will need these imperfect ways to decarbonise. The way to get the costs of electrification down is a rolling programme, so that experience of good practice is retained and not constantly lost and built up again.

*Julian Langston, Cardiff
julian.langston@outlook.com*

Hydrogen alert

David Dundas (*Railwatch* 173) appears keen to see more hydrogen trains. Be careful what you wish for. Hydrogen produced using steam methane reforming, rather than electrolysis, can produce worse emissions than a diesel.

Bimodes can support the roll-out of electrification but conversion is not straightforward.

Sprinters and Turbostars have hydraulic transmissions and even converting diesel electric units can cause complications. Adding a diesel engine to a class 319 has not been free of problems.

*Thomas J Wheeler, North
Pembrokeshire*

Editor's note: There are at least 120 paid lobbyists for hydrogen operating in parliament, according to the MCS charitable foundation. Industrial companies are trying to convince politicians that hydrogen is an important weapon in the fight against climate change.

Railwatch welcomes articles/pictures from rail users and user groups. Send material (as early as possible) to: The Editor, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk

tony.smale@railfuture.org.uk

Railfuture unlocks funding

Since attending a planning meeting in 2019 about the new housing development at Welborne, north of Fareham, Railfuture representatives have maintained a close working relationship with officers from both the development company and Fareham Borough Council. Not only has Railfuture won the argument about the merits of a new station for the benefit of Welborne residents, but our in-depth knowledge about how to build the case for a new station has been put to good use. Earlier this year, Fareham Borough Council was awarded a £65,000 grant from central government enabling the council to move forward with plans for a station to serve the new village, and the bid document for this funding was effectively written by Railfuture. Our representatives are also helping the council with the appointment of a professional consultant, with a view to having a strategic outline business case published in the first quarter of 2023.

If a new station is eventually built at Welborne on the line between Fareham and Eastleigh, it will be only the third station to be opened in Hampshire in recent times, after Hedge End in 1990 and Chandler's Ford in 2003.

Southampton freight boost

The Port of Southampton is investing £17.5 million in a major upgrade of its rail terminal. A further 150 metres will be added to the rail-loading pad and a new track layout will enable trains to arrive and depart independently on any of the three lines. While the extra rail capacity at the port is very welcome, Railfuture argues that the need to address pinch points further up the line is now more urgent than ever, particularly traffic conflicts around Basingstoke.

Timetable abandoned

After spending a good many hours responding to South Western Railway's December 2022 timetable consultations, it was disheartening for volunteers from Railfuture and a number of rail user groups to find out that the whole process had been abandoned and the current reduced service would continue into 2023.

At a face-to-face meeting with SWR's senior development manager, the Railfuture Wessex chair was assured that a few gaps in the timetable would be plugged from December, such as the lack of evening trains serving stations between Winchester and Southampton. The meeting was an opportunity to reiterate many of Railfuture's concerns about difficult connections and longer journey times, and there was genuine interest in some of our suggestions for incremental improvements.

The sad fact is that many stations on the SWR network will have to put up with a much-reduced service for the foreseeable future. Continued delays in the introduction of the new Arterio train fleet have not helped matters, although it is unlikely that rolling stock shortages are solely to blame for reduced train lengths and continued service cuts.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+branch
Twitter @RailfutureWessex



PORTISHEAD: West of England Combined Authority's image of the planned station

bruce.williamson@railfuture.org.uk

Portishead celebrates breakthrough

Great news at last for Portishead, as on 14 November the government approved the development consent order, which was a last major stumbling block for this reopening. Hopefully now it is all systems go, and trains could be running by 2026. However, some joined-up thinking is required. The Bristol-Portishead Railway will be reinstated as an initial hourly service. But the site for a future station at Ashton Gate must be protected and the train frequency must increase to half-hourly. Either of these will require the permanent closure of the level crossing at Ashton Vale. Planned housing development and the need for an alternative access road to a trading estate look incompatible. Other possible rail developments are also at risk, such as completing the Henbury Loop, or developing the Tytherington Quarry line from Yate to provide passenger services for Thornbury. Railfuture fears that those who support the development of railways to help defeat climate change cannot rely on the aid of local planners and big business.

Railfuture promotion at rail show

Railfuture's Wendy Thorne and Bruce Williamson joined forces with Colin Howells and Roger English from the Portishead Railway Group to host a stand on 2 October at the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Railway anniversary exhibition, held at Portishead's Parish Wharf Leisure Centre. A railway society is fertile ground for potential new members, and a good opportunity to raise Railfuture's profile.

Success! Filling the timetable gaps

As from December, there is a permanent extra "request" call at Dilton Marsh at 08.04 in the morning, filling the southbound gap between 06.57 to Southampton and 09.54 to Warminster. This extra call on a train that passes through has been requested for many years, as it will allow school pupils from Westbury Leigh (close to the station) and Dilton Marsh to use public transport. Thank you GWR. A small change that will make a big difference.

Railfuture teams up with West Wilts

Railfuture Severnside held a branch meeting alongside Railfuture's national AGM at Bristol Parkway in July. Members were urged to join the committee. In order to give more members the opportunity of putting themselves forward for the branch committee, Severnside branch joined forces with West Wilts Rail User Group for a meeting on Wednesday 2 November at Trowbridge. Trowbridge has lost its through services to London Waterloo and Brighton, as well as catering on all trains except the 05.41



Wendy Thorne at anniversary exhibition

departure to London Paddington. GWR's customer experience manager was invited to the meeting and to join an initiative to promote rail travel. We are still looking for members who would be willing to serve on the Severnside branch committee to help organise branch meetings, find speakers and venues etc. so if you are able to help please do get in touch.

Charfield station may be reborn

Railfuture is backing a planning application for the reopening of Charfield station. Charfield is a village in Gloucestershire straddling the Bristol-Birmingham line, between Cam & Dursley and Yate stations. The cost of reopening would be shared between Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire councils. Although the station is in South Gloucestershire, the nearby town of Wotton-under-Edge would be a principal beneficiary. A plan agreed by the West of England Combined Authority in December 2020 could lead to reopening in 2024.

TravelWatch SouthWest

"Your vision for getting around by public transport" was the theme of an online TravelWatch SouthWest public meeting in October. Mark Hopwood, managing director of Great Western, was the speaker.

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Goodbye fossil fuels, hello rail future

By Gareth Marston

Railwatch editor Ray King asked my permission to use an article I wrote for my local rail user group – the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association – which appeared in SARPA's April newsletter.

The subject of the article was the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its implications for energy security, the cost of living, fossil fuels and rail in the UK, and it was written in March.

I thought that simply printing it again when a lot has changed since then, particularly at UK government level, would not be providing something up to date for *Railwatch* readers.

On reflection though, I believe my basic conclusions remain relevant and correct despite the seeming triumph of the right-wing think-tanks and big oil. In fact, recent events have provided more pointers that the future is more favourable for rail.

What were my conclusions?

■ The UK has sold its fossil fuels on the world market for private profit rather than use them for energy security, and now is dependent on imports also bought on the world market since North Sea oil and gas went into decline approximately 15 years ago.

■ Energy supply security and insulation from volatile world markets considerations will weigh more heavily in policy-making, favouring green technologies and accelerating the decline of fossil fuel use.

■ The promise of electric cars for all is reckless because of the geopolitical consequences of where rare metals for use in batteries are located. Do we really want an ugly confrontation between the West and China over cobalt?

■ A transport policy with electrified railways powered by UK green sources at its heart is just the ticket to overcome the above problems.

What have we learnt in the past six months?

■ The war in Ukraine has not been a flash in the pan, "normal service" has not been resumed, and we are heading into winter with an energy crisis caused by reliance on fossil fuels sold on a continually volatile world market.

■ Mainland Europe has begun moving in the direction predicted, while the UK was in hiatus for months because of the Johnson administration's in-the-end futile focus on its own survival.



First hydrogen filling station for trains

Hydrogen trains have started regular operations on local passenger services in northern Germany.

To service the trains, "the world's first filling station for trains" has also been built at Bremervurde by the multinational company Linde, which has headquarters in Britain.

The fuel point has 64 storage tanks with a capacity of 1,800 kg, as well as six hydrogen compressors and two fuel pumps.

"We have built the most hydrogen filling stations for cars in the world," said Linde's Dr Mathias Kranz. "We are all the more pleased to see the world's first filling station for trains."

The company plans hydrogen production in future on the site, using wind power for electrolysis.

The Alstom Coradia iLint hydrogen trains were launched in August and operate at speeds up to 75 mph. Five have already been delivered, with nine coming by the end of the year.

The hydrogen trains replace diesel multiple-units on services between Cuxhaven, Bremerhaven, Bremervurde and Buxtehude.

*The trains have a range of 600 miles, enabling a full day of operation without refuelling. The Alstom train is called iLint, an acronym for *Intelligenz eichter innovativer Nahverkehrstriebwagen* which translates as intelligent light innovative local transport railcar. It was designed at Alstom's train factory at Salzgitter, Germany, and its traction centre at Tarbes, France. The fuel cell is supplied by Cummins' hydrogenics business. "We will not*

buy any more diesel vehicles, in order to contribute even more to climate protection," said Carmen Schwabl from the transport authority for Lower Saxony.

"At present we own 126 diesel multiple units. Diesel trains will no longer be economically viable to operate in the future."

Alstom said there are 4,000 diesel multiple unit carriages in Germany, and a significant part of the European rail network is expected to remain non-electrified in the long term.

Rolling pipeline

A hydrogen rail link from Belgium to Germany has been set up to fill the energy gap left by Russia cutting off oil and gas supplies.

The twin ports of Antwerp-Bruges have established a "rolling pipeline" using rail freight to deliver ship-borne liquefied hydrogen to Duisburg in Germany.

H *Sweden's first hydrogen filling station for lorries opened in October at the port of Gothenburg when it also launched six charging points for electrically powered lorries which it predicts will soon become a "common sight". One million lorries a year currently operate at the port but only 15 lorries a day are expected to be hydrogen-powered in the near future.*

H *St Andrews university is testing a former ScotRail class 324 electric unit, converted to run on hydrogen, on the heritage Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway, near Linlithgow.*

■ The Truss and Rees-Mogg energy-crisis plan involved borrowing money to pay world market energy prices and lifting the ban on fracking and granting new North Sea exploration licenses to sell fossil fuels on the world market. It has proved unpopular as it is self-evidently not a policy for energy security nor a sustainable plan for protecting consumers from volatile markets.

■ The markets' negative reaction to September's Truss-Kwarteng mini-budget of tax cuts plunged the pound to its lowest level ever

against the US dollar, highlighting further the pitfalls of buying items from world markets based on US dollars. With no opinion poll bounce for the new Conservative leader, no one is likely to invest money in fracking and the North Sea. Labour's shadow climate change and net zero secretary Ed Miliband already has one hand on the cancel button, and a general election is barely two years away at most.

■ The average age of lorry drivers has increased by six months – so the crisis in road

haulage has certainly not gone away.

With a recession and a winter of lowered living standards looming, we must remember that rail is a big part of the answer to the problems facing the country, even though it is not getting enough attention. It is not just about the environment, but it is fiscally critical that we move people and goods in the most cost-effective manner.

My original article can be found here:

<https://sarpa.info/pdf%20archive/sarpa87.pdf>

How Ukraine's Iron People answer

Freelance journalist **Alex King** travelled by train through Ukraine – and found that nearly 300 rail workers – the 'Iron People' – had died as the Russian bombs fell, but the blue trains still ran on time

Photography © Jules Slütsky

There is a timeless romance to the railways in Ukraine. Many Ukrainians and foreigners alike have fond memories of discovering the spectacular landscapes – steppe, mountains and sea – of this vast land through the windows of its hulking broad-gauge trains. Criss-crossing Europe's second-largest country, journeys over 10 hours long are not uncommon. Your sleeping compartment companions are more than likely to become friends before you reach your destination.

But when Russia launched its full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022, the role of Ukrainian Railways (UZ) and its place in the hearts of the Ukrainian people was transformed forever. It has become a powerful symbol of national unity and resilience. In the first few weeks of the war, UZ safely evacuated four million people to western Ukraine from areas close to the fighting – and 600,000 further onwards into Europe. When Ukrainians needed it, their railway was there for them.

Evacuation trains

On the same day in February that Russian missiles hit Kyiv and other cities across the country, Ukrainian Railways started running free evacuation trains.

"I don't remember much from that time because I think my brain makes me forget all those traumatic experiences," recalls Cay, a Kyiv-based non-binary artist and activist, who runs Rebel Queers collective.

With a friend, Cay arrived at the almost deserted Pasazhyrskyi rail station in Kyiv on 3 March, just after the curfew was lifted at 7am.

Schedules changed on a daily basis according to need, and soon they

boarded a suburban electric redeployed as an evacuation train bound for Lviv.

"Once the train began to leave Kyiv, I started to cry," Cay says. "I didn't want to leave."

During the first days of the war, trains and stations were jam-packed with people fleeing from Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro and other major cities.

Yet everyone who turned up was able to board a train for the journey west and all stations were emptied by the end of each day. Orchestras soon appeared outside Lviv, Odesa and other stations, to calm people fleeing their homes. By the time Cay and friend made the journey, the volume of people fleeing daily had already peaked. Still, fighting along the route forced diversions and the six-hour journey took almost an entire day.

Cay ended up in Berlin.

Lviv is one of the most spectacular cities in eastern Europe, with a vibrant contemporary cultural scene and an architectural legacy of buildings in Gothic to Baroque, neo-Renaissance and Soviet modernist styles. Just 70 kilometres from the Polish border, it's the furthest major city from the front lines. Following the invasion, Lviv became a sanctuary city. Hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people have settled there.

Millions passed through its palatial art nouveau Holovnyi station, built between 1899 and 1904 under the Austro-Hungarian empire. Lviv station normally welcomes around 5,000 people daily. Suddenly, it had to cope with around 100,000 people each day. Volunteers appeared on the station square to feed people, share information and provide accommodation and healthcare support.

"The biggest fears people had were for their children," remembers Roman Senyshyn, the 38-year-old director of Lviv station, responsible for managing this unprecedented exodus. "The most important role the railway workers had to play was keeping everyone calm and avoiding a panic."

Temperatures hovered around minus 10-15 Celsius, while Russian attacks on the railway network made the evacuation challenging. Yet Ukrainian Railways quickly repaired damage and overcame challenges. The evacuation operation continued, non-stop.



**Keeping Ukraine's blue trains running: A mechanic (above)
Below: A painter at the Lviv railway workshops**



Trains kept rolling into Lviv throughout that apocalyptic first day of the invasion, as they do to this day. Railway staff worked around the clock. "From February 21 to March 10, I only managed to get about 10 hours of sleep," explains Roman, employed at the station since 2007 and director

from 2021. "On March 10, I finally felt able to take a break and go home – for 15 minutes, to change clothes, then I was straight back to the station. It was a very sad time for everyone. But we succeeded in doing everything to allow people to evacuate safely. That was the strongest message we could send."



Cay leaving Kyiv by train

erred the horror of Russian bombs

The calmness and effectiveness of the evacuation was warmly appreciated by Ukrainians. The evacuation trains have embedded themselves in the popular narrative around the war so far – a story of pride. This accomplishment was recognised far beyond Ukraine's borders, too. Roman and others involved in the evacuation have been invited to share their experiences with other countries, particularly the Baltic States, who fear a similar challenge.

Once the Ukrainian military repelled the assault on Kyiv after ferocious fighting, the focus of the conflict shifted to Ukraine's east and south. Slowly at first, people began to return. The priority for UZ became bringing people home and reconnecting recently liberated areas, such as Irpin, Bucha and Borodianka, with a reliable train connection. Today, Lviv station remains a key hub – as it always has been – but things are calmer. The station continues to keep people moving, despite repeated attacks.

In early October, Russians launched strikes on the electricity grid. But while many districts across the city lost power, Lviv station carried on as normal, with diesel generators.

Fundamental rail

Rail is fundamental to the Ukrainian economy and the war effort – a lifeline throughout Ukraine and to the rest of the world. With international flights cancelled, visiting world leaders such as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen arrived in Kyiv by train. With major ports blockaded or occupied by the Russians and kilometres-long queues of lorries at log-jammed land borders, rail is crucial.

UZ's energetic CEO Alexander Kamyshin regularly boasts on Twitter about double-digit month-on-month increases in freight, particularly grain.

Rail capacity has been significantly boosted to take over the lion's share of import-export responsibilities – which includes millions of dollars of heavy weaponry – and new freight connections have been opened with Romania and Moldova.

Back in 2020, UZ's dynamic new leadership announced ambitious modernisation plans. In 2021, the railway returned to profitability for the first time in years. When war broke out, UZ accelerated its programme of refurbishing existing trains and introducing new ones, such as the double-decker 'Elephants.' It continues to open new lines and electrify existing ones – all while rapidly repairing additional war damage. As Ukraine's largest employer (230,000



Ukraine's railways were essential in evacuating people as the Russian army swept into Ukraine in February

workers), UZ felt a responsibility to create more jobs and stimulate the economy – which has shrunk by almost third since the invasion.

All trains now have medical kits and special medical trains are also running. Evacuation trains are on standby, ready for whenever fighting escalates. All windows are now covered in protective plastic and lights are turned off at night for safety. A fellow passenger warned us to sleep with our feet towards the window rather than our heads – in case there's an explosion. Public gatherings to

celebrate Ukrainian Independence Day on August 24 were prohibited. Air raid sirens sounded throughout the day, across the country. UZ marked the occasion by unveiling the Victory Train, painted with murals to commemorate the occupied regions Ukraine is determined to recapture.

On Independence Day, guard Larysa stands outside the Victory train, waiting to depart from Uzhhorod. Larysa explains how she has continued to work, travelling back and forth across the country, ever since the invasion. "When the



Proud of safe evacuation: Lviv station director Roman

war started, everyone was all over the place," she remembers. "We've been working ever since that first day. Everybody in my team of 28 stayed and kept working, none of them evacuated."

Flicking through photos and videos on her phone is a chronicle of the conflict as it unfolded. She shows photos of packed platforms and evacuation trains in the early days, and a picture at Kramatorsk station just days before a Russian missile strike on April 8 which killed 60 civilians (including seven children) and wounded more than 110. Even though she was never ordered to, Larysa has taken on responsibilities above and beyond her job. She shows a photo of a family from Rubizhne waving her goodbye at Lviv station. After their house was destroyed and they lost everything, Larysa found them a house in a village in Khmelnytskyi Oblast.

Depot work

On the outskirts of Lviv lies a sprawling railway depot. Built in 1958, it employs over 1,500 people, who maintain the trains. 230 people work on each train to get it ready for passengers. Inside the carriage sheds, workers paint the white UZ logo on the side of a blue, newly refurbished carriage.

"This month, we're making two medical cars to transport wounded people, on top of our regular refurbishing schedule," maintenance manager Vasyl explains. An intense refurbishment can take up to 16 days. The depot puts at least eight carriages back on track each month. "At the beginning, more and more carriages were needed, so we were working really hard. Now the workflow has stabilised." A Russian rocket strike on a train at Chaplyne was the deadliest attack of Independence Day, which

European Union backs Ukraine Railways



UNDERSTANDING: European Transport Commissioner Adina Valean, Deutsche Bahn chief executive Richard Lutz, Ukraine Railways (Ukrzaliznytsia) chief executive Alexander Kamyshin and German transport minister Volker Wissing signed a memorandum of understanding at InnoTrans, the four-day international transport technology exhibition in Berlin.

Mr Kamyshin was one of the stars at the September trade fair, signing a series of cooperation agreements with European rail operators. He told the 1,000-strong audience that events in Ukraine have shown the importance of railways as a backbone of the economy but also essential for security. He predicted that joining the European rail network will bring benefits to Ukraine but also for wider Europe. The European Commission is already working on how to integrate Ukraine's Russian-style broad gauge network into European standard gauge operations.

More than 40 Russian companies had planned to attend InnoTrans, but none did following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



Continued on next page

Ukraine's Iron People keep the trains running despite the bombs and missiles



Continued from previous page

⇒ also marked six months since the invasion.

"It was a tragedy, we lost four of our train guards," Vasyl laments. "Four of our carriages were burned to the ground." Outside the depot, candles and four portraits laid in front of a statue of the Virgin Mary pay tribute to fallen colleagues. Recent modernisation efforts have attempted to move UZ from a top-down organisation to a more modern management style. Yet part of the reason Ukrainian Railways was able to respond so effectively was that railway workers understand what they need to do and do it, without making a fuss. "Do we feel part of the resistance?" asks Christina, the depot manager. "Of course."

Cay returned to Kyiv by train in April and began volunteering. "I



Jules Stitisky

'VICTORY TRAIN' Painted by seven artists to represent the seven occupied areas that Ukraine aims to reclaim

have huge respect for the railway workers and what they keep doing," Cay reflects. "Helping people get to safer places is incredibly important. Especially in those first days, they did something incredible. You can just quit a normal job. But this was

more than work to them, it was part of the fight. Just like some people started volunteering or joined the army and took up weapons for the first time in their lives, this was their fight – helping people get to safety." In those first weeks, volunteer groups circulated

messages calling for people to bring food to the railway guards because they had been working non-stop, without any sleep.

Today, they are still held in high esteem as people across Ukraine recognise the immense contribution they make. In war, the simple act of getting people from A to B has huge symbolic meaning and helps hold the Ukrainian nation together.

As we talk, eight months after they first evacuated from Kyiv, Cay is again preparing to travel by train to Berlin – this time by choice, to take up a month-long artists' residency.

"The Russians may keep bombing tracks and stations but I still have this feeling that Ukrzaliznytsia is going to be there for us."

You can support Ukrainian railway worker families here:

<https://zalizna-rodyna.uz.gov.ua/index-en.html>

Power that drove the railways to success

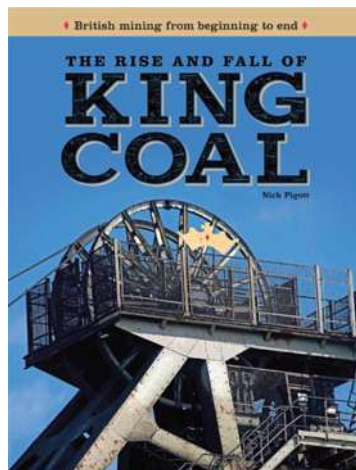
By Richard Lysons

The two sub-titles for this handsome, high quality book say it all – "Mines. Miners. Mining. The Full Story" and "a tribute to mark the end of one of Britain's greatest industries".

Reading the book reminded me – a child of the late 1950s – of how important coal had been in my life. The house in which I grew up was heated by coal and, as a child, one of my responsibilities was to "get the coal in".

Coal was omnipresent in my childhood: it powered the steam trains which ran from Chester's two stations, there were several coal merchants with their open top lorries and even a Black Diamond Street. I remember being impressed with the sheer strength of the coal-men who delivered the heavy sacks to our house. Even now, I can picture the grim expressions on the men's faces and the folded pile of empty hessian sacks on the back of the lorry. As Nick Pigott's book tells us, working above ground for a coal merchant would have been somewhat better than working below ground in a mine.

Pigott reminds us that at its height, Britain's coal industry employed a million workers and operated 3,000 mines. He makes an excellent point in the book, comparing the wealth of magazines and books about the railways with the much smaller amount of literature on the coal industry. This book, however, will make a major contribution to the subject. As editor of *The Railway Magazine* for 21 years,



The Rise and Fall of King Coal
Nick Pigott (Gresley Books)
£29.99 256 pages

ISBN 9781911658634
www.mortonbooks.co.uk

Pigott had the opportunity to make close links with the colliery industry. His attention to detail and first-hand experience are obvious throughout this excellent book. The author lists some of the many collieries that he visited in their operational days. Pigott pays tribute to "a great and sadly missed industry", but never becomes sentimental nor politically biased.

The author takes us from the early days of coal mining, with its extraordinary scenes of near-naked men, women and children digging and carrying coal, right up to the present day with the ending of deep shaft mining at Kellingley. A posed Press Association photograph of the final shift at that colliery says

it all: the men are smiling for the camera but as Pigott comments, "the faces masked a deep sadness and ... resentment ..."

There is a panel on page 134 titled "The worst tragedies in British mining history" which makes shocking reading. From 440 lives lost at Senghenydd in 1913 to 101 at Penycraig in 1880, this is the true price of coal. The reader is reminded that almost half these appalling events occurred in Wales. The Aberfan disaster has its own page with a poignant colour photograph of the town's cemetery, taken on a brighter day than my visit there. 144 people died at Aberfan, 116 of them children.

Throughout the book the reader is given concise and helpful information on everything from pit ponies and Bevin Boys to strikes, opencast mining and, yes, before you ask, the role of both surface railways and underground transport. There are plenty of trains in this book. We learn how closely the two industries worked together. The author is particularly effective in describing the details of the miners' working conditions such as the temperature underground, the size of the seams in different parts of the UK, the variety of injuries that they sustained and the frequently lengthy journey underground from the shaft to the coalface.

The colour photographs – many of which were taken by the author himself – are often striking, not least the "before and after" pairs of pictures. A scene at Kellingley taken in 2015 shows

the colliery's vast collection of buildings: just half a dozen years later all traces of the mine have gone and a solar farm dominates the scenery.

Throughout the book there are maps, diagrams, old advertisements and grim photographs and illustrations of the working life underground. In a section called The "Surviving Locations", Pigott lists the collieries open to the public, along with other surviving structures and coal-related museum and heritage sites. Already, I have made a mental note of future days out.

Pigott's final chapter addresses the elephant in the room for all transport campaigners and supporters. The chapter is called "Energy Policy and the Future" and the author sums up well the irony of Britain closing its coal-fired power stations while new ones spring up around the rest of the world. He also reminds us of the billion tons of coal lying underground that is said to be economically recoverable.

This is an excellent book and would make an imaginative choice as a Christmas present. Please consider purchasing this book. You will not regret it as it feels already like a classic.

This large format hardback is packed with fascinating photographs, 28 chapters and eight appendices.

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

Open access passenger operation in Britain

By Stewart Palmer

The past few years have seen the passenger railway in a state of turmoil in Britain. Revenue has collapsed, train service delivery has been poor and there appears to be no sense of strategic direction for the industry.

Railfuture has consistently held the view that as a non-political organisation we want a railway that works for users and taxpayers and, how that is delivered is not our primary concern.

However, the news that the government's plan to create Great British Railways is now in reality a dead duck means that the passenger railway is now facing a further period of hiatus, with the Department for Transport micro-managing the operation with an obsession for cost cutting, instead of bottom-line optimisation.

This is bad news for passengers and taxpayers. Duplicate services operated by different train operators have been systematically removed, allegedly to save money and frequencies that were reduced on many routes as a result of Covid have simply not been restored.

As a general principle, most people support the idea of choice for consumers. Nobody would seriously suggest for example that there should be only one chain of supermarkets, one model of car to buy, or one type of restaurant to eat in.

So where does Railfuture stand on the issue of Open Access passenger services in Britain?

As older members will recall, one of the fundamental ideas of rail privatisation was the creation of more choice.

In truth, open access operation has had limited impact on genuine choice, with only the East Coast route seeing any long-term serious competition from open access operations.

Various other operations have come and gone, even those backed by people with deep pockets, such as the Wrexham to London service, funded by Deutsche Bahn, or have never got to the stage of launching a service despite good intentions, such as the Blackpool to London and Cardiff to London proposals.

The reasons are many, but most people simply have no understanding of the complexity (and therefore cost) of regulatory compliance to operate, or understand the basic economics of any passenger rail operation in the current industry structure.

So, in the context of what looks like a worse service for users in the years ahead being supplied by DfT, which is now calling the shots in what was a franchised railway, should Railfuture support all proposed and existing open access operation?

As with so many things, there is no simple answer to that question. If we support choice, and therefore best value in terms of quality and price, then the answer logically should be "yes".

But if the open access operation simply extracts revenue from existing rail operations, as the market is simply not capable of supporting the required growth in total demand, and the revenue cake is just being cut up into smaller pieces, then logically the answer is "no".

My conclusion is that Railfuture's position on this should therefore be to consider each proposed open access operation on its merits and, using local knowledge and experience, decide whether any proposal is in the long-term interest of rail users and taxpayers before deciding whether to support it or not. Food for thought.

■ Stewart Palmer is a director and vice-president of Railfuture and worked in the rail industry for 38 years.



Network Rail

The first trainload of slate with a passenger train at Llandudno Junction

Welsh slate is back on rail

Slate from north Wales is being delivered by rail for the first time for years, thanks to funding from the Welsh government.

The freight facilities grant helped to bring Llandudno Junction freight yard back into use for the slate to be loaded on to a 22-wagon train (replacing 76 lorries) bound for Luton, Bedfordshire, hauled by a GB Railfreight loco.

The first train ran in July but up to 250,000 tonnes of slate aggregate is

expected to be despatched from Llandudno Junction each year by the building materials company Breedon, which provided 50% of the funds needed to reopen the yard.

John Smith, chief executive officer at GB Railfreight, said: "It is encouraging to see the government in Wales and the private sector come together to enable a service that will transport key construction materials, create employment opportunities and drive local growth."

RAILFUTURE MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2023

By Wendy Thorne

Railfuture is ready to welcome nominations for the renamed Member of the Year 2023 award. The award will be presented at the Railfuture AGM in July 2023.

Do you know an individual Railfuture member who has contributed to the success of the organisation? Perhaps they have raised

the profile of Railfuture in their local area? Or they may volunteer helping run their local branch?

Whoever they are, if you think they deserve recognition, we would like to hear about them.

We will require a written statement of no more than 500 words explaining why they deserve to be recognised. All Railfuture individual members (not

rail user groups) are eligible to be nominated. This award is completely separate from the Rail User Group Awards which have their own nomination criteria. The deadline for nominations to be received is 21 May 2023. For further details or to submit a nomination please email membership director Wendy Thorne at wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk

Be active with Railfuture

Railfuture would love to have more active campaigning members to ensure it continues to have influence within the railway industry. Our members are an essential part of the organisation. We need more of them! We will shortly be setting up a working party to look at ways we can attract more members. Ideally we will start with a physical meeting and any follow up meetings that are needed may be online. If you have ideas and would like to be part of this small team we would like to hear from you. For further details, please email membership director Wendy Thorne at wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk

Railfuture Lottery winners

August M Waller, C Wright, D Scott, J Savage, G Smith, J Ward

September J Savage, M Robinson (2), G Smith (2), A Colquhoun

October D Fleming, R Goring, G Smith, D Hurdle, J Bannister, W Thorne

You could be a winner with the Lottery

Lottery profits go to the Fighting Fund which supports Railfuture campaigns. For £12 per year for 12 entries, you can join and win one of six prizes every month. Taking part is easy. Email lottery@railfuture.org.uk and decide how to pay: via online banking, Paypal or cheque. With more prizes in December, you could easily be a winner.



Julian Langston

DANESCOURT STATION: Some electrification gantries are in place and platforms are being extended as the South Wales Metro takes shape

julian.langston@railfuturewales.org.uk

Wales local transport forum

A long weekend ticket, allowing travel on Friday and in the Monday morning peak, was launched by Great Western Railway in September as a way of combatting overcrowding on Sunday. Railfuture learnt about the ticket at a Wales local transport forum meeting, when GWR also confirmed it is still actively pursuing a rail link to Heathrow airport from Reading. Airlines are expected to provide the funding but currently face financial constraints.

Stakeholders complained to Transport for Wales about poor late-night services from Swansea, but TFW reported positive progress on the South Wales metro, although it later emerged that completion is likely to be delayed until 2024.

Network Rail reported ongoing resilience work to combat land slips on the Chepstow-Gloucester line is halfway towards completion.

TFW needs to improve

Railfuture is concerned that Transport for Wales train operations are performing badly, with cancellations, delays and short trains. Liverpool City Region Rail Users Group, which includes Railfuture's Wales and North West branches, has appealed to Lee Waters, the Welsh Government's deputy minister for climate change, for improvements. TFW claims Covid and delays to new trains have caused problems, but Railfuture Wales is considering how to benchmark TFW's operations for an objective assessment. One option is to monitor selected services in the New Year.

New station for District line?

Grand Union Trains has revised its application to the Office for Rail and Road to operate open access trains between London and Carmarthen.

In its latest submission, Grand Union proposes five daily train pairs between Paddington and Carmarthen from December 2024, calling at Bristol Parkway, Severn Tunnel Junction, Newport, Cardiff Parkway (when it

opens), Cardiff Central, Parc Felindre, Llanelli and Carmarthen. Grand Union is prepared to build the proposed Parc Felindre station on the Swansea District line, which bypasses the city. Grand Union trains will not call at Swansea, but its trains would be 20 minutes faster from west Wales to Cardiff and London than currently. Grand Union also promises improved car parking at Severn Tunnel Junction.

Railfuture welcomes the proposal and has long wanted the freight-only Swansea District line to be included in the passenger network.

GWR wants the Office of Rail and Road to reject the proposal because significant revenue could be abstracted.

Space for five extra train pairs may be difficult to find at the London end because the HS2 interchange with GWR and the Elizabeth line is to be built at Old Oak Common for five years from next year. There will be significant periods when the four lines to Paddington will be reduced to two, and other times when Paddington will be cut off. It has also been proposed that Elizabeth line services will be the only passenger trains on the slow lines into Paddington, putting more pressure on the already-stretched fast lines.

Platform extensions approved

Cardiff Council has confirmed that platform extensions at Danescourt, Fairwater and Waungron Park on the Cardiff City line constitute permitted development and can go ahead. Work has already started at Danescourt and Fairwater.

The work is necessary so that double units of the electric-battery tram-trains can call at these stations.

Electrification work is proceeding on the core valleys lines, with the first phase, Waungron Park and Llandaff to Aberdare, due to go live next March. Although much of the steelwork is in place, there is plenty of work to do in the next three months.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk

Twitter @RailfutureWales

arthur.thomson@railfuture.org.uk

Refreshment trolleys for Bentham line?

With class 158 trains operating on the Bentham line from Morecambe to Leeds via Skipton, the Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group has suggested to operator Northern that the trains should have refreshment trolleys. Northern has promised to look at "other options". The group has asked Carnforth Town Council to step in to get improvements in general maintenance at the station.

Metrolink engineering works delay

A delay to supplies of new rail to replace worn out sections of Metrolink track in Piccadilly Gardens in central Manchester affected services in the city. In October and November, Piccadilly services had to be diverted, with Eccles-Ashton trams terminating at Deansgate, along with Castlefield and Bury to Ashton services being diverted to Altrincham for much of the day, with a limited Crumpsall-Ashton service instead.

Salford Central upgrade shuts station

Salford Central station will have long-awaited station improvements early in the new year, but the station will be closed for nearly five months from January. Through services via Manchester Victoria will run through the station without stopping, but there will also be some line closures to allow platform edge and canopy repairs, along with new tactile paving and passenger information equipment.

Merseyrail class 777s to enter service



Stadler

EXCELLENT ACCESS: Level boarding

Merseyrail expects its new class 777 to enter service before the end of the year, initially on the Kirby line, after closures in November for upgrade work to accommodate the new trains.

Stadler displayed the first completed Merseyrail train as its showpiece "independently powered electric multiple unit", at the Innotrans exhibition in Berlin in September. The battery-electric trains will operate on non-electrified routes beyond the end of the third rail. The IPEMUs will help meet Merseyrail's carbon emissions targets, with just 20% of the energy consumption of the diesel trains they replace.

Mayor Brabin in TransPennine appeal

Tracy Brabin, the West Yorkshire combined authority mayor, has called for an immediate solution to widespread cancellations that have caused chaos for passengers in the North. Fifty-five TPE trains were cancelled in one day on Wednesday 19 October, with a significant outcry from passengers as all key TPE routes were affected. She has added her voice to those of Steve Rotherham (Metro Mayor of Liverpool) and Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, who have called for the government to provide TPE and Northern with more funding so they can address staffing issues and improve services. Mr Burnham said they are "being hamstrung by the financial constraints imposed on them by Whitehall" and asked for "the financial and negotiating room to breathe, in order to start fixing our broken system."

www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthWestBranch
Twitter @RailfutureNWest

How secure do women feel on Britain's trains?

By Emily Pownall



Do women feel safe on Britain's trains? My research examined a survey into women's perceptions of safety while travelling by train. The survey sought to dismantle a homogenised group and evaluate how safe transgender and LBQ+ (Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer+) women felt travelling compared to the group average. Railfuture, Network Rail's Inspire & Archway Networks, Women in Rail, Govia Thameslink and Transport for London all distributed the survey. This research gave a voice to women's first-hand perspectives to avoid the male-dominated architecture of traditional transport research. Sadly, 60% of respondents had experienced a situation where they were made to feel uncomfortable due to their gender or physical appearance. Nearly 35% had purposely changed their physical appearance while on a train journey, and 50% had experienced sexual harassment

or assault. LBTQ+ (Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) women were 10% to 20% more likely to have been made to feel uncomfortable due to their gender or physical appearance, but no more likely to experience sexual harassment or assault.

Moreover, LBTQ+ women were two to three times more likely to feel unsafe expressing themselves through their physical appearance and were nearly twice as likely to alter their appearance on a journey.

Consequently, LBQ+ sexuality and transgender-identity are significant factors in women's perceptions of safety and resulting defensive behaviours.

By diverging from heteronormative societal expectations, LBTQ+ people are made to feel more vulnerable and have a resulting depreciation in their perceptions of safety.

When allocating resources and introducing policy, organisations should evaluate the effects that personal characteristics have on the effectiveness of these proposals. Ultimately, nearly 90% of women felt their perception of safety could be

improved while travelling by train. More than 60% said they would increase their journeys, to some extent, if they felt safer. For 7.5% this was their number one priority.

Furthermore, 40% of respondents did not know where to get help in a situation where they were sexually harassed or assaulted. Therefore there is large scope for train operators and the British Transport Police to introduce policy and resource improvements, to increase women's perceptions of safety and increase patronage.

This is more important than ever in an industry still recovering from Covid.

The survey also created debate about the use of women-only carriages as a policy proposal. Those who favoured women-only carriages generally just wanted to feel safer. On balance, the research suggests women-only carriages are not an effective way to improve women's perceptions of safety or decrease potential sexual harassment or assault.

Within written comments, most respondents called for an increased presence of railway

staff on board trains to provide both formal and informal guardianship and improve perceptions of safety.

Railway staff, such as train guards, were the preferred choice for this guardianship.

Increased transport police presence proved controversial, particularly among LBTQ+ respondents. The research recommended that train operators evaluate their current staffing levels and how they could use their resources to improve women's perceptions of safety.

It is difficult to find an all-encompassing solution that is effective and safeguards marginalised communities. It is recommended that future research broadens its scope to consider race, disability, location and class as potential contributing factors towards women's perceptions of safety on public transport.

■ Sexuality and trans identity were split within the research evaluations

■ This article was informed by Emily Pownall's Masters dissertation for Railway Studies, at the University of York

Railfuture floats on the Conservative fringe

By Steve Wright

It was 0800 on 3 October – and a hardy band of Railfuture members stood outside the Conservative Party conference venue in Birmingham.

Armed with eye-catching leaflets (right) – and jam doughnuts to sustain us – we attracted the attention of arriving delegates and handed out 500 leaflets for our evening event.

Nearby, Unison demonstrators and an anti-abortion group helped to create an enlivening atmosphere.

We hoped to get a 10% response to our leaflets and hours later, 35 attendees made our effort worth while. We chose to discuss Great British Railways and with the help of Railfuture chairman Chris Page posed questions such as "How should GBR function?" and "How will it relate to devolved organisations?"

The question we asked ourselves after the conference: "Were the effort and cost worthwhile?"

Our verdict

We think so, because there are now Conservative MPs, activists and some ministerial aides who know who we are. We will certainly repeat the exercise next time a political party is in town. Now all we, Railfuture, need to

do is access the other main parties. Our process to attending the conference came about at a Railfuture committee meeting.

The first of a whole chain of events was to select a date. With advice from our ex Conservative MP, it was quickly decided to make it the evening of the first full day of the conference, starting at 1800 to fit in with the usual conference timetable.

We wanted to attract delegates in search of interesting discussions and, perhaps, liquid refreshment after a day of speeches.

Our next main task was to choose a venue. Birmingham's International Conference Centre was out of the question because everyone would have to be security vetted in advance and it was too expensive. Our normal Quaker meeting room at the

Priory Rooms would not be able to provide alcoholic drinks – deemed a necessity for some potential attendees.

So where else could we use? Well, Birmingham's Council House (Town Hall in most other cities) is a prestigious venue and nearer the ICC.

It proved cheaper than the Priory Rooms and could organise snack food and of course drink, albeit at an exorbitant price per bottle.

Andy Bagnall, chief executive of Rail Partners, Network Rail's Denise Wetton and Malcolm Holmes, chief executive of West Midlands Rail Executive, were our star guests. The panel was completed with Railfuture communication director Neil Middleton and chaired by Railfuture West Midlands committee member Roger King,

a former MP for Northfield, Birmingham. Andrew Haines, head of the GBR Transition Team, and Network Rail chair Peter Hendy were unable to attend because they are regarded as civil servants and cabinet rules forbid their involvement with any fringe meetings.

paul.hollinghurst@railfuture.org.uk

Rail given key role in transport policy

Transport East, the sub-national transport body for Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock, held a summit on 20 September which was attended by Martin Cooper of Railfuture East Anglia.

TE announced that the Department for Transport ministers have signed off the draft strategy including the key principles of planning for decarbonisation, better connectivity between main urban centres, supporting better transport links to the ports and neighbouring regions, and improved transport for our rural and coastal communities.

This is good news for rail as TE is promoting a number of key rail schemes as high priorities for the region consistent with the above principles. These include early delivery of East West Rail from Bedford to Cambridge, urgent upgrade of Ely North Junction, doubling the single track section from Soham to Ely Dock Junction, and removing the single lead at Haughley Junction to allow faster running across the flat junction. However, getting these schemes committed to construction remains a challenge because of government spending restrictions, but lobbying by local MPs has been coordinated.

TE has engaged Arup to assist in modelling future travel demand across the region, capturing the gross impact of thousands of daily individual choices. An early illustration of the power of the model was demonstrated by the finding that the volume of car trips was likely to rise because people see driving an electric vehicle as guilt free while retaining flexibility and convenience.

Martin concluded that there is no room for complacency that decarbonisation will drive the growth of rail passenger travel. Other policies will be needed to encourage modal shift and solve the congestion and air pollution problems that electric vehicles will exacerbate if the Arup model's forecasts are accurate. We need to focus on how road and rail can collaborate, making best use of rail for fast inter-urban and longer journeys, trunk haulage of freight, and new mass transit metro systems for people travelling into city centres and around the rapidly expanding built-up areas of our city regions.

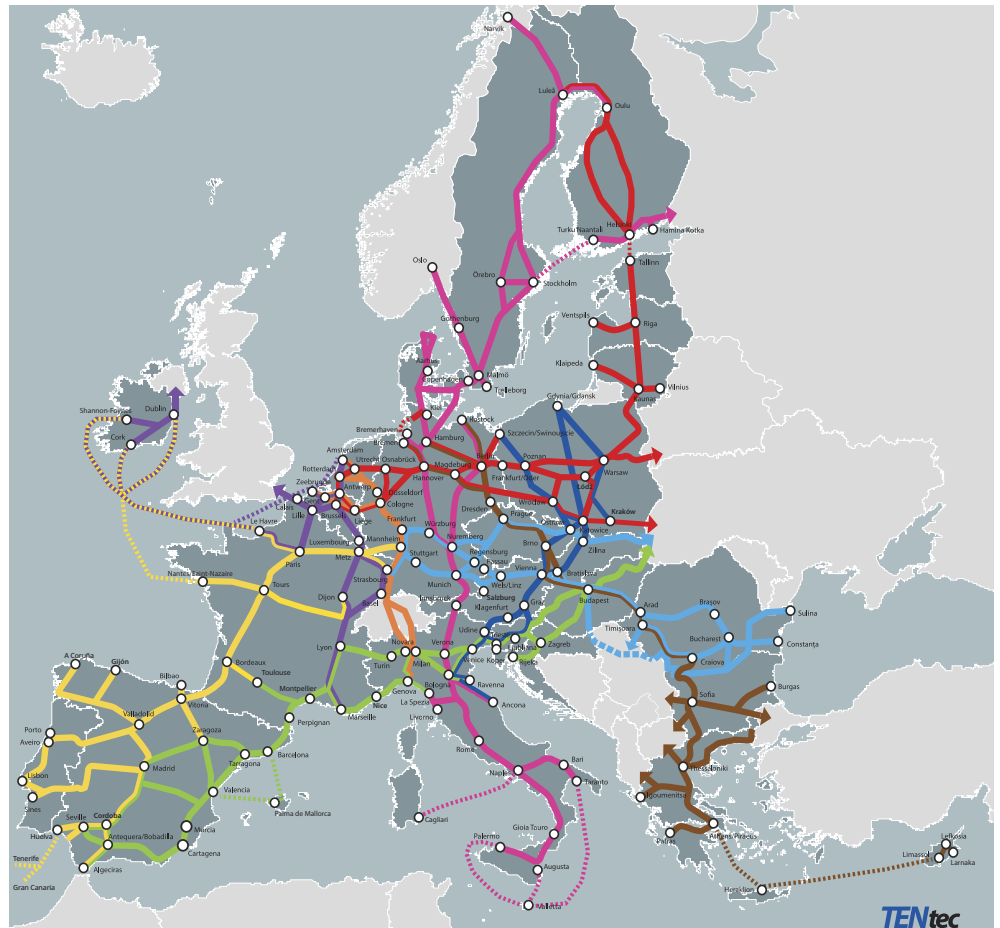
Electrification success celebrated

The Fen Line Users Association is celebrating 30 years of electrification on the line from Cambridge to King's Lynn. The campaign for electrification started after the 1983 Serpell report threw doubt over the future of the line north of Cambridge and long sections of the route were singled in 1984-5. Campaigners celebrated with champagne when electrification was announced in the Commons in 1989. The late Queen Mother officially inaugurated the electric service in 1992. Mike Beckett, who was involved as a principal planning officer at the time, is currently compiling a pictorial record, showing the stages of the electrification works.



www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia
Twitter: @RailfutureEA

Your views extra



European Commission

The European Commission map which identifies transport corridors for development

Railfuture member Trevor appeals to his MP for action

I recently wrote to my MP, Angela Richardson, to point out that she does not need to read anything to see how the UK is missing out from pan-European rail development. Just look at the map above which was published in *Railway Gazette International*. Impressive progress is being made even in non-European Union countries such as Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Albania. I believe Britain is missing out on major rail

improvements throughout Europe which will be detrimental for UK trade and tourism, as well as for our general prosperity.

I asked my MP to urge a government transport minister to get involved in international rail developments, taking the lead from the then prime minister's recent visit to French president Macron's pan-European event in

Prague. When I travelled to Albania for a holiday in May, I learnt that there are ambitious plans to refurbish the rundown national rail network there and in Montenegro. The clickable map can be found online at <https://tinyurl.com/aneftw96> Zoom in for more detail or click the multi-arrow box to go to clearer images.

Trevor Jones, Guildford GU2 7NH
htjones.raildev@gmail.com

Rail minister's reply

(in a letter to Angela Richardson MP)
3 November 2022

Thank you for your email enclosing correspondence from your constituent, Mr Trevor Jones, regarding the latest initiatives as part of the Trans-European network. I am replying as the Minister responsible for international rail.

I am aware my predecessors have previously written to your constituent setting out the proactive role the UK plays regarding international rail initiatives, which very much continues to be the case. International rail provides major benefits for citizens and businesses both in the UK and overseas. We saw record numbers of passengers choosing to travel by international rail prior to Covid-19 and, despite the challenges of the pandemic,

we have seen a strong recovery in demand since the lifting of restrictions earlier this year. This demonstrates the significant appetite for international travel by rail from the UK to Europe and, whilst the UK is no longer a member of the EU, the Government continues to proactively engage with our European partners to seek out opportunities to secure the future growth and success of international rail connections.

Critically, the UK continues to participate as an active member of international organisations and country-led initiatives where the objective of these is to promote international rail connections. For example, DfT officials recently hosted a three-day meeting in London for a key committee within the Organisation for International Carriage by Rail. DfT officials also play key leading roles in various expert groups within international organisations and country-

led initiatives. For example, the UK vice-chairs an expert group established under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, with the purpose of defining international rail passenger hubs across the pan-European region in order to facilitate greater modal shift.

In addition, the Government is also engaging with industry partners and our near neighbours to consider the potential for new international rail connections, albeit this will clearly be dependent on there being a clear commercial proposition from industry.

This demonstrates our intention to drive forward the agenda on promoting international rail, where we will continue to play our part in the global conversation on rail policy.

Thank you again to you and your constituent for raising this important matter with me.

*Huw Merriman MP
Minister of State for Transport*

Ticket office choices

There has been concern about tickets, ticket offices and travelcards, including among some letter writers to *Railwatch* and maybe Railfuture's policy has been misunderstood. We believe passengers should be able to buy tickets from a member of rail staff, using either a debit card, a credit card or by paying cash.

I am less worried as to whether or not there is a glass screen between the two, but that in-person option remains essential. The staff member could even "drive" a ticket vending machine if it had the necessary functionality.

We know, however, that the current ticket office provides a natural way of providing an in-person ticketing service and, if that ticket office member of staff also takes on wider duties, there will need to be a way to ensure that ticket selling remains an important core service of the railway.

Railfuture does not want the railway restricted to smartphone users with a credit or debit card. The railway must be available to everyone, even if they do not have internet access or a cash card. People should be able to buy tickets easily, otherwise potential revenue is lost.

On the other hand, for the many with smartphones or a computer, being able to buy a ticket in advance, print it out, or store it on their phone, or use post pay (also known as pay as you go) are major benefits. To be able to arrive at the station without the need to queue is a definite plus.

In my case, using post pay is also advantageous because I often travel off-peak and the time of my return home journey from London influences the ticket price. With post pay, I do not have to buy a more expensive ticket in advance if I want flexibility but do not know the exact time of my return.

The government has recently made a bit of a U-turn, or maybe a swerve, on ticket office closures. The then transport secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said in October that the rumoured blanket closures of ticket offices will not be happening, although she predicted some changes.

At the time of writing, I await news as to whether or not the latest transport secretary will continue this approach.

The government message seems to be that

existing ticket staff will be expected to take on a wider role, part ticket seller and part customer service around the station.

This is to be welcomed, as having staff at the station is really important.

Unfortunately, a staff member with portable ticket issuing equipment cannot match the efficiency of staff in a ticket office, and nor can a ticket machine, especially if it does not offer the full range of tickets.

So at the moment, Railfuture believes it is premature – or even stupid – to try to implement a non-ticket-office system now.

The industry needs to fix its equipment first. Done properly, that could lead to an increasing number of passengers using the improved equipment.

But not everyone will be happy to accept this new approach to buying a ticket, and the percentage will probably depend on how good the equipment development is.

And also, a bit of lateral thought, many people travelling from smaller stations that are not in the centre of the town may find it easier to buy their tickets at a nearby library, council office, local pub or cafe in the town centre if the staff are well informed and well trained.

However good the new systems are, it is also important that travelcards remain easily available.

Pay as you go can be simple but it is not always better than one travelcard which provides unlimited travel on public transport.

In London and some other cities, many travellers have accepted pay as you go, but some people who do not want to be bothered with zone boundaries prefer the relative simplicity of the travelcard.

Choice is important to passengers – and to Railfuture.

*Neil Middleton, Railfuture director with responsibility for communications, Harpenden
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Aid for campaigners

We at the Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group regularly put forward timetable suggestions to Great Western Railway. To help with this, I have written a train-graphing product for Windows. Other rail user groups might be interested in making use of it.

You enter your timetable as a text or CSV file and TGSmith graphs the services with passing points (for example stations and signals) on the Y-axis and time on the X-axis. This allows you to identify clashes and optimise your timetable.

You can enter head codes, the graph line colour for each service and the metres per pixel of the display. It supports bi-directional services, printing and saving your graphs to JPEG (for inclusion in reports etc).

You can scroll through the time axis or the calling points axis (where it does not fit on one page). It is a free Windows download and available, along with a user guide:

<https://steve09478.wixsite.com/mysite/tgsmith>

Steve Smith, Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group

Editor's note: Steve was awarded the Clara Zilahi Award for Best Campaigner by Railfuture in 2013. He led the campaign to save Bedwyn's direct Reading and Paddington service from downgrading to a diesel shuttle to Newbury,

using leaflets, press briefings, TV, press and radio interviews and political lobbying.

He worked with organisations and councils to gather evidence on the impact of electrification to Newbury and a study showed electrification to Bedwyn is economically feasible. He also campaigned to align train and bus departures to save money and cut ticket prices. He created and maintains the Bedwyn Trains website:

www.bedwyntrains.org.uk

European travel

The Association of European Rail Agents represents travel agents and tour organisers specialising in rail travel to and within continental Europe. A large proportion of our customers use Eurostar for business or leisure travel. Trains are more sustainable than other modes and have great potential to tackle the now widely accepted climate emergency.

We are therefore concerned that Eurostar, while attracting more business following the pandemic, is not yet fulfilling its potential. We have therefore written to the new transport secretary and to the Commons transport committee, pointing out that the British government did not give financial support to Eurostar in the way that it did to the airlines. It should now rectify that shortcoming by helping Eurostar to compete with other modes on a level playing field.

1 One way is by reducing the border checks which were enhanced when the UK left the European Union. These currently increase the processing time at stations and dampen demand for Eurostar services. The cost of controls discourages Eurostar from resuming calls at both Ebbsfleet and Ashford International stations and has been a factor in the suspension of their trains to Disneyland Paris next year. The prospect of having to impose the EU entry-exit system next summer will make things worse.

2 Track access charges on HS1 are three to four times more expensive than on the high speed network in France and are rising almost three times as fast as those on the French network.

3 Eurostar and Southeastern Trains have, with HS1, made a proposal to reduce pressure on charges, but the response so far from the Rail Regulator has not been helpful.

We urge the government to intervene, in the ultimate interests of passengers and the urgent need to encourage rail as an environmentally friendly means of transport.

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Eurostar ticket costs

I was interested in several items in *Railwatch* 173 and was prompted to ask: Is Eurostar really interested in competing with both coach and air? Having booked a river cruise starting in Amsterdam, the add-on cost from London is £126 by coach, £226 by air, and £300 on Eurostar. However, it is good to see Royal Mail using more mail trains. Despite that, there are still too many of their red heavy goods vehicles on our motorways. On one Tuesday afternoon on the M6 between Birmingham and Rugby, I saw an eastbound mail lorry every two minutes.

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BILLINGHAM STATION: Looking south towards Stockton and Middlesbrough with one new footbridge in place.

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Upheaval over access upgrade

Fifty years or more since they were promised, lifts are being installed to make Billingham station step-free. Unfortunately this has required demolition of the existing footbridge, removal of half the existing island platform and a temporary footbridge further from the existing approach to it. Excavations for the lifts forced the closure of a pedestrian access to the station, increasing the time for many users to reach and leave the station. We are waiting hopefully for the works to finish in May.

One reason why permission for the step-free access took so long to be given is that Billingham has been unstaffed since 1969. It has been a general rule that lifts should not be installed at an unstaffed station. This rule has been relaxed in Billingham's favour. However, passengers also want to see staff at stations.

Petition for booking offices

A nationwide petition has been started, urging the retention of staff at stations. Many Railfuture members may have already signed the petition to maintain booking offices at stations. You can find the petition until 23 March at: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/622391>

Power boost for East Coast line

Passengers speeding through Chathill station are able to catch a glimpse of extensive work to upgrade the East Coast power supply between Doncaster and Edinburgh. The project involves no fewer than 27 electrical substations, four of which are in the Railfuture North East area:- Relly Mill (south of Durham), Benton (north of Newcastle), Chathill, and Marshall Meadows, near the Anglo-Scottish border just north of Berwick-upon-Tweed. Power shortage has previously limited train services north of Newcastle.

TransPennine troubles

TransPennine's Stakeholder Newsletter explains that the years of Covid, plus the large proportion of drivers about to



BILLINGHAM: Looking north along the Coast route towards Newcastle. The orange square between the tracks is probably for one of the lift shafts

retire, seriously interrupted the usual processes of recruitment and training of new staff, particularly drivers. Standards of service have also been affected by the Department for Transport restrictions on service frequency. We in the North East have suffered particularly from this, first in the delay to the intended extension of Manchester-Redcar trains to and from Saltburn, and second in the complete suspension of Newcastle-Manchester airport trains. We are calling for an early remedy and deplore the implied government ban on services that previously operated on this line.

Lumo success helps Morpeth

News of high numbers of passengers on Lumo's London-Newcastle-Morpeth-Edinburgh trains is welcome, and Railfuture wishes the service continuing success.

Passengers alighting at Morpeth from the London direction in the early evening have numbered 60 or more, not all with luggage, so may include commuters from Newcastle looking for a quick ride. The down side of Lumo's activities, for passengers awaiting trains immediately before or after them, seems to be that punctuality takes a bit of a dive from time to time.

www.railfuture.org.uk/North_East_Branch
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Railfuture newsletter

Since the previous branch report in *Railwatch* 173 a new 16-page branch newsletter has been published, available to view or download on the branch's page of the national website.

Tarka Rail Association's Railfuture-affiliated ACE Rail campaign lead Tim Steer gave a presentation to Barnstaple Town Council in October, and received unanimous support. There he made the first public announcement that Great Western Railway had confirmed financial support from its community fund towards the cost of an initial business case for an extended and upgraded Bideford-Barnstaple-Exeter railway service, reporting next March. GWR had issued their own press release only hours before, and Railfuture nationally issued one too. GWR's financial commitment completed the funding package, which was already supported by Railfuture's Fighting Fund and the Tarka Rail Association.

Dartmoor allies

The Dartmoor Line continues to go from strength to strength, in October winning the National Rail Awards for Outstanding Teamwork and for Outstanding Contribution to Society. The new Dartmoor National Park information centre and the all-week Bulleid Buffet at Okehampton station reopened at the end of September. The Dartmoor Railway Association and OkeRail continue to be very good friends to Railfuture in Devon, as their websites demonstrate.

Blooming success

Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership's Tarka Rail Association and Barnstaple Town Council have had their joint efforts over many months to smarten up Barnstaple station's disused island platform recognised by the Royal Horticultural Society. They have been recognised as "Outstanding" in the RHS South West in *Bloom It's Your Neighbourhood* category.

Tavistock priority

The strategic outline business case for restoring services to Tavistock is being submitted by Devon County Council to the Department



OkeRail Chairman Michael Ireland and Executive member Cllr Kevin Ball on their return to Okehampton from Railfuture's RUG Awards in Bristol, bearing the Judges' Special Award which they suggested would be put on display in the station!

for Transport, following the successful bid for up to £50,000 in round 3 of the Restoring Your Railway ideas fund. Railfuture notes with approval that, along with Bideford, Tavistock is said to be one of GWR's top three priorities in the South West. Meanwhile the Mid-Cornwall Metro – connecting Newquay, Truro and Falmouth – is another Restoring Your Railway ideas fund winner in the South West, given additional project development funding earlier this year. Rail minister (at the time) Kevin Foster, the MP for Torbay, was expected to take a close interest!

Branch AGM

Although a date and venue have to yet to be arranged, there should be a branch AGM next year – for the first time since 2019. Branch Secretary Philip Shelton has given advance notice that he will not be standing for re-election.

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Matlock-Nottingham service

East Midlands Railway has announced that there will be a partial restoration of through services between Nottingham and Matlock this December, in response to a petition with more than 10,000 signatures as well as lobbying by Railfuture.

There will be three Nottingham-Matlock services in each direction in each of the morning and evening peak periods on Mondays to Fridays, but only one through service in each direction on Saturdays. At other times, passengers will still need to change at Derby. The organiser of the petition, Gary Parsons, said that he is hoping that the full service will be restored in the May 2023 timetable.

MPs at Ivanhoe line meeting

Work to restore passenger services on the Ivanhoe Line (Leicester to Burton upon Trent) could begin as early as May 2024, depending on the results of an ongoing feasibility study funded by the Department for Transport. This news emerged from a meeting in September between Campaign to Reopen the Ivanhoe Line, the DfT and Network Rail, also attended by MPs Andrew Bridgen (NW Leics) and Luke Evans (Bosworth). The campaign's spokesman Douglas McLay pointed out that the reopened line would ease commuting into Leicester and also to the many employment opportunities, especially in logistics, along the route of the line.

Peaks and Dales Line

Leaflets target Matlock

This autumn sees a major campaign of leafleting, canvassing and meetings organised by Manchester & East

Midlands Rail Action Partnership (MEMRAP) to raise awareness of the project to reopen the Peaks and Dales line, from Matlock to Buxton and Chinley. As many as 20,000 copies of a new leaflet, advertising the benefits of a restored railway and seeking support for the campaign, are being delivered by MEMRAP's volunteers to houses in the area. Leafleting is currently focused on Matlock, Darley Dale and Bakewell, but will gradually be expanded to other market towns along the line. Integrated with this, the first council meetings took place, with Matlock Town Council and, separately, a senior cabinet member of Derbyshire County Council.

Both meetings secured positive feedback. There has also been a very positive meeting with the chief operating officer of the Chatsworth estate, following a letter to Lord Burlington from MEMRAP's Stephen Chaytow earlier this year. A survey of 3,000 users of the Monsal Trail, which will be re-provisioned if the railway is rebuilt, has revealed 98% support for the project. This activity continued until the end of November.

Peaks and Dales Line

National Rail Awards

Railfuture East Midlands is pleased that Nottingham station has been recognised as Large Station of the Year in this year's National Rail Awards. The Midland Main Line is often seen as the Cinderella of the main line rail network, so all credit to East Midlands Railway for gaining this recognition.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch

Twitter: @RailfutureEMids



By RUG awards judges coordinator Stewart Palmer and awards organiser Roger Blake

Railfuture's ninth awards for rail user groups (and similar organisations such as local campaigns, station adopters and rail partnerships) will be presented after the 2023 national annual general meeting, to be held on Saturday 15 July 2023.

Nominations for the six categories of best new group, newsletter, website, social media, campaign and campaigner must be submitted by Easter Saturday, 8 April 2023.

Please note that the award for

Railfuture Campaigner of the Year is a separate award for Railfuture members only, and with a later closing date to be announced in due course.

In *Railwatch* 173 we incorrectly used a picture for the Judges' Special Award of Tim Steer, Stewart Palmer and Andy Hedges. The online version was corrected.

Full details of all the 2022 awards and commendations and previous years are on the Railfuture website. Click on What's on and then RUG Awards.



The picture that should have appeared in *Railwatch* 173: OkeRail chairman Michael Ireland, left, Stewart Palmer and OkeRail executive member Councillor Kevin Ball, displaying the Judges' Special Award

Thames Valley

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Bedwyn bid for better services

In his letter in *Railwatch* 173, Steve Smith described how the Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group is fighting to retain a full service of through trains from Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury to Paddington. They have come up with a proposal that just one class 800 IET set could provide a three-hourly interval service of four through trains a day, with diesel multiple units filling the gaps between Bedwyn and Newbury. This was put to Great Western Railway and met with a favourable response, but it was prevented by a shortage of rolling stock. Hitachi can supply only 75 sets per day from a stock of 93 sets, and 80 sets per day are required to operate a full timetable. The group also raised the question: Could the 16.36 from Paddington be made off-peak for passengers to Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn? At present the last off-peak departure from Paddington is at 15.07. As a concession, GWR agreed to this request for passengers holding advance tickets.

No progress in Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire Council has produced a local

transport plan with half a page on rail transport, out of about 50 pages devoted to roads, pedestrians and cycling. It does not give Railfuture much confidence, and gives the impression of being cobbled together from old proposals and not a statement of serious intent. For example, it suggests twin-tracking between Princes Risborough and Aylesbury which Railfuture does not consider a priority, but does not include the need for a station at Aylesbury South. Nor does it mention High Wycombe to Bourne End. It includes passive provision for the line to Old Oak Common, but that is a legal obligation on HS2, not a Buckinghamshire policy. Railfuture is trying to set up a meeting with councillors and officers, but the chief transport officer does not answer our emails.

East West Rail

The Oxon and Bucks Rail Action Committee (OBRAC) is considering whether it is time to be wound up. For more than 30 years, Chris Wright has been campaigning tirelessly for reopening the Oxford-Bletchley line, and now that its core objective line has been almost achieved, Railfuture will continue the campaign for the

remainder of East West Rail: Aylesbury, Bedford and Cambridge. Railfuture is however worried about all the delays to EWR. The date for opening to Milton Keynes has been deferred from 2023 to 2024, and then to 2025, and now there are rumours that train services will terminate at Bletchley instead of running through to Milton Keynes.

Wantage/Grove

Everybody is agreed on the need for a new station for Wantage/Grove, also serving Harwell, Faringdon and the rest of the Vale of White Horse. It has been included in the Oxfordshire County Council transport plan for many years, but nothing is done. The council has £250,000 to spend on feasibility studies on rail development, and Railfuture suggests that some of this should be spent on the business case for Wantage/Grove. Railfuture has also had discussions with two activists from Wantage who on their own initiative have campaigned on social media for a station. We encouraged them to involve their county councillor.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Thames+Valley+Branch
Twitter @RailfutureTV

◆◆◆◆ Recruit a new member for Railfuture

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Timetable possibility for East Linton

While construction of East Linton continues, the website Realtime Trains has published a timetable that applies from 12 December. It seems likely that these are test stops rather than passenger services, especially as the station is most likely to open in the spring of 2023. It is interesting, though, to see the potential journey times. Of course, ideally all TransPennine and ScotRail services should stop at East Linton from the start.

End of the year hope for Beattock

The regional transport partnership SWESTRANS (South West Transport) board has asked consultants Stantec to update some of the feasibility report that was carried out for Beattock, Thornhill and Eastriggs stations, and passed to Transport Scotland on 27 August. Approximately 30 people, including local MSPs, attended the Beattock Station Action Group AGM in July. They are hoping the station will be put into the "pipe" system by the end of the year. They are optimistic that the business case for a reopened station at Beattock will emerge as the best option.

Levenmouth line will be future-proof

Unlike the most recent line reopening in the Borders, and other projects criticised for omitting overhead wires during construction, the Levenmouth line will be fully electrified from the outset. Although when it opens in spring 2024, rail services will initially be introduced using diesel trains, electrification provides future-proofing to enable the introduction of battery electric multiple units to replace diesel units, which are expected to be phased out on completion of the wider Fife electrification project. It is understood that these electrification-ready works are mainly responsible for the major increased cost of reinstating the Levenmouth line from an estimated £70-90 million to £116 million but they will improve service reliability, shorten journey times and prove more environmentally friendly.

St Andrews new hope for rail link

After sitting on it for over four months, Transport Scotland has finally supplied feedback on the initial options appraisal. A meeting to discuss the required amendments has taken place between Transport Scotland, StARLink and consultants Stantec. The detailed options appraisal should be under way in the New Year. Meanwhile, Transport Minister Jenny Gilruth accepts there is a strong case for a St Andrews railway. Before golfers return for the Open Championship at St Andrews in another seven or eight years, let us hope the town will no longer be accessible only by road.

Transport minister calls for key role for railways

Scottish Transport Minister Jenny Gilruth backed rail at the SNP conference in Aberdeen in October.

In a fringe event at the conference – organised by the Railway Industry Association Scotland and the High Speed Rail Group – Ms Gilruth called for strong rail infrastructure in Scotland, providing sustainable transport for people and freight, as well as supporting skilled jobs.

She said rail can play a leading role in aiding the Scottish Government's goal of achieving net zero by 2045. She spoke of the importance of electrifying Scotland's railway, and of ensuring that High Speed Two trains could link to Scotland when the scheme is built.

She thanked RIA Scotland and the High Speed Rail Group for the opportunity to debate and recognised that the rail supply chain is essential to delivering a world-class railway in Scotland.

Meirion Thomas of RIA Scotland said: "It was great to see the Scottish transport minister being so constructive in discussing priorities for Scotland's railway, the need to invest in rail infrastructure and the importance of decarbonising the network, including by ramping up electrification, or working to ensure HS2 trains can get to Scotland.

"We are also pleased that Ms Gilruth acknowledged the role the rail supply sector can play in supporting jobs and boosting the economy.

"I would like to thank Minister Gilruth for her positive approach, and we look forward to continue working closely with her and the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, Network Rail and others, to deliver a successful, vibrant railway industry in Scotland in future."



JENNY GILRUTH: Backing a rail future

Contacts:

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

Beattock Station Action Group: www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/ [facebook.com/BeattockStationActionGroup](https://www.facebook.com/BeattockStationActionGroup)

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

Levenmouth Rail Campaign: www.levenmouth.co.uk/ [facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/](https://www.facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/)

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

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

Thornhill Station Action Group: [facebook.com/thornhilltrainstation/](https://www.facebook.com/thornhilltrainstation/)

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

Friends of the West Highland Lines www.westhighlandline.org.uk

Friends of the Far North Line: <http://www.fofnl.org.uk>

London & South East

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Out and about, meeting and greeting

Post-pandemic, Railfuture is able to take part again in public events.

In November, we had a stall in Ashford International station as part of its 180th anniversary celebrations under the auspices of the Ashford International Model Railway Education Centre.

In January, we plan to have a stall at the Erith Model Railway Society annual exhibition held in the Longfield Academy.

In March, we plan a stall at Alexandra Palace for the London Festival of Railway Modelling.

Members have also been representing Railfuture at stakeholder events such as a Southeast Community Rail Partnership's annual joint meeting and the South East Councils meeting.

Campaign through writing and tweeting

Responding to consultations and calls for evidence remain core parts of our campaigning activities. Our most recent submissions have been on Bluebell Railway's proposed western extension to Ardingly. Railfuture supported it for the economic benefits which it would bring to the area, in line with the findings of the *Social and Economic Value of Heritage Railways*, produced by the heritage rail all-party parliamentary group in 2013.

Medway Council's draft Development Framework for Future Hoo anticipates housing and related developments over 30 years.

Railfuture's regional and national consultation responses are in the *Submissions* section on the Railfuture website. Current consultations are in the *Rail dates* section of the website.

A bigger better railway

The winter months see anniversaries of station and line openings and reopenings across our

regional branch area, including London St Pancras International where Thameslink platforms A and B opened 15 years ago in 2007.

Others are: Aylesbury Vale Parkway station in 2008, London Marylebone services extended between Oxford Parkway and Oxford in 2016.

London Overground services were extended via Silwood Junction between Surrey Quays and Queens Road Peckham for Wandsworth Road and then for Clapham Junction and Battersea Park 10 years ago in 2012. Ashford International Eurostar platforms opened in 1996 – but it is likely to be a while before they, and those at Ebbsfleet International, are used again.

Railfuture updates

All Railfuture members can subscribe free to the branch's monthly newsletter *inter-railse*. The newsletters can be viewed or downloaded from www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East Twitter: @RailfutureLSE

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

Growth and Green, or bust

Growth and Green were her priorities, the then transport secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan told the Commons transport select committee on 19 October.

Six days later, a new transport secretary, Mark Harper, was appointed by the new prime minister, Rishi Sunak, so these priorities may have changed.

In the autumn financial statement on 17 November, major real-terms spending cuts will be made in all government departments from 2025.

The temptation for the Department for Transport will have been to go for the easy stuff, cutting services and quality of service, instead of addressing the real issues of streamlining the organisation, getting rid of bureaucracy and improving the offering to increase revenue. The ongoing pay disputes must not be allowed to divert attention from getting productivity agreements. The Office of Rail and Road recently noted that Network Rail (but not the train operators) has made modest efficiency improvements over the past year as part of normal management. This is a better approach than big deals with unions which then do not get implemented. It was also apparent at the Commons transport select committee that, although many ticket offices will close, the DfT understands that it is the glass barrier not the person that should be removed.

This is in line with Railfuture's campaigning, see www.railfuture.org.uk/article1889

Open-access operator Lumo has increased rail's share of the London to Edinburgh market from 35% to 57% versus air. This shows that rail can attract more passengers and increase revenue if it offers a simple high-value product. Neil Middleton's article on page 6 shows how this could be achieved cheaply and without revenue risk for all rail journeys, by changing the way choices are presented on ticket websites and vending machines.

Capital spending has also come under scrutiny, with major projects potentially being delayed. HS2, EWR and IRP have survived, but capital spend will remain at the 2021 level in cash terms nationally. This means a cut in real terms. The government's comprehensive spending review in 2021 has already made the

rolling programme of electrification proposed in the traction decarbonisation network strategy unaffordable, making net zero undeliverable by 2050. The focus will now shift to rolling stock solutions, shifting the cost from the government to the passenger. Electrification will be phased, with whatever schemes are affordable after HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail. See www.railfuture.org.uk/article1895.

The government has learnt the hard way that the key prerequisite for growth is stability, but it has yet to apply that lesson to the railways. Legislation for Great British Railways has been delayed, whilst the Opposition is proposing to bring rail operators into public ownership. Both introduce uncertainty: it is leadership that matters, not ownership. The railways have some good leaders, but without decisions on the "rules" from government, there is a lack of direction.

This prevents those on the ground getting on with delivering passenger rail services that are more welcoming, frequent, reliable, convenient, clean, comfortable, safe and reasonably priced, and meeting a target (yet to be decided) of doubling or trebling rail freight.

The DfT should decide on the "rules" and implement GBR without legislation now, by rebranding Network Rail and progressively transferring responsibilities to it. The need is for a "guiding mind" responsible for both delivery and revenue generation with the power to make decisions, after consultation. This will drive meeting customer needs and close the gap between revenue responsibility and cost control, which government seems unable to manage. The recent increase in the price of energy means that, until significant new renewable and nuclear generation comes on stream, the transition to electric vehicles will not be financially attractive. Therefore the government should invest in rail rather than road to exploit the potential of the railways for low-cost and low-carbon transport, attracting more passengers and shifting more freight.

The alternative is that a combination of cuts in service and unaffordable pay claims will lead to a 1970s-style spiral of decline. The acid test will be whether the railways work for us as taxpayers, passengers and freight consumers, and deliver the Growth and Green priorities.



railwatch

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campaigning for a bigger, better railway

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Railway waits for certainty 60 years after Beeching

By Ray King

After years of boom in passenger numbers and the need for more investment to combat climate change, the railway is surrounded by uncertainty.

Sixty years after the Beeching plan cut a swathe through Britain's comprehensive railway network, the industry is waiting for the government to unlock the pipeline of investment.

On 17 November, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt confirmed in his financial statement that the core Northern Powerhouse Rail, East West Rail and HS2 to Manchester schemes are all set to go ahead. He also said that capital budgets will increase over the next two years to 2024, and then be maintained in cash terms subsequently.

But Mr Hunt also predicted that the capital budgets will not rise as planned from 2024.

The Railway Industry Association warned: "To deliver both transformational major projects for the future and to protect today's railway, the industry needs the government to commit to a long-term investment package beyond 2024."

Two months ago, the RIA called on the government to name the rail enhancements it is planning over the coming years.

It is more than three years since the government said it would publish the list of rail upgrades – the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline.

The UK rail network needs enhancements to increase rail capacity, improve journey times and generate further economic growth.

The government also has goals to decarbonise the rail network, which can be achieved only through enhancement projects.

In the political turmoil and run-up to the government's financial statement on Thursday 17 November, however, there was plenty of loose talk about cuts – including axeing HS2 and other vital rail projects.

The sacred cow of road building continues to consume a lion's share of government expenditure – £27 billion.

Quick-change Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng announced plans to accelerate 86 projects in the roads programme in his now-abandoned budget. There were only 10 rail schemes in Mr Kwarteng's dash for growth.

The Green Party issued an angry response to Mr Kwarteng: "This will embed carbon emissions, air pollution and ecocidal car dependency. To tackle these, railways should be fast-tracked



BEAUTIFUL SURVIVOR: Jacobite steam trains join the regular service trains between Fort William and Mallaig on Scotland's West Highland lines. This picture, on Glenfinnan viaduct, by Jon Brook was commended in the Lines in the Landscape photographic competition, announced in October

instead." The Campaign for Better Transport's Norman Baker said it was regrettable that the government does not save vast amounts of public money by curbing road building.

Fix the railway

The long-standing government policy of encouraging car use by freezing fuel duty, started in 2011, has cost about £19 billion a year in lost revenue, according to a new study.

The loss from fuel duty is more than the total income of the rail and bus industries, says Tom Haines-Doran in a book called *Detailed: How to Fix Britain's Broken Railways*.

The money handed over to car drivers would have been enough to make public transport free to use.

Comparing eight other European countries, the book shows that Britain has the highest peak rail fares, the highest anytime fares, the highest off-peak fares (except for short distances where Britain is second to Germany) and the most expensive season tickets.

Tom Haines-Doran is a political economist specialising in transport systems, infrastructure and social movements. He works at the University of Leeds, leading research on transport decarbonisation.

He said: "We all deserve a much better rail system."

Fuel duty may, however, soon be unfrozen if hints dropped by the Office for Budget Responsibility after the November statement are to be believed. One

prediction was that fuel duty could go up by 23%.

Determined government action is certainly needed to curb the massive pollution from roads and to prioritise rail.

Rail franchising, however, collapsed in 2020 and was replaced by a concession contract system.

To add to uncertainty, the government has delayed (or abandoned) plans for Great British Railways to take over command of the railway.

Defying recent problems, although some were self-imposed, the railways have been growing successfully and have become genuinely popular with the public, especially young people who have turned their backs on car culture.

Dirty old cars

We should not forget the Beeching report of 27 March 1963, *The Restructuring of British Railways*, which outlined plans to cut 5,000 miles of track and 2,000 stations.

The car, with advertisers going to extreme lengths to sell a polluting nightmare as a dream, would replace the train, Beeching decreed. In doing so, he ushered in an era of vast motorway expansion and cheap motorised transport.

Railfuture president Christian Wolmar, author of *Fire and Steam: How the Railways Transformed Britain*, has said: "Transport planners in the 60s simply could not conceive of the idea that a line, once closed, would need to

be reopened." Railfuture's book *Britain's Growing Railway* documents 400 new and reopened stations since Beeching. More are coming.

One of Beeching's legacies has been to thwart plans to fulfil the country's renewed need for rail infrastructure by axeing lines that are now needed.

Let us also thank goodness for those that survived, for example the Mallaig line in Scotland, the Settle-Carlisle in England and the Heart of Wales line.

And remember that the Heart of Wales line survived only because it ran through seven marginal parliamentary seats.

Political machinations can make or break the railways – and the many individuals and companies that depend on them.

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