

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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Page one picture

Our page one picture is an image which will soon be a common sight in Britain.

Electrification teams are already at work in the North West of England on a £300 million scheme and will then move on to the Great Western lines to take the wires to Oxford and south Wales.

But we still have quite a way to catch up with the German workers shown in the picture on a new stretch of high-speed line between Köln and Rhein/Main.

Rail electrification has been the norm for years in mainland Europe.

All of Switzerland's rail routes are electrified and both Germany and France have more than half their networks electrified.

Britain lingers near the bottom of the European league table with 30% of the network electrified. Only the Czech

Republic has a smaller percentage. But although Britain is at last waking up to the importance of electrification, its attitude is still penny-pinching.

The Government has just said no to the electrification of the Barking-Gospel Oak line in London.

As many rail campaigners have pointed out, the decision NOT to electrify the 13-mile route is just plain daft.

The decision not to electrify further west than Cardiff is also likely to prove an expensive mistake.

Even the welcome North West scheme will not include the Chester-Crewe line.

With the future widespread availability of oil becoming ever more doubtful, every opportunity to wire up as much of the rail network as possible should be taken, particularly in urban areas where pollution is a major problem.

The 'blockbuster' rail reopenings

By Ian Brown

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Vigorous campaigning needs to be accompanied by a strong and committed "client", to deliver new stations and rail services.

This is particularly important now because neither Network Rail nor train operators are incentivised to do so.

In *Railwatch* 127, I was concerned with London rail developments. In this issue I compare the performance of the six major English conurbations and ask which has been most effective in delivering new stations?

I have drawn up a list of the 79 stations opened in English cities covered by the Railfuture book *Britain's Growing Railway*.

This was largely the work of passenger transport executives, with varying support from national government.

This is how the city regions are ranked with the number of stations they opened:

1	West Yorkshire	22
2	Merseyside	16
3	Greater Manchester	15
4	West Midlands	13
5	South Yorkshire	10
6	Tyne and Wear	3

All six invested in new stations, with West Yorkshire providing most. West Yorkshire transformed its relatively dense network of local routes with few stations into a series of high ridership corridors by providing infill stations and higher frequency services at attractive fares. The Leeds-Bradford-Ilkley-Skipton corridor perhaps represents the best example where this was complemented by electrification and new attractive trains.

However, given that cities do not have direct control over main line rail, there has been a strong push for a do-it-yourself approach by converting underperforming main line routes to light rail.

All six cities have promoted light rail schemes and entered the Department for Transport "lottery", receiving funding drip by drip, a responsibility which should be within the city regions.

Two have so far lost out in the "lottery", Merseyside and West Yorkshire. Interestingly the recent development of devolved responsibility in Merseyside is set to replicate the light rail experience elsewhere but using heavy rail, the Merseyrail Electric system. The established Merseyrail electric system provided an



Picture: PHILIP BISATT

ONE OF THE BEST: Birmingham Moor Street has been highly successful since it reopened

excellent base for further development of new stations on Merseyside. The strength here is that a difficult regional economy was recognised as one requiring investment in transport, not a reason to cut back.

The ranking by city region looks different, in fact it is reversed, where light rail reopenings and conversions are also counted.

1	Tyne and Wear	63
2	South Yorkshire	58
3	Greater Manchester	54
4	West Midlands	36
5	West Yorkshire	22
6	Merseyside	16

Top of this list, up from bottom place is Tyne and Wear with Metro, a system that started with the momentum of a comprehensive network of converted British Rail lines under local control, went through the depression of ill-thought-out bus deregulation, and rebounded with two extensions and is now enjoying a comprehensive upgrade.

The situation in South Yorkshire is similar in that Supertram, although not serving the South Yorkshire region comprehensively from the start, represents a massive commitment to the rail mode.

It is clear that the next steps in this region will be to extend the reach of its light rail network by using hybrid technology such as tram-train.

Why are they doing this? The answer must be that there is increasing understanding that good transport is essential in promoting regional economic regeneration. The test is whether investment in new stations is

rewarded by more passengers. I have examined annual passenger usage figures for each of the 79 stations for the year 2009-10 from the Office of Rail Regulation survey (joining plus alighting, showing interchange where this takes place) and then divided them into four categories:

Blockbuster: Over 1 million passengers per year.

In the West Midlands, where they concentrated on providing new city stations, there were four blockbusters: Birmingham International, University, Moor Street and Snow Hill.

In Merseyside, which concentrated on the city loop, there were also four blockbusters: Liverpool Central, Moorfields, Lime Street and Conway Park (Birkenhead).

Greater Manchester had two blockbusters: Salford Crescent and Manchester Airport, while South Yorkshire had one, Meadowhall.

Major success: Over 550,000 passengers per year.

Merseyside had four major successes: Aigburth, St Michaels, Brunswick and Liverpool South Parkway.

West Yorkshire also had four: New Pudsey, Steeton and Silsden, Saltaire and Burley Park.

West Midlands had two, Sandwell and Dudley and Longbridge while South Yorkshire had one, Rotherham Central.

Very good investment: Over 100,000 passengers per year.

Not quite sure: Less than 100,000 passengers per year.

The "very good investment" stations are mainly well-judged, simple line-of-route infill stations that have attracted good ridership. This represents the

Station reopened	Good	Not sure
West Yorkshire	12	6
Greater Manchester	6	6
South Yorkshire	4	4
Merseyside	6	1
West Midlands	4	2
Tyne and Wear	1	2

bread and butter of station reopenings apart from the major strategic initiatives listed above.

We need this type of investment to increase rail's market share. We also need a standard tool-kit for planning and delivery of new stations.

The stations contribute significantly to the routes concerned and indeed to the economy of the region.

The "not so sure" list includes the less successful. However, some of these are now growing fast with new housing developments nearby.

It is clear that the passenger transport executives have consistently supported rail reopenings despite everything being stacked against them.

Imagine if they had proper funding and proper control over all local rail development in our cities - heavy and light rail.

That would allow balanced choices to be made between rail and indeed other modes.

Let's hope Transport for Greater Manchester, which was created this year from the former passenger transport executive, will be able to use its enhanced powers to reopen more stations.

LOCAL ACTION

Lincolnshire

By Brian Hastings 01724 710528 and Don Peacock don.peacock@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Election and AGM

Railfuture branch officials would like to thank members who attended the AGM in Lincoln and also those who took the trouble to participate by postal vote in the election for chairman. The current incumbent, David Harby, was returned with a large majority of votes. It was also rewarding to have members of the public join us for a meeting after the AGM. After presentations from Philip Cameron of East Coast Trains and David Horne of East Midlands Trains, and subsequent questions, the branch committee were clearer where they should focus campaigning. Top of the campaign list for 2011 is to plug the two-hour gaps in evening services between Nottingham and Lincoln.



■ ■ Trains expected to play bigger role at Gainsborough

The branch was pleased to learn that Gainsborough Lee Road and Gainsborough Central might secure cash injections because of a new Gainsborough Town development strategy. The council sees transport as a key component of a plan to increase the present population from 17,000 to 30,000 and Railfuture has held talks with the train operator which is keen to run more passenger trains. This line was upgraded to handle more freight and is open 24/7. One of our members who lives close to the line in Brigg monitors both traffic and passenger usage.

■ ■ Lincoln to London train service is improved

Lincoln's link with London improves with the start of the new timetable in May. The 07.08 Lincoln to St Pancras (and evening return) is augmented by a new 07.20 Lincoln to King's Cross (and evening return).

■ ■ Late train possible from Lincoln-Barnetby

East Midlands Trains agreed to study an idea by a Railfuture member who believes the Saturday evening train, which terminates at Market Rasen but then continues empty to Holton le Clay only to cross over and return south to Lincoln, should continue as a service train to Barnetby. It would then provide a connection into the South TransPennine services to Grimsby/Cleethorpes and Scunthorpe.

■ ■ Station figures show how buses cut patronage

Station usage figures published by the Office of Rail Regulation are generally encouraging, although in northern Lincolnshire the three-month engineering blockade saw some reduction in use. Passengers preferred to drive rather than sit on a bus from Cleethorpes to Doncaster. Lincolnshire branch suggested to TransPennine that it would be better to route the trains via the Brigg line (after Barnetby) to Doncaster and run a Brigg-Scunthorpe bus shuttle but the train operator refused.

■ ■ Snow halts passengers but volunteers take action

The heavy snow in early December disrupted passenger services badly. Freight trains, however, were seen operating from the docks to Scunthorpe and beyond with hardly a break. Members contacted their MPs and eventually Network Rail admitted that two junctions in the area had been clipped in favour of the route to the docks thus preventing any passenger train movement to or from Grimsby and Cleethorpes. We understand Network Rail will now install equipment to combat adverse weather conditions at these critical junctions. Our local members will be monitoring the situation. Railfuture members joined other volunteers to clear snow on the approaches to stations on the Barton line.

■ ■ Old-fashioned commitment helps boost Market Rasen

Congratulations to the station adopter group for more improvements at Market Rasen. In 2009, it was voted the best station in Britain by the readers of *Oldie* magazine.

railwatch

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Elections Board elections held annually. Nomination forms can be obtained from Returning Officer, PO Box 7690, Hinckley LE10 9WJ. You can also download a form from www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=Elections

Who's Who: Many other useful contact details can be found on the Railfuture website www.railfuture.org.uk

North West

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

Halton Curve campaign

The campaign to get the Halton Curve back in regular use was the main reason the North Cheshire Rail User Group came into existence. But following the Government's spending cuts, the project to provide train services from Chester to Liverpool Airport via the curve seems to have fallen into the abyss. It remains in the local transport plans of Merseyside, Halton Borough Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council and the six "Taith" county authorities in north Wales.

Rail users in Cheshire are disappointed at this lack of progress, especially when the Government claimed, at long last, to accept the importance of transport as an essential driver of

the economy and its recovery. Although the rail industry felt that Transport Secretary Philip Hammond fought a good case with the Treasury, with major schemes such as Crossrail, Thameslink and High Speed Two gaining favour, Merseytravel received a much lower allocation of funds for local schemes, less than a third of its lowest estimate. With such cuts, only essential work can be contemplated and, it seems, Halton curve reinstatement does not fall into this category. NCRUG feels the case for

these low-cost quick-fix schemes has not been made and feels that the Halton Curve fits very well into the Tories' Big Society approach and is contemplating temporarily shifting its campaigning towards trying to persuade the Treasury to make more local transport funding available so that projects such as the Halton Curve can go ahead. The cuts in local transport budgets seem totally at odds with the Big Society policy. NCRUG is asking all politicians for explanations or comments on this serious lack of joined-up thinking.

Network Rail has completed its stage 3 assessment studies of the options and was ready to move on to the fourth stage, analysing a single option. But NCRUG has been told the scheme will not proceed further, as a stage 4 decision will only be valid for two years. If funding were not available in this time frame, the whole stage 4 process will have to be repeated at a further cost of £400,000.

NCRUG finds it difficult to understand how it can cost £400,000 merely to select the best option from the three or so options. Sadly however, this is not an unusual state of affairs in this country where delays and procrastinations seem to be the norm.

The £11 million figure that Network Rail has quoted for the full reinstatement of the curve is being challenged by Merseytravel. RAIL magazine published an article in December 2010, by Christian Wolmar, where a rail engineer suggested the curve could be reinstated for £2 million.

It is hoped these negotiations will be successful, and that a much lower cost will be placed on this project to make it more attractive to stakeholders. NCRUG is continuing to push for Halton Curve reinstatement.

In the meantime, however, NCRUG arranged for another special train in conjunction with Northern, which was scheduled for Saturday 4 June. Following from last year's successful run, it gave people the rare chance to travel over the Halton Curve and on to Liverpool South Parkway.

Information from Cedric Green of NCRUG.



Euro togetherness

By Trevor Garrod

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Railfuture now has a sister organisation in the city of Debrecen in eastern Hungary (famous for its sausages) and only 30 miles from the border with Romania.

Debrecen Regional Transport Association invited me to speak at its conference in April on the topic *Together with the Region*.

We looked at how public transport could be improved at both local and regional level in Hungary as well as over the border into Romania.

Debrecen is two hours from the capital Budapest by inter-city train but public transport into Romania is sparse. The direct link to the Romanian city of Oradea was cut in 1920, reinstated briefly during the Second World War but abandoned again afterwards.

The cities, 45 miles apart, both have populations of over 200,000.

I spoke about how improvements have been made to cross-border services in several parts of the European Union and how the European Passengers Federation had helped to spread good practice and had also lobbied at European Commission and parliamentary level. The conference heard speakers on urban transport and the train-tram concept.

Debrecen has plans to build a new tram line and Oradea is keen to have better regional and urban transport.

The following day we took a trip on what is now a quiet branch to Nagykereki, a village near the border. As the diesel train called at unstaffed halts in small towns and villages, skirting arable farmland and wetland nature reserves, I was reminded of issues which have been faced – and sometimes successfully tackled – on rural lines in Britain.

It was interesting to watch a film made by local volunteers which had helped boost use of the railway by 30%. We met a councillor from Oradea and discussed these issues in the historic manor house at Nagykereki.

To reach its full potential, the truncated line needs to be relaid across the border to enable trains to run to their natural terminus in Oradea. It also requires an upgrade. For more information and pictures: www.derke.hu

A longer report of the conference will appear in the summer bulletin of the European Passengers Federation. You can subscribe to this electronically on www.epf.eu or send a large SAE for a paper copy to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.



By Simon Hope

The European Passengers Federation held its annual general meeting and conference in March in Barcelona where 75% of the population travel by bus, tram, train, cycle or on foot.

The deputy mayor of Barcelona welcomed members and told them investment in public transport was increasing with a series of six-year plans with low-cost solutions to reducing traffic congestion, adopted by other European cities.

A speaker from Spanish national railways said a 1980s modernisation plan was followed by the development of a high-speed network as a national priority.

But financing new lines and maintaining and developing the existing broad-gauge system is a challenge.

Renfe is now aiming to provide high-speed train services to places off the new lines. Currently high-speed services are profitable and account for 75% of long-distance rail journeys in Spain. The newly opened

Madrid-Valencia line saw a 150% increase in passengers.

Mrs Meglena Kuneva, political adviser to the European transport commissioner, said all operators must facilitate seamless, multi-mode, door-to-door cross-border "intelligent" transport throughout Europe, with integrated ticketing.

Mrs Kuneva said further opening up of the rail market would drive down costs as it had already done for air.

EPF vice-chairman Christopher Irwin said there should be consistency in passenger rights between modes, better impartial information about fares and ticketing, and reliable information about multi-modal end-to-end journeys.

A full report of the conference is available from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ. The presentations by the speakers can also be viewed on the EPF website www.epf.eu

The next EPF conference will be on 10 March 2012 in Salzburg, Austria.

www.railfuture.org.uk

Drop the Nodding Donkey strategy

I was accused of being a cross between Victor Meldrew and Captain Mainwaring with my "stupid boys" comment in *Railwatch* 127, but I persist in my belief that our young politicians cannot show us a credible transport strategy.

Sadly transport is not taken seriously because health, security, post office closures, doing away with cheques and almost every other day-to-day concern seem to command more attention.

In Railfuture we also tend to campaign on local issues and reserve any strategic views to a few motions at the AGM which lose their campaigning punch because by the very nature of AGMs, they have to be written for general acceptance.

Unfortunately the rail industry itself does not pull together, with each train company paddling its own canoe and being expected to compete with its rivals. We need to ask ourselves how well we, or others, campaign for a railway strategy.

The Coventry flyover (or flyunder) for instance is an issue that hardly gets a mention, although it has been correctly identified as a central issue by Railfuture members.

There is no better case, Hitchin apart, for grade separation than Coventry.

Yes, Birmingham has an immediate need for more and faster services to London.



Certainly Birmingham Airport does. And a non-stop service through Coventry, once an hour, intermingled with the regular London services, would be a way of meeting that demand. But it has been agreed that longer Freightliner trains will be coming off the Leamington line on to the main line.

However well you timetable them they will take six to eight minutes to clear the junction. Without a flyover, that idea would not work – even on paper.

We live in a world of contradictions. On the one hand we have the somewhat dilettante comments of Secretary of State Philip Hammond, blasting his way gently through Nimbyland, saying the right things about HS2.

Then that same nice Mr Hammond boasts about using cascaded units in northern England.

If the cascade gets rid of the Nodding Donkey 142 units, it will be a good thing, but you cannot justify calling cascaded units new or claim that moving five units from Scotland to Leeds is a significant investment.

Positive things, however, are happening. I see Southend Airport is to get its own station, although it is a long time a coming. I opened and manned the first ticket desk at the airport 50 years ago. The airport rail station has taken longer to come to pass than East Midlands Parkway station!

Still on my roller-coaster, it remains to be seen whether the McNulty report proves to be good or bad news.

It is really easy for him to talk about the need for staffing levels on trains and stations to be "significantly reduced".

But running a railway should not be about whether people can understand and use the ticket machines, it should be about feeling secure and looked-after when travelling.

Sir Roy McNulty is right to question the regulatory standards which are horrendous and makes the contractor, sub contractor melange costly to operate. We can only hope he does not prove another Beeching – with closures to follow.

Changing terms and conditions, especially for drivers, is also a potentially dangerous road to

consider. The driver holds a key role in any railway. Unless we have a competent, well trained, well rewarded, well rested, properly supervised driving force, we are in trouble.

Whenever I am visiting Stafford, as I sometimes do, I am appalled by the number of cancellations on London Midland, blamed on "shortage of train crews". The alternative bus service does not hide the managerial incompetence.

Any manager who says to a skilled and essential workforce that there should be a "volunteer arrangement for Sundays" is not facing up to reality.

Such an arrangement also gives the drivers a tactical advantage in wage negotiating. The voluntary "goodwill" can easily be withdrawn.

The railway is a seven-day-a-week service and Sunday is part of that week's work.

Finally on the upside, I have a great delight in seeing there are plans for a tram-train between Stourbridge and Walsall, part of the through route we fought hard to save.

Now we must fight on until we get services to Derby via Burton – and beyond.

Tram-train is a beginning perhaps of a new optimism. But we shall see.

■ Peter Rayner is a former British Rail operations and safety manager.

Rail volunteers are the 'big society'

RAILFUTURE AGM BRIGHTON 2011

Way before the big society catch-phrase was taken up by politicians, volunteers were playing a vital role in helping their local railway and stations, Railfuture's 2011 annual general meeting at Brighton was told.

Sam Bryant made it clear that the voluntary work was continuing even though funding for projects is difficult to come by.

Ms Bryant, development officer for the Sussex Community Rail Partnership, said: "It is incredibly rewarding and the volunteers have a wonderful time."

She said many children did not often travel by train but loved it when they had the chance.

At Rye, with input from the partnership, schoolchildren are being taught about railways by incorporating it into the studies of geography, history and other subjects.

She added: "We also have a contract with East Sussex council to teach children how to use a rail timetable to help them think of public transport when they move on from primary to secondary schools."

The partnership had a whole series of other successes to chalk up, including better services at Winchelsea, late-night trains on the

Uckfield line and station adoptions. But she said: "Railways can be an incredibly frustrating industry to work with."

The conference also heard from Alexandra Wordsworth, public transport campaigner for the Campaign for Better Transport. She said the CBT was running a *Fair Fares Now* campaign and warned that fares are likely in future to increase four times faster than wages.

"Railways are being turned into a luxury," she warned. "And you have to be an expert to beat the system." She added that 80% of people have said they would desert a political party that implemented an unfair fares policy.

Railfuture president Peter Lawrence agreed that the cost and complexity of the fares system was one of the big issues facing the railways. He said: "Rail ticketing is a jungle."

Railfuture chairman Mike Crowhurst also pointed out the unfairness of rail fares. He

said there were demands from the road lobby for fuel duty cuts at a time when rail passengers were on a fares escalator.

The AGM passed a resolution deploring the continued above-inflation fare increases, calling on the Government to take into account the sums paid by the rail industry in taxation, premium payments and revenue share contracts.

The motion warned that rising rail fares will deflect many rail passengers to overcrowded roads and called on the industry to simplify the fares structure.

The AGM also passed a motion calling for better management of engineering work so that there are fewer and much better organised bus replacements.

The AGM welcomed recent Government announcements on railway electrification and called for a rolling programme which would include the Midland main line as well as regional infill schemes.

The AGM also called for a campaign involving other organisations to work for a Swiss-style integrated transport system for Britain.

A resolution deploring the choice of AGM venue was not voted on.

Wales

By Rowland Pittard rowland.pittard@railfuturewales.org.uk

■ ■ Electrification plan is not good enough

The electrification from Didcot to Cardiff has not been welcomed universally in South Wales because the section from Cardiff to Swansea has been omitted. The use of bimode trains will involve additional equipment and introduce a risk to reliability. Depots are proposed in Cardiff and Swansea but if the electrification went to Swansea only one new depot would be required. Railfuture has expressed concern at the suggestion that the Swansea trains will not stop at Bristol Parkway thus removing the connective facilities at that station to the Midlands, the North East and South West of England, increasing journey time and the number of connections required.

■ ■ Rail can unlock untapped potential of Valleys

The £200 million plan to ease railway congestion in Cardiff and the Valleys involves Network Rail improvements to stations, lines and signalling which could double rail capacity by 2015. Passenger demand in Cardiff and the Valleys is increasing at 8% a year and NR predicts passenger numbers will exceed 12 million a year by the end of 2015. Mike Gallop of Network Rail said the plan would help unlock the untapped potential of the area, meeting a growing demand and paving the way for electrification. The plan includes an extra platform and refurbished southern entrance at Cardiff Central, two extra platforms and a new entrance at Queen Street, doubling Cardiff West Junction to Ninian Park to enable improved frequency on the City line, a bay platform at Barry, upgraded loops at Cogan Junction for passenger trains, an additional platform and passing loop at Tir-phil to provide for a half-hourly service to Rhymney, a bay platform at Caerphilly and an extra platform and passing loop at Pontypridd. The proposed half-hourly service to Maesteg was not included.

■ ■ Steel loads boost rail freight

Railfuture welcomed an increase in the movement of steel between South Wales and the continent, following a fire at Tata Steel's tinplate works at Beverwijk in the Netherlands. Steel coil is being moved in trains three times a week to Trostre tinplate works in South Wales for processing and there is a corresponding reverse flow of coil from Llanwern to Beverwijk. These trains are being worked by DB Schenker. Colas has a new twice-a-week flow Margam to the Channel Tunnel depot at Dollands Moor with steel coil for Rotterdam Botlek. This started on 10 April and is worked forward on the continent by Captrain. Colas also worked a loaded train to Dollands Moor for Boenen in the Ruhr on 18 April. A new once-a-week block train replacing wagon load traffic began running from Trostre to Tilbury on 24 April. Steel coil is also being imported and exported at Birdport Newport and is conveyed almost every day by rail between Birdport and Llanwern. Trains, worked by Colas, continue to run from Llanwern to Sous le Bois near Mauberge in north east France with steel from Margam and Llanwern.

■ ■ Shaky start for advanced control system

The last day of operation with the radio electronic token block system on the Cambrian line was 18 March. The European Rail Traffic Management System was commissioned next day. Full services resumed on 28 March but initially there were a large number of equipment failures resulting in late running and termination of trains short of their destination.

■ ■ Mayor welcomes revamped 158s back to Wales

Arriva Trains Wales staged a launch ceremony at Aberystwyth in April to mark the multi-million pound refurbishment of its class 158 units. It was attended by Mayor of Aberystwyth, Samantha Hearne, and Mark Williams, MP for Ceredigion.

■ ■ Anger rising over 'improvements' at Newport station

Railfuture continues to receive comments about the unsuitability of the design of Newport station, especially for connecting services. The situation will not be improved by Network Rail proposals for some westbound trains to terminate in the eastbound platforms at Cardiff Central.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk

Let's have a colour

By Dennis Fancett

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Most rail campaigners, and I suspect many managers, acknowledge that the bewildering complexity of current rail fares is a barrier to people migrating from other forms of transport to rail.

A *Fair Fares Now* campaign has recently been launched by the Campaign for Better Transport. In South East Northumberland, we launched a complementary campaign for the simplification of inter-city fares.

In January a local journalist phoned me to ask my opinion on the recent 6.2% fares increase. He wanted my reaction to the fact it now costs £111.40 to travel from Morpeth to London off-peak. I told him I never pay that price. The cheapest advance purchase fare is £12.45. It was not the story he wanted, but the public perception of rail travel is formed from headline regulated "walk-on" fares which few need to pay, if only they appreciated how the current crazy system works. Rail companies contribute to the confusion by suggesting that cheaper fares can be found by visiting a specific website.

In fact, it is usually how far in advance you book that determines the fare, not which website you use. I accept the logic of offering cheaper fares on less crowded trains but rail companies should not copy the hated pricing policies of low-cost airlines. My daughter regularly travels on the lightly used 08.56 from Morpeth to Aberdeen. The advance purchase fare, normally available until 18.00 the night before, is a bargain £8.90, considerably less than the petrol cost, even with three or four people sharing a car.

But one day, because of work commitments, she was obliged to buy a "walk-on" ticket, which then cost £84.20.

On less busy trains, cheaper fares should be available on the day of travel too.

If you are unfortunate enough to have a sick relative or get that call during the night summoning you to a family emergency, the exorbitant price of walk-on fares is like a tax on misery and distress.

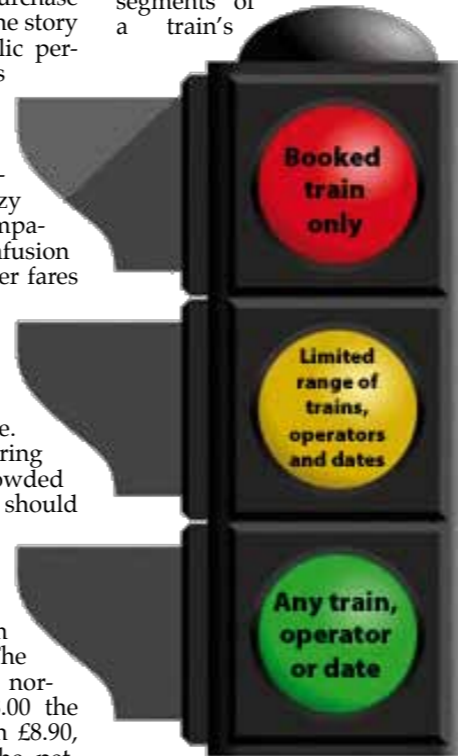
The South East Northumberland Rail User Group, of which I am chair, has developed its own SIMPLER FARES campaign for inter-city rail travellers. We believe that for every journey there should be only three fares available for each class of travel, red, amber and green. Red fares

would be for a specific journey on a specific train, equivalent to the current "booked train only" tickets.

Amber fares would be for a limited range of trains on a limited range of dates, and limited to certain operators, similar to current off-peak tickets, though with the train companies being able to decide what trains they allow the amber tickets on, but with this information being clearly published in the timetables. Green tickets would be for any train, any date and any permitted route.

Tickets could be printed appropriately on coloured card to make identification easier.

Timetables could be printed with tinted highlights for all or segments of a train's



journey so it is clear what journeys or journey parts an amber ticket is valid on.

It would eliminate the need for the long announcement on trains as they leave King's Cross, listing all the tickets that are not valid on that particular service.

We thought we had almost achieved this objective when the companies launched their advance, off-peak and anytime classifications a few years ago.

But the system fell into disrepute before it was even launched, by having several different fares, some with over £100 difference, within the "advance" option.

In tidying up the rail fares system, there are other issues that also need to be addressed.

Again, using Morpeth as an example, hard work by local rail

code for fair fares

campaigners means that Morpeth now has half a dozen inter-city services serving the station.

The most popular inter-city destination is York and the cost of an off-peak walk-on return fare from Morpeth to York is £42.

But you will have been robbed if you pay this fare. Buy your ticket to York in two segments, even though you are travelling on a direct train with no changes, and you'll save £11.00

The off-peak return fare from Morpeth to Newcastle is £5.60 and from Newcastle to York is £25.40.

Why do the rail companies discriminate against Morpeth citizens, or is it just they have inherited an outdated, antiquated system full of glaring anomalies, which no one, not even the Government-owned East Coast Trains, which sets this particular fare, is willing to sort out?

The anomalies I have highlighted relate to direct services without a change of trains. There is no increased risk of having to compensate passengers for late running as would be the case if two or more trains are used.

Morpeth to York is an interesting example because the fare is set by East Coast, the off-peak trains are run by CrossCountry, and the tickets sold by Northern Rail which runs Morpeth's ticket office.

The same problem also occurs with advance purchase tickets but is more difficult to highlight because of difficulties in demonstrating that certain fares were or were not available for sale on a certain date.

Recently I looked at advance purchase tickets for Sheffield to Morpeth, again on a direct train, departing Sheffield 13.21, and arriving Morpeth 15.47.

The fare to Morpeth was £38.50, but to Newcastle was £24.50.

By buying a £4.40 single ticket from Newcastle to Morpeth, each traveller could have saved £9.60.

But, in this case I was buying tickets for two American visitors. I anticipated the complexities of giving them two lots of tickets for their journey, of explaining they might need to change seats at Newcastle, with the need to move their luggage to a different coach, and which tickets to show the conductor when.

I began to doubt my advice to rely on reliable and efficient inter-city train travel rather than hiring a car while in the UK. I could almost hear the astounded response as I started to explain the ticket anomalies: "What a way to run a railroad!" I was so

incensed by this particular example and my inability to show off an efficient rail system to our car-loving American cousins, I took the case up with CrossCountry which runs the train.

Back came the mind-boggling response: "While it may appear at first glance that your journey costs more to get to Morpeth than Newcastle, all it is will be our computer's efforts to attract people out of car and onto the railways from large population centres."

But the additional money paid is more than a "loss at first glance". It will be gone from your wallet for ever.

Fare anomalies such as these do not just lose passengers to rail, they also distort data on passenger end to end journeys.

To eliminate these anomalies, our group has created a list of "fare guarantee rules" which form part of our red/amber/green campaign, and are listed below.

We believe passengers should be given an instant refund if ever any of these fare-setting rules are broken by the rail companies.

Rail companies should also refund the loss, or even double it, if the passenger can find a cheaper way of purchasing tickets for a journey on a single train, without changing.

Guarantee 1 All tickets to be sold as singles, which should be 50% of the return fare.

Guarantee 2 It should never be cheaper to buy two tickets for a journey on a single train (for example, Sheffield to Morpeth).

Guarantee 3 It should never be cheaper to buy a ticket for beyond the station you are travelling to and get off at an earlier stop.

Guarantee 4 Maximum of three fares only per class for any journey, red, amber, green.

Guarantee 5 Railcard discounts must be available on all fares subject only to minimum ticket price.

The issue of ticket prices on journeys which do involve changes also needs to be addressed but this could simply be the price of the segments added together, or lower if the operators wish.

Some open access operators, like Grand Central, have simplified ticket buying. But we need a new approach from the Association of Train Operators, Passenger Focus, the Department for Transport and the individual train companies.

SENURUG's proposals could be written into the next franchise agreements.

Severnside

By Nigel Bray
nigel.bray@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Double bonus

Following the Government's announcement that electrification of the Great Western main lines from London to Bristol and Cardiff is to go ahead, we are delighted that Kemble-Swindon redoubling is also to proceed. Many thanks to members who wrote to their MPs in an effort to overturn the Office of Rail Regulation's 2008 decision not to approve the Kemble scheme. The branch has been vindicated in making the key argument that the line would need more capacity for diversions during London-South Wales electrification work. After the recent announcement, Bruce Williamson wrote an article for the *Gloucester Citizen* which appeared on 29 March.

■ ■ Severn Beach campaigners win their battle

Bristol City Council has agreed to continue underwriting the enhanced (roughly 40 minute interval) service introduced in 2008 on the Severn Beach line after a campaign by Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways. The subsidy now required is smaller because the improved service has generated more users.

■ ■ Bristol needs to confront its own transport issues

The nonsense of not making more use of Bristol's railway infrastructure was made clear by guest speaker Ian Crawford, secretary of Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance, at the branch annual general meeting in the city on 9 April. He pointed out that despite all the expenditure on new buses and bus priority schemes, use of buses in Bristol had not increased and some journeys of six miles were still taking an hour.

He noted that all four parties on the city council favoured a Greater Bristol Integrated Transport Authority, which would have powers to develop local rail services and attract more central government funding. The need for an ITA was supported by Business West, local NHS management and Bristol's two universities but vehemently opposed by the transport portfolio holder of North Somerset Council. Ian Crawford regarded this as a case of parochial attitudes working against the common good.

Our second guest speaker Roger English, secretary of Portishead Railway Group, said North Somerset Council had secured about £1 million of Section 106 funds from developers and had spent some of this on a Network Rail GRIP* report to progress the reopening. The group was campaigning on the basis of a 17-minute rail journey time from Portishead to Bristol, compared with an hour by road. Its vice-chairman had suggested to local MP and Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox that the Portishead line be used as a test case for the true cost of rail reopenings. Roger English believed that changes to NATA** rules, which no longer treated modal shift from cars as a disbenefit, together with new franchising policies, made it less likely that a passenger service would need large subsidies.

During discussion, concern was expressed that Bristol City Council officials had produced leaflets promoting plans for bus rapid transit without any mention of rail and distributed the leaflets to homes while the council was in recess.

* Network Rail's Governance for Railway Investment Projects (formerly Guide to Rail Investment Projects).

** NATA The Government's New Approach to Appraisal which is used to appraise Network Rail and Highways Agency projects.

Railfuture Severnside website:
www.railfuture-sw.co.uk/severnside.html



High-speed errors

Now that public consultation on the Government's proposed HS2 scheme has been opened, I assume that Railfuture will be drafting our response which I hope will be discussed at the conference on 9 July.

The Government has to date mishandled the public relations for the scheme by concentrating on the hypothetical benefits of stimulating economic growth in the North and the notional value of time saved by quicker journeys.

This has allowed opponents to claim that the business case for the scheme is weak. We should concentrate on the real benefits of creating extra capacity, particularly by releasing spare capacity on the West Coast Main Line for growing volumes of rail freight traffic.

Is the value of increased freight traffic on the West Coast main line factored into the benefit-cost-analysis for HS2?

The choice of the Fazeley Street/Curzon Street area for the Birmingham terminus without a direct connection to the West Midlands rail network is stupid. Any time saved by a quicker journey to London will be nullified by the extra time taken to get to the terminus. The whole journey time, including access to the station, should be taken into consideration. Why would passengers from Wolverhampton, for example, who at present have a through service to London, want to change trains and change stations to catch a high-speed train from Fazeley Street?

The obvious Birmingham terminus for HS2 trains ought to be New Street, if the capacity problem can be solved. Some years ago there was a proposal for deep-level platforms at New Street for the cross-city services. What is the point of spending half a billion pounds on rebuilding New Street without creating any extra capacity? If the cross-city and Walsall

services could be diverted into a new underground station, there would be enough capacity in the main station for HS2 trains, and the extra cost would be partly offset by not having to build a separate HS2 terminal. Some joined-up thinking is required.

As for the London end of HS2, I wonder whether there is a business case for the proposed direct link between Old Oak Common and Camden Road for through trains to the continent. A cheaper alternative would be a free underground shuttle tramway between Euston and St Pancras, which would be just as convenient as the arrangements for transfer passengers at airports. It would give domestic passengers arriving at Euston a much easier connection with Thameslink services at King's Cross.

Investment in HS2, however, must not be at the expense of continuing modernisation of the existing rail network, rolling electrification, removal of bottlenecks and reopening of disused railway lines.

Martin Smith, Bath Street, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 1EA

Rail freight

Congratulations to George Boyle (*Railwatch* 127) on his timely warning about the threat from super trucks.

His reference to rail freight producing 70% less carbon dioxide than road per tonne-kilometre reminds me of a related figure produced in 1994 by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (and not likely to have changed much since that date). Figures given for long-distance freight in the RCEP report (Table 10.2, page 167) show that road haulage uses 4.3 times as much energy per tonne-km as rail.

Mr Boyle goes on to point out that road freight transport needs 50 times as many drivers per tonne-km as rail.

With these crippling economic disadvantages facing road

hauliers, one would expect that in a rational transport system (one with level playing-fields), road hauliers would have difficulty competing with rail but they seem to be able to undercut rail prices nearly all the time!

This seems conclusive proof that road hauliers get the use of the roads at well below the true cost, thus contradicting their shrill claims that they are hard done by in this respect. It is impossible to imagine that this glaring anomaly can be fully rectified overnight, but steps should be taken to persuade the public that road transport is, at present, featherbedded.

I have frequently advanced this argument, and have heard no rational opposition to it, but on the other hand it has not been embraced with the enthusiasm that its relevance seems to call for, not even by such level-headed bodies as Railfuture.

Neville K Upton, 21 Rockingham Gardens, Sutton Goldfield, West Midlands B74 2PN

Railwatch despatch

We enjoy reading *Railwatch*, always hoping that people will come up with ideas to improve the poor "performance" of the National Rail network.

However it is very wasteful to send *Railwatch* with a full A4 sheet just for our name, address and membership number. We think an Addressograph facility would be preferable with normal, light brown or white envelopes, like those used for our monthly bus and railway club newsletters.

T S and P J Keep, 5 Welbeck Avenue, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9BU

Editors' note: We try to use the simplest and cheapest method to despatch *Railwatch* while fitting in with our despatchers' methods. We have been investigating using the back of the address label to include other Railfuture information. However the back is currently used, every fourth issue, for subscription renewal information.

London-based rail

In reply to my letter about an emphasis on southern-based rail schemes (*Railwatch* 127), you quote Network Rail as saying 70% of all rail users either start or finish their journey in London.

Maybe so. But one reason for this is simply the poorer level of services elsewhere when

compared to the capital. If we in the North had equality when it comes to railway provision, I am sure you would find the percentage of non-London journeys increasing sharply. After all, I seem to recall that the pro-rail passenger transport executives in both South and West Yorkshire were very successful in getting more people on to the trains.

*Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby DN31 2JP
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High-speed sense

Railwatch 127 was very good and I was particularly impressed by Messrs Kay and Bacon who seem to have grasped that the high-speed network will particularly benefit non-London city pairs such as Nottingham-Sheffield and Nottingham-Leeds.

I see the potential of HS2 to transform those lines as much as it will enable improved rail service for Milton Keynes, Northampton and Coventry on the historic network.

Sorry to see our esteemed editors though lending credence to the old lie about 70% of journeys being to or from London. Network Rail got that by mis-analysing real passenger flows. Peterborough to Brighton return? Yep, that's four more for London. The editors should know better.

I guess, like most commentators, I am still scarred by the code language used by ministers and top transport civil servants until Labour's Transport Secretary Lord Adonis changed the tone:

- Carting around fresh air
- Doing what rail does best
- Most trips are to/from London

These weasel phrases were repeated, mixed and matched, essentially to provide a shorthand rationale to head off demands for investment in rail. We failed to interrogate their meaning, if any, with sufficient rigour. We let them get away with far too much.

The climate of opinion has improved markedly in recent years and these phrases are seldom heard now. Hence my surprise when one of them cropped up in *Railwatch*. My own regular return trip between Grantham and Romsey was presumably counted as four London based journeys.

We now have a rail minister who is encouraging people to lobby for the "Northern Hub" solution

to Manchester and transPennine capacity, for example.

Rather than compile some more reliable statistics, a task way beyond my ability, I think it important to appreciate that the repeated use of the trope that most trips are to and from London, far from being a value-free statistical fact, was part of a campaign to limit investment to the barest minimum.

Enjoy your Pacers you Northern throwbacks was the implied message from New Labour.

As *Railwatch* has documented, some of the most atrocious and intractable overcrowding and much of the least acceptable rolling stock is to be found running between cities in the north of England.

Many people with a general, everyday sense of history and pride in our country were mildly shocked to see Michael Portillo on television riding the clapped-out Pacers between Liverpool and Manchester on the very first inter-city railway in the world.

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Bikes on ICE

I always read *Railwatch* magazine with interest. The latest is another fascinating edition.

One article that grabbed my attention talked about ICE trains. One big drawback for the UK of ICE trains is that they do not allow any form of bicycle. This causes real inconvenience for German friends and colleagues on mainland Europe. This compares unfavourably with Eurostar which has made real efforts to help cyclists use its trains. I hope ICE trains do become a feature of St Pancras International BUT only once they allow passengers to travel with bicycles.

*James Barber
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Deutsche Bahn's Stefan Heulle commented: "Unfortunately, our forthcoming ICE service London-Germany will not

Send your letters to:

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

◆◆◆◆ MEPs have set up Rail Forum Europe to promote links with the rail industry



Pictures: DEUTSCHE BAHN

Fly by rail

Passenger jets are flying around Europe with the livery of German Railways to promote a rail and fly offer. Deutsche Bahn's offer involves 90 airlines for rail journeys to and from major airports in Germany and Amsterdam. The DB-branded aircraft are carrying passengers for the next three years on behalf of Tuifly to destinations around the Mediterranean Sea, the Canary Islands as well as the Cape Verde Islands. Rail and fly tickets allow people to travel stress-free by train from all German stations to all major German airports and vice-versa. About 2.5 million customers used this service in 2010. From Britain and Ireland, Tuifly, Air Berlin, Lufthansa and Germanwings are offering rail and fly to Germany. Tickets can be booked on the airline websites. Rail passengers on inter-city trains in Germany will for the first time be able to travel on double-deck trains.

Double deckers have been common on regional trains for years in Germany, but now Bombardier has signed a contract to build 160 vehicles for long-distance routes at its Gorlitz factory in eastern Germany. The 100 mph push-pull trains will enter service in two years time. There will be 10 bicycle spaces on each train as well as mobile phone signal amplifiers and electronic displays for multi-language information. The power cars will be assembled at Kassel with bodies built in Poland.

take bicycles – like all other ICE services in Germany and abroad – for safety and space reasons. We know that this is an inconvenience for travellers with bicycles. I think that the only possibility that will be proposed is to dismantle the bicycle and to take it as luggage in a bag. There is no official policy for the moment (it is a bit too early) but please be sure that I will communicate any news regarding our 2013 service as soon as I get it."

Bikes in Germany

In *Railwatch* 124 David Spurling wrote of a helpful feature for rail travellers in Germany, the conveyor belt beside stairs by which luggage-carrying passengers are assisted.

Be aware though that these conveyor belts work in both directions. If one does not remove the luggage with alacrity at the end of its ascent/descent, it starts going in reverse!

Travelling with a bicycle I found many other features on German railways to ease one's journey and save time.

On the platform an electronic chart with diagrams of each train due to arrive shows the various coaches, including the one that carries bicycles.

The coach numbers on the chart correspond to hanging signs on the platform, so that one knows where to wait for the correct coach.

Another feature is the large bicycle sign on the side of the coach, large enough to cover the whole of the metalwork as

well as part of the window. No mistaking that! Not like the poky little signs one has to run up and down beside British trains trying to find. These are such simple, common-sense measures which surely British train operators could use. They would help themselves as much as their passengers by saving time.

I would like to add that all station bridges should be fitted with wheeling ramps for bicycle-laden travellers to use. These ramps should be fitted far enough from the side walls of the bridge, or be wide enough, to allow use without having to remove pannier bags.

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More letters: Page 18

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30 years of TGV travel Britain needs to catch up fast

By John Stanford

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In 1981 I started travelling regularly and extensively on trains around France. In that year SNCF started running high-speed TGV services on a new, dedicated line between Paris and Lyon, with a spur towards Dijon. Now the French are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the *Train à Grande Vitesse* and its subsequent expansion over much more of the country.

As we are moving towards more than a single high-speed line in Britain, it seems appropriate to look back at the impact of high-speed lines on rail travel in France from the personal viewpoint of a lay traveller.

At times the emphasis on TGVs has seemed to be at the expense of the rest of the network, both the local services and what have belatedly been referred to as the "classic lines".

This has been both in relation to investment, understandably, and marketing. The TGV has become the brand by which SNCF markets itself to prospective passengers at home and particularly abroad.

It certainly seemed that although some long-distance rail travel in France was great, the same could certainly not be said for much of the rest, where services were both irregular and unreliable.

There are signs that this is now improving. Regionalisation has been a spur to local services with modern rolling stock in many areas. Some other longer distance services have been improved, although still with irregular timetables.

On the Paris-Brive and Paris-Clermont Ferrand lines these have been rebranded as Corail Teoz services that have drawn from TGVs the requirement for seats to be reserved.

The TGV network has always been more extensive than that of the dedicated high-speed lines. In the early days TGVs from Paris continued beyond Lyon to Marseille, Nîmes and Geneva for example. More recently the TGV Aquitaine line goes much less than half way to Bordeaux. Having said that, some towns have one or two trains a day probably because of political pressure to have the kudos of having a TGV service – at other times in the day there is a perfectly good local service to the regional centre.

On the high-speed lines themselves, intermediate stations are widely spaced and usually outside traditional urban centres. The two "new" city centre stations specifically built for TGV services, Lyon Part Dieu and Lille Flandres, have been part of major regeneration areas. However, generally there are no connections to other train services, although road connections, supported by local authorities, are provided. Beyond long distance journeys, where TGVs travel on ordinary lines, they tend to provide the standard non-stopping service between sizeable towns, for example between Poitiers and La Rochelle or Vannes and Quimper, but with seat reservations.

One particular feature of the way in which the TGV network has developed is the introduction of services between regions which, if not exactly cross-country, avoid the need to change stations in Paris. This will be enhanced next year when a line from near Dijon towards Mulhouse opens with services from Rhone-Alpes and Burgundy to Alsace and northern Switzerland. However, perhaps the most significant use of the TGV lines

bypassing central Paris is to provide a direct connection to Charles de Gaulle airport.

To passengers from Britain the range of destinations that it is possible to reach with a simple change from the Eurostar at Lille is significant, but there would probably be many fewer such services if the trains did not also stop at the airport. On a recent trip from Rennes, one of five TGVs that left between 9.00 and 9.30, my train appeared about three-quarters full. After the airport only around a quarter of the passengers continued on to Lille.

In summary, TGVs have been successful in cutting journey times and attracting passengers. They provide a comfortable and, usually, reliable service. At times during the development of its network, this was at the expense of the rest of the rail network in France although this has now been rectified, to some extent, not least because of the involvement of regional authorities. France is of course very different from Britain in respect of the distances covered and space available for new lines but, as long as lessons are learned, France's experience provides encouragement for the benefits of high-speed lines.

And news from around the world

USA The US federal government is redirecting £1.2 billion intended for a Florida high-speed line to 15 states in grants for inter-city and high-speed rail projects. Florida Governor Rick Scott killed the Orlando-Tampa project after taking note of a 24-page report which, according to the National Association of Railroad Passengers, was riddled with half truths. One commentator on the Sunshine News website said: "The state keeps electing Republican politicians who keep destroying high-speed rail plans. I can't believe how much ultra-right-wing oil lobbyists are hijacking and distorting what is as plain as the nose on your face."

USA The California High-Speed Rail Authority is planning to invest £1 billion repairing and electrifying tracks owned by operator Caltrain in order to run high-speed trains, rather than spending around £3.7 billion on a plan to build four tracks between San Francisco and San Jose. The two-track plan would allow the authority to have high-speed trains running in some parts of the state by the end of the decade while it secures money for the complete £26 billion high-speed project.

CHINA China's high-speed trains will be running at 186 mph rather than the planned 215 mph, in order to reduce running costs.

GERMANY Deutsche Bahn says it is hoping to have high-speed trains running to London St Pancras by 2013, following a decision by the European Railway Agency to permit ICE-type trains to travel through the Channel Tunnel.

KOREA High-speed rail which crosses from one end of Korea to the other in three hours has led to the withdrawal of flights at 14 airports.

SPAIN The opening of the Madrid-Valencia link now means that 21 cities are on the Spanish high-speed network. The first Spanish high-speed trains ran in 1992.

FRANCE Three firms are competing to build the French £3 billion 132-mile high-speed line from Le Mans to Rennes to open by 2015.

Plans for High Speed Two have met opposition and a very negative press.

More than 70 protest groups have formed to fight HS2 and some question the need for it.

Many of the opponents are linked to road and air transport companies.

In response, Transport Secretary Philip Hammond has asked supporters of high-speed rail to speak out.

Railfuture will be making a submission to the Government's consultation on HS2, for which the deadline is late July 2011.

In the meantime Railfuture's network development committee will be co-ordinating our response.

Some Railfuture supporters of high-speed rail believe the Government has not chosen the best route.

Discussions are continuing after the committee received many comments from Railfuture branch members.

"We plan to finalise our draft response well before the deadline, and branches will be given the opportunity to comment on the draft before it is submitted, through their principal contact, with any variations on the proposed route, the cost, stations served, and project concept, for comment," said Ian McDonald, chairman of the committee.

Members are welcome to submit relevant comments by email or by letter to the other NDC members, or to Ian at ian.mcdonald@railfuture.org.uk, or by post 10 Douglas Road, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8ES.

Railfuture chairman Mike Crowhurst drew up an initial four-page discussion paper on HS2 after conferring with the committee in January. With revision based on members' input, this paper was available at the Railfuture AGM in May and will be discussed further at Railfuture's high-speed rail conference on 9 July.

Norman Bradbury compiled Railfuture's response in May to the House of Commons select committee inquiry into HS2.

But the chance of a major step towards a high-speed network is being threatened by protests against the Government's plan.

One rail campaigner said: "I saw an item about HS2 on BBC's Country File but I would not call it balanced reporting. They



FORGING AHEAD: A Siemens Velaro high-speed train being tested for extreme weather conditions in a wind tunnel at the Rail Tec Arsenal in Vienna. This Velaro was built in Krefeld and will enter service with Deutsche Bahn as an ICE3. Other versions of the train have to operate at 185mph in tropical heat, rain showers and snow storms in Spain, China and Russia

played a recording of a high-speed train to people holding their hands over their ears. Exactly the same misleading tricks were used in Kent."

But in Kent, more and more people are recognising the value of HS1 to St Pancras.

Greenpeace supporter Bill Reynolds, who lives in Buckhurst Hill, Essex, regularly makes journeys to Deal, Kent.

"It's fantastic," he said. "Using the Javelin trains cuts an hour off my journey. What could be better than that. Once Stratford station is finished it will be even faster."

"It is already a more civilised way to travel. It is cleaner, the staff are more visible and everyone on board seems happier than they were on the old trains."

But before HS1 was built, lies were told about the effect high-

speed trains would have in Kent. Similar distortions are being promoted in the "beautiful" Chilterns and "unspoilt" Warwickshire.

There is a deafening silence about the impact of the M5, M6, M42 and M40 motorways and the awful pollution from Heathrow and many other British airports.

Cars, lorries and planes are free to despoil the "beautiful countryside".

People who are determined to keep Britain even deeper in the backwoods say the proposed £18 billion HS2 is a "vanity project".

Tell that to all the other countries who are already seeing the massive returns on their investment in high-speed rail.

Others call for the money to be spent on small-scale transport improvements while at the same

time cutting rural bus routes! Railfuture has drawn attention in the Department for Transport HS2 consultation paper to a list of "alternative" schemes (pages 57-61), which included Midland main line electrification. We argue that these schemes are essential whether or not HS2 is given the go-ahead.

To reduce the horrible impact of road traffic, more needs to be spent on the conventional rail network.

Birmingham City Council believes HS2 is essential to the future prosperity of the city. One benefit will be extra capacity on existing lines. Greengauge 21 director Jim Steer said: "Services which simply cannot be fitted on today's network will become viable once HS2 is built."

He added: "HS2 is the Government's most visible commitment to economic

growth, the closest we have to a fiscal stimulus package."

High-speed trains may use more energy than conventional trains but the energy consumption per passenger is still six times less than jets or fast cars.

And the electricity can be produced by coal, rubbish, wind, wave and water power but aircraft and cars need oil.

Earlier this year, just nine per cent of the public who were questioned were opposed to a high-speed rail network.

And European rail industry chief Michael Clausecker said: "The success and economic benefits of high-speed rail make it increasingly attractive to a growing number of countries in the European Union and beyond. There is a window of opportunity for us to develop a truly European high-speed rail network."

Picture: PHILIP BISATT

North East

By Peter Kenyon peterkenyon@yahoo.com

Stalwart leader Martin retires after 10 years

Having served for 10 years as chairman, Martin Murphy retired at the annual general meeting of Railfuture's North East branch in March. Martin's work for the branch was recognised by a presentation and a subsequent lunch with committee members, who are providing a rotating chairmanship at meetings until a successor can be found. The AGM was addressed by Ian Yeowart, managing director of Alliance Railholdings, who outlined hopes and plans for new services both on the western and eastern sides of the country, with a Hull-Liverpool service included for good measure.

Rail users battle to protect their services

As well as continuing to campaign for the reopening of the Ashington branch line, the South East Northumberland Rail Users Group has been active in lobbying for improved services. In April, Neal Smith of East Coast Trains addressed a public meeting on the new Eureka timetable which originally would have involved depleted services for Morpeth. Lobbying by SENRUG has ensured reasonable connections from Northumberland stations at Newcastle. Morpeth will have 15 inter-city services each day this summer, but still lacks a help point or train running information after the ticket office closes at lunch time. Northern Rail, which manages the station, plans to introduce information screens. Unexplained changes to the morning commuter services have provoked a petition in protest. SENRUG is seeking a meeting with Northern to see if an amicable solution is possible. Northern is good at liaison, but delegates to a recent timetabling meeting were prohibited from taking away the draft copies, making it impossible to consult with local users. SENRUG is also campaigning for a simpler fares structure: see page 6 and www.senrug.co.uk

Durham coast line

Coastliners report that later last trains from Newcastle on the line to Middlesbrough, Sunderland and Hartlepool have been provided and that Government-imposed cuts to bus services may induce more of the same. Following Northern Rail's management reshuffle, Coastliners Users Group met the new Tyne-Tees station manager to discuss possible sources of traffic for these services, such as the two universities, the tertiary college and the reopened Billingham Forum Theatre and sports complex. Looking ahead, comments for the 2013 re-franchising process for Northern Rail and TransPennine are being prepared. Support for Grand Central's fourth Sunday train has been sent to the Office of the Rail Regulator.

Percy lion fronts heritage line reopening bid

Various schemes for the restoration of the Alnmouth-Alnwick branch as a heritage line have come to nought but the Aln Valley Railway Trust has this year secured £159,000 in funding and the co-operation of Alnwick Estates. The construction of the Alnwick bypass made rail access to the old station in Alnwick virtually impossible, so a new station at Alnwick's Lionheart Enterprise Park is planned. A new logo incorporating the Percy lion – the emblem of the famous family – with its characteristic tail and the BR wheel design has been introduced. Visitors to the renowned Alnwick Garden, Alnwick Castle and Barter Books in the old NER station, together with the historic town itself should fill the trains of the future. www.alnvalleyrailway.co.uk

Bridges repaired in Tyne and Wear Metro upgrade

In the new year, during a 23-day closure, four miles of Metro track between Byker and Tynemouth were replaced, bridges were repaired and embankments strengthened as part of a £385 million upgrade. North Shields station is being demolished to make way for a new one that will have a bigger and better concourse and lifts to platforms. An ambitious scheme for the involvement of the community in the life of the Metro has been inaugurated. It is hoped to involve local residents, businesses, community groups, charitable organisations, voluntary groups, schools and universities in the life of the system. www.nexus.org.uk/metro



ALN VALLEY RAILWAY



Picture: NORTHERN RAIL

NORTHERN SPIRIT: Blackburn's station champion Sultana

Jamil, right, making rail travel fun for youngsters.

Cuts are a big challenge

There is no doubt that the cuts in local authority budgets have started to bite on public transport, with bus service cutbacks and reduced funding available for some rail schemes and for supporting Community Rail Partnerships and station groups. The amounts of money required for CRP support are a tiny part of most local authorities' budgets, but even these have been cut to the bone or cut out altogether.

In some cases this has meant the loss of an experienced partnership officer or a reduction in support to a part-time post. There is every reason for Railfuture branches to lobby elected members on the importance of local authorities continuing to support local rail services, even when funds are limited, and it is not a statutory obligation for them. And then we are all waiting to see what

effect McNulty has on local railways and their funding.

Minister backs community rail

Transport Minister Theresa Villiers visited the Severn Beach line on 4 March and subsequently spoke in very positive terms to an Association of Community Rail Partnerships seminar in Bristol, with strong encouragement for the community rail movement.

She said: "You are making a real difference to your communities and you are making life better for your fellow citizens. For that, I applaud and thank you." She also announced a boost for ACoRP with a three-year funding package, and an increased grant of £100,000 for the fund which supports innovative and sustainable projects on community rail lines. This reflects the added value of CRPs in improving the railway's value for money and is most welcome.

COMMUNITY RAIL

By Chris Austin
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Northern champions

Another value-added scheme has been introduced by train operator Northern, with support from Greater Manchester, Lancashire County Council and the Department for Transport. Northern has recruited station champions in Blackburn, Farnworth, Brierfield and Rochdale and they promote their local railway and help overcome the barriers to travel. They hold regular surgeries in community centres, through speaking engagements with local groups and by open days in local shopping centres or at sporting events. Uniquely, they also offer free "accessibility" trips to encourage people to use the train where the ambassadors explain how to

make sense of timetables, how to find the right fare and how to overcome concerns some people have about using public transport. Early results are encouraging, and if successful, the scheme would be extended, subject to funding.

DalesRail Sprinter

A Northern Sprinter has been named Lancashire DalesRail. This is supported by the Clitheroe Line Community Rail Partnership.

Community rail awards

Nominations for the 2011 Community Rail Awards close on 24 June, so if you think your community rail line or station has done something exceptional over the last year, click on www.acorp.uk.com for an application form.

How your experiences can

By Trevor Garrod
trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk
Enclosed with this *Railwatch* is a questionnaire to complete about any Eurostar journey made by you or a friend, relative or work colleague during this summer. Railfuture last conducted such a survey in the winter of 2007-8 and our international committee

wants to see how the passenger experience has improved – or otherwise – since then. We welcome your comments, positive and negative, and aim to issue a report in mid November. As part of the same project, the international committee members are also undertaking a mystery shopper exercise which includes

www.raifuture.org.uk

put Eurostar in the spotlight

checking to see if train operating companies promote Eurostar in their own publicity, on paper, online and at stations. For example, East Coast's website contains a handy link to Eurostar. On the concourse at Nottingham station there is a large banner advertising the fact that Paris is only four hours 49 minutes away by train.

Yet there are also some train operators which seem to assume that their passengers do not want to go anywhere else in the UK, let alone to continental Europe! If you would like to help us with this exercise, please contact Chris Brown at 24a Lannimore Close, Lincoln LN5 8SF or email him on cmb-24@ntlworld.com

◆◆◆◆ Just fancy that: Lib Dems want to reopen thousands of miles of railway (April 2011)

London and South East

By Roger Blake
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Main line to heritage links

Two heritage railways in the South East are re-establishing direct links with main lines. The Spa Valley Railway now runs services from Tunbridge Wells West to Eridge on the Uckfield branch. Meanwhile in Sussex, the Bluebell Railway is making great strides to reopen between Kingscote and East Grinstead, with recent dramatic excavations of the Imberhorne cutting and subsequent track-laying. Campaigners hoping to see such links promoted as part of a genuinely integrated rail network will however be disappointed to learn that the transportdirect website is unable to include heritage lines because of uncertainty about their timetables. The Heritage Railway Association needs to follow this up with its members. More information: www.heritagetrains.com www.spavalleyrailway.co.uk and www.bluebell-railway.co.uk



High Speed One could help inner London

Train operator Southeastern has been experimenting with three weekday Javelin services from Maidstone West to London St Pancras in the morning peak with balancing returns in the evening peak. This puts Maidstone on the high-speed network and partly addresses the county town's concerns about slow journey times on the route from Maidstone East. It may also help offset fears, raised in the Rail Action Plan for Kent, that those services might be further slowed if they have to serve Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill as the Mayor of London is demanding. In December next year the London Bridge-Victoria half-hourly shuttle will be withdrawn because London Bridge will not have the capacity for them during the Thameslink works.

Councils step in to rescue local services

The West Anglia Routes Group successfully challenged National Express plans for December 2011 timetable changes which would have cut some services while improving Stansted Express to coincide with the introduction of new trains. Nine stations on the Seven Sisters route would have seen their peak services cut from six trains per hour to four. Under intense scrutiny and concerted pressure from the group of local authorities and Transport for London, the plans have been modified. Three stations still lose one-third of their peak services. The group of councils used evidence of station passenger counts undertaken by the Railfuture-affiliated Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail Users Group as ammunition for the arguments to defend local services.

Electrification, but not as we know it

There are reports that the Government is expecting hybrid trains to help fill the few remaining unelectrified gaps in the south east network. Some existing diesel units are to be retro-fitted with third-rail pick-up shoes. Diesel locomotives are expected to haul Southeastern's electric trains between Ashford and Hastings. But fitting a central pantograph car to London Overground's new trains has reportedly been ruled out as not cost-effective because the electric pick-up would only have been useful for less than two miles between Barking and Woodgrange Park on the 13-mile Barking to Gospel Oak route.

TravelWatch vision for Chiltern suburban services

Graham Larkbey reports: London TravelWatch has published its proposals for improvements to Chiltern services, ranging from short-term (including a two trains per hour service at all suburban stations) to long-term (turn-up-and-go frequency and electrification). The proposals are at: <http://bit.ly/eA1ATV> and Railfuture's submission to it at: <http://bit.ly/kosXGY>

West Midlands

By Peter Cousins

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■ ■ Sunday services return to normal

Everyone in the West Midlands region was relieved to read that the long-running dispute between London Midland and train drivers' union ASLEF over Sunday working payments had been resolved. For several months many Sunday and some weekday services have been cancelled at short notice because of this dispute and as passengers we now look forward to a resumption of normal service.

■ ■ Massive protests over booking office closures plan

Less welcome was the proposal by London Midland in March to reduce the opening hours at 86 station booking offices, closing nine completely. More than 17,000 passengers and most rail user groups across the region complained to Passenger Focus which has since published a critical report. We hope that, given the weight of opposition, the company will now re-think these proposals.

■ ■ West Coast franchise offers new opportunities

Earlier this year the branch contributed to Railfuture's response to the West Coast rail utilisation strategy consultation and we have since contributed to the Department for Transport's consultation on the new InterCity West Coast franchise. Our input to the latter stressed the urgent need to restore a through service from Shrewsbury to London now that the Wrexham & Shropshire service to Marylebone has ceased. We also suggested that a through service from Walsall to London should be a franchise objective.

■ ■ Welcome timetable changes on CrossCountry

As the introduction of faster services on the Chiltern line has been deferred until September, there are few changes expected in the region in the May timetable. However the branch has welcomed the decision by CrossCountry Trains to insert additional stops at Chepstow and Lydney in its Cardiff service on a trial basis.

The branch has also welcomed the Rail Regulator's decision to approve London Midland's application to run additional services on the Trent Valley route from May 2012, a change which is linked to the expiry of the much-disliked "moderation of competition" rule in Virgin Trains' contract with Network Rail.

■ ■ Government allows Midland Metro to build on success

Early in February the Government approved funding for the next phase of the Midland Metro which will see the existing Wolverhampton-Birmingham Snow Hill line extended into the city centre. The scheme includes extensions to the depot at Wednesbury and the purchase of a fleet of new low-floor trams. As part of the project, the tram stop at Snow Hill will be relocated allowing the former platform 4 to be reinstated for heavy rail use.

■ ■ New trains give a double boost for passengers

The first of a new fleet of Bombardier Class 172 diesel multiple units has arrived at Tyseley depot for driver training and will be introduced on the Snow Hill routes later this year. These trains will have faster acceleration and provide more capacity than the Class 150 diesels which they replace. However the capacity which will be provided in other regions by the cascade of Sprinters which this purchase initiates is probably even more important.

■ ■ Setback for hopes of station at Kenilworth

Warwickshire County Council says it remains committed to a new station at Kenilworth, despite developer John Laing withdrawing from the scheme, following the Government's failure to award funding through its regional growth fund.

■ ■ Farewell to Railfuture campaigner Frank Hastilow

Railfuture has lost one its most respected campaigners. Frank Hastilow, who was a founder member of the Railway Development Society in 1978, died in May. He was the national membership secretary for 14 years and pioneered the use of a computer to keep track of members.



Pictures: NORMAN McNAB

Beneficial cutback

Passengers on the Glasgow-Oban line now have a clear view of beautiful Loch Awe and historic Kilchurn Castle.

The view, above, is thanks to the Friends of the West Highland Lines Society which paid to have about half a mile of trees and bushes removed from the banks of the loch, inset picture.

The actual work was done by Network Rail contractors who worked round the clock to remove rocks and trees and stabilise the slopes of Ben Cruachan.

The society – which has over 350 members throughout Britain – took the opportunity to pay for the additional removal of trees west of Loch Awe station. The work was made possible with the co-operation and support of Network Rail and the assis-



tance of contractor QTS Rail. Fraser McDonald, secretary of the Friends, said: "Last year we managed to get grants through Scottish Natural Heritage and the Loch Lomond and Trossach National Park to get some trees cut between Loch Long and Loch Lomond.

"When an opportunity arose to get some trees cut at Loch Awe we did not have time to seek a grant, so we financed it from society funds. Network Rail and Transport Scotland say their remit is to run a safe, efficient and reliable railway. They cannot spend money for purely aesthetic reasons."

Learning from each other

By Trevor Garrod

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An important aspect of the work of the European Passengers Federation is sharing experiences and spreading good practice.

EPF has just embarked on a project to compare public transport services from the passenger's point of view in 20 major European cities – including London, Birmingham and Glasgow.

EPF's urban transport expert group includes members from Spain, Greece, Poland, Hungary, Ireland and Britain and has drafted a questionnaire for this study. Railfuture's members in London, the West Midlands and Scotland will have valuable input here. If you would like to help, please contact Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ.

It is hoped to publish a report by the end of the year and a possible future project would then be to

undertake a comparative study of medium-sized cities. Regional transport is also an issue on which we can learn from each other.

EPF is involved in a project which looks at a number of different regions from the viewpoint of modal shift. Are there good examples of shifts from the car to train and bus, from which others can learn?

Trevor Garrod, Matthias Kurzeck and Christopher Irwin have also had useful meetings with the German regional rail passenger authorities, which are involved in a European Union project called Inter-Regio Rail.

We have explained franchising in Great Britain, the role of the National Passenger Survey and how rail users organisations – such as Railfuture branches and local rail users' groups – work constructively with operators and local authorities.

www.railfuture.org.uk

Rail for Euro future

By Trevor Garrod

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Two years of conferences and discussions culminated in the publication in March of the European Commission's White Paper on Transport. The European Parliament is expected to debate it in June.

Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource-efficient transport system looks ahead to 2050 and also contains 40 initiatives to be implemented over the next 10 years.

Its starting point is the unsustainable nature of transport at present, with its heavy dependence on oil.

The paper assumes that curbing mobility is not an option.

The White Paper makes some particular proposals –

■ Carbon emissions from transport should be cut by 60% by 2050.

■ Conventionally fuelled vehicles should be excluded from cities by 2050 and there should be greater emphasis on public transport, cycling and walking, demand management and land-use planning.

■ Greater integration, with airports, seaports, railway, metro and bus stations transformed into "multimodal connection platforms for passengers".

■ Greater use of buses and coaches, rail and air transport for passengers over intermediate distances, with consolidation of flows into large volumes.

■ This trend should be helped by online information and electronic booking and payment systems

integrating all modes, accompanied by a comprehensive set of passengers' rights.

■ The rail industry should undergo structural change to enable it to compete more effectively and take a "significantly greater" share supported by "considerable investment" to expand and upgrade capacity and new rolling stock with silent brakes and automatic couplings.

■ Public transport must be of good quality, reliable and accessible. Better use must be made of measures such as road pricing and the internalisation of external costs with an emphasis on "polluter pays" and "user pays." The European Commission identifies the need for over €1.5 trillion of investment up to 2030, including some €215 billion for the removal of bottlenecks.

This will help a modal shift of 30% of freight over 185 miles to rail or waterborne transport by 2030 and over 50% by 2050.

The European high-speed rail network should be completed by 2050 with connections to all core network airports and seaports and "a dense railway network maintained in all member states." This will ensure that most medium-distance transport is by rail by 2050.

Many of the proposals in the White Paper reflect points made in recent years by the European Passengers Federation (of which Railfuture was a founder member) and we need to be using them in our dialogues with our Members of the European Parliament as well as in our dialogue with national politicians.

IN BRIEF + IN BRIEF + IN BRIEF + IN BRIEF + IN BRIEF

Leap forward Regional development agencies are being abolished by the Government. The RDAs, which Railfuture had vainly hoped would improve prospects for railway projects, are being replaced by new bodies called local enterprise partnerships. Rail campaigners would be well advised to make contact with their LEPs to ensure that the LEPs take rail seriously and make resources available for rail improvements. Please contact your local LEP and find out who is the best person to receive a free copy of *Railwatch*. Please then email the contact details to Lloyd Butler at renewals@railfuture.org.uk

Draw tickets Railfuture's annual draw tickets are enclosed with this issue of *Railwatch*. If you have requested not to be sent these, but have received them, we apologise, as it would cost the society a three-figure sum to separate those who do not want draw tickets from our members mailing list. We feel this would be an unnecessary expense. We thank you for your understanding.

Railfuture stamps Help raise money for Railfuture by sending your used postage stamps to Stamps for Charity, Railfuture, 10 Bellamy Avenue, Hartcliffe, Bristol BS13 0HW. Please cut the stamps from their envelopes leaving a quarter of an inch margin of paper around the stamp and the post mark. You can ask friends and relatives to help too. Please ensure that you include Railfuture in the address so that the correct funds can be allocated to Railfuture.

Printing problems *Railwatch* occasionally suffers from print problems. If you receive a defective copy, please let us know.

◆◆◆◆ The answer to polluted cities: More tram-trains

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright

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■ ■ Future plans on show

The AGM in March in Oxford provided an opportunity to review the activities of the branch which showed how much rail activity is happening in the area. This includes the Reading redevelopment, Cotswolds line redoubling, High Speed Two, electrification to Oxford, East West Rail, Chiltern main line upgrade. Two public inquiries were attended, into Chiltern's Oxford-Marylebone scheme and an application to convert part of the disused Akeman Street branch into a village green. The latter could have serious implications for other disused lines. The officers and committee were re-elected. AGM speaker, Adrian Saunders, the rail officer for Oxfordshire County Council, provided an update on the rail activities the council was involved in. Railfuture welcomes the council's approach and shares its aspirations.

The East West rail link has been a key project since 1995. The strategic orbital route provides links to Didcot and Vale Science Park, Reading and many other destinations. EWRL provides extra rail capacity and network benefits to both freight and passenger sectors. The capital cost is expected to be £250 million in 2015 but the benefit-cost ratio is exceptionally good at 6.3. The East West Rail Consortium met Theresa Villiers who was impressed by the benefits and suggested further work and a bid to get the scheme included in Network Rail's high level output specification.

The Department for Transport has made various suggestions which would add to the cost but the business case remains strong even with this extra provision.

Over the next three years, the consortium expects to make progress and get the line open by 2017 with help from developer funds.

Chiltern Railways' plan to cut journey times from London to Oxford from 2013 by introducing a new service via Bicester Town could help the case for the East West link. A decision on the Oxford-London service could be made in September this year.

There are also separate plans to upgrade Didcot Parkway/Interchange for £6.7 million by 2013.

The Cotswold line partial redoubling should be completed this year.

High Speed Two is still subject to consultation and the Government's current proposal would have limited, localised impact on most of Oxfordshire. Some of the alternative proposals however would have significant impact and would almost certainly prompt objections.

Oxfordshire County Council is involved in a range of other work. It has surveyed car park provision, with help from train operators, at Charlbury, Radley and Hanborough. Bus links have been developed.

The council wants reinstatement of CrossCountry calls at Didcot as well as more community rail initiatives. A five-year station improvement plan has been developed and, subject to funding, will be continued. The county council maintains links with Passenger Focus, Network Rail, train operators and the Department for Transport, as well as making inputs into the many rail consultations.

Plans for a reopened station at Grove have been given outline planning permission and costed at £8.8 million. Further study work in 2011-12 will explore potential and scope for a partnership for a Didcot-Bristol service or link to a TransWilts service. Franchise renewal may offer an opportunity.

East Anglia

By Nick Dibben
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and Trevor Garrod
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■ ■ Campaigning pays off

Following a number of letters and emails from branch members, Cambridgeshire County Council has added more rail content to its next Local Transport Plan. Although a new station at Chesterton Junction, just north of Cambridge, was in the original draft document, the agreed plan now also includes continued support for the East-West Rail link, investigating the reopening of the Wisbech line and setting up community rail partnerships.

■ ■ Backing for rail freight

The branch is supporting two developments to increase rail freight in the region. The first is Network Rail's scheme to build a new curve north of Ipswich, known as the Bacon Factory Curve, which will allow container trains from Felixstowe to run directly to Peterborough, avoiding the current reversal at Ipswich. The second involves a planning application to import waste material by rail to the Barrington Cement works. Up to three trains a day could be run, bringing in material to help with the land restoration project associated with the site.

■ ■ Lift off for flyover on East Coast main line

The branch has welcomed the Government's decision to grant Network Rail a Transport and Works Act order to build a new flyover at Hitchin. The new two-mile route will mean that Cambridge trains will no longer have to cross the other tracks on the East Coast main line, increasing capacity and reducing train delays. The branch had written in support of the TWA Order.

■ ■ Ipswich lifts and Beccles loop

Completion of work on the lifts and footbridge at Ipswich was delayed but they should now be in use. The original ones were dismantled when the main line was electrified in the mid 1980s. On 17 February, Suffolk County Council voted to contribute £1 million towards the £4 million cost of a passing loop at Beccles. This will enable trains to pass on a 17-mile section of otherwise single track and is a key step towards an hourly service throughout the Ipswich-Lowestoft line. The work should be done as part of resignalling in 2012 and the hourly service is expected to start in December next year.

East Suffolk Travellers Association is now pressing for the five-year discussions between Network Rail, local councils and landowners at Beccles to be brought to a conclusion so that much-needed enhancements to the town's station and its access can also be completed by December 2012.

Both these projects are important in enabling rail to compete more effectively with cars on the A12, by helping the train operator to attract and retain business. Railfuture and our affiliate, ESTA, have campaigned consistently for them.

On Saturday 30 July, ESTA is organising a sponsored cycle ride to celebrate and use the new lifts and footbridge at Ipswich. For details, go to www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk or contact Mike Farahar at 5 Digby Close, Martlesham Heath, Ipswich IP5 3UD.

■ ■ MP calls for track upgrade to reduce delays

MP Ben Gummer is calling for Network Rail to install a double track upgrade at Haughley Junction, near Stowmarket, to reduce delays to trains heading for Bury St Edmunds and Peterborough. By 2014, 24 freight trains a day could be using the junction following the upgrade of the Felixstowe-Nuneaton route.



Is Boris thinking big

By David Berman

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One of the big questions for the whole of the South East region of England was how would London's transport emerge from the Government cuts?

Having reviewed Transport for London's business plan for 2011-14, it seems not too bad.

But there are serious concerns about future transport provision in a still expanding city, led by Mayor Boris Johnson. Transport schemes have been protected to an extent. Crossrail will proceed in full, albeit at a slightly slower pace.

The main elements of the Tube upgrades are protected but are re-phased over a lengthier period extending into the mid 2020s.

The investment programmes in the Docklands Light Railway and London Overground proceed as planned and the bus network is protected at its current level.

The main focus is on delivering a transport infrastructure to

support the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In theory all should be well but we will have to wait and see if the system really can cope when the international crowds descend on London next year.

The downside of the whole plan is the lengthening of project time scales, especially on the Tube, and most importantly the raising of fares well above the level of inflation.

In this strategy, Transport for London is following the same dubious course as the Department for Transport with national rail fares. The common mantra is "transfer the burden from tax-payer to fare-payer", conveniently overlooking that they are one and the same!

The plan also contains "efficiency" savings of £7.6 billion. This appears to be more of a demonstration of bravado by Mayor Boris Johnson that he can cut deeper than anyone else without affecting front line

enough for London?

services. Unfortunately, there will be a heavy price to be paid in delayed programme delivery times, the scaling back of important accessibility schemes and the static level of bus service provision when use of the system is still growing fast.

The savings are music to the ears of the Treasury but do nothing to improve the short and medium term quality of services.

As for the future expansion of the transport network, there seems little scope at present. Beyond the completion of the London Overground via South London to Clapham Junction at the end of 2012, and Crossrail which is expected to open in 2018, there are no major plans before the end of the current investment programme in 2018.

There might be a privately funded extension of the Northern line to Battersea, perhaps opening by 2018 but that will be dependent on the regeneration of the former Battersea power

station site, much talked about but with little forward movement beyond copious drawings and models. Crossrail 2 which is also known as the Chelsea-Hackney line is obviously still a long way off and barely merits even a mention.

As a look to the future, this business plan is very disappointing, lacking in vision and scope. The Mayor and the Government both proclaim the importance of London to the national economy, but clearly the proclamation and the reality are quite different.

■ The Tube carried a record 1.1 billion passengers in the year to March. There had been 14% growth over a seven-year period on "some of the oldest railway infrastructure in the world" which is why the Tube upgrade is so critical for London, said the Underground's managing director Mike Brown.

London's buses carried 2.25 billion passengers last year, a 57% increase over the past 12 years.

Wessex

By John Friedberger

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■ ■ First Great Western plans

The branch AGM was held in Romsey on March 26. John Barker, FGW's performance manager (central), gave an interesting briefing on the Portsmouth-Cardiff main line, including plans to improve reliability through small but necessary timetable changes and additional rolling stock to guarantee that all trains will have three coaches. The importance of this 'inter-city' route is recognised by FGW and it is acknowledged that ideally it requires five-coach trains with more comfortable seating and space for luggage and bicycles. Westbury station manager Dave Martin explained how FGW is tackling problems associated with revenue collection and outlined plans for improvements to information screens at stations in the Romsey area, although noting that FGW no longer stops at Dean or Dunbridge. Other subjects raised included signage between the two Dorchester stations and plans for loco-hauled trains to serve the Olympic sailing at Weymouth in 2012. Thanking the speakers, the chairman referred to a Rail Passengers Council 2004 report *The Mainline They Shouldn't Ignore* and hoped that one day the Portsmouth-Cardiff line would live up to its full potential.

■ ■ Salisbury to Exeter signalling

Railfuture welcomes the Network Rail announcement that signalling on the vital Salisbury-Exeter rail line is to be modernised as part of a £20 million scheme. At a meeting in May with NR, South West Trains and Passenger Focus, we were told that the work will take place in three phases, between now and April 2012. There are likely to be some "repossessions, during the commissioning phase". SWT does not plan any significant service changes as a result of the upgrade but reliability on the route will improve.

■ ■ Southampton area line closures

Railfuture has expressed disappointment that there have been frequent weekend closures this spring between Eastleigh and Brockenhurst causing disruption to passengers. It seems the work could have been done over Christmas/New Year 2010-11 when Southampton tunnel was re-engineered for the W10 freight upgrade. We were briefed that the new Network Rail "devalued" structure will ensure better coordination with SWT and so minimise line closures and also produce better and more timely information after unforeseen incidents, of which there have been several on the South West main line recently.

■ ■ Olympic sailing – Weymouth

South West Trains is examining ways of providing additional trains to serve Olympic sailing events. However a recent trial has shown that electric supply problems prevent the use of 10-car class 444 trains on the line from Poole to Weymouth.

Devon and Cornwall

Railfuture Devon and Cornwall is hoping that bi-mode trains could ensure the survival of inter-city services to Penzance if eventual electrification only reached Plymouth. Bi-mode trains would also allow incremental extension of the electrified network. So the already-authorized electrification as far as Newbury could, as a first stage, be extended to Westbury, which would provide Bristol with an electrified diversionary route from London. Stage 2 could be from Newton Abbot to Plymouth where electric power would cope better than diesel on the line's steep gradients.

Devon and Cornwall contact: Gerard Duddridge. Email: gerard.duddridge@railfuture.org.uk



Rail rides to the rescue

The cuts in Sunday bus services resulting from reduced financial support from local authorities has also given heritage railways a new role. In County Durham, the loss of Sunday buses between Stanhope and Bishop Auckland means that the only public transport between these two points is now provided by the Weardale Railway, with added help for people in the dale through their local railcard scheme. What a remarkable change of fortune from 1953 when bus competition forced the withdrawal of the line's passenger service by British Rail!

Heritage freight

Coal trains were expected to start running along the Weardale line from Wolsingham from the end of May, initially expected to be heading for South Wales, and keeping more juggernauts off the creaking road system. The Dartmoor Railway, also owned by Iowa Pacific, is looking at the prospect for freight from Okehampton.

Vandalism

Many heritage lines suffer from loss of cable or equipment by scrap metal thieves and most have had to invest heavily in security measures to combat this. Even rare castings and beautifully made historic

brass and copper components have been stolen and melted down. Badly hit recently was the Sittingbourne & Kemsley railway in Kent. Denied access to their Sittingbourne Viaduct station while the demolition of the adjacent paper mill was undertaken by the new landowner, they returned to find that the extent of theft and vandalism during their absence means so much work that the station cannot be reopened until later in the year. Meanwhile, the rest of the line from Milton Regis to Kemsley Down is reopening at the end of May after a two-year closure.

Railway Heritage Committee

This committee was due to be abolished by Philip Hammond as part of the Coalition Government's "bonfire of the quangoes" even though its members (including me) serve on a voluntary basis. In a welcome change of heart, the Government has now agreed that the crucial statutory powers of the committee to designate railway records and artefacts for preservation should continue, and will be exercised by a new committee of the National Museum of Science & Industry. This is thanks to the timely intervention of Lord Faulkner of Worcester, the president of the Heritage Railway Association, who had



A Sunday lifeline for public transport: The Weardale Railway

questioned the Government's policy during the committee stage of the controversial Public Bodies Bill in the House of Lords.

More legal changes

Heritage railways operate in a traditional way, but are constantly having to change to comply with new legislation designed for main line railways. Latest changes proposed by the Law Commission are an overhaul of the legislation relating to level crossings. In place of level crossing orders for each

location, a general safety duty at crossings will be imposed on railways under the Health and Safety at Work Act. For heritage railways, this is a much more difficult and uncertain process than complying with an order where the requirements are laid out clearly by the Minister. It is likely to place yet more responsibilities and worries on hard-pressed volunteer directors, and there is a risk that in simplifying the law, their task is made much more complicated.

Picture: WEARDALE RAILWAY

Special offer to Railfuture members

Railfuture member Kevin Sinclair is offering members a special "£4 off" offer to buy his new book on exploring Scotland by rail for days out, short breaks or holidays.

The guidebook promotes all rail operators together with ferries and coaches.

Kevin said: "I had the idea of setting up a website to encourage greater use of rail travel within Britain, especially for those on holiday.

"I noticed that many visitor attractions and guidebooks were written with the assumption that those on holiday would be arriving by car.

"To try and make things easier for those on holiday by rail I set about writing a guidebook to Scotland primarily for those using the train, although it is also useful for those using the coach,



Need for speed

In his interesting analysis of the train paths on the Salisbury-Exeter line in *Railwatch* 127, Gerard Duddridge tells us there is a hope that Chard Junction may be reopened. Railfuture should beware of such suggestions. Frequent, little-used, country stations should be avoided at all costs. The railway no longer operates in that tiny market, nice as it might be for the sentimental locals to have their stations back.

Too many stations on a line slow the service down to the detriment of through passengers, thereby rendering the railway unattractive. They seriously reduce line capacity, impede more important traffic and demand more track and signals from the limited money available for investment. What is more they add more heavily loss-making trains to the railway's costs, thereby offering ammunition to the "let's close this huge loss-maker down" brigade.

The present trains on the one time as-fast-as-you-can LSWR main line from Waterloo to Exeter Central are timed to average 52.3 mph over the 171 miles, but from Salisbury to Central the average speed is a miserable 46 mph and this with diesel units powerful enough to run at 90 mph on the level. You would not need to be a racing driver or law breaker to beat that speed on the A303. Chard Junction has

no large settlements near it and Chard itself, three to four miles north of the railway, lies equidistant, some eight miles, from Crewkerne for those going up to London and Axminster for westbound travellers.

As most rail passengers reach country stations these days by car there is hardly hardship in not being able to board a train at Chard Junction and the Class 158s will be able to blaze through still at a full 90mph.

Continuing this theme in an urban setting, is it not a great pity that in modernising the East London line it was not possible to close Rotherhithe station as it is only 300 metres from the new Canada Water and has no catchment area on its north side as it is on the river? Many stations mean slow unattractive trains.

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Quiz for Railfuture

There was no Railfuture input when BBC TV Midlands Today invited comments on HS2 on many evenings in March. An opportunity missed, surely!

Mention was made of Virgin's three fast trains to London per hour from Birmingham and serving Coventry which could be reduced to one per hour, plus two semi-fasts with the advent of HS2, but Chiltern's admirable intention to reduce journey times between Marylebone and Snow Hill in 2011 to one hour 40 minutes for 180 kilometre was ignored. There was little in *Railwatch* 127 about HS2. However, the annual report

Your letters extra

of the network development committee stated that a joint meeting with the policy, lobbying and campaigns committee had been held last July, but that a substantive policy document would not be produced until the new Government went out to consultation, which it now has.

Does such a document exist and who produced it? I do not recall individual Railfuture members being invited to state their views on the subject which I assume is the prerogative of board members only? With only 2,238 members our influence cannot be very great when compared to the size of some lobby groups.

I was informed that the Government consultation period was three months, but note that Railfuture intends to hold a conference on the subject in July which one hopes will be within the timescale! The cost of attending such an event will obviously deter some.

The agenda seems heavily loaded in favour of HS2, with criticism of the proposals and exploration of the many alternatives confined to the last 25% of the meeting, by which time many people will have already left!

How is it intended that the findings of the meeting are communicated to the Government when no regular meetings are established? Given our very low membership, I am amazed that the publicity team is currently suspended, pending review.

Obviously cash is limited but I would have thought that recruitment should have taken precedence over publications such as *A-Z of Rail Reopenings* which are of limited appeal. Perhaps it would be useful if

Railfuture attended some of the lobby group meetings and attempted some recruitment there? There are periodicals other than *Modern Railways* with bigger circulations, for instance *Railway Magazine* (34,000), *RAIL* and *Today's Railways UK*.

Perhaps their respective editors should be contacted to see if a small recruitment advertisement could be included free of charge when space permits, or, alternatively could a copy of *Britain's Growing Railway An A-Z of Rail Reopenings* be sent to them for review, with a favourable price for Railfuture recruits/members?

Finally, I notice an insert from an affiliated group, the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group, seeking funding for yet another feasibility study consultants report on the missing section of line between Long Marston and Stratford-upon-Avon, a total of six miles. A consultancy study, to Network Rail's GRIP 3 level is suggested at a total cost of £70,000, more than £10,000 per mile.

SLPG are seeking contributions of £10,000 which seems an incredible amount to state the obvious! The editor of *Railway Magazine* recently queried the value of consultants by saying: "a consultant is someone who borrows your watch and then charges to tell you the time." Surely it is not beyond the wit of the Railfuture board to produce such reports, thus ensuring that any money raised is spent on the actual project, not just talking about it!

Peter Kennard, Fulford Hall Road, Tidbury Green, Solihull B90 1QY

Editors' note: For more on HS2, see pages 10-11 and <http://bit.ly/ksRlSf>

Labour's Maria Eagle MP is carrying out a review of Labour party transport policy. She is inviting submissions and the closing date for submissions is 31 July 2011. For more information go to : <http://bit.ly/dLCKlq>

Small advertisements

Free to members (max 50 words)

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Author offers books and tutoring: Author of 13 books including latest one on transport economics offers books and courses to members at a discount. Also tutoring (via Skype) on economics and business including degrees, etc. Please see website www.davidjohnspurling.com for details.

◆◆◆◆ Argentina presidential candidate Pino Solanas says he wants to reopen railways

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay

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■ ■ M&S wakes up to the advantages of rail distribution

The first track was laid in February in a £7 million project to create a rail link from the East Midlands Distribution Centre at Castle Donington to the freight line between Trent Junction and Stenson Junction. Network Rail is building the link for Clowes Developments, the owners of the EMDC. The link will support a 1,000,000 sq ft distribution unit being built for Marks and Spencer. This will be the first M&S facility to have an integrated rail freight terminal, and will enable the company to transport more products by rail.

■ ■ Great Central hopes to bridge the gap with £2.5m bid

The Great Central Railway has bid for £2.5 million from the Government's regional growth fund for its project to link the sections of railway north and south of Loughborough. If successful, the bid is expected to lever in five times as much private investment to complete the project, which will involve a new bridge over the Midland main line. The link would not just allow an 18-mile ride for tourists on a heritage railway, but enable the line to be used for more freight and for rail industry trials and tests. Network Rail support the project and has donated two bridges which were due to be scrapped following the Great Western line upgrade at Reading. These will be used side by side to replace an existing bridge over the A60 road, improving the headroom at a location with a history of being damaged by lorries.

■ ■ Nottingham tram extension allowed to proceed at caution

Transport Minister Norman Baker announced in March that savings had been identified to make the extension of the Nottingham tram system affordable. Two new lines are planned, running from Clifton and from Chilwell/Beeston to join the existing tram line at Nottingham station. Nottingham City Council can now continue procurement and seek approval of a final business case.

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes

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■ ■ Extra trains for Leeds area and hopes for new stations

Train operator Northern is leasing 20 additional class 322 carriages to boost commuter trains serving Skipton, Ilkley and Doncaster via Wakefield into Leeds in a Department for Transport brokered deal which will cost Northern £10 million. West Yorkshire Metro chairman Chris Greaves said: "Passenger numbers on West Yorkshire's rail network have grown by over 50% over the past decade. West Yorkshire has a comprehensive inter-urban and suburban rail network, with 12 lines and 67 stations, which has a huge role to play in combatting growing road congestion and reducing carbon emissions. The extra capacity will also help Metro's proposals for new stations at Kirkstall Forge, Apperley Bridge and Low Moor, and means we can continue to develop local rail services as the quick, convenient and comfortable way to get around the city region."

■ ■ Pacers get a safety upgrade

Northern is upgrading its fleet of bus-style Pacers – which date back to Mrs Thatcher's era – to make them safer in a crash. The Pacers are owned by bank-owned companies which demand millions of pounds each year in leasing charges.

■ ■ Bridge blockers told to find another way

Tram users in Sheffield were celebrating in May when the Department for Transport backed down after a three-year battle over plans by East Midlands Trains to install ticket gates on a disabled-friendly footbridge at Sheffield station which would have blocked access for non-passengers, including residents and tram passengers.

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Kevin Sinclair

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The A5 paperback book is 210 pages long and has a colour map of Scotland with rail and ferry routes marked, as well as 17 colour photographs.

Further details and an online order page are available at: http://www.britainbyrail.co.uk/railwatch_offer.htm

For those without internet access, please send a cheque for £10 (payable to Kevin Sinclair) to Kevin Sinclair, 35 Townlands Park, Cromarty, Ross Shire, IV11 8YY.

Contact details for Railfuture Scotland:
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www.railfuturescotland.org.uk



Picture: NETWORK RAIL



Picture: RAY KING

MILES APART: The ambitious plans for London Bridge station, left, compared to a closed ticket office at inner-city Bruce Grove station, only six miles away

591 ticket offices at risk

Nearly 600 ticket offices could close if the Government allows train operators to follow the advice of the McNulty "rail value for money" report.

Sir Roy McNulty, who is reported to have "a love affair with the aviation industry", has recommended that train operators should consider closing 591 category E station ticket offices.

They include Arundel, Burnley Central, Erdington, Holyhead, Skegness and Sandy.

He has also advised operators to cut back the opening hours at 266 category D stations. They need to be open from only 07.00 to 10.00, because that is when most tickets are sold. Category D stations include Aylesbury, Marple, Rochester and Sutton Coldfield.

His *Realising the Potential of GB Rail* report which cost £3 million has been described by one rail campaigner as radical tinkering.

Axe them, £3m McNulty tells train operators

ing. "At the age of 71, perhaps he should spend more time tending his garden, said one frustrated rail expert. He added: "The sure-fire way to cut costs would be to cut nine tenths of the delayed minutes attribution and attendant lawyers, but that would offend the neo-liberals and is not on the agenda."

Allowing rail fares to go up any further when they are already the highest in Europe seems perverse, and de-staffing inner-city stations is asking for trouble.

Most rail campaigners know rail costs have risen by between three and four times because of privatisation. Inefficiencies have been built into the system. Waste is the result of a fragmented system of multiple operators, complicated contractual relationships and the diversion of taxpayers' cash into

company profits and dividends. McNulty's remedy is to give train operators – who have not covered themselves with glory – greater "commercial freedom" while calling for curbs on rail workers' pay.

The rail unions say independent monitoring shows that train operators' labour costs have risen at a lower rate than those for the UK economy as a whole. For an analysis of rail industry wages, see <http://bit.ly/jyfpA4>

There is no criticism in the report of company profits or management salaries.

A former rail worker said: "I suggest Sir Roy spends three months in a track gang including nights and weekends, three months in a booking office at a station where the passengers get upset, and

three months in a traffic control office, and absolutely no time at all with the in-house economists or any other kind of guru."

The annual subsidy to the railways is said to be £5.2 billion with fare payers contributing £6.2 billion a year.

But the Government is happy to carry on with its conspiracy of silence about the massive hidden subsidies given to roads and the airline industry.

Sir Roy has been chair of the quango Advantage West Midlands since 2009 with a salary of £80,000 for a three-day week. He was previously chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority with a salary of £158,000 per annum.

Check if Sir Roy wants your ticket office to close: <http://bit.ly/jaOESB>

What about the needs of passengers? demands Railfuture

By Chris Austin

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Railfuture has given the McNulty report a cautious welcome, with chairman Mike Crowhurst warning: "We are in danger of managing passengers to meet the needs of the railway, rather than managing the railway to meet the needs of the passenger."

Sir Roy calls for "evolution rather than revolution", and his forecasts show the bulk of savings being made from 2014-19. Sir Roy was asked to look at the

costs of the railway by Labour's Transport Secretary Lord Adonis in 2010, but it was the Coalition's Philip Hammond who welcomed its publication.

In a 320-page report, Sir Roy acknowledges that the causes of the excessively high costs of the railway in Britain are complex and that there is "no simple solution – no silver bullet".

He makes clear that he did not examine cuts to the network, but warns that if his recommendations for a 30% cost reduction by 2018-19 are not implemented, Plan B would have to be considered – a smaller railway.

He recommends no overall increase in fare levels, but does recommend extending the use

of "intelligent pricing" at busy times to help to manage demand and calls on the Department for Transport to undertake a full review of fares. Maximising use of existing capacity should precede providing extra capacity. Previous experience suggests that sweating the assets in this way can produce some uncomfortable pinch points where demand is high.

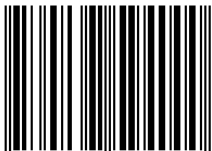
The DfT is too "involved in the detail of the industry but is not providing sufficient clarity on what Government policy is".

He identifies the industry structure and inadequate or misaligned incentives created at privatisation as being a cause of excessive cost. His recommenda-

tions to overcome these shortcomings include clearer roles and objectives set by the DfT, acceptance by the industry of responsibility for strategic planning and delivery, a rail delivery group of train operators and Network Rail, to be chaired by Tim O'Toole of First Group, a stronger lead by the Secretary of State on some issues, greater devolution of decision-making on local services to PTEs and local authorities, and pilot schemes to assess scope for differentiated standards for local routes.

Many of McNulty's ideas require a consistent approach by Government until 2019. The railways have not enjoyed such a lengthy period of policy stability in the past.

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