

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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**Spain's new high speed
rail station: Pages 2 & 10**

Page one picture

Our cover picture is another example of high speed rail spreading across Europe. It shows how the new station for Ourense in north-west Spain will look.

London-based Foster + Partners are part of a consortium which won an international competition to design the station.

The design incorporates a new park – partly built over the tracks – for the Galician city which is surrounded by mountains and has a population of 100,000.

The park will join two parts of the city which have been separated by the existing railway.

High speed AVE platforms are situated above the existing rail track.

The roof canopies provide shade at times and also reflect daylight on to the platforms. The park starts

at the station entrance and has a network of pedestrian routes leading to the station where there will also be a bus interchange.

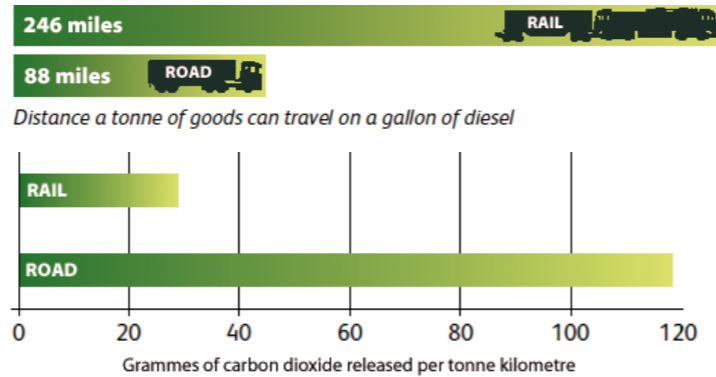
“We are delighted to have been selected for our integrated design and look forward to working with the city of Ourense as the project develops,” said Nigel Dancey of Foster + Partners.

The 90-mile long double-track route, incorporating 50 miles of new line, from Ourense to La Coruna cost £2.7 billion and opened in December.

Ourense is about the same size as Cambridge but it is unlikely that Cambridge will be getting a high speed rail line in the immediate future.

Maybe one day an HS3 will allow Cambridge to be part of the European high speed rail network.

More information: Page 10



Toxic policy on lorries

Rail freight use has been going up in recent years, in line with recent official policy and overwhelming public opinion.

But the Government has recently been backsliding in its support for rail freight and getting back in bed with the road lobby.

It has already axed freight facilities grants in England which helped to transfer freight from road to rail and delivered overwhelming economic and environmental benefits.

Now the Scottish Government has followed suit and slashed the grants by more than half. The Rail Freight Group said that the Scottish grants should be increased to seven times their “pitifully small” current level.

Just to meet expected demand they would have to be increased by 10 times.

A bogus 10-year “trial” began in January of 60ft (18.55m) lorries.

“The Government justified allowing longer HGVs on our roads by misleading MPs and distorting the safety analysis,” said Philippa Edmunds, manager of the Freight on Rail campaign.

Other campaigners are also telling the Government in no uncertain terms that 25-metre mega-trucks weighing up to 60 tonnes should not be allowed in Britain.

The European Commission is proposing changes that would allow mega-truck traffic between consenting countries.

The current UK limits for lorries are 16.5 metres and 44 tonnes, but the Government recently approved a 10-year trial of 18.5 metre lorries.

Campaigners argue that once European mega-trucks are allowed to travel between member states, large UK haulage companies will claim they are unfairly disadvantaged and pressurise the Government to allow them to operate 25-metre 60-tonne vehicles on UK roads.

Ms Edmunds said: “Allowing mega-trucks will lead to more road fatalities, more congestion and more pollution and will be disastrous for the rail freight industry, which has the potential

to take thousands more long-distance lorry journeys off the road. “Mega-trucks are 50% longer and a third heavier than existing HGVs.”

Good news

■ A four-mile disused freight line between Newton Abbot and Heathfield has been reopened for a weekly train to transport timber from Teignmouth, Devon to Wrexham, north Wales.

Patrick Hallgate from Network Rail said: “Without the railway, the anticipated growth in freight traffic over the next 30 years would mean an extra 1.5 million lorry journeys on Britain’s roads each year.”

“Each freight train can take about 60 lorries off the roads and by shifting traffic from already congested roads to rail will bring greater future benefits.”

■ Supermarket company Asda has agreed to use rail freight from Southampton to Cleveland in north east England to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by 60%. Freightliner will run extra trains to remove 10,000 lorry miles.

■ Eurotunnel’s subsidiary Europorte Channel has been given permission to run its trains over the 70 miles of track between the Channel Tunnel and London. It means that European gauge freight trains will be able to run through to Barking. Eurotunnel is also seeking permission to run its class 92 locomotives on French lines and beyond.

Bad news

The Government has allowed the road lobby to get away with a massive highway robbery by fixing the Euro vignette charge for foreign lorries using British roads at only £10 per day. A 38-tonne lorry does 10,000 times more damage than the average car per mile travelled. Lorries should be charged based on their mileage, and enough to match the damage they do.

Currently the subsidy paid to rail transport is a tiny fraction of that enjoyed by road freight.

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Picture: CSR

‘300 mph plus’ Sword

This is China’s latest high speed train, operated by the train maker CSR.

The train is actually a cutting-edge research project, and will become a mobile test platform for new techniques.

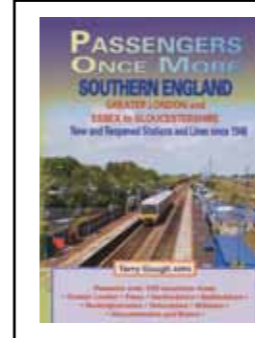
It is aimed at “perfecting” China’s high speed technology so it can build its own trains in future but also to export them, maybe even to Britain.

The project is supported by the Chinese government and several universities and institutes and is also aimed at developing safer ways to go even faster than China’s

current crop of high speed trains, like the CRH380A which was developed by CSR. The CRH380A set a world record of 300 mph in trials between Beijing and Shanghai in December 2010.

The new “Sword” test train has six power coaches, and uses carbon fibre, magnesium alloy and new sound-insulating materials. It was shown to the public in Qingdao.

CSR has already supplied 278 high speed trains to the Chinese network but hopes to apply for more than 100 technical patents as a result of work on the Sword.



The first volume of *Passengers Once More* by Terry Gough deals with Southern England. The 128-page book features 120 locations and costs £19.99. ISBN 978-1-85794-356-6

Railfuture’s book *Britain’s Growing Railway* gave details of reopened lines and stations over the past 50 years but now this series of books is being published by Silver Link Publishing dealing with the rail reopenings area by area.

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

David Bill MBE Rail campaigner David Bill received an MBE for services to local government in the New Year honours list. Mr Bill, 67, is a member of Railfuture’s network development committee but is also a Liberal Democrat Leicestershire and Hinckley councillor.

Born in Sheringham, he is a keen supporter of the North Norfolk Railway and the Norfolk Orbital Railway project: www.norfolk-orbital-railway.co.uk

Industry plan Railfuture’s Chris Page submitted our 15-page response in January to Network Rail’s draft initial industry plan.

Factory shut EMD, the makers of Britain’s class 66 freight locomotives, closed its factory in Ontario, Canada, and sacked 665 workers who refused to accept a

50% pay cut. The company, once part of General Motors, is now owned by Caterpillar.

Railfuture bequest Railfuture member Martin Conway Cook of London, who died in 2010, left Railfuture £4,853 in his will.

Good response Railfuture directors were delighted with the response to the members’ questionnaire which was distributed with the December edition of *Railwatch*.

The comments from members are currently being analysed and more details will be available when the next *Railwatch* is published.

Stamps for charity Help raise money for Railfuture by sending your used postage stamps to Stamps for Charity,

◆◆◆◆ You can buy our book *Britain’s Growing Railway* online at www.railfuture.org.uk

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes
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■ ■ Electrification bonanza

Railfuture Yorkshire is delighted with the go-ahead for electrification of the Manchester-Leeds-York line over the Pennines via Stalybridge, Huddersfield and Dewsbury. There have been worries, however, about what will happen to the existing stopping services and the future of services from York to Scarborough, Middlesbrough and Newcastle which currently depend on through trains from Liverpool and Manchester. Transport Minister Theresa Villiers has told MP Tom Blenkinsop (Lab, Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) that she has asked Network Rail to establish the cost and whether there is a business case for electrification from Northallerton to Middlesbrough.

■ ■ Vital to invest in local rail, MPs agree

Two local MPs have been to see for themselves the working conditions along the Penistone rail line. Jason McCartney (Con, Colne Valley) and Simon Reeve (Con, Dewsbury) were invited by the Huddersfield, Penistone and Sheffield Rail Users’ Association. Peter Marshall, chairman of the association, said: “Both MPs were amazed at how busy the trains were.” Mr McCartney said: “It is vital to invest in local rail services as the roads get busier and I hope that I can help in my role as vice-chairman of the Northern Rail All Party Parliamentary Group.”

■ ■ Rundown station may be restored to its former glory

Railfuture Yorkshire welcomes the news that Wakefield Kirkgate station, which former transport secretary Lord Adonis called “one of the worst in Britain”, is to benefit from extra funding for its refurbishment. Network Rail has pledged an additional £1.5 million to be spent on the grade II-listed building and is working with Groundwork Wakefield, whose executive director Ken Taylor said there was a commitment to bring the station back to its former glory and the improvements would be a catalyst for the regeneration of the entire Kirkgate area.

LOCAL ACTION



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

North West

By Arthur Thomson
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■ ■ **Police appeal to rail users**
British Transport Police has asked for help from the rail user group STORM (Support The Oldham, Rochdale and Manchester line) with an ongoing problem at bridge 40, east of Mills Hill station near Middleton. The police have asked STORM members to report any incidents, possibly taking photos from the train if they see any sign of youths trespassing and throwing stones. Railfuture members can contact British Transport Police direct on 0800 405040.



■ ■ **Good news on neglected stations**

North Cheshire Rail Users Group has been campaigning for years for action to be taken on the closed and boarded-up station buildings at both Frodsham and Helsby. The buildings have gradually deteriorated and been subjected to bouts of vandalism since the 1990s without any staff to keep an eye on them. The station master's house at Frodsham has become almost derelict and in danger of collapse.

Now NCRUG is pleased that improvements are under way. Customer information screens were installed at Frodsham and Helsby by Arriva Trains Wales which means that there are now screens at every station between Llandudno and Manchester. Network Rail is also renovating the station master's house on Frodsham station and NCRUG has been told the building will be brought back to its original condition, respecting its Grade II listed status. The aim is to find a new tenant which should be easier once the building is restored.

NCRUG volunteers plan to renovate the former booking office at Helsby station, subject to Network Rail approval. The idea stemmed from last year's ACoRP "Adopt a Station" seminar in Liverpool. Planning authorities will be consulted to maintain its Grade II listed status requirements.

■ ■ **Teacher uses local knowledge to produce rail guide**

A "window-gazer" guide to the Leeds-Morecambe line is beginning to appear at railway stations and tourist information centres. The guide describes the attractive scenery on show as trains cross the Pennines and Aire and Lune valleys on route to the coast at Morecambe. The guide, which contains a short history of the rail line, was written by Gerald Townson, pictured with the poster and guide, who was born in Bentham and has now retired there. He travelled the line for more than 50 years when he was a mathematics teacher and adviser to examination boards. The guide was designed by Wendy Smith, also of Bentham. 20,000 copies of the guide have been printed with funding help from Northern Rail, the Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership, and the Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group.



The guide complements a poster campaign at principal Northern stations which describes the line as "one of the most glorious train journeys in Britain". Gerald and Wendy were also involved in the design of the poster. It is hoped that the poster and guide will encourage more passengers to travel on this scenic route and visit the towns, villages and local attractions described.

■ ■ **Local action needed to tackle rail overcrowding**

Rail minister Theresa Villiers urged local councils in January to bid for funding to improve services on the Clitheroe, Blackburn, Bolton line to Manchester to combat chronic overcrowding. She was responding to appeals from local MPs Jack Straw and Jake Berry. Mr Straw wants the track doubled but Network Rail said a more cost-effective solution could be to provide a longer passing loop at Darwen and an increase in line speed at Turton. Ms Villiers said it was possible for a scheme to be implemented by late 2016. The track between Blackburn and Bolton was singled in the 1960s.

Thinking big will

By Ian Brown
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As my family sat down to over-indulge in our Christmas turkey, my thoughts turned to Sir Roy McNulty's report and his idea for a rail delivery group, tasked to cut costs.

Few turkeys would vote for Christmas, even though most depend on Christmas for their existence.

Is it realistic to expect individual members of the rail delivery group, formed from representatives of passenger and freight train operators and Network Rail, to volunteer themselves as sacrifices?

The McNulty report was published in May last year. What have we seen since? Well – not much.

Sir Roy's report was not a prescriptive Beeching-style report. It was a careful analysis that said that our railways are too expensive. Many would accept his assessment if the inference is that we can have more railways as long as costs can be cut.

However, it is possible that unit costs will not be reduced, with the result that the rural railway is the most likely to be earmarked for further surgery.

No one seems to asking: Is there another way?

Is the RDG trying to get consensus on a solution to the right question?

Back in the 1850s, the law in Boston, USA, allowed bars to charge three times more for a cold drink than a warm one.

This promoted the growth of ice "harvesting" from frozen lakes, and eventually an efficient and sophisticated distribution system delivered ice to virtually every house.

Then in 1876, someone invented the freezer.

You could say that something similar happened when Beeching judged that the rural branch line was outmoded compared with the motor car. No amount of efficiency could alter this situation.

The Beeching Report was delivered on 27 March 1963, 48 years before McNulty.

Interestingly, Beeching came half way through the line closure period. Closures had started in 1950, while the first year with no closures was 1974.

There is an obvious danger that failure to implement McNulty will lead to a Beeching-style series of closures, particularly in areas remote from Westminster. So what question should we really be trying to address? Is



Ian Brown retired as managing director of London Rail TfL in 2010 and was

awarded a CBE for services to railways in the 2011 new year's honours list. He has recently joined the boards of Crossrail Ltd and Abellio UK Ltd. Views expressed are his own.

there a "freezer" style structural change just around the corner which would make RDG initiatives misguided?

We all have difficulty with the notion of second time around in different circumstances. Yet we saw the death of the tramcar, and now 50 years later, the rebirth of light rail worldwide, if a little delayed in the UK.

Is the social railway in the same category, and if so what questions should we be trying to answer?

Question 1 The market?

The peak post-war journey figure was in 1957 with 1,101 million journeys on the network.

By 1963, the year of the Beeching report, this had declined to 938 million and continued to decline steadily, only partly on account of closures, to 702 million in 1976. This was serious structural decline.

Then demand for rail travel seemed to level out with an absolute worst year in 1982 with 630 million journeys.

With economic growth and motor car saturation, this all started to change, gradually at first. In the 1990s journeys went up from 810 million in 1990 to 931 million in 1999, a 15% increase over 10 years but perhaps not particularly noticeable against the background of decline.

It was not enough to be factored into the BR privatisation process in the 1990s which was therefore based on provision for a static market.

Passenger numbers, however, took off in the 2000s. By 2003 passenger journeys on the network passed the 1,000 million journey mark. It was a level not seen since 1961 and was approaching the pre-motor car boom figures.

By 2010-11, with steady year on year increases, 1,354 million journeys were taken, higher than ever recorded, just beating the 1945 wartime peak and the 1957 post-war peak.

The most recent eight-year period saw a 30% increase. The latest records show growth of 7.6% from 2010 to 2011 – in a

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lead to bigger dividends for us all



LONDON POWER: The Docklands Light Railway has helped to fuel a property boom as well as providing the transport infrastructure which allowed Canary Wharf to grow into a world financial centre. Our picture shows a DLR train crossing Limehouse Basin, re-using a grade II listed viaduct designed by Robert Stephenson and originally built for the London & Blackwall Railway

recession! Has anybody noticed? Well yes. The passengers have. The trains are packed.

For the industry to distort the picture by including empty counter-peak trains in reports will not convince passengers that their trains are not overcrowded. This reveals a structural market failure to invest for growth. The train operators find it difficult to justify investment with short franchises. The rolling stock leasing companies, set up to take such risk, are reluctant as well, because the Government specifies the service.

Question 2 Investment?

I have successfully made the case for investment on a number of occasions, with the Docklands Light Railway, the London Overground and Crossrail sponsorship. But the system makes it difficult to prepare a business case. Making the case to develop a rail service depends on addressing transport issues of course, but what can tip the balance is social inclusion, and the ability to get to jobs to sustain both a city and the economy.

If this wider context is taken into account, investment in infrastructure projects to provide rail service capacity has a huge payback. Europe's largest infrastructure project was justified on this basis. It is Crossrail. The scheme has been subject to more financial scrutiny than any rail scheme on the planet, yet two successive British governments have re-affirmed commitment



CYBER CITY: The bright new Overground railway services the new silicon industries of Shoreditch and links south London to traditional business in the City

to it. I appreciate that governments have lost the plot on environmental issues, but even here rail scores because cities are back in fashion and cities should be made more liveable in and easier to get to.

The DLR repaid expectations by delivering a 500% increase in journeys from 1996.

The London Overground has registered a 50% increase in journeys each year since Transport for London took it over in 2007 and invested over £1 billion in it. These figures are extreme but they do illustrate the results of full line upgrades, infrastructure, better signalling and new trains

Picture: NETWORK RAIL

plus investment in areas of passenger concern, such as security. Thameslink and Crossrail will deliver on a similar huge scale. Here again it is a total upgrade, providing massively increased capacity through new infrastructure, new signalling and loads of new trains, that tips the balance in terms of value for money.

Try making a business case for Thameslink or Crossrail based on unstaffed halts with an hourly Pacer!

Question 3 Only London?

Well London had a "client" in the form of an elected mayor, and a client organisation in the form of TfL. Interestingly, although transport does not seem to register on the national government agenda like health and education, it is important on the local agenda.

The aggregate of this is that it matters a lot on the national agenda although its voice could, at times, be fragmented.

Augmenting the responsibilities of the passenger transport executives in our cities in the Midlands and the North to include heavy as well as light rail would provide a similar focus on the potential for rail.

Transport for Greater Manchester has taken up the mantle in promoting the Manchester "Hub" for example. Here, like London, the biggest benefits come from the full project, although the Government currently prefers to announce it in instalments. At

Picture: RAY KING

the other end of the scale, where total modernisation has taken place in the form of attractive stations, improved frequency of service and half-decent cleaned-up trains, the relative result has been dramatic.

The Association of Train Operators has recently quoted spectacular growth on several very local lines over the 2007-2011 period, citing 91% on Truro-Falmouth, more than 90% on Bristol-Severn Beach and 86% on Derby-Matlock. Doubling the business can be much better value in economic and social terms than simply reducing costs by 30%.

Overall growth of passengers travelling into all our cities has continued to the point where the pips are squeaking. Network Rail's rail utilisation strategy approach of trying to squeeze more out of the system by putting in a minimum of new infrastructure has been a good tactical approach for taking up the slack after years of decline in ridership. It will not work for growth after the slack has been taken up, unless considered on a whole line upgrade basis. This includes the infrastructure, a new approach to signalling, and new trains. Look what West Yorkshire passenger transport executive did with the Leeds, Bradford, Skipton, Ilkley routes or the West Midlands with the Cross-city line. They were both a great success.

Question 4 Another way?

Cost control is important and should not be forgotten. However it is value that counts. Remember the ice harvesting.

We are currently fixated on ice harvesting while we should really be inventing the rail equivalent of the freezer.

This would allow us to pursue other scenarios which will lead to growth.

Currently we are trying to answer the wrong question. What about planning for a future using a total system approach?

What is the relative value of constrained growth with a 30% cost reduction versus doubling the business with cost-effective investment in selective infrastructure, new control systems and higher capacity trains – both diesel and electric? Careful use of capital investment is critical, with the additional benefit of stimulating the economy.

Where this has been tried, in London and elsewhere, better value to more people, users and non users, has been obtained by investing in the whole route with a particular economic, social or integrated transport growth objective in mind.

◆◆◆◆ Turkey will start work this year on a high speed line from Bilecik to Bursa

Wales

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

■ ■ Train driver praised after level crossing crash with lorry

A two-car diesel train was involved in a level crossing crash, 14 miles west of Carmarthen, while working a Milford Haven to Manchester service in December. The Coradia train, built by Alstom in Birmingham, stayed on the track but the cab was extensively damaged when it hit a lorry loaded with hay on the Llanboidy half-barrier crossing, a mile west of Whitland. Five of the 60 passengers received minor injuries. The Arriva Trains Wales driver was congratulated for reducing speed and warning passengers of the impending impact. The train had been going at 68 mph but had slowed to 41 mph after the emergency brake was applied. Inquiries by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch are continuing. The crossing had featured in a TV safety campaign last year.



Picture: RAIB

■ ■ New station backs up extra trains initiative at Fishguard

Passenger numbers are growing on the additional services provided from Fishguard and funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. Now preparatory work, including trackwork and site clearance, is under way to reinstate Fishguard and Goodwick, closed in 1964, that will be more convenient than the Harbour station to the residents of the two communities. The new station, which was expected to reopen last month, will also clear the way for better bus links from other North Pembrokeshire communities.

■ ■ Rail-bus link withdrawn

The rail-bus link between Maesteg and Caerau (at the top of the Llynfi Valley) was withdrawn on 14 January. The link service was well used and carried 180 passengers on the last day. The link bus also made an extra journey on the last day to Tondy to meet a late running train that was turned round short of its destination. This back-up facility will not be available in the future. Bus company First Cymru will provide a replacement facility using its existing Caerau-Maesteg service but it does not give a direct link to the rail station.

■ ■ Trains will supply new wood-burn power plant

Planning permission has been granted for a wood-burning power plant in the Llynfi Valley – on the site of the old coal-fired power station at Llangynwyd – which will receive imported woodchip from Latvia via Newport Docks in five weekly 800 tonne trains. Railfuture has suggested that the new siding facility could be combined with a crossing loop to enable a half-hourly passenger train service to Maesteg.

■ ■ Improvements to Cambrian line but not for steam

Extensive engineering work took place in January to bring up to standard the redoubled section of line between Welshpool and Newtown. The summer steam service between Machynlleth and Pwllheli will not run for a second summer as Network Rail has not provided the necessary signalling equipment, so West Coast Railways continues to be paid compensation. There is considerable concern in Newtown over the withdrawal of the bus links to the rail station and the unsuitable nature of the replacement footpaths.

■ ■ Sail Rail given a boost

Following Railfuture's meeting with Stena Line at Holyhead and suggestions to Arriva Trains Wales, an improved publicity campaign has been launched. Sail Rail is now a distinct part of ATW's website and banners and posters have been provided at major stations.

■ ■ Cheap fares extended in West Wales

Advance purchase fares were introduced in January from West Wales stations to Cardiff and beyond. In Pembrokeshire, a railcard is available for local journeys.

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At last, East West

After years of campaigning, it looks as if the East West Rail project might finally become reality.

Several issues remain to be resolved but a route from Oxford to Bedford could be recreated from a combination of moth-balled and existing lines, and begin operating by 2017.

Uncertainty remains about how East West Rail would proceed from Bedford to East Anglia.

Three main hurdles remain: The Government needs to approve the business case, local authorities need to come up with some funding – and there will be a need for planning orders to authorise the works.

Hopes were raised when the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his autumn statement that the western section of East West Rail would be given the go-ahead subject to certain local funding sources being identified and committed by July 2012.

The Chancellor approved the allocation of £270 million funding provided the East West Rail Consortium can confirm the business case and identify local contributions from businesses, local authorities, or other organisations.

If the funding is agreed, Network Rail will work in conjunction with the consortium to deliver the scheme.

Plans to restore the line from Oxford to Milton Keynes and Bedford, together with a rail link from Milton Keynes to Aylesbury and High Wycombe, were identified in the Chancellor's statement.

Transport minister Theresa Villiers said planning work could start this year, followed by building work in 2015.

She confirmed the position when she met local MPs, the consortium and councillors at Bicester Town station in December. She also noted the potential for regional services along the route.

John Elvin represented Railfuture and the Oxon and Bicester Rail Action Group at the meeting. Consortium chairman Neil Gibson said members were encouraged by Ms Villiers' visit and said: "We have a very strong business case, but there is still much work to do before final approval."

East West Rail has been a long-held aspiration of several Railfuture branches as well as Railfuture nationally.

North Oxfordshire Tory MP Tony Baldry (who has campaigned for 27 years for reopening) asked Ms Villiers in Parliament when she

expected work to begin and be completed.

Ms Villiers replied: "Work on the east west rail link requires prior agreement of an appropriate local contribution to the cost of the project and confirmation of a satisfactory business case.

"If this is concluded in July 2012 as currently envisaged, the East West Rail Consortium proposes planning work to commence immediately, with physical work commencing in 2015 or earlier, and completion in 2017."

The consortium was expected to provide an update of the situation at the OBRAC AGM on 6 March.

The AGM was being held in Milton Keynes where the first meeting, funded by Railfuture, was held in 1987.

East West Rail could be running by 2017, making it one of the few major railway reopenings in England since the 1960s Beeching era of line closures.

In August, Oxford Economics showed that East West Rail connecting Oxford and Aylesbury with Milton Keynes and Bedford could generate more than £38 million a year for the UK economy.

Evergreen 3

The East West project is likely to be linked to Chiltern Railways' plans to run services to Oxford from London Marylebone via Bicester which it calls Evergreen 3.

The public inquiry into Evergreen 3 involved 33 days in public hearings of evidence. The inspector recommended that Chiltern Railways should not get permission because of bat roosts in Wolvercot Tunnel in Oxford.

Since then, the Government has said it is "minded" to approve the scheme if Chiltern and Natural England reach agreement on mitigation measures for the bats in Wolvercot Tunnel and measures to relocate a colony of great crested newts. It is understood that Chiltern Railways is close to resolving the bats issue.

It has set up an innovative lighting system to alert the bats when a train is approaching and allow them to get into a safe roosting position.

If the Government gives approval, 12 months of design work on Chiltern's Evergreen 3 scheme can go ahead, at the same time as design work for East West Rail.

A key issue is how passenger services using the new lines will be franchised but Chiltern Railways is expected to bid. The consortium business case proposed one

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Rail looks likely



Picture: JERRY ALDERSON

JANUARY 2012: An excursion train traverses Bletchley flyover which is expected to be a key point for East West Rail. There could be a station on the viaduct with access to the main station platforms at Bletchley below.

example of a service pattern, but the Department for Transport is studying additional services.

Local rail users in Bicester and Bedford are concerned that Evergreen 3 and EWR could change services to small stations such as Islip.

BAM Nuttall have been awarded the £190 million contract for the Evergreen 3 construction work and await final approval and planning to be completed before construction can begin.

It is estimated that this may take a year and construction a further year so that services may commence in 2014. The work will be undertaken in phases so that access to the Ministry of Defence site at Bicester and the stone depot at Water Eaton can be maintained.

The Department for Transport had already agreed to fund work at Wolvercot Tunnel so that it is future-proofed for possible W12 container freight traffic and electrification.

Railfuture has always held up East West Rail as a test case. It should be a simple rail reopening, because the track or trackbed is all there but the railways' complex structure has until now prevented the reopening.

To the East

The Department for Transport is working with the consortium to identify a route east of Bedford.

MPs are committed to the complete East West Rail scheme. Iain Stewart (Con, Milton Keynes South) and Dr Julian Huppert (Lib Dem, Cambridge) support creating a link to the existing rail network serving Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

The political process came to a head last year when Mr Stewart formed an all-party group of MPs and peers to support EWR and get a Commons debate. Ms Villiers visited Cambridge in

September to discuss EWR after Railfuture met Dr Huppert. She also met MPs and the consortium in March 2011. Richard Fuller (Con, Bedford) is a member of the all-party group which supports East West Rail. Mr Fuller highlighted the line's potential to improve the economic prospects of Bedford and create jobs.

Ben Gummer (Con, Ipswich) pointed out that EWR would enhance the economy.

Peter Aldous (Con, Waveney) saw the advantage of EWR as a means of avoiding the need to travel on the congested main line into London.

George Freeman (Con, Mid Norfolk) and Chloe Smith (Con, Norwich North) both stressed the importance of EWR reaching Norwich.

Brandon Lewis (Con, Great Yarmouth) was keen to see regeneration on the back of EWR.

Enterprise partnerships

Local Enterprise Partnerships, introduced by the coalition Government, are expected to play a key role in planning transport infrastructure like EWR.

The Oxfordshire LEP (Adrian Shooter is vice chair) has identified the EWR as an essential piece of infrastructure and has been pressing the case.

South East Midlands LEP which includes Milton Keynes has also adopted EWR as a priority.

The chair of the Greater Cambridgeshire LEP has urged support for EWR. Bucks has yet to finalise an LEP but Bucks Business First has expressed support.

Local Transport Plan support

All relevant county and unitary councils are supportive of EWR and have included it in their Local Transport Plans.

Railfuture will be encouraging them to stay on board what looks like a winner.

Severnside

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

■ ■ Short trains challenged

One of the main challenges for the British rail network is meeting the demand for medium-distance travel, Railfuture vice president Chris Irwin told members at a branch meeting in Bath in December. He warned that using up paths with short trains was not the answer. Chris, who chairs TravelWatch South West, gave a very stimulating presentation on the McNulty report which claimed that British trains are less heavily loaded than those on the Continent, although the very large numbers of passengers travelling by train to the city's Christmas Market that day would disagree! The McNulty report noted that French Railways generally operate at a lower frequency and higher capacity than UK train operators.

■ ■ Rail important for core transport strategy

The public examination of Bath & North East Somerset Council's core strategy was being held in January, where Railfuture was represented. Our response to the consultation in 2011 emphasised the need to safeguard the disused Radstock-Frome line, protection of sites for stations at Bathampton and Salford, reinstatement of the former Midland route into Bath and use of rail transport where possible for mineral traffic. We had argued that Bath attracts more long-distance visitors than most cities of its size and therefore needed more railway routes, instead of the busway which was to have been built on part of the Midland trackbed and was essentially for local travel. Following a change in its political complexion last May, the council removed the busway from the Bath Transportation Package and some very pro-rail comments have been made by Councillor Roger Symonds, the Cabinet member for transport.

■ ■ Rail speed a bonus for public transport users



The Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy makes a number of projections for population growth in the

three districts and suggests locations for additional housing. It makes no specific comments about railways, although its maps include the main lines and the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway. The branch responded to the strategy's theme, *Making the best use of infrastructure*, by pointing out that many local journeys are faster with a rail element than if made entirely by bus. Taking up its own call for "joint funding of transport infrastructure", we suggested that the option of additional housing at Churchdown strengthened the case for reopening the station there. We also asked the councils to press for improved train services at Gloucester and Ashchurch, together with improvements to Cheltenham station.

■ ■ Minister and MP hopeful over Portishead reopening



Hopes for reopening the Portishead line have been boosted by a meeting between Dr Liam Fox, MP for North Somerset and Transport Minister Norman Baker, left. According to the *Western Daily Press* for 19 December 2011, the Government's policy of giving greater priority to capital projects has pushed medium-sized schemes like Portishead further up the queue for funding. Dr Fox was reported as saying there was now a realistic chance of work starting before 2015.



Your letters

East Coast

It seems to be assumed that "of course" a high speed north-south railway line should take the West Coast route via Carlisle to Scotland. But there is no "of course" about it. Traffic analysis shows that the route should be along the East Coast.

The North East is a slightly more important traffic objective than Scotland. It exchanges 7,7303,00 passengers/year with the rest of the country, against Scotland's 6,641,000 journeys/year. Within Scotland, 3,116,000 (46%) of these come from Edinburgh against 1,624,000 (24%) from Glasgow.

More Scots want to go to the east side than the west side of England. 2,340,000 go to the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber region while 1,615,000 go the North West. Only 1,658,000 (25%) go to London.

My figures come from the Office of Rail Regulation's yearbook. They are derived from ticket sales (not turnstile clicks) and therefore record origin and destination and ignore intermediate stations. Return journeys are treated as two single journeys.

The West Coast route has two significant obstacles, Shap and Beattock, which will be expensive to overcome. On the east side Berwick will have to be on a loop off the main line. The only natural but not very difficult obstacle is Penmanshiel.

To reach Scotland via the North East is the natural and business-like way to go.

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Links to HS2

There appears to be widespread agreement that HS2 should go ahead on the Y proposal, and people from Scotland and north east England are busy lobbying for further extensions to serve their areas. But what about

the Midlands and South, which consist of a lot more than just London and Birmingham?

May I suggest a campaign for feeder routes which would not be built to full high speed standards but which would carry high speed trains? While using much of existing routes they would have some new sections, possibly high speed, which would be aimed at bypassing key bottlenecks, and also catering for other needs like freight.

Here are five possible routes, all serving the central hub near Birmingham.

1. Birmingham to Plymouth which would take over the long distance functions of Cross Country, and have connections for South Wales.
2. Birmingham to Bournemouth (as above), and forming part of a strategy for freight to Southampton.
3. Birmingham to Ipswich via Northampton, Bedford and Cambridge (which would also be served by east-west trains from Oxford, etc, and freight for Felixstowe).
4. Birmingham to Lincoln serving East Midlands Airport, Nottingham and an interchange with the East Coast main line, possibly at Newark Northgate.
5. Birmingham to Shrewsbury via Wolverhampton, with connections for Mid Wales.

This would make high speed rail a truly national network.

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HS2 day dreamers

As you print several letters in response to my original letter expressing disappointment following the high-speed rail conference, including a two-page spread explaining Railfuture's stance, which incidentally should surely have been produced a long time ago after canvassing opinion from all members, I hope you will

allow me to add some further thoughts? I sometimes wonder if anyone has actually read the consultative document issued by the Department for Transport.

For reasons of space I quote just three random items from that document:

'On the basis of HS2 Ltd's analysis, the Government announced in October 2010 that it favours a Y-shaped core high speed rail network, linking London to Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds, with additional stations serving South Yorkshire and the East Midlands. This network would also include links to HS1 and Heathrow.'

"It is particularly important to note that such a network would not only deliver capacity improvements for those people travelling on the new lines themselves. For example, on the London-West Midlands corridor, a new high speed line would release capacity on the West Coast main line for additional passenger services to towns and cities such as Northampton, Coventry, Rugby, and Milton Keynes, or for the increased use of the West Coast main line for CrossCountry services or for services on other east-west routes."

"Connections to the West Coast and East Coast main lines would enable through-running high speed rail services to continue to other destinations including Liverpool, Newcastle, Glasgow and Edinburgh via the conventional network."

"Integration with the classic network: This would enable high speed lines to serve more destinations, spreading the benefits of high speed rail more widely."

The above seems to answer Lloyd Butler's criticism about it being "totally isolated" from traditional lines.

Others want a "debate" about the route and environmental concerns. Heaven knows we have had enough "debates". Let's get on and build it!

Even after the umpteenth debate, the line chosen would need another debate about that, and so on ad infinitum.

Of course all this plays into antis' hands. There is enough opposition already without Railfuture adding to it.

Railfuture can daydream about all the different routes HS2 could have taken, and meanwhile those of us who want to travel by rail will have to put up

with cramped claustrophobic, uncomfortable Pendolinos for the next 30 years at least!

The antis insist it can all be solved with a few extra coaches and a flyover at Ledburn, but it is the extra services we need on the southern West Coast main line to the South coast, East Anglia, the west of England, South Yorkshire, the North East, and direct services to Scotland, Liverpool and anywhere north of Crewe, none of which are possible at the moment because of lack of capacity.

A new line is needed, and it should be part of the European high speed network.

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Editors' comment: We understand Lloyd was criticising the overall process of high speed rail planning in Britain rather than the detailed plans arrived at by HS2 Ltd.

Rail for the future

While I sympathise with Mike Crowhurst and Railfuture committee members who are attempting to find a stance on high speed rail acceptable to all members, Railfuture needs to get to grips with this important issue. The high speed rail debate has many aspects but for Railfuture it comes down to this:

- 1) Why would an organisation which calls itself Railfuture not support high speed rail?
- 2) Why would it ignore the extensive studies already undertaken by professionals examining the options for high speed rail in Britain?

I worry that too much time is being spent trying to find a solution that suits everyone. In doing so officers have embarked on the ambitious but ultimately fruitless task of attempting to devise a better HS2 package than Arup, Atkins, Greengauge and all those experts with the time and money to look at these things properly.

Any high speed rail route will be controversial. Swapping the Chilterns for the M1 corridor means building through people's homes instead of countryside. While I understand some Railfuture members oppose high speed rail, we might reasonably ask why they are members of a pro-rail organisation.

Railfuture can have a vital role ensuring Government high speed rail proposals are thought through and do not go ahead

www.railfuture.org.uk

at the expense of other rail projects. This is possible without needing to reinvent HS2. I would politely suggest that Mike and the committee adopt a position true to Railfuture's railway development principles without worrying too much if not every member is yet convinced of the merits of HS2.

Dan Harvey
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Walk-on justice

I agree with Shadow Transport Minister Lilian Greenwood that "we should not be taxing people off the railway" (Railwatch 130). Alas, today's emphasis on pre-booked tickets using the internet and credit cards is discouraging "those without an alternative means of transport". Such people are less likely to go online or use cards for making payments.

I think there should always be a proportion of low cost fares made available for those wanting to buy their ticket on the day and from the station booking office. We do not expect users of buses to decide their journeys well in advance, while car drivers have the freedom to fill up their tanks and go wherever they please. Restrictions on cheap fares are helping to kill rail travel as we always knew it.

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Another way

Network Rail's London & South East rail utilisation study rejected the Brighton main line 2 proposal but did not come up with any solutions. The study identifies potential for two additional paths through the East Croydon bottleneck, but plans to use them to provide additional capacity at Tattenham Corner and Caterham by separating some of these services which currently join at Purley. However, the capacity required at Tattenham Corner and Caterham could be provided another way, by building a one mile long shallow tunnel linking

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

◆◆◆◆ The Israeli government has approved a new 200 mile railway from Eilat to Tel Aviv



STOP: A steam excursion is halted in the South African bush after steel sleepers were stolen

Special train halted after thieves steal rail line

Theft from railways to fuel a criminal scrap market has caused massive delays and expense in Britain. Copper and other electrical cabling particularly have been targeted.

But in South Africa thieves ripped up the rail track to steal the metal sleepers beneath.

The discovery was made when a steam excursion on 25 November 2011 travelled from Hermanstad to Cullinan, at the end of a lightly used six-mile long branch off an electrified main line.

The class 24 steam loco had to grind to an emergency halt. Passengers had to walk into Cullinan and were taken home by bus.

Volunteer driver Peter Odell had been warned that there had previously been metal theft along the line so was keeping a careful lookout. A programme is now in place by Transnet Freight Rail to replace all steel sleepers with

concrete. These can be seen in the photos awaiting installation.

"The locomotive came to rest on already loosened ties and some of the sleepers were lying nearby in the bush obviously waiting to be loaded," he said. "We were keeping a keen eye open for sleeper theft and speed was down to about 10 mph. Our approach had obviously disturbed someone busy stealing steel sleepers."

The train reversed to the main line junction at Rayton and returned empty to the Friends of the Rail, Pretoria base at Hermanstad. Transnet Freight Rail has relaid the line and the Friends' operations continue normally.

In Britain several people have been jailed after a spate of cable thefts and the Government is changing the law so all scrap metal sales are recorded and the dealers can be prosecuted for accepting stolen material.

Tattenham Corner and Epsom Downs stations to create a loop line from the two branches and using different approach routes. This would make these two additional paths available for the Brighton Main Line.

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Rail books

From time to time I have been asked if I have any copies of my books. I have not, apart from *Railway Conversion - the impractical dream*, although

many libraries have copies. However, I have uploaded the following five books so that they are available as e-books for Kindle readers: *Blueprints for Bankruptcy, Square Deal Denied, The Railway Closure Controversy, Britain's Railways - the Reality and Railway Conversion* - the impractical dream. My object is to get the contents to a new wider audience. I am not looking for financial gain. Any royalties

will be donated to charity. I am keen to publicise the unsung achievements of BR, and seeing so many myths exposed.

I believe that many readers would like to see some of the books' contents widely disseminated among those who support railways.

I would be grateful for Railfuture members' help in finding key words to promote the books on the internet.

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More letters: Page 18

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Picture: FOSTER + PARTNERS

The trains in Spain

This picture shows another view of the planned Ourense station featured on the front cover. Existing tracks can be seen at the lower level while the new high speed trains use the upper platforms. The roof canopies provide shade and also reflect daylight on to the platforms. Designed for eventual operation at up to 215 mph, the Ourense-La Coruna route has opened as a traditional Spanish 5' 6" wide gauge line, with journey times halved from 2 hours 15 mins. Conversion to standard European (and British) gauge is expected when the high speed line from Madrid to Ourense is completed towards the end of 2015. The new route has already reduced the fastest journey time between Madrid and La Coruna from 7 hours 38 mins to 6 hours 40 mins. Thirty minutes will be cut from the timings when Spanish national operator RENFE introduces class 730 gauge-changing electro-diesel trainsets to the route later this year.

FAR AHEAD: The developing high speed network in Spain



Now Britain sets out plans for high speed network

Despite objections, Transport Secretary Justine Greening announced on 10 January 2012 that Britain is to build a national high speed rail network which should be operating by 2026.

She went to St Pancras station in London, terminus of Britain's only current high speed line, to announce that a Y-shaped network will link London to Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield and the East Midlands.

New 250 mph trains will be able to travel on to the existing West Coast and East Coast main lines to serve passengers beyond the HS2 network in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle, Durham, York, Darlington, Liverpool, Preston, Wigan and Lancaster.

The network will be built in two phases. The first will see construction of HS2, a new 140-mile line between London and Birmingham by 2026. Details of the route were published by the Department for Transport with 79 miles of the 140-mile line running in tunnels or cuttings. This is a concession to MPs who com-

plained about the line's effect. HS2 runs through 13 miles of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but fresh mitigation measures mean that less than two miles will be at or above surface level.

The second phase will see lines built from Birmingham to Leeds and Manchester by 2033. A formal consultation on second phase routes will begin in early 2014 with a final route chosen by the end of 2014.

The first phase of HS2 will include a connection to HS1 and thus to Europe via the Channel Tunnel. On completion of HS2 the network will include a direct link to Heathrow Airport.

HS2 is designed to relieve congestion on existing inter-city rail routes as well as roads and air routes.

The Government said the high speed line is expected to deliver £6.2 billion more in economic benefits than a line running at conventional speed.

For every £1 spent on the project, HS2 will produce £1.80 to £2.50

worth of economic benefit. It will take an estimated 9 million journeys off the road network and cut up to 4.5 million air journeys each year.

Double decker trains could be introduced to run on the HS2 network and would be compatible with HS1 and the Channel Tunnel, while services using both HS2 and existing rail lines will use standard-size non-double decker high speed trains.

Ms Greening said: "A new high speed rail network will help create jobs, growth and prosperity for the entire country. This is a truly British network that will serve far more than the cities directly on the line. HS2 is our generation's investment in Britain and our children."

The Government estimates the cost of the complete Y shaped network at £32 billion and expects it to generate benefits of £47 billion and fare revenues of up to £34 billion over a 60-year period.

Phase 1 of HS2 will run from a new Birmingham city centre sta-

tion at Curzon Street to a rebuilt Euston station. An interchange station will be built at Old Oak Common in West London, providing direct connections via Crossrail to the central London and Docklands, to the South West and Wales via the Great Western main line and to Heathrow via Heathrow Express.

A second interchange station will be constructed where the route passes the National Exhibition Centre and Birmingham Airport, close to Junction 6 of the M42.

A direct link to HS1 will be provided in tunnel from Old Oak Common to the existing North London line, from where existing infrastructure can be used to reach the HS1 line north of St Pancras.

Phase 2 will see the new high speed line running on to Manchester and separately to Leeds. HS2 Ltd is currently engaged in detailed planning work for options for these routes, including stations in the East Midlands and South Yorkshire, as well as for a spur link to Heathrow.

■ ■ The Channel Tunnel should be used more effectively according to the European Union committee of the House of Lords. The committee's new report *Tunnel Vision? Completing the European Rail Market* focuses on how to unlock the tunnel's full potential. The committee is calling for the terms of the Treaty of Canterbury, the agreement that allowed the Channel Tunnel's construction, to be reviewed, in order to allow British and French regulators to take more control. It wants access charges to be reduced to

ensure a better deal for passengers, border controls to be streamlined so that new international services can be introduced, and priority to be given to projects that boost economic growth. You can download the 55-page report from <http://tinyurl.com/75hp8ug>

■ ■ Deutsche Bahn announced in January that it was delaying plans to operate trains to London through the Channel Tunnel for three years. The new target date is 2015. DB said train maker Siemens has

faced difficulties in obtaining some of the technical equipment needed for new trains.

■ ■ The wider benefits of high speed rail were confirmed in a December study for the International Union of Railways *High Speed Rail and Sustainability*. Its carbon footprint can be 14 times less than car travel and 15 times less than aviation. "The Transport White Paper proposed earlier this year that the European high speed rail network should triple in size by 2030 and be completed by 2050, to help ensure that

the majority of medium-distance passenger transport can go by rail," said deputy executive director Libor Lochman.

■ ■ Once HS2 is built, Birmingham Airport is hoping to relieve pressure on Heathrow by doubling passenger numbers from the current nine million. Manchester and Leeds airports are also hoping to use high speed rail to help them develop into hub airports, spreading economic activity into the UK regions, following the example set by Germany. "Birmingham and the

West Midlands will be at the centre of the railway network," said Transport Secretary Justine Greening. She said the 45-minute HS2 journey from Birmingham city centre to London would be similar to many journey times just getting around London.

■ ■ The HS2 station at Old Oak Common will lead to swathes of derelict industrial land in one of London's poorest areas being regenerated, said Hammersmith and Fulham Council, and at least 20,000

jobs created. Five major UK airports will be linked to Old Oak Common. Heathrow will be 11 minutes away, Birmingham 38 minutes, while Luton, Gatwick and City Airport will be within 45 minutes. Councillor Mark Loveday said: "HS2 is the fastest way to deliver much needed new homes, jobs and opportunities." Half of working age adults within 1.2 miles of Old Oak are unemployed and parts of Old Oak are in the bottom 1% of most deprived areas nationally.

North East

By Peter Kenyon
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£5 a head shock for North East

The branch was concerned to read how Government investment in transport infrastructure has been skewed strongly in favour of London and the South East. The hard figures came from an analysis by Cox and Schmuecker at the Institute for Public Policy Research North, in December. Annual investment stands at £2,731 per head for Londoners, £792 for those in the South East, while the North East was granted a miserly £5 per head for investment in transport infrastructure. Lest this disparity be thought to reflect differences in economic achievement, the analysis also records that for each £1,000 of gross value added generated in 2009, London received £81 for transport infrastructure and the South East £38. In stark contrast, for every £1,000 of GVA generated in the North East, less than 50p is spent on transport infrastructure. Little wonder that Pacer trains seem set to be with us for the foreseeable future! The findings of this analysis will form a firm base for future campaigning by the branch and the North East transport activists' round table.

Police helicopter joins battle to halt cable theft

Northumbria Police are to step up the use of their helicopter support unit in the campaign to stop cable theft. All patrols returning to base will now fly over Metro lines, in addition to special action being taken when required.

Coastliners aid Grand Central in publicity campaign

The December meeting of Coastliners heard Grand Central's Tom Cliff explain that Arriva (owned by DB) had taken over the open-access operator. For now the operation will continue independently but when profitable working is achieved, further investment can be expected and an increase in services is hoped for. Successful rail-hotel packages have been established by Grand Central in association with Superbreak. In cooperation with the Saltburn Line Users' Group, Coastliners are discussing ways of extending publicity and preparing to press the needs of the North East when the Northern and TransPennine franchises are up for negotiation.

Weardale Railway drops community passenger service

In an abrupt change of policy in December caused by lack of support, the Weardale Railway withdrew its community passenger service between Bishop Auckland and Stanhope. The railway will concentrate on steam and diesel services catering for the tourist and heritage leisure market. To facilitate this, work proceeds apace on improvements to the Weardale station at Bishop Auckland with the aim of improving interchange with Northern rail services. One of Colas Rail's class 66 locomotives engaged in the opencast coal traffic has been named Wylam Dilly, linking the enterprise with the pioneer colliery railway engine which worked in the Tyne Valley in 1813. The name was chosen by pupils of Wolsingham School and Community College.

Morpeth gears up to fight threat from McNulty

The South East Northumberland Rail Users' Group has reacted strongly to the McNulty proposals for the closure of ticket offices and is determined to defend both the ticket office and ticket issuing machine at Morpeth. Fourteen inter-city trains a day serve the station in addition to local services. Alarm bells were triggered, however, by the news that the Alcan aluminium smelter, on the coast end of the Ashington Blyth and Tyne line, will close shortly. This will mean the end of coal traffic and diminish the prospect of restoring the passenger service. SENRUG has innovative ideas about promoting tourism and the colourful SENRUG newsletter, containing details of these and other campaigns, is available at www.senrug.co.uk

Rail and sea to Ireland

By Peter Walker

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Three Railfuture members met with Jamie Christon, route director of Stena Line's Holyhead-Ireland ferries at Holyhead in November.

From a very informative meeting, we found that increasing fuel costs had forced the winter withdrawal of services to Dun Laoghaire although the services are expected to resume this April.

Train operators do not normally provide advance information to ferry operators about the likely number of SailRail passengers on individual ferry journeys. Railfuture believes passengers and operators would benefit if this was rectified.

The Railfuture team was told SailRail passengers would in future be given the option of an overnight stay at Holyhead's Travelodge. This would be especially helpful to those travelling from Dublin in the late evening.

Because of the remoteness of ferry berths at Dublin Ferryport and Holyhead, Stena was considering providing a road coach link from central Dublin to take foot passengers and their luggage through to Holyhead. The coach would travel on the ferry

so passengers would not have to get on and off different buses at each terminal.

The Railfuture delegation also heard that a review of routes and sailing times was under way for 2013, though no details were forthcoming. Service re-timings to enable day trips from Holyhead to Dublin were being — considered.

Despite being commercial rivals, Stena and Irish Ferries did cooperate by carrying each other's passengers if delayed incoming trains caused intended sailings to be missed. Once the Belfast-Liverpool (Birkenhead 12 Quays) service had settled into its new routine, its route director would aim to introduce SailRail on that service.

Meanwhile, SailRail facilities continue to and from the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Prospective passengers are advised to refer to the seat61.com website for more details.

The Railfuture delegation comprised Rowland Pittard from South Wales, Mark Gleeson from Dun Laoghaire, and Peter Walker from Billingham-on-Tees.

£24m barrier to rail service

By Trevor Garrod

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More than 400,000 journeys would be made if a local train service was provided between Ashford and Calais and Lille, it is estimated.

But mainly because of the high cost of Eurotunnel track access charges, a three-trains-a-day service would make a loss of £24 million.

The information was revealed when Railfuture vice president Christopher Irwin took part in a conference in Lille, organised by RoCK, Regions of Connected Knowledge, funded by the European Union and studying cross-border connections.

A team of French consultants reported on the potential for local train services between Kent and Nord Pas de Calais.

Mr Irwin, who is also vice-chair of the European Passengers' Federation, said: "I was left with the very clear impression that little is likely to happen without the European Commission first taking steps to ensure compliance by the French government, SNCF, Reseau Ferre de France and Eurotunnel."

More positive progress is being made with the projects to restore

rail passenger services between Hasselt and Maastricht and between Eindhoven and Dusseldorf, plugging gaps across the Belgian, Dutch and German borders.

Railfuture was represented at the EPF annual conference in March in Salzburg, when the themes were urban transport, rail liberalisation and the transport role of the European Union.

A report of the conference will be available by the end of April on www.epf.eu or by post from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

EPF's conference next year will be in March at Basel, which is now even closer by train to London, following the opening of the French Rhine-Rhone high speed line.

In January, EPF members from the UK, Belgium and Germany met RailTeam managers to discuss high speed trains across Europe, and the Railfuture report Eurostar — a Snapshot Survey.

If you make a journey by Eurostar and high speed train to such places as Lyon or Koln, remember to fill in the questionnaire at www.epf.eu

Passenger feedback is sent to RailTeam.

www.railfuture.org.uk

A better way forward

By David Berman

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I am sometimes told that because Railfuture is a voluntary campaigning organisation, we do not need to spend time on structure and governance.

But getting the basics right allows us to campaign more effectively and influence opinion.

We want to avoid giving an incoherent, disorganised message that would not be taken seriously and would prevent us being the leading voice of reason in the rail campaigning world.

We also need to attract new members by showing exactly what we stand for and how successful our campaigning has been.

The present structure of the Railway Development Society has been in place since we became a limited company eight years ago. Much of our former structure was adapted to suit the requirements of the Companies Act but little else changed.

However, the board has now decided that the time is right for an overhaul of the way the society is structured and functions, and has asked me to chair a corporate governance review group.

Corporate governance is the system by which an organisation is directed, supported and controlled at all levels in order to achieve its objectives and meet the necessary standards of accountability, probity and openness.

It covers a wide range of activities including national and branch management, internal democracy, organisational control, support of activities at all levels, discipline, risk management, health and safety and financial controls. The group has been asked to review the current structure, identify possible improvements and recommend an action plan to the board to encourage best practice.

The aim is to implement the plan by May next year and to keep it under review. The group is already mapping out a programme, starting with the implementation of a business plan.

We obviously all need to work together for the good of the

society and to achieve our shared goals. Our regional branches are the backbone of the society and the society's most valuable assets in a local area, but they need clearer support and adequate funding from the society's national structure.

I do not want more central control, but a redefinition of the partnership which is currently ill defined. We must empower our branches and give them the support and tools for local campaigning.

Our specialist committee structure also needs to be reviewed with a better definition of roles and functions and better ways of communicating with branches and members.

The society needs to take advantage of all the opportunities presented by new technology to produce materials for campaigning and recruitment, and we need to equip our active members with the skills to use them.

We also need to empower our local media representatives with the tools needed to make sure the Railfuture viewpoint receives adequate local coverage.

We must also adjust to devolved government in Scotland and Wales, the Government's localism agenda and the coming devolution of rail powers.

Corporate governance should not be about stuffy rules and central control, although there will be new procedures.

We need to breathe new life, greater transparency and increased empowerment into the society, its committees and its branches.

The group cannot operate in a vacuum. We need your active support, advice and criticism.

This is an invitation to all members to get more involved. So please do not hesitate. If you want to express your views or ask questions, please email the group at governance@railfuture.org.uk

I look forward to hearing from you.

Dr David Berman is a director of RDS Ltd and chairman of the corporate governance review group.

Keep your email up to date

Lloyd Butler reports that it is becoming difficult to contact some members by email. Messages have "bounced". Lloyd reports that he has six email addresses ending @ukonline.co.uk which was closed over a year ago by Sky.

So please, if your email address changes or has changed in the past year, please email your new address to renewals@railfuture.org.uk It will help Railfuture keep its information up-to-date and it also allows Railfuture to get in touch with news and information when necessary.

◆◆◆◆ A 1,300 mile railway through six countries is planned from Kuwait to Oman

London and South East

By Roger Blake

roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

More change on the way

Railfuture campaigners are preparing to respond to Network Rail's final route utilisation study — the Network RUS Alternative Solutions. Our branch will provide a contribution to the national Railfuture response. We are also focusing on the refranchising of Great Western and Essex Thameside for 15 years. Thameslink is to be let for seven years with two-year extension option. Potential bidders are already approaching Railfuture with their ideas. Our time is limited as the short list will be announced in May for GW, in June for Essex Thameside. The short list for Thameslink will be known by October. Southern services are expected to be absorbed into Thameslink in 2015.

Electrification and more trains are needed

Most of our region's routes are electrified, but Railfuture is keen to see electrification of Gospel Oak-Woodgrange Park, Ore-Ashford International, Uckfield-Hurst Green, and parts of Redhill-Reading. We also want dirty diesels excluded from London terminus stations by investing in electric power cars for diesel trains.

Local involvement in franchises looks likely

In line with the Government's "aspiration for decentralisation", the Department for Transport is indicating that the Great Western franchise may be let, following the examples set by Merseyrail and London Overground, where financial control, monitoring and management is devolved. With London Mayoral and Assembly elections in May, it is understood that the Mayor is seeking a greater role for Transport for London in the franchising of inner suburban lines. Londoners make five times as many rail trips per head compared to those in other parts of the UK.

Rail, the green alternative which aids regeneration

The Marsh Link line from Hastings to Ashford was closed for nine weeks to allow essential repair work on Ore tunnel with buses as a replacement service. Railfuture now wants to see further improvements, starting with an all-day service at Ore every day of the week and Sunday services at Winchelsea and Three Oaks at least in the summer.

The DfT deferred a pre-Christmas decision on the controversial Bexhill-Hastings link road. The Hastings Alliance has mounted a rigorous campaign against the county council's myopic view of local regeneration needs, challenging through expert submissions the fundamentally flawed approach which runs contrary to the DfT's own guidance. Alternatives, including improved local rail provision between Bexhill and St Leonard's Warrior Square, have not been properly evaluated. A new station could be opened at Glyne Gap. More information: <http://hastingsalliance.com/>

High speed services could expand if link is thought out

The Department for Transport now expects the link line between HS1 and HS2 in London to carry trains to Amsterdam and Frankfurt as well as Paris and Brussels. Railfuture would also like the link line to be built with enough capacity to cope with new high speed services from Kent to West Midlands to Heathrow, for instance.

Review of Chiltern timetable under way

Graham Larkbey reports: The Rail Industry Review of Chiltern's timetable is now under way, with a view to trying to improve the spread of services including those at London suburban stations. Chiltern will be mounting its own public consultation exercise in late spring/early summer, so watch their website for details.

Passengers call for Ken to help with line overcrowding

Rail users exasperated with chronic morning-peak overcrowding on the Barking-Gospel Oak line have invited Mayoral candidate Ken Livingstone to visit the line, something current Mayor Boris Johnson refused to do.

Lincolnshire

By Don Peacock
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■ ■ Package bid for Hykeham
Railfuture Lincolnshire has been contributing to Lincolnshire's Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid which is a list of potential package elements focused in and around Hykeham, including improvements to the station area and better public transport for the Hykeham area. The branch is now in discussions about its involvement in delivery of the bid if it is successful.

■ ■ Extra train gets 'lost'

Railfuture Lincolnshire welcomed improvements to the East Midlands Trains services in the county from the December 2011 timetable. Lobbying from one of our branch committee members was instrumental in getting a morning commuter stop inserted at Raucedon. Service improvements would have been more wide-ranging had the Department for Transport not decided to divert rolling stock released by the introduction of class 172s in the West Midlands to other areas. All that was needed in Lincolnshire was one extra diesel unit.

The extra class 156s aimed at reducing overcrowding on Liverpool-Norwich services have arrived many months later than originally planned. Members who attended the Rail Reopenings conference in Corby in 2009 may remember the presentation at that conference outlining the need for these extra units on one of the most overcrowded routes in the country. A great deal of time and effort was put in by Railfuture members and others, especially TravelWatch East Midlands and the Campaign for Better Transport, over the whole route in helping to gather the data needed to put the case for additional units to DfT.

■ ■ Anger over 9% fare increases on East Coast

Branch chairman David Harby was interviewed by Lincs FM about the January fare increases where he expressed anger at the large off-peak increases (9% and more) on the East Coast main line services from our area.

■ ■ AGM planned for Lincoln

Railfuture Lincolnshire's AGM will be held in Lincoln on Saturday 10 March.

■ ■ Petition may bolster Government promise of action

Railfuture members are invited to support a petition brought to our notice by North Lincolnshire Neighbourhood Watch asking for a debate on scrap metal regulation given the increasing incidence of theft and disruption. Go to <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/406>

The Government announced in January that it will be banning cash for scrap. Metal theft cost Network Rail more than £16 million last year, as well as resulting in delays to or the cancellation of over 35,000 passenger journeys.

West Midlands

By Les Fawcett

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■ ■ Ambitious plans for Bescot rail freight depot

Transport authority Centro wants Bescot rail yard, strategically located next to the M6 motorway, to be expanded with longer sidings so it can become a regional freight terminal. Centro expects rail freight to increase by 120% by 2030.

■ ■ Light rail link planned by Parry People Movers

Parry People Movers is planning for a new £5 million light rail link from Brierley Hill to Stourbridge on an existing freight line. Three new metro-style stations could be built. Cradley Heath-based firm Parry People Movers already runs the branch line between Stourbridge Town and Junction stations.



YOUNG PASSENGERS HELP COMMUNITY RAIL GROW: Bricklet Wood on the Abbey line which runs from Watford to St Albans

Rail hits the jackpot

The economic news remains grim, with the economy shrinking by 0.2% over the last three months of 2011, and fears of a double dip recession. So why are our trains still full and passenger numbers still rising? And why are community railways ahead of the curve?

Twenty five years ago, rail travel seemed harnessed to the gross domestic product. When the economy did well, demand for rail travel rose. When the economy faltered, the consequent fall in rail travel led British Rail to make savings by pruning services.

This changed 15 years ago with the start of the upward curve in passenger numbers that continues today. Recently, the recession demonstrates that this direct link between the state of the economy and demand for rail travel has been broken. What is happening?

Despite the recession and complaints about fares, passenger rail growth has been inexorable. Recent figures show that over the past four years passenger numbers on community rail-

ways increased by almost 19%, compared with the regional services average of 11%. Even over the past year, growth has continued at a rate many high street stores would envy.

Last summer the Association of Train Operators published ridership figures for the top ten community rail lines, including two where growth over four years had been over 90% (Falmouth and Severn Beach) and one where it was still an astonishing 86% (Matlock).

So why this phenomenal growth when other businesses struggle, and can we do anything to keep the boom going?

More frequent local services, reliability and new or refurbished trains all attract new passengers, but there is no doubt that the underlying driver of growth in rail demand today is the price of car fuel.

While this may vary with world oil prices, or the financial collapse of individual suppliers, the most important element is the tax, and particularly the fuel duty escalator, even though the inflation-linked



increase was deferred in the Budget in March last year.

Traffic congestion, parking restrictions and the sheer misery of driving all play a part, but it is the fuel costs that make car drivers think seriously about the train as an alternative. When they look at local rail offers, they often discover to their surprise that it is more reliable and cheaper than using their car or the bus, quicker than the bus and sometimes quicker than driving too.

Community rail partnerships have been active in promoting their lines to local people, and have often been able to secure service improvements as well, which helps to explain their higher than average growth.

In the case of Falmouth, service frequency was doubled, while at Matlock the service had been increased, but had also become more reliable. Most importantly, partnerships listened to local people and fed back ideas

to the train operators so that the community has a much bigger say in its railway.

Fortunately, the Treasury is unlikely to want to give up the tax take from fuel duty, particularly as the poor state of the economy is going to deprive it of tax in other areas.

There are good environmental reasons why the tax regime should encourage the use of public transport rather than the car. For those of us dedicated to rail development, it is important that the Government sticks with further fuel duty increases, because there will be plenty of pressure from the road lobby to reduce it.

The Government may have fewer friends among motorists in the months to come. Railfuture has long advocated better local services supported by a more level playing field, so we should now support them in a policy which encourages a shift to rail and is clearly working.

Roll up for Railfuture Lottery

Roll up for the Railfuture Lottery. But remember, you need to be in it to win it!

Graham and Garth Smith – no relation – have over 27 entries between them, which is why their names keep cropping up in the winners' list! There are six prizes each month - with a top prize of £40. Half of the money raised is returned in prizes

while the remainder goes into Railfuture funds to help our campaigns.

So you can help us and help yourself by joining the Lottery. It costs just £1 per entry per month and you can get details by writing to RF Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND or email lottery@railfuture.org.uk

www.railfuture.org.uk

and you could be a winner

Alternatively, join using PayPal via our website - www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery/.

Recent prize winners are

September: Martin Parker, John Ward, John Henderson, Ian and Jane Appleyard, Colin Palmer, K Grimes. **October:** Terence Sheppard, K Grimes, John Barfield, Michael Humphrey,

Graham Smith, Andrew Marsh. **November:** Ron McLean, Alan Koolman, Susan Riley, Garth Smith, Ian Sesnan, Peter Pass. **December:** Felix Schmid, David Stocks, Michael Hanson, John Ward, Peter Jacobs, Graham Smith. **January:** Garth Smith, David Brady, Graham Smith, Walter Richardson, John Ward, Peter Wilson.

◆◆◆◆ Thailand is planning to build a 450 mile line from Bangkok to Chiang Mai

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright
chriswrightmk@aol.com

■ ■ Welcome rail strategy

Railfuture welcomes the publication of Oxfordshire County Council's draft rail strategy which encompasses the aspirations of the branch. Oxford station redevelopment is seen as the key project to ease congestion. The council would like to see a new station with four through platforms. County councillor Rodney Rose said: "Oxford is going to be the major bottleneck, and if East-West Rail goes through it will make it even worse." First Great Western told the *Oxford Mail* it would not comment on the county council's plans, but said stakeholders and rail users should "make their aspirations known". Chiltern Railways has its own separate plans to build two new platforms to serve its new Evergreen 3 link to London via Bicester. The council welcomed the ability to plan ahead following the Government's approval of electrification to Oxford by 2016 and the good prospects for Evergreen 3 and East West Rail. Railfuture Thames Valley has already contributed to the draft strategy and in February members of the public were invited to have their say on the proposals in a formal consultation process. You can view the 100-page document which contains lots of interesting information at <http://tinyurl.com/7w9q3s3>

The strategy sees Grove/Wantage as feasible for inclusion in the new franchise to meet the growth in the area and to serve Science Vale UK. The Association of Train Operating Companies recommended this in its report *Connecting Communities*. Rebuilding the closed line to Carterton and Witney is suggested as worthy of consideration in the longer term to improve connections between the towns and RAF Brize Norton.

The completion of £5.66 million worth of improvements at Didcot, improvements at Bicester Town and Banbury, the opening of the Evergreen 3 services to Marylebone and the East West Rail link to Milton Keynes are envisaged, while the restoration of an Oxford-Bristol service is proposed. The strategy lists the station improvements and service levels sought throughout the county as well as the options for freight.

■ ■ Campaigners celebrate 25 years of struggle

The Oxon & Bucks Rail Action Committee, a coalition of Railfuture and local rail user groups formed to campaign for rail services between Oxford/Aylesbury and Milton Keynes, has celebrated its 25th anniversary.

■ ■ New main line franchises present lobbying opportunity

First Group, which saved itself £800 million by withdrawing early from the Great Western franchise, is likely to bid to be allowed to run it again when a new franchise is awarded in April next year. The shortlist of bidders is expected in May.

First Group, the French national railway SNCF and the Dutch railway's Abellio company are bidding to oust Virgin Trains for the opportunity to run the 15-year West Coast main line franchise from December this year. Bids for the franchise are expected to be received by May and the new operator will be announced in August.

The branch will be making an input into the Railfuture responses. The cost of running the railway is now three times higher than it was under British Rail.

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
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and Roger Bacon
roger.bacon@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ East Midlands AGM

The East Midlands Branch 2012 AGM has been provisionally booked for 1pm on Saturday 31 March at Loughborough library in the town centre. Hopefully by this time attendees will be able to arrive at a splendid Loughborough Midland station complete with full length platforms for 10-coach trains, a new covered footbridge with lifts, and new bus, taxi, car and bicycle facilities, as well as much improved pedestrian access. The outlook from the station is also a far cry from the derelict buddleia-covered sidings of the past few decades.

■ ■ Longer trains on Nottingham-Liverpool route

Railfuture campaigning has at last paid dividends on the notoriously overcrowded Nottingham-Liverpool route. From December, 57% of the Nottingham-Liverpool trains and 67% of the Liverpool-Nottingham trains, operated on weekdays by East Midlands Trains, became four-coach class 158s. This will increase in December this year to 86% of Nottingham departures and 100% of Liverpool departures. More of the longer trains will also operate on Saturdays and Sundays and full details are clearly marked on the new timetable. This is at least a step on the way to East Midlands Trains' public aspiration at the time of winning the franchise in 2007 to bring the "Norwich to Liverpool route up to inter-city standards".

■ ■ Campaign to upgrade Midland main line

Our campaign to get the Midland main line north of Bedford electrified will be stepped up following the decision of the Department for Transport to go ahead with electrification of both the Great Western and the Transpennine route from Manchester to York. We are angry that the MML did not even get a mention in the November pre-budget speech infrastructure projects. The *Nottingham Evening Post* has called on local politicians to show greater urgency in campaigning. "Nottingham's case would be better heard if the city council and the business community hired an experienced transport lobbyist, someone who understands the complexities of the railway industry," it pronounced on 17 January. "Nottingham cannot continue to allow its fragile economy to be placed at a disadvantage with other core cities".

■ ■ Tram's advantages win over the sceptics

Railfuture welcomes changing attitudes to light rail in Nottingham. The anti-tram lobby for the Beeston extension "has peeled away to be replaced by positive thinking", according to a letter in the February issue of LRTA's *Tramways* magazine by Steve Barber, the 2010 Light Rail Awards Campaigner of the Year. Even local MP Anna Soubry, who gave election pledges in 2010 to stop the tram from passing through her area, seems to have shifted her position. According to Hansard she said on 30 November: "Many things are happening, such as the extension of the tram, that give people hope for the future – the prospect of more jobs and apprenticeships."

The city council has agreed a £570 million contract with Tramlink Nottingham Consortium to build two extensions and operate them along with the city's existing line under a 23-year concession.

Transport Minister Norman Baker said the extensions would build on the "great success" of line one, will help regeneration and give people an alternative to commuting by car. The extensions, to open in two year's time, start at Nottingham station and run via Clifton to a 1,000 car-space park-and-ride station, seven miles from J24 on the M1, while the second will go via Nottingham University, Beeston and Chilwell to another 1,300 car-space park-and-ride terminal near M1 J25.



Rail must try harder to compete with airlines

Rail campaigners have long asked why national rail bodies and private rail companies do not face up to the competition from airlines.

Airline bosses encourage you to book early, often up to a year in advance, but rail bosses make it difficult to plan that far ahead.

You can book your Eurostar tickets four months in advance, French railways restrict you to three months and Spanish railways allow you to book only two months in advance.

So if you want to go from Britain to Spain by rail you may feel you have to leave it until two months before you travel to book your tickets, by which time the cheapest Eurostar tickets will have gone and French cheap tickets may be in short supply.

As one rail campaigner put it: "Is that clever or stupid on the part of the railways?" The excuse the rail companies make is that they regularly change their timetables so they do not want to offer you a seat on a train that might not

run. But airline passengers have been brainwashed into accepting that schedules change, while bus companies are notorious for changing their timetables at the drop of a hat.

It may be best to book ahead in stages as and when the best rail tickets are available.

In a bid to make life easier for passengers, Railfuture holds regular meetings with train companies.

For example, two members of Railfuture's international committee met Eurostar after our snapshot survey, reported in *Railwatch* 130.

We gave Eurostar's Rebecca O'Leary a rundown on the survey and she outlined some of the company's plans for the future, reports Trevor Garrod.

People are increasingly using Eurostar as part of a longer journey, although a six-hour journey was the limit for most leisure travellers. We were told Eurostar was reviewing its website, which could include more information

about Railteam, the consortium of high speed operators in seven European countries. Railfuture expressed concern that many British train operating staff seem unable or unwilling to sell "London International" or "London CIV" tickets, which enable Eurostar customers to travel to and from London by any train, with flexibility if the train from the Continent is late.

Mrs O'Leary said all Eurostar's call centre staff were able to issue such tickets. We also passed on our members' concern about the design of Eurostar carriages and insufficient luggage space.

We were assured that, in the design of their new fleet, Eurostar had taken into account how passengers board and disembark and their luggage problems.

I also had a meeting in January with four of Rail Europe's management team, to whom we had sent the Railfuture report *Eurostar - a Snapshot Survey*. Rail Europe took over British Rail's international sales division and

now operates from West Malling in Kent, with a shop in Piccadilly, London.

Rail Europe can book you from one of the three Eurostar stations (St Pancras, Ebbsfleet or Ashford) to over 10,000 destinations in continental Europe.

It cannot book you a ticket from your home station as it does not have a licence from the Association of Train Operators.

However, Rail Europe staff are aware of the *London International* or *London CIV* ticket and can tell customers how to buy it.

Rail Europe also communicates with customers via Facebook if disruption is threatened.

You can receive Rail Europe's monthly electronic newsletter, giving updates on rail services throughout Europe, via www.raileurope.co.uk or phone their call centre on 0844 848 4040.

It deals with bookings from individual customers as well as travel agents and tour operators.

Wessex

By John Friedberger
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■ ■ Rolling stock roundabout

Three reshuffles of rolling stock, involving three of the four train operators in our area, are examples of the 'playing train set' system which seems still to be a feature of the nation's fragmented railway. On West Coastway, most Southern services between Portsmouth and Brighton are now operated by 35-year-old class 313 units transferred from London suburban routes. These trains are not suited to this route, which has a typical off-peak journey time of one hour 39 minutes, since they do not have toilets. They are also cold, draughty and have an inferior ride quality when compared with the class 377 trains they replaced. We hope the recently announced new order for 130 more class 377 carriages will enable Southern to reverse the situation.

On the Basingstoke to Reading line, First Great Western is intending to replace the current class 165 turbo-diesel railcars with older class 150 units on the important shuttle link between the two towns. This retrograde move highlights the need to include this short but vital link between the South Coast and the Midlands in the GW electrification scheme at the same time as the Reading-Newbury line, which it shares for two miles. Basingstoke could then enjoy direct access to Crossrail, thus relieving pressure on the over-crowded service to Waterloo.

On South West Trains, Stagecoach Rail negotiated for some years with the Department for Transport in an effort to obtain more rolling stock to relieve congestion. At long last an announcement was heralded just before Christmas. The Gatwick Express Juniper trains (60 carriages) will be refurbished and transferred to the Reading line. Big deal! In 2006 all the popular and purpose-built Wessex Electric class 442 trains (120 carriages) were removed from SWT main lines and are now operating the Gatwick Express and Southern services to Brighton from Victoria. Had this change not been made, SWT would have had sufficient rolling stock to improve the Reading service with Desiro class 450 trains and ensure that passengers on main lines to Weymouth and Portsmouth could continue to travel in suitable comfort.

■ ■ Greater Western franchise
Three routes operated by First Great Western are of particular concern to members of the Wessex branch. We are therefore joining Severnside and neighbouring branches in formulating the Railfuture response to the current consultation. In addition to the Basingstoke-Reading line mentioned above, the line from Weymouth to Bristol and Swindon, the Heart of Wessex line, is both a scenic journey and a key link to the South Coast, as will be demonstrated during the Olympic Games sailing events this summer.

The important inter-city line from Portsmouth (and Brighton) to Bristol and Cardiff merits better rolling stock than the current class 158 trains. Key sections of the route are overcrowded and business passengers, for whom the line should offer an attractive alternative to the car, are put off by the cramped standard class accommodation. Also not to be forgotten, and currently in the GW franchise, is the route from Reading to Gatwick Airport.



INCONVENIENT: A 313 at Brighton

Picture: HENRY LAW

Ban on scrap cash

Action on metal theft

I mentioned the problems for heritage railways caused by metal theft in *Railwatch* 130.

The good news is that through the persistence of Lord Faulkner, a Labour peer who is also president of the Heritage Railway Association, the Government is about to amend the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill to restrict cash payments by scrap metal dealers.

This follows representations from the HRA, Network Rail, local authorities and many other organisations which have suffered losses from metal theft.

The House of Commons transport committee in a January report also made a strong case for amending the law to prevent the chaos caused by railway cable theft.

The new law is expected to have a big effect by outlawing "cash in hand, no questions asked" purchases by scrap merchants, who have helped to make metal theft such a widespread and damaging phenomenon.

It should prevent specialist castings being stolen from locomotive restoration projects, and will also help Network Rail reduce the delays caused on the

national network from theft of signalling equipment.

Railway Heritage Committee
The Government is consulting on winding up the Railway Heritage Committee (see www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/) and responses were due back by 1 March.

This is actually better than it sounds, and the powers of designation of important railway artefacts and records are to be entrusted to a new group under the auspices of the National Museum of Science and Industry.

This is a great result of tough lobbying by the heritage railway movement, and we have come a long way from the original proposal to abolish both the committee and the designation powers as well.

The change means that the process transfers from the Department for Transport to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which may bring benefits because the DCMS is more closely involved in heritage and its importance in economic as well as cultural terms.

As a co-opted member of the committee to be abolished, I am confident that the proposal is a sensible response from the Government and can safely

HERITAGE RAIL
By Chris Austin
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RAILWAY TREASURE:
This Edinburgh & Glasgow milepost dating from 1842 was installed at Glasgow Queen Street in 2008

be endorsed by Railfuture members.
Portillo's progress

The series of railway journeys by Michael Portillo on BBC2 is living up to the standards of the earlier programmes and is the biggest national promotion railways have enjoyed for many years.

I recall the unease with which his appointment as a transport

minister was greeted in 1986, given his reputation as a right wing Thatcherite hawk, but he turned out to be a rather good minister and as this series shows, he understands the value of rail.

At every stage, he gently takes the viewer through the significance of the line to the economic development of the area and highlights the relevance of the railway to the community today.

Many of his journeys involve heritage railways, and he switches seamlessly between the modern railway and heritage lines, treating both as part of a national network.

He skilfully draws out the lessons from heritage lines, whether it is the principles of safety and signalling, the universality of the Edmondson card ticket or the engineering skills still required today to keep steam trains running.

The joy of the programme is a recognition that railways shaped modern Britain and that today's railways, without the monopoly enjoyed by their Victorian predecessors, are still essential to economic prosperity and success.

Picture: RAILWAY HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Scotland

■ ■ Shaping the future

Railfuture Scotland has been urging people to respond to the Scottish government's consultation on Rail 2014 and take an active part in shaping rail services to suit passengers. ScotRail's franchise and the funding arrangements for Network Rail in Scotland will come to an end in 2014 and new arrangements have to be in place. Railfuture made its own submission to the consultation which closed on 20 February. People were urged to press the case for a park and ride station at Allander, between Hillfoot and Milngavie, where 550 new homes are to be built.

■ ■ Welcome for electrification but closure warning

Railfuture Scotland has also sounded the alert over the possible threat of closure to 16 stations in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, as a result of changes to service patterns outlined in the Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme. Railfuture's research officer Ken Sutherland briefed MSP Patricia Ferguson about the danger to the Glasgow Northern Suburban Line serving Ashfield, Possilpark, Gilshochill, Summerston, Maryhill, Kelvindale and Anniesland stations. Railfuture welcomed positive aspects of EGIP which include electrification of the key lines between Glasgow-Edinburgh including Cumbernauld and Stirling-Alloa/Dunblane. Railfuture called for another change of mind over the proposal to scrap the Garngad Chord in Glasgow, and urged that EGIP should create the opportunity for an additional rail connection with the Abbeyhill area of Edinburgh, and the provision of an improved rail service to Carstairs. The EGIP consultation process ended on 31 January.

■ ■ Network Rail steps in to build Borders Railway

Network Rail is to take over responsibility for the £235 million Borders Railway reopening scheme following the withdrawal of two of the three bidders from Transport Scotland's procurement competition. The line from Edinburgh through Midlothian to Tweedbank in the Scottish Borders is expected to reopen in 2014.

■ ■ Rail to the rescue after road blocked by rock fall

An extra train was introduced by ScotRail in January because a rock fall had blocked the A890 road at Stromeferry in December. The road was expected to be blocked well into February. The alternative road route is around 130 miles long so schoolchildren used the train to get to school. However, because of a shortage of trains, the knock-on effect was that the 07.26 Elgin to Inverness train had to be replaced by a bus.

■ ■ Level crossing trials could improve safety

Barriers could be installed at 23 open level crossings in Scotland if trials of a new type of barrier at Ardrossan are successful. The new style barriers can be installed for £100,000, much less than the current £500,000 cost.

■ ■ Minister steps in to check reopening plan

MSP John Lamont tabled a motion in the Scottish Parliament in January praising RAGES (Rail Action Group, East of Scotland) for campaigning for many years for improved rail services in Berwickshire and East Lothian. He and three other MSPs are confident there is strong cross-party support for the reintroduction of local services from Edinburgh to Berwick-upon-Tweed and the reopening of stations at Reston and East Linton. Scottish transport minister Keith Brown was planning to visit East Linton, Reston and Eyemouth on 28 February. Railfuture awarded RAGES a grant of £250 towards its postcard campaign.

Contact details for Railfuture Scotland:
mike.harrison@railfuturescotland.org.uk

www.railfuturescotland.org.uk



Franchises and costs

Peter Rayner and Ian Brown in *Railwatch* 130 refer to railway costs being too high and the need to reduce them.

A simple way would be to stop letting franchises and set up a not-for-profit passenger operating company, to take over franchises as they expire or fail. We should then have a unified system run by experienced professionals.

Costs of bidding would be saved as would the profits the companies take. The biggest saving would probably be on buying rolling stock rather than leasing which seems to cost nearly three times as much. The only costs should be administrative ones at the outset.

David H T Smith, *The Thursfield Smith Consultancy, Grange Road, Shrewsbury SY3 9DG*
david@thursfieldsmith.co.uk

Labour's record

Malcolm Clark (*Railwatch* 130) is much too kind regarding the Labour Party's neglect of rail development, and I share Michael Weinberg's dismay that the Labour government spent 13 years doing nothing but talk. Before the appointment of Andrew Adonis we had a succession of short-term transport ministers who were either hostile to rail or just plain ignorant, beginning with Glenda Jackson who thought that buses would be more cost-effective than light rail between Gosport and Portsmouth.

Labour transport ministers wasted £200 million of public money on the St Ives-Cambridge busway, money which could have been more usefully spent on re-opening the East-West line between Bletchley and Bicester. Then we had Ruth Kelly who refused to call in the planning application for the Willington boating lake which cuts across the Bedford-Sandy route, on the grounds that it was only of local and not national interest.

Alistair Darling will be remembered for his remark about trains carrying air around the country, and he cancelled the light-rail schemes for Leeds, Liverpool and South Hampshire, after £200 million had already been spent on planning and preliminary

works. Labour ministers before Andrew Adonis were opposed to electrification, with airy talk about hydrogen-powered trains. Over all was the baleful influence of Gordon Brown who imposed the disastrous public-private partnership on London Underground.

Going back to previous Labour governments, we had Bill Rodgers who wanted to cancel the Tyne-Wear Metro, after work had already begun. In 1964, the unlamented Tom Fraser sacked Dr Beeching and then proceeded to implement the Beeching cuts. Even the Oxford to Cambridge line which Beeching wanted to retain as an important cross-country route was closed.

Now, after all parties have come to an agreement on HS2, Labour transport spokespersons are trying to muddy the waters and score political points by proposing a more expensive route via Heathrow and the motorway corridor.

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

Thanks to Rayner

No, no, you can't. You can't let Peter Rayner go. He is the highlight of your magazine!

Please pass on my best wishes and thank him for a most accurate and entertaining column.

Peter Odell, *PO Box 1104, Kimberley 8300, South Africa*
rollbahn@vodamail.co.za

Rayner wisdom

I'm going to miss Rayner's Review. I had the privilege of working with Peter in the early 1980s and I always admired his common sense, clarity of thought and analytical skills – qualities reflected in his *Railwatch* reviews. Thank you, Peter, for sharing with us your wisdom and experience.

Paul Gubbins, *Arden Court, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 3JH*
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Keynes and rail

As a transport economist of a Keynesian variety I have noticed with interest and incredulity comments about the public and private and voluntary sectors.

We could often use the voluntary sector in a much more sensible way. In particular, if we want track bed restored which Network Rail seems incapable of doing for a reasonable fee, why

www.railfuture.org.uk

Your letters extra



BETTER THAN A VAN: The Cargo bike in action

do we not ask the preservation societies?

They often want longer trackbed than they have at the present time as well as often having a lot of stock which is not well utilised. They could develop it for an agreed fee and use it for a period of say 20 years to be developed in the future.

A line such as that from Uckfield to Lewes could provide an alternative route and greater capacity to the south coast and also a diversionary route. In the meanwhile such a project would provide a good training ground to many people in practical and other skills, including commercial ones.

David Spurling, *Periwinkle Close, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 2JT*
davidjohnspurling@yahoo.com

Cargo bikes and rail

Having read the article about trains and bikes in *Railwatch* 130, I wondered about another way in which bikes could assist railways.

We are a bike shop in central London, and also UK's distributor of the Christiania tricycle, the original Danish cargo bike, used by families and businesses for transporting goods and people up to 100kg over short distances (several miles).

Whereas the family side of the trike is becoming more and more established in the UK, we would

be keen to push the opportunity for businesses.

We believe that railways could use our trikes in depots as well as carry them with them for ad hoc use at their destinations.

Would you be able to advise us of key contacts within the railway industry we should direct our offer to?

With kind regards - and best wishes for your excellent campaigning, to which we in the cycling world are naturally hugely sympathetic,
Mat Schmidt, *Great Portland Street, London W1W 7NX*
info@velorution.biz

Editors' note: For more information, see www.velorution.biz
Do *Railwatch* readers have any ideas about how to promote the combined use of cycles and rail?



BETTER THAN A CAR: Non-polluting family transport

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◆◆◆◆ Italy and France plan to build a high speed line under the Alps from Lyon to Turin

East Anglia

By Nick Dibben and Trevor Garrod

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■ ■ Rail can relieve pressure on the A14 road

Railfuture has called on the Government to improve the rail network as a way of helping to solve the traffic congestion on the A14 road near Cambridge. The Government has shelved a £1.2 billion scheme to widen the road to three lanes and build a separate road for local traffic, saying it was unaffordable. In response to a Department for Transport consultation, Railfuture highlighted rail's ability to carry high volumes of people and freight at high speed. The existing regional train services between Peterborough, Cambridge and Ipswich have the potential to remove cars from the road if extra carriages are provided and service frequency is increased. The proposed station at Cambridge Science Park, one of the city's main employment areas, could also remove many commuters from the road by providing public transport from many adjacent towns.

Lorries make up a high proportion of A14 traffic so there is great benefit in switching freight to rail. The rail industry plans to double the number of freight trains to Felixstowe docks and run many additional services from the Thames ports and industrial areas, but Railfuture highlighted the problems of high charges to freight trains using the Channel Tunnel and called on the Government to deal with this issue as a matter of urgency. The full response can be found on the Railfuture website.

■ ■ New train operator reassures passengers

Railfuture members attended stakeholder meetings in Norwich, Cambridge and Colchester organised by the new train operator, Abellio Greater Anglia. They were assured that there would be no reduction in station staffing and ticket office opening times, and that additional staff were being recruited to help combat fare evasion. One of our members also mentioned the deteriorating bus-train integration at Halesworth. The long-awaited Beccles station loop has edged closer, with a planning application in January for access to the recommissioned island platform that was abandoned 28 years ago. The East Suffolk Travellers' Association has supported the plans for access to the platform, with new seats and shelter, while asking questions about capacity. Up to date info: www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk

■ ■ MPs join campaign to improve railways

Norwich North MP Chloe Smith and Ben Gummer (Ipswich) were among those who attended a "rail summit" in London in December to look at ways of improving rail services in East Anglia. MEP Vicky Ford said: "The people of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex feel they are getting a third or fourth class service."

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Tel: 01522 874513 Email: membership@railfuture.org.uk

Birmingham of future

THIS is what Birmingham's high speed station of the future could look like in 2026.

The artist's impression of the Curzon Street interchange was revealed in January soon after Transport Secretary Justine Greening visited Birmingham to bang the drum for HS2.

She said the development will slash journey times to London to 49 minutes and place the city at the centre of Britain's rail network.

She added: "High speed rail is by far the most effective way to open the capacity of the railway network. HS2 is a phenomenal undertaking. We have to make sure that we get the details right."

She also promised: "We will continue to invest in the wider network."

Plans are afoot to develop bridges and walkways to connect the new Curzon Street station with New Street and Moor Street stations.

Birmingham City Council leader Mike Whitby said: "The city will become a centre of excellence for the railway industry."

Curzon Street was the terminus of Robert Stephenson's London and Birmingham Railway. The surviving 1838 portico will be incorporated into the new design.



Picture: BIRMINGHAM POST/HS2

Three years of 'daylight robbery' rises

The continuing rise in rail fares has provoked protests throughout Britain and prompted the rail unions to label it "daylight robbery".

Shadow transport secretary Maria Eagle warned: "If this year's fare hikes were not bad enough, the Government has told the train companies they can increase fares by up to a staggering 13% in 2013 and 2014, meaning three years in a row of eye watering price hikes."

In spite of high fares, train use is still increasing, partly because road traffic is so awful and partly because petrol costs have also increased.

Britain's railways will undergo significant changes in 2012 but the basic expensive structure created at the time of privatisation will remain.

Network Rail is being regionalised and several franchises are coming up for renewal.

On the plus side, the budget for the railway is now fixed in five-year control periods, rather than changing with just a few months notice as in the past. There is

uncertainty, however, about where some of the money for rail might come from, as the Department for Transport has said it will be devolving major transport budgets to local enterprise partnerships from 2015.

The DfT admits the new system could "inhibit the funding of large schemes".

New "local transport bodies" are to be set up to decide priorities for funding.

Ms Eagle demanded: "Ministers must do more to explain how the proposed local transport consortia, with LEPs playing a central role, will be genuinely accountable to local communities."

Currently there is not much democratic input into how decisions are made on the railways. One idea for making passengers' needs more central comes from the Co-operative Party which is suggesting that Network Rail should be turned into a mutual.

"All citizens should be given the right to become individual members of a mutual Network Rail," said Joe Fortune. "This would allow rail passengers to have a

say in how our rail system is run and hold the Network Rail leadership to account."

A February report claims our railways are now at the bottom of the league compared to other parts of Europe where railways are 30 to 40% cheaper to operate.

On four out of six key indicators – fares, electrification, high speed and passengers to seats – the UK comes bottom or second to bottom, according to the think tank Just Economics.

An affordable, comfortable and faster railway would generate £324 billion in social value (£9.2 billion a year) between now and 2050. Just Economics estimates the social, economic and environmental benefits of a modal shift from road to rail would give benefits of £154 billion.

The report was commissioned by rail union RMT whose general secretary Bob Crow said: "This latest research shows that the failures of privatisation are costing the UK hundreds of billions of pounds in social value. Instead of addressing that issue and looking at the cheaper and

socially beneficial alternative of a publicly owned railway, McNulty proposes more cuts and even longer gold-plated franchises for the private train operators."

Eilis Lawlor of Just Economics said: "Our research puts figures on what anyone who has been to France or Spain already knows.

"The UK's railways are poor value for money. Instead of profitability being the primary measure of success, the wider benefits of the railway need greater consideration. Government should act decisively and make an objective and transparent assessment of the best way to organise Britain's railways so as to maximise social, environmental and economic value."

A Fare Return: Ensuring the UK's railways deliver true value for money can be downloaded from www.justeconomics.co.uk/

You can download information from www.railfuture.org.uk

