

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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Hats off to Crossrail and Brunel: See Page 2

Picture: CROSSRAIL

Farewell to rail hero

Former Railfuture president Tony Speller died in February, aged 83. He was the Tory MP for North Devon and impressed rail campaigners with his private members bill, the ‘Speller Act’, which cleared the way for rail reopenings. This was the first chink of light (post-Beeching) that made it possible to test the market for reopened stations and train services. Amazingly the Act was used 139 times to reopen stations or stretches of line. Only a handful proved unsuccessful.

AGM Durham warning

Railfuture’s 2013 AGM is being held on Saturday 11 May in the Town Hall, Market Square, Durham DH1 3NE, and not at County Hall, as wrongly reported in *Railwatch* 134.

Trains and ferries

Last year the Railfuture international committee, with the help of nearly 200 of our members, conducted a detailed survey of train and bus access to airports.

We published a report in November and this can be viewed on the Railfuture website. This year Railfuture will undertake a similar survey of train (and where appropriate bus) access to sea-ports. A questionnaire will be enclosed with the summer issue of *Railwatch* but if you travel to Ireland, France, the Netherlands, for example, before then, or seek to book a journey, using train and ferry, we will be interested to receive comments on your experience, good or bad. You can email Peter Walker at pj.walker@zen.co.uk

2014 summer conference

Railfuture is considering where to hold its summer 2014 conference. You can make your preferences known in an online poll at <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Events>

No Freepost to Railfuture

The Freepost envelopes which were sent to members for a survey last year should no longer be used. Some members retained

them and used them for membership renewals. The Freepost has now been cancelled and, if they are used now, they will no longer reach Railfuture.

Members’ PIN code query

Some Railfuture members were puzzled by the PIN code which has been added to the renewal sheet which comes with *Railwatch*. Lloyd Butler explains: The code is designed for use when purchasing items from the Railfuture website. This system allows us to confirm that a buyer is a member so that discounts can be offered. The website is being developed on a day-by-day basis, so we needed to have the PIN code available to members for when the sales section becomes more comprehensive.

Stamps to help Railfuture

Help raise money for Railfuture by sending your used postage stamps to Stamps for Charity, Railfuture, 10 Bellamy Avenue, Hartcliffe, Bristol BS13 0HW. Please cut the stamps from their

envelopes leaving a quarter of an inch margin of paper around the stamp and the post mark. You can ask friends and relatives to help too.

Please ensure that you include Railfuture in the address so Stephen can allocate the correct funds to Railfuture.

Rail plan for Sizewell C

Railfuture and the East Suffolk Travellers Association responded to the consultation exercise by electricity company EDF on its proposal to build a new nuclear power station, Sizewell C, even though it is not in the remit of ESTA or Railfuture to take sides for or against nuclear power. However, if the project goes ahead, we want to see rail used as much as possible. Up to 5,600 people could be involved in the building work and 900 staff would be employed at the new plant.

They should be encouraged to use the hourly train services on the Ipswich-Lowestoft line

where possible and the consultation document does indeed propose bus links from Saxmundham and Darsham stations to the site.

During the construction period, four or five freight trains a day are predicted between Ipswich and Saxmundham, then on to the site seven miles away, via an extension of the Leiston freight branch which EDF says should be upgraded.

This will create capacity problems which it is proposed to solve by laying extra track in the Wickham Market area.

ESTA has put forward a number of options for this, which will ultimately also benefit passenger trains. Sizewell C or no Sizewell C, Railfuture regards a loop at or near Wickham Market station as the next infrastructure improvement on the single-track East Suffolk Line, after the success at gaining Beccles loop.

Campaigner Frank dies, at 93

Railfuture stalwart Frank Tomlins died in January, aged 93. Frank was a GP in Loughton, Essex, and was an enthusiastic rail campaigner, who fought for the Channel Tunnel rail link, an international station at Ashford, Kent, and the Stansted rail link.

He was a former chairman of London and Home Counties branch and a member of the Muswell Hill Metro Group which aimed to reinstate a light rail system between Finsbury Park and Alexandra Palace.

He was also an active member of the National Council on Inland Transport.

More support for East West Rail

Support for East West Rail is growing, with many visitors to the Oxford Green Fair signing up as Oxford-Cambridge supporters. Their reward was a free mince pie or muffin.

Network Rail’s project team has started work on the important environmental baseline surveys between Aylesbury, Bicester and Bletchley. A legal challenge is delaying the Oxford-Bicester upgrade which would clear the way for a London Marylebone service as well as East West Rail.

Railfuture is now concentrating on the next phase, from Bedford to Cambridge. East Anglian members are making detailed assessments of four route corridors. This will be the first time the issue has been analysed to professional standards.

Railfuture lottery winners

Beginner’s luck certainly applies to Elizabeth James. She entered our monthly lottery for the first

time in January, and snapped up a prize immediately! She doubled her chances, however, by purchasing two tickets for the year via PayPal on our website. You can too, helping Railfuture as well as giving yourself the chance to pick up one of six prizes every month, with a top payout of £40.

Half the money raised is returned in prizes while the remainder goes into Railfuture funds to help our campaigns, once expenses have been met. Entries cost just £1 each per month and you can send a cheque, payable to Railfuture Lottery, to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND, or email lottery@railfuture.org.uk. Alternatively, join using PayPal via our website: www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery/.

Recent winners are:

November: Keith Montague, Lindon Stone, Hans Hammschmidt, Terence Roger Sheppard, Anthony S Cleveley, Peter J Pass.

December: William Morton, Brian Balmain, Joan Powell, Alan & Hilary F Everett, Alan John Boultswood, Gerald E K Chandler.

January: Francis Vivian Thomas, Geoffrey J Heathcock, Garth Smith, Keith Green, Elizabeth James, John Ward.

Railfuture trip to Ireland

RDS Group Travel has organised many visits by train to continental Europe for members of Railfuture. In September this year the group is planning something new, a rail/sea/rail study trip to Ireland.

It is hoped to go from Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire or Dublin and spend five days experiencing Irish trams and trains. Details will be in the next *Railwatch*, but if you are interested, please email trevorgarrodd2000@yahoo.co.uk or write to him (with SAE) at 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

Campaign issues for Europe

The European Passengers Federation council met in London in January. Railfuture was one of the 14 founder members of EPF in 2002 and the Federation now has 34 affiliated organisations in 19 European countries. EPF is preparing a report on alternative services during engineering work, including bus substitution.

Another field of study is how rail passengers gain access to local transport, like city-wide ticketing. If you would like to be involved in any of these projects, please contact Trevor Garrod (details above).

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes
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■ ■ £13 million for tram-train pilot

Network Rail has set aside £13 million, in its strategic business plan, for the South Yorkshire Tram-Trains scheme which would link Parkgate to Sheffield. The Government agreed last year to provide £58 million for the ‘trailblazing’ project. Three trams an hour are expected to run from Sheffield city centre through the redeveloped Rotherham Central station and on to Parkgate’s retail park. There is also a chance that the scheme could be rolled out to Doncaster. The pilot will run for two years from 2015 and, if successful, may then be taken up by other cities such as Manchester. A spokesman for Network Rail said: ‘The fine detail of the project is still under discussion but construction work is expected to begin in spring of next year.’ For commuters from Parkgate and Rotherham to Sheffield, the tram-trains could be a huge bonus, saving money and travel time.

■ ■ Call for tram-train link to Leeds-Bradford airport

There is now cross-party support for a tram-train link from Leeds to Leeds-Bradford airport, via Horsforth. A link to the airport from Bradford via Guiseley is also under consideration. Greg Mulholland, Lib Dem MP for Leeds North West, Alec Shelbrooke, Tory MP for Elmet and Rothwell, and Gerry Sutcliffe, Labour MP for Bradford South, are leading the campaign. They attended a meeting on 22 January of other MPs and representatives from the Department for Transport, local government and the light rail industry. The meeting followed a working lunch attended by Transport Minister Norman Baker MP to discuss a strategy for progressing the scheme. It is hoped the scheme can be included in the projects to go forward within the proposed £1 billion West Yorkshire Plus Transport Fund.

■ ■ Now it is Elland’s turn for a new station

A campaign to get a station reopened at Elland is being stepped up by Halifax and District Rail Action Group. A station was promised for Elland 15 years ago. Brighouse reopened in 2000 but plans for Elland were shelved. HADRAG, which says the catchment area for Elland equals that of Brighouse, is holding its AGM in Elland on 11 May.

■ ■ More say for rail passengers, promises minister

Passengers in the North West will have more say on how local rail services are run, promised Rail Minister Norman Baker when he announced that the Bentham line would be run as a community rail service.

Designation of the line between Leeds and Morecambe, sometimes known as the little North Western, will enable train companies to work more closely with the Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe Community Rail Partnership to design better services to meet local needs. Mr Baker said: ‘I want to encourage communities to become more closely involved with their railways to help create the services and stations passengers deserve. That is why I am delighted to announce this latest community rail service designation.’

Ian Bevan, managing director of Northern Rail, which runs services on the route, said: ‘As this route is integral to the area, its designation ensures it will be developed to benefit local people and visitors to the region. We look forward to working with the community rail partnership to enable the route to prosper as much as possible.’ Councillor Richard Rollins, chairman of the Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe Community Rail Partnership said: ‘Key objectives include station improvements and service developments.’



Page one picture

Our page one picture shows London’s Paddington station, as most rail users will never see it.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel’s impressive Great Western Railway terminus building is now being supplemented by Crossrail. The new station box is being created below street level to the left of the existing station, in the picture. Eastbourne Terrace has been completely closed to road traffic for a year to make way for Crossrail’s construction machinery.

Miles away in south-east London, Crossrail’s Woolwich station box has been completed ahead of schedule by Berkeley Homes which is building 585 new homes around the station. Work on other stations around London is continuing and of course several tunnel boring machines are on the move, creating tunnels which will link the new stations. Beneath London, new stations are also being built at Canary Wharf, Bond Street, Tottenham Court

was rescued from oblivion by the Labour government and escaped being axed by the present coalition government.

But when Railfuture representatives urged Railtrack to get the project going in the 1990s, during another economic downturn, the then chairman Bob Horton refused to agree that it was needed. Now even newspapers which have a shameful history of knocking railways while fighting for the rights of ‘motorists’, are waking up to the biggest construction project in Europe taking place in front of their eyes. After years of being an unquestioning road lobby mouthpiece, The Sun admits: ‘Love it or hate it, we are living through a new age of the railway.’

The Sun recognises that the £15 billion project will create 73 miles of new railway in London and be ‘one of the most enterprising transport projects’ undertaken since the first Underground railway in London 150

years ago. The Sun concludes: Brunel, left, would have taken his hat off to the engineers currently modernising our railways.



railwatch

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

Devon and Cornwall

By Gerard Duddridge
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Bus links to station

First Group closed its North Devon bus network last year, leaving Stagecoach to take over routes such as Bude to Exeter via Exeter St David's station. In Barnstaple, Stagecoach services via the station have been improved. The services from Westward Ho! and Appledore together give a bus every 10 minutes from Bideford to Barnstaple railway station. However, Railfuture Devon and Cornwall would still like to see the Bideford to Barnstaple railway reopened. The train would take



less than 15 minutes, compared to 30 minutes by bus. This would persuade many to use the train through to Exeter, instead of driving 45 miles to catch main line trains at Tiverton Parkway.

Uncertainty surrounds Great Western franchise

First has had its contract to operate the Great Western franchise extended until October and talks are under way to allow the company to extend the contract for a further two years. Originally a new 15-year franchise was expected to be announced in March this year with a start in July. Now the long term must await a Government statement "in the spring". Railfuture was worried by plans in the new franchise to reduce the current nine through trains from Penzance to London Paddington to just six. More positively, there was mention of a two-hourly service from Exeter to Okehampton and back. All stations would be served so perhaps Newton St Cyres, currently served by just a few Barnstaple line trains, might benefit as well.

There were also plans for trains to run on reopened track from Tavistock to Bere Alston and on to Plymouth, but only at an approximate two-hourly frequency. Railfuture Devon and Cornwall would like to see a much more frequent service than this and linking across Plymouth to a new station at Plympton. The new franchise also proposed that between Exeter and Axminster, there would be five additional trains operating two hourly. These would use the paths identified in *Railwatch* 127 in April 2011.

New stations and local service hope for Exeter-Taunton

The idea of a local train service between Exeter and Taunton serving new stations at Cullompton, Willand (former Tiverton Junction station) and Wellington, Somerset, is not yet making any progress. The three stations would serve

estimated populations of around 8,845, 3,511 and 15,000. Of the three stations, Willand would be the easiest to reopen, as platforms remain alongside the four-track layout through the station. All three stations could be served by extending the Cardiff-Taunton service to Exeter St David's and Central station and then across Exeter as part of a Metro service.

Investment at last for growing North Devon line

Jointed track is being replaced by continuously welded rail on the Barnstaple line north of Crediton at a cost of £9 million, the most spent on the line in more than 100 years.

Railfuture Devon and Cornwall AGM

Saturday 20 April 2013 at 13.30 at Unitarian Church, Notte Street, Plymouth PL1 2HG. Speaker Stuart Walker: The Chacewater to Newquay Line, A Warning from History.



A CrossCountry train at Cullompton where a new station could be built

Picture: GERARD DUDDRIDGE

Franchise fiasco but rail digs deeper to succeed

By Ian Brown
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It is no surprise that Mystic Wolmar had a hard time predicting events in 2012. Chaos planning as a science may be still in its infancy but it is increasingly important in Britain.

It would be easy to comment on the West Coast franchise fiasco. Many Railfuture members who have followed every nuance know it was a fiasco.

Even the man in the street and the woman on the platform are starting to associate words like fiasco with the rail industry. This is not welcome but at least the trains are still running. Attention has started to turn to what to do next following the Laidlaw report that confirmed that the process was indeed a fiasco.

The Richard Brown report, which followed the Laidlaw inquiry, was thoroughly competent but apparently constrained into making suggestions as to how to patch up the current franchise process.

Nobody has asked the passengers or taxpayers of course, as it seems the Government's intention is determined to maintain the status quo, a position the Treasury gains most from.

Devolution is clearly working in London and Scotland where a concession, rather than a franchise, model is preferred.

The client, Transport for London for instance, says what it wants, decides on the level of investment and hopefully implements a coherent and, dare I say, even an integrated fares structure.

We should also however be looking for efficiency improvements which so concerned McNulty.

But the Rail Delivery Group will soon be "celebrating" two years of inaction on efficiency, apart from cutting out customer value such as closing ticket offices.

My own solution of freezing the costs and growing the volume (and revenue) is happening by default.

There is a useful role, which I am hoping will evolve soon, for RDG in the area of research and technical standards, but cutting its own costs and profits demonstrably is not one of them.

One aspect of all this is that the current franchise model is not conducive to investment except by the Government. With the Government's rich history of defence procurement fiascos it is difficult to see why it wishes to replicate this experience with railways. It suggests a deep psychological problem as evidenced by Intercity Express Programme.



IAN BROWN

But there are positive signs of investment, including Southern procuring the Class 377/6 electric multiple units (even if it does not know where they will run).

A seriously novel idea is also being implemented whereby Crossrail will procure both trains and infrastructure.

When I saw a discarded wooden train in a skip after Christmas, I mused that the industry should concentrate on my "cut costs by growth" approach and should stop throwing stuff away.

A good start would be to devise a sensible cascade of equipment as schemes are implemented. The current industry structure has allowed loads of "good toys" to go in the skip, both equipment and infrastructure.

Instead of attempting too many predictions I submit my awards for "Innovation for growth achieved through recycling from the railway skip - 2012".

On equipment, my winner is First Great Western, which was faced with massive overcrowding as a result of growth on both short and long distance trains.

Three of FGW's initiatives come to mind, intercepting the two Centro prototype Sprinters on their way to the skip, collecting second generation diesel multiple units from all over and properly upgrading and maintaining them at Bristol, and of course digging deep into the skip for Mark 3 catering vehicles, modifying them and incorporating them into its IC 125 trains.

On depot capacity, Northern took the initiative to dig into the rather full depot skip and resurrect Allerton complete with wheel lathe to provide for growth on Merseyside and plan for the introduction of electric multiple units on North West local services. Track and points were repaired and a new washing plant installed.

The freight operators have also been active, bringing redundant facilities back into action at, for instance, Leicester.

Turning to long-distance pas-

senger assets, throwing away the West Coast fleet of electric locomotives and the Mark 3 fleet was beyond a child's tantrum dimension, more reckless negligence.

The structure of the industry made it difficult to respond to the cascade challenge until recently when Chiltern Trains checked the skip, recycled the Mark 3s and driving van trailers and, with a flourish, produced its Silver trains. This was accompanied by redoubling the route and increasing capacity and speed.

However most of the infrastructure opportunities were lost many skips ago when British Rail, at the behest of the Government when business was declining, was forced into "rationalisations". Capacity was cut back to such an extent that once growth returned, it was difficult to accommodate it. This was not just route closures, but many single line schemes and even more ridiculous single-lead schemes such as at Dore and Totley, now belatedly being redoubled.

This did not stop Chiltern or First Great Western which, in association with Network Rail, rescued the 125 mph class 185 trains and deployed them effectively on the redoubled Cotswold route.

These initiatives are far from being fiascos, and show both impressive and intelligent use of resources. We should not revel in the current series of Government-inspired fiascos when the railway industry is already well on the way to its goal of continuous development.

The media love a scandal of course but obsessing about it runs the risk of scaring off both passengers and funders.

So what should we be campaigning for? In the short term we should recheck the skips - particularly the old ones containing discarded infrastructure capacity and evaluate against the Government's support for electrification.

There are electric trains around which will be suitable for intelligent cascading once there is a timely delivery of new Crossrail and Thameslink trains.

There are even a limited number of diesel units suitable for cascade but probably not enough to replace the wretched Pacers.

My unofficial spreadsheet of what rail vehicles are available shows that with continued passenger growth, the Pacers will have to last for ever, not just the 80 years some people suggested. No one will win a prize for strategic planning for that. A strategic electric freight network, recycling under-used or binned

routes such as Oxford-Bletchley-Bedford provides all sorts of opportunities for regional service enhancement and to enhance network resilience.

To be viable these can provide new linkages, but in business case terms stand up much better if they provide capacity relief and added resilience to existing routes. Oxford-Bletchley now going ahead particularly ticks this box.

Others may also provide a cost-effective solution to capacity enhancement and resilience such as Buxton-Matlock. Reopening would be effective in relieving congestion in the Peak District National Park.

In business case terms however it would probably look healthier if it were evaluated as an option to increase capacity in the Hope Valley, providing more efficient access from the Peak Forest quarries to markets in the south.

Other potential reopenings, such as Lewes-Uckfield, Skipton-Colne and Carlisle-Tweedbank might also stack up, if evaluated in the wider capacity, efficiency and resilience context.

Despite the shortcomings of industry leadership and the dearth of strategic direction, the potential for growth remains, enough perhaps to overwhelm the system.

We need to encourage continued innovation - not just hope for a return to BR. A Government controlled BR would enlarge the existing problems.

We need to plan for cost-effective strategic investment in infrastructure capacity against various scenarios of growth, the environment, oil security and road congestion, all of which threaten to overwhelm the system at relatively short notice, particularly outside London.

My first prediction is that essential innovation will continue to come up with short term tactical capacity solutions, like the Paisley electrification scheme.

My second prediction is that the railway will continue to be bogged down with complexity and the costs of complexity, and will continue to be perceived as overcrowded and overpriced.

Chaos planning suggests that a tipping point can be reached very quickly. The question is can the railway respond quickly enough when all these stars align?

■ Ian Brown CBE FCILT retired as managing director of London Rail TfL in 2010 and was awarded a CBE for services to railways.



Eversholt's refurbished mark 4 standard class interior

Picture: EVERSOLT

New for old 'magic'

After the success of Chiltern Trains in renovating redundant mark 3 coaches for its Silver service, Eversholt Trains is suggesting it could do something similar with the mark 4 coaches, now operating on the East Coast main line. Eversholt says it would be more popular and more cost effective than buying all-new trains as part of the Intercity Express Programme. A Railfuture team travelled to York to inspect Eversholt's mark 4 mock-up of the interior design.

Railfuture's Norman Bradbury said he was agreeably surprised by the standard class seating which gave the impression of being a more spacious and less claustrophobic interior than some other inter-city trains. The mark 4 trains were built between 1988 and 1991.

Eversholt says it can provide mark 4 refurbishment at a cost of £120 million rather than the estimated £1 billion cost of a new train fleet.

Eversholt believes that new locomotives would, however, probably be needed to replace the class 91. It believes Bombardier's class 93 Traxx locomotives, which are already operating in several European countries, could be the answer.



Chiltern's mark 3 Silver trains

Picture: GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK



Hungarian Railways already uses the Bombardier Traxx loco which could replace East Coast main line class 91s

Picture: BOMBARDIER



Wales

By Rowland Pittard
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■ Sand train points way forward

A new intermodal container terminal operated by ABP opened at Barry docks in January. The first train to use the terminal was a silica sand train with both containers and hopper wagons from France. The terminal is used for traffic to and from the chemical works at Barry owned by Dow Corning but the terminal may attract other users and has the potential to be extended.

■ More freight trains for steel

The hot mill at Llanwern steel works, near Newport, has reopened and once again steel slab is being taken by rail between Margam, near Port Talbot, and Llanwern. This is being supplemented by slab from Scunthorpe and imported via Cardiff docks until the rebuilt blast furnace at Port Talbot is back in action.

■ Wales must not miss out when HS2 is built

The announcement of HS2 routes in northern England has raised concern in Wales. The Welsh Government will not receive additional compensatory funding as HS2 is deemed to be in the national interest. Even though no section will serve Wales directly, North Wales will be served by connections at Crewe. This has stimulated a campaign for the electrification of the North Wales coast line and the provision of through services. Connecting services from South Wales are shown only from Cardiff and are routed via Bristol – with longer journey times! This raises the need for electrification of the Lydney-Chepstow line to provide through services at least as far as Swansea.

■ Government's freight group is re-established

The Welsh Government's freight group was re-established in January and was chaired by Transport Minister Carl Sargeant, the minister for local government and communities. An initial task for the group (of which Railfuture is a member) will be to look at the initial recommendations of the review of the Wales Freight Strategy.

■ Metro rail can be developed around Cardiff and Newport

Transport Minister Carl Sargeant also announced that the Welsh Government has set up a task force to develop a metro-style rail system for south east Wales. An announcement was expected in March on the proposed system which would enable Cardiff and Newport area passengers to travel across the region in 45 minutes. The task force builds on work already done by the South East Wales Transport Alliance which includes 10 local authorities. Members of the task force include Network Rail, CBI Wales, train operating companies, Wales Trades Union Congress and Sustrans. Mr Sargeant said: "Good transport is critical for economic growth and social inclusion and the reduction of poverty."

■ Rail expected to be public transport spine

A phased programme is also being drawn up to take forward proposals set out in the recently published North East Wales Area Based Transport Study, which proposes a modernised railway to form the spine of an integrated transport system and enhanced cross-border connectivity.

■ How to improve integrated transport

The Welsh Government's enterprise and business committee is undertaking an inquiry into integrated public transport and how it can be improved. Railfuture Wales has made a written submission to the inquiry.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk

LOCAL ACTION



Lost opportunities to

In 1964 I went off to Cardiff University and, my home town being Bournemouth, I wanted to use the Somerset & Dorset Railway as much as possible.

I got known by staff at Bournemouth for objecting when they told me the "correct" way was via Southampton, at £3.90 return in "modern" currency, when I wanted the S & D at £2.60 return.

It sounds trivial but in those pre-railcard days, with no fares other than the "ordinary three-month return" available, and when I only paid £2 a week to rent my bed-sit, the saving mattered. However, more importantly, I objected to staff running the railway down.

Here, from Hansard, is Viscount Hinchinbrooke, a Dorset MP, speaking on 23 June 1958: "I notice there is a concern which has been in existence for a long time, called Srubluk, the Society for the Reinvigoration of Unremunerative Branch Lines in the United Kingdom. It has note paper, and it is an intact organi-

sation." Well by the early 1960s that had become the quaintly named Railway Invigoration Society and I noticed it too! On its behalf I campaigned to save the S & D and, of course, we lost.

Thirty years later a senior director of the then Regional Railways sector of British Rail told me if there was one line he wished were still open it was the S & D, where he would now be running hourly class 158s from Bournemouth to Bristol.

How short-sighted was Beeching! He never attempted dieselisation of the line, let alone de-staffing smaller stations, because he wanted these lines to show poor figures to justify closure.

I recall his being interviewed on television many years later and, asked if he had any regrets over the closures, he said: "Yes, I wish I could have closed a lot more."

The years moved on. The RIS became the Railway Development Society and after teaching maths for 13 years I took up my railway interest full time and the rest, as they say, is history. I was,

make rail fares lower

My CALCULATIONS

By Barry Doe



therefore, really honoured to be asked to become a Vice President of Railfuture, not least joining people whom I admire so much, such as my good friend Chris Green, one of the great railway managers of the 20th century.

Most readers will know I tend to specialise in fares. I note that that fare from Bournemouth to Cardiff via Southampton (£3.90 in 1964) is now £52.60, nearly a 14-fold increase.

Yet the "ordinary" (now called an Anytime) return from London to Manchester was £4.60 in 1964 and is now £308, a 67-fold increase.

My recent analysis of 2013 fares shows that out of London standard class walk-on fares now vary from 8.5p to 85p per mile. Granted the old mileage rate of the early 1960s took no account

of quality and so you paid the same per mile to travel to Manchester by comfortable inter-city train as on a basic early diesel multiple unit.

In today's terms it seems reasonable to pay more for a Pendolino or a high speed train than a Pacer.

But is not the variation too great? We can never say for sure what would have been "if only..."

But I do feel that, with BR having been the most efficient railway in Europe, InterCity making a profit and Network SouthEast heading for break-even, if only it had continued with the quality of management we had then, things would be so much better today – and certainly fares would be far lower.

■ Barry Doe is a Railfuture Vice President and RAIL columnist.



London and SE

By Roger Blake
roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

■ A century of rail development

Railfuture campaigners are devising ways to influence developments over the next 50 years, following the half century of progress since Beeching. We hope to see at least 50 new or reopened stations and another 100 miles of route in London and the Home Counties, to match the progress since 1963.

■ More electrification and stations

We will be pressing for complete electrification of our region's main line network. Our short-term targets include additional stations at Lea Bridge, Surrey Canal Road, Glyne Gap, Maiden Lane, Beaulieu Park and Beam Reach. We will be calling for all communities with a population over 15,000 to have rail services.

■ The time is coming for Crossrail 2 and Crossrail 3

Crossrail 2, also known as the Chelsea-Hackney line, is already getting positive coverage and Railfuture will be supporting it. HS2 is expected to generate passenger growth on local rail services at Euston and King's Cross and thus worsen congestion. This however will enhance the business case for another Crossrail. Crossrail 3 could connect the Brighton main line with the West Coast main line and relieve congestion at London Bridge and Victoria. Long-term pressure on Liverpool Street station may require a new route to Norwich via Stansted Airport. This would probably mean the addition of two tracks out of Liverpool Street. Railfuture will seek to influence strategic thinking at Network Rail when it starts a public consultation on its draft "market studies" as part of its long-term planning process. More info: www.networkrail.co.uk/Long-Term-Planning-Process

■ Railfuture report jump-starts station reopening

Lea Bridge station looks likely to reopen within two years, and a third track may be added to the Lea Valley line through Tottenham Hale to Angel Road by 2019 which will allow the local service to be doubled, to four trains per hour. This progress is at least partly the result of Railfuture's fighting fund providing a grant to enable Railfuture and the affiliated Chingford Line Users Association to commission a report on the benefits especially to Waltham Forest. The Railfuture-sponsored report is proving to be highly influential in generating the necessary political commitment. See: www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=CLUA-JRC%20Report

■ Hopes are high for Uckfield-Lewes reinstatement

Our other major campaign, to "Bridge the gap: connect East Sussex" by extending Uckfield line services to Lewes and beyond as the essential first step in adding capacity between the Sussex coast and London, has received submissions from consultants interested in developing a new business case for the project. Our 10-year timeline remains achievable, though of course, it depends on support from district and county councils and the new Local Enterprise Partnerships. Railfuture is likely to raise the issue during the county council elections in May. If all goes to plan, Railfuture is hoping that the project will be included in the High Level Output Specification for Network Rail's control period 6 (2019 to 2024). Please register your support here: www.railfuture.org.uk/Uckfield+Lewes

■ Budget may clear way for Barking-Gospel Oak boost

By the time you read this, we trust that the go-ahead for Gospel Oak-Barking line electrification will have been announced in the Budget on 20 March. The line was not included in the Government's autumn financial statement. The March Budget could pave the way for Bombardier's four-car Capitalstar trains to be introduced on the route, doubling the present passenger capacity. See www.railfuture.org.uk/Barking-Gospel+Oak to see how to contact the nine MPs along the line.

■ Keep up to date at www.railfuture.org.uk/branches

LOCAL ACTION



Now lorry firms want

By George Boyle

george.boyle@railfuture.org.uk

For some time, road haulage interests have been pushing the concept of an "essential users rebate" for road fuel excise duty.

They want heavy goods vehicles to pay less than "ordinary" road users.

This would be an outrageous step but we must be alive to the possibility that the Government may listen to these siren voices, just as they have listened several times before and not implemented inflation-linked increases to road fuel duty.

Perversely, the Government has consistently increased the duty on diesel fuel used by trains, by more than inflation.

If any mode should be classed as an essential user it is the freight train which helps to take dangerous, polluting lorries off the road. Most road users would plead that their use is "essential".

If we accept the premise that some lorry use is essential, we have to decide where the division between essential and non-essential lies. Under no circumstances are all lorry movements essential.

A container carried by road from Southampton Docks to Manchester is not essential because the route is served by several trains per day, already used by

a variety of rail freight operators. Any reduction in fuel price for lorries will lead to a loss of rail freight, leading to more road congestion and damage, pollution and accidents.

This applies to other commodities over many different routes, including steel coils from South Wales to the Midlands and stone from the Peak District to Manchester and Birmingham.

A lorry is only "essential" in transferring goods to and from a rail or water freight terminal.

It is certainly not "essential" for lorries to take freight from ports or the Eurotunnel terminal. It would be better for everyone if the freight went as far as possible by rail.

By contrast, containers from Workington to Tees Dock and bulk cement from Derbyshire to Plymouth have recently switched from rail to road. We suspect this is because road hauliers have been undercutting rail.

If the Government does concede that lorries are essential, rail campaigners and users must demand that rail fuel duty should be cut by the same amount.

Rail uses one third of the diesel to move a tonne of freight so the Government would be tripling the subsidy to road, and penalising the greenest form of freight transport – rail. A bad precedent

www.railfuture.org.uk

to squeeze rail freight



Picture: FREIGHTLINER

THE RIGHT PLACE FOR FREIGHT: On the railway, not the road. To adjust to changing times, Freightliner has started to introduce new 40 foot Shortliner wagons, seen above. The new wagons complement Freightliner's existing 60 foot wagons which can accommodate two 30 foot containers but which leave wasted space when used for the increasingly popular 40 foot container

has been set by the Irish Government in announcing a discount to road hauliers from July.

Rail campaigners can be certain the Road Haulage Association and its friends will be applying pressure for the British Government to match this.

Another problem for rail freight is the plan to increase access charges. GB Railfreight, one of Britain's leading rail freight companies, has already expressed "deep disappointment" at plans to increase charges for operators

to access the rail network. GBRf was responding to an announcement from the Office of Rail Regulation that it intends to increase the variable usage charge and introduce a new charge for the haulage of coal, iron ore and spent nuclear fuel.

GBRf managing director John Smith said: "These deeply disappointing plans could threaten competitiveness and counter the ORR's duty to promote the use and growth of freight on rail." Railfuture agrees.

◆◆◆◆ Every six seconds someone is killed or seriously injured on the world's roads

Your letters



Let's go further

Mike Crowhurst draws our attention to anomalies and omissions in the electrification programme in *Railwatch* 134. The proposal to terminate electrification at Newbury on the Great Western main line is particularly galling because it would deprive Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn (the railhead for Marlborough) of most of their through trains to Paddington, which are currently hourly or better.

The proposal is to provide a diesel shuttle to connect with the electric services at Newbury, so those villages and small towns not only miss out on the advantages of electrification but get a service significantly inferior to that which they have enjoyed since BR days.

Operationally it would be difficult and Newbury is not an ideal interchange station – just two through platforms without step-free access between them and a bay platform with no weather protection. In contrast, the continuation of electrification to Bedwyn would appear to be a straightforward exercise – about 12 miles of simple double track.
R M Hand, Kintbury Mill, Kintbury, Berkshire RG17 9UN

Think big and small

The Government can find £33 billion for HS2, yet not the far smaller amount needed to electrify Barking-Gospel Oak, 13 strategically important miles surrounded by electrified lines. This means its overcrowded passenger service needs a dedicated fleet of diesel trains, while its increasing numbers of long-distance freight trains have to be diesel-hauled even if most of their overall journey is over electrified tracks.

*Graham Larkbey, Carr Road, London E17 5ER
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High speed network

It was good to see Mike Crowhurst suggesting that the Bromsgrove-Bristol Parkway

(and eventually Plymouth) route should be electrified, as well as Birmingham-Southampton.

If the Government really wants to promote development outside London and SE England how can it allow the Swansea/Cardiff to Birmingham route to remain non-electrified? Cardiff and

Birmingham are two of the very largest cities in the UK.

If the gaps between Birmingham and Leeds were electrified too, this would mean that the entire CrossCountry NE-SW and NW-SW axes could operate electric trains all the way from Scotland to Bristol, and also of course to South Wales. This would eliminate some of the longest sections of track in the UK where diesels currently run under the wires. Surely the savings on running costs over these distances would be immense?

Voyagers could be cascaded, for instance, to Cardiff-Portsmouth services. The lines could then help to give HS2 a truly national role, not just for trains to London but as a hub for north-east to south-west and north-west to

south-west. A flyover at Kings Norton would greatly speed up trains as well as massively increase capacity.

If this required increased capacity at Curzon Street, would it not be possible to create two through platforms with a link to the Moor Street line which it could run alongside as far as Bordesley? Obviously a lot of expense, but an expanded role for HS2 would be well worth it.

*Michael Rothwell
rothwellmj@talktalk.net*

Watchful eye needed

Thank goodness that at long last the British Government has come up with a rolling programme of electrification, something which other European countries have accepted as



Picture: VOSSLÖH

Railwatch 134 included an article by Mike Crowhurst listing many extensions to electrification, with which most of us will wholeheartedly agree. However, even in the present climate, with a pro-electrification government, such a programme will take years to achieve. We need action now to maximise the benefit of existing electrification, and future extensions as they come on stream.

Today, diesel traction, both passenger and freight, covers many thousands of miles daily under the wires simply because the ultimate destination is "off the wires". Indeed, some freight is diesel hauled because the sidings are not wired, even though the main line run of 300+ miles is fully wired. This situation will continue for many years even as infill schemes gradually close gaps. The solution is available in electro-diesel traction. Modern diesel

engines are considerably lighter and more powerful than their predecessors, as are the pure electric power packs for locos. Vossloh is currently manufacturing a diesel, pictured above, lighter and more powerful than current freight designs.

DRS has already ordered 15 of these locos, in pure diesel configuration, with a 3,750 horsepower engine. Despite its light weight, it is a match for a class 66 loco on pure brake horsepower.

Such a loco could be adapted and expanded so it could easily accommodate the electric power pack and pantograph, necessary for dual use.

These locos would be fully capable of moving current freights, as diesels or electrics, with no loss of performance. This is important, as thinking on electro diesels is coloured by the present ex Southern Region class 73s, which

are very underpowered in diesel mode. The same principle applies to passenger operation. There are proposals to insert an electric vehicle in existing Voyager and Meridian sets to provide dual capability. This proposal inexplicably sits on the shelf on the dubious premise that some of their current routes will, in years to come, be wired.

Other routes, or potential routes will be only partially wired for many years to come and in any case, redeployment will ensure their continued productive use. A combined diesel and electric unit for shorter journeys is equally achievable. When the end destination is finally wired, if necessary, the diesel equipment can be removed to leave a pure electric unit. However, I have a feeling that, when that day comes, the units will be life expired anyway!

*George Boyle
Railfuture Vice President
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the norm for decades. But we must keep a close watch on our parliamentarians and civil servants, especially the latter, to make as sure as we can that this programme is adhered to in full and without delays.

I have read that the Great Western main line scheme has already drifted 18 months behind schedule.

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Crucial link

In *Railwatch* 134, Dr Adrian Morgan writes of his lack of success in gaining the support of any government front-bench MP for the campaign to reopen the line from Northallerton to Leeds via Ripon, Harrogate and Wetherby. Apparently the MP for Richmond, William Hague, is interested only in the Wensleydale railway.

This campaign appears to be mainly about putting Ripon back on the national railway network and providing a shorter route from north-east England to Leeds, but it is actually more important than that. Were it reopened it could also shorten the route to every other major conurbation in England and Wales except London and Brighton.

For those whose destination is not south-east England, this could be an important line. In addition, for future travellers whose destination is London or Birmingham, it would provide a better link to High Speed Two than the proposed diversion off the East Coast main line.

It deserves the support of more politicians than just the local MPs.

*Damian Bell, Northbourne Street, Gateshead NE8 4AE
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Ticket check

I would be interested to know whether Railfuture members using train operators other than Northern hear the all-too-frequent announcement from the train conductor: "I am sorry I cannot issue tickets on this service because my machine is not working."

Here in Greater Manchester there are already enough unstaffed stations, with probably more to come post McNulty.

Tickets are not always properly checked at Piccadilly or Victoria.

Ticket machines on First trains always seem to be working,



Picture: JIM WADE

CORBY: The 09.30 Derby-bound diesel Meridian train, which goes north and calls at Oakham, Melton Mowbray, East Midlands Parkway. Electrification poses question for the future

We rail users in Corby welcome the decision to connect Corby to the electric railway. However, those of us who travel north to Oakham, Melton Mowbray and Derby are a little nervous as to what the franchise holder will do regarding traction north over the un-electrified route via Melton and Syston Junction.

Indeed, we worry in case the franchise holder withdraws services to the north altogether. East Midlands Trains runs a superb service in the early morning from Melton Mowbray and Oakham to London St Pancras via Corby and a return working at 18.00 north via Corby every week day. This, and the 09.30 service from Corby to Derby and 16.34 return, needs

diesel haulage. This route is also used as a diversionary route five or six times a year at weekends when engineering work is in progress on the main line between Kettering and Leicester. Will the route be discontinued for passenger traffic? Will the regular weekly services go to class 158s? And will all diversions require electric units to be diesel hauled from Kettering to Leicester with class 67s? Clearly a decision for the new franchise holder after 2014, but a concern that Railfuture must be aware of and guard against losses sorely won just four years ago.

*Jim Wade, Friends of Corby Station
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and their conductors zealous in checking, unlike some Northern conductors.

*Martin Rimmington, Overdene Close, Lostock, Bolton BL6 4DY
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Mobile phones

I was disappointed to read that there will be improvements to the mobile phone reception received by those travelling on class 222 Meridian trains (East Midlands report in *Railwatch* 134). Why? Well for many of us, mobiles are a bane of modern-day travel, with their regular use by passengers hardly

encouraging us to use public transport.

That's why I am glad that trains on the East Coast main line have a quiet coach where we do not have to endure the drivel emanating from pointless conversations.

*Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby DN31 2JP
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Widen the zone

The zonal system of fares, where London is divided into six zones with zone 1 in the centre, should be revised.

Berlin and Vienna have zones stretching into the countryside and even into neighbouring countries in the case of Vienna.

In London, zone 9 includes Amersham and Chesham on the Metropolitan line. Grays, Basildon, Cheshunt, Welwyn Garden City, St Albans, King's Langley, Slough, Windsor, Woking, Epsom, Redhill, Sevenoaks and Dartford should

also be included in zone 9. It seems rather out of date to continue to use the Greater London Council boundary as the limit of Transport for London's one-day travel cards.

Edgar Locke, Langton Court, Langton Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 7BZ

Lib Dems pressure

Despite the horrendous economic climate, there is something of a quiet revival in rail fortunes.

This is largely down to the pressure exerted within the government by the Liberal Democrats. If you imagine how rail would be faring under a majority Conservative government, the contribution of the junior partner is significant.

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Send your letters to:

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Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk
Railwatch also welcomes articles and pictures
Please use email if possible

Is it time to bring back InterCity – or British Rail plc?

By Mike Crowhurst
Railfuture Vice President

Both the Laidlaw and Brown reviews have recently reported on the implications of the West Coast fiasco.

It appears that, as with McNulty, any remotely radical proposals have been ruled out by the Department for Transport.

The DfT appears to believe, as did Voltaire's Candide: "All is for the best in the best of all possible worlds."

It may come as a surprise to the DfT, but everything is not all right. Many thoughtful observers – before Laidlaw and Brown – had already begun to agree on where the franchise system had gone wrong.

It had become clear that short franchises fail to provide a viable basis for long-term capital investment, and now it is equally clear that long franchises came up against the problem that no economist possesses a crystal ball capable of seeing more than a couple of years into the future.

The checks and balances set up to reassure bidders ("cap & collar") have reached a level of complexity exceeding that of the fares and ticketing system, so that outside the Department probably the only person who understands them is Roger Ford, and he is struggling!

Add to that the uncertainties of open access, and it becomes clear that franchising might have been appropriate for the bus industry, but on the railways it is simply not fit for purpose. First Group has recently blown another hole in the structure by showing how to end-load its bid with premium payments then quit just as they begin to bite! It said in May 2011 that it would exercise its option not to extend the Great Western franchise beyond March.

Now First has had its contract extended until October, negotiations are under way on a new two-year contract with the company, while the Government plans to announce its longer term strategy "in the spring".

Originally a new 15-year Great Western franchise was expected to be announced in March 2013

with a start in July 2013. The bizarre two-stage refranchising of West Coast, which seemed likely to add to the already huge cost of the bidding process to the industry and ultimately the public purse, has thankfully been dropped.

One wonders if any but the two main protagonists will bother to bid – or can afford to.

So just as it became clear after the Hatfield crash that Railtrack was not fit for purpose, now the other twin pillar of the Major government's rail structure – passenger franchising, has been shown to be equally wanting.

While one may question the then Transport Secretary Stephen Byers' motives in 2001 for dumping Railtrack, it is surely evident with hindsight that while Network Rail may not be perfect it is certainly a lot better than its predecessor. The key question now is surely whether the present regime at the Department for Transport will see sense and bite the bullet, or will they seek to paper over the cracks and hope their luck holds until it becomes someone else's problem. One must earnestly hope for the former, but so far the signs are not good.

The argument that the last thing the industry needs is another reorganisation has probably now been overwhelmed, but any changes must of course be done in such a way as to minimise disruption and management distraction.

A key issue is whether the muddle in the DfT was confined to franchise-related issues or did it infect the basic approach to how forward discounting and inflation is handled.

If the latter, then all planned investment, including electrification, new rolling stock, the Intercity Express Programme and High Speed Two, could all be in the frame.

It does seem to be common ground that whatever else happens, having civil servants run the railway should end.

The generalist culture of the civil service is inappropriate to a technical field such as railway operation. Civil servants did not try to run the railways in Brit-



BRITISH RAIL'S IC250 TRAIN CONCEPT: This was one of the projects that got lost in the rush to privatisation more than 20 years ago. It would have delivered a non-tilting inter-city train that could run at speeds up to 155 mph on the West Coast main line, but major track realignment and increased cant on many of the line's curves would have been required

ish Rail days, nor have they in the utilities or other privatised industries.

Even regulation is generally conducted by arms-length agencies. Indeed the franchised passenger sector suffers far more than Network Rail, the freight sector or of course the open access sector.

The responsibility for letting franchises was given to the Office for Passenger Rail Franchising in the original John Major privatisation.

It was passed to the Strategic Rail Authority but went to the DfT when the SRA itself was abolished in 2006.

Now it is time to remove that responsibility from the DfT and transfer it to an independent rail agency, preferably the Office of Rail Regulation, even if the Association of Train Operators would oppose such a move.

Only overall strategic objectives and the support budget (in the jargon: High Level Output Specification and the Statement of Funds Available) should remain to be decided by the Government. For the rest, let railway-

men and women run the railway.

Only if an operator proposes a withdrawal or a significant cut in service should the Regulators, or in the last resort the minister, intervene. This should be the first and easy step.

The next stage should be to address the fundamental unsuitability of franchising. As several people have already pointed out, over half the network comes up for tender in the next few years, so we have a golden opportunity to tackle this issue head

on. If we miss this opportunity we will not get a better one for decades. The impetus for change has come at an ideal time.

The present moratorium should be made permanent and all existing franchises should either be allowed to run their course, or be terminated early by agreement. "Directly Operated Railways" should be put in overall control for the time being, and a

few immediate extensions negotiated in order to allow time to set up the necessary team within DOR. This should not be a problem as all but top management usually remain in place anyway.

Very few franchises would need to be bought out, so there would not be major costs, whereas the ludicrous cost to all parties of franchising could be saved and reinvested in the network. But this can be only a tempo-

rary solution or we risk going back to a Government-run railway. Where we should go from here depends largely on one's ideological standpoint. Some, including the unions, favour a return to British Rail by outright renationalisation.

This has its supporters within Railfuture, but being a non-partisan organisation we have always refrained from officially taking this view. Our policy,

which I strongly endorse, is that fragmentation, not ownership, is the main problem. Others, including many in the industry at the time of privatisation, favour a unified private body, a modern-day British Rail plc.

That remains my preference, although it is more difficult to see how we get there now than in 1994. For one thing, we are constrained by European Union requirements in two respects.

First, there has to be transparency between the accounting for infrastructure and operations.

Second, related to that, open access has to be accommodated for both passenger and freight operations.

That probably precludes a unified body but should permit some sort of holding company, a "British Railways Group" such as has been adopted in some European countries.

In theory this could include Network Rail and the freight operators, but it might be better to leave the present status of Network Rail alone, and the freight sector too has operated quite successfully with open access under the present private ownership structure. Open access was aimed mainly at the freight sector originally anyway.

Within the umbrella body, ideally it would be best to leave the industry to decide how to organise itself, but the options would seem to be:

1. Recreate the old British Rail sectors of InterCity, Network SouthEast, and Regional.

2. Replace the present franchised train operators with a series of concessions on

the model of London Overground Rail Operations Ltd, and Merseyrail with the DfT to specify standards and services. Transport for London already has ambitions to take over South London metro services, Crossrail and West Anglia services.

3. Seven or eight not-for-profit regional subsidiaries or concessions closely related to Network Rail "routes" with controlling interests devolved to integrated transport authorities in England, and the Welsh and Scottish Government. A residual "national rail" operation comprising the principal inter-regional routes, East Coast, West Coast, the original CrossCountry routes and the Caledonian sleepers. Great Western and the Midland main line could be run by the regional concessions.

Any one of those options would offer an acceptable way forward without huge upheaval

and would be preferable to the present wasteful franchising system. Some might suggest that we go further and merge Network Rail and the Highways Agency into a national Infrastructure Agency on the model of the Swedish Bankverket. This was the original model for the European Union directive 91/440, imposing vertical separation.

On balance I would not support this and it is not required by the EU. We need to put financing of road and rail infrastructure on a comparable basis, but in Britain, I think transparency would best be served by keeping the two separate but parallel.

TWENTY YEARS ON FROM PRIVATISATION, THE WAY AHEAD IS FAR FROM CLEAR

■ ■ Rail union RMT called for the railways to be put back into public ownership, 20 years after legislation paving the way for the privatisation of Britain's railways was passed by John Major's Tory Government on 19 January 1993. The RMT says that since 1995, the average ticket price has increased by 22% in real terms and that the cost of running the railway has more than doubled from £2.4 billion per year during the five-year period 1990-95 to around £5.4 billion per year from 2005-2010. It estimates privatisation costs the equivalent of £1.2 billion a year compared to public ownership.

■ ■ MPs on the Commons transport committee are worried by the savings targets set by Sir Roy McNulty. In their Rail 2020

report, they support the approach outlined in the McNulty Report but said the £3.5 billion figure could have a negative impact on "safety, staffing and the protection of passengers' interests". Louise Ellman MP, chairman of the committee, said: "If train operating companies do not realise substantial efficiency savings over the next five years, then the case for more far-reaching structural changes to the industry will become compelling. Changes to the numbers and duties of station staff should not be pursued solely to reduce costs or at the expense of passenger safety or service quality."

■ ■ The vertically integrated structure of railways in Germany and Austria does not contravene European Union laws,

the European Court ruled in September last year. Advocate General Mr Niilo-Jääskinen said that directive 91/440 does not require institutional separation of the incumbent operator from the infrastructure manager, and that the holding company structure adopted for both Austrian Federal Railways and German Rail is legally sound.

■ ■ In January, the European Commission announced the "Fourth Railway Package" of proposed laws. Trains built anywhere in Europe will be able to run anywhere in Europe, operations and infrastructure must be "kept apart", and the conditions of rail staff should be protected when public service contracts are transferred.

Picture: BRITISH RAIL



North East

By Peter Kenyon peter.kenyon@railfuture.org.uk

North East left out in Network Rail's £37 billion upgrade

Railfuture has protested over the small amount of money allocated to the North East in Network Rail's strategic business plan. Tony Walker, Railfuture's North East branch press officer, was quoted in the *Newcastle Journal* after the plan was published in January: "Of the £37.5 billion total budget, only a pittance is earmarked specifically for a track enhancement in the North East, namely the easing of the so-called pinch point between Northallerton and Ferryhill. No mention, however, of electrification or track enhancements for the important Tyne Valley route between Newcastle and Carlisle, or of an intention to progress plans for the introduction of passenger services over the Ashington and Blyth freight lines, or of track upgrades on the Middlesbrough to Sunderland route, or of reinstatement of the Ferryhill and Pelaw line, which means Washington remains isolated. These projects would really help boost mobility and connectivity in our region. Pressure must be put on Network Rail to make sure North East services get a fair allocation of resources."

Progress on reopening the Aln Valley Railway

Track laying to restore the branch line from Alnmouth to Alnwick was proceeding when the winter weather allowed. Training for drivers has started on the first length of track available. Guards, secondmen and shunters are also being prepared for action. A display is being prepared for the 45th anniversary of the closure of the line. Major articles were anticipated in both *Railway Magazine* and *Heritage Railway*.

Business shows interest in improving rail services

North East Coastliners rail users group is liaising with the Tees Valley Unlimited Business Partnership about proposals to develop rail services in the area. So far on the coast line, heavy freight trains share the line between Pelaw and Sunderland with the Metro. As well as the five Metro trains and one Northern train each hour, there are several coal and biomass fuel trains each day between Boldon curve and Sunderland station, en route for Drax power station. In addition, Grand Central operates empty stock trains at the beginning and end of the service. With electrification in mind, it will be necessary to convert the Metro system from DC working to the AC voltage used on main lines, if the Coast line is ever electrified.

High fares prompt response from rail campaigners

The Morpeth-based South East Northumberland Rail Users Group produced a lively and informative newsletter in December which is available at www.senrug.co.uk.

There is a good summary of the group's work and a further article on the Unfairness of Fares which explores some fare anomalies facing the Morpeth traveller.

Bid to reopen station to serve Hadrian's Wall tourists

The campaign to reopen a station at Gilsland as a service for locals and tourists visiting Hadrian's Wall has received a major boost. Tyne Valley Users Group has been awarded enough funds



Rose Hill station at Gilsland in 2008

from the European Union-sponsored LEADER regeneration scheme run by Northumberland Uplands to employ a consultant to aid the campaign. Cumbria and Northumberland county councils have also contributed. A report is expected by June. You can help the reopening campaign by filling in a survey at www.surveymonkey.com/s/QHWXFZ8

Picture: Old Cumbria Gazetteer

Could a franchise be the solution for rail freight?

The Government is being urged to consider a new way of getting freight off Britain's congested roads and back on to the railway. Railfuture believes a franchised freight operation should be established so that individual lorry loads of freight could be combined and operated as one train, carrying more than 500 tonnes of freight.

Freight is currently moved by rail only if a customer is able to supply enough goods to require a complete train, so bulk loads such as coal, oil and steel can be delivered by rail.

But most of Britain's freight is in smaller consignments that often go by road because there is no system to combine them into a train load.

Individual wagon-load freight was abandoned by British Rail when it scrapped its Speedlink service which ran from 1977 to 1991. It was part of attempts to convert British Rail into a commercially viable business prior to privatisation.

The decision was taken purely by looking at the balance sheet without taking into account the considerable financial and economic benefits to the community at large of sending freight by rail rather than road.

Speedlink was carrying approximately three million tonnes of freight per year, but was given

no credit for the environmental benefits of doing so.

Railfuture's freight group suggests that an "effective" way forward now is to revive wagon-load freight across Britain's rail network. The findings are set out in a report published at the end of 2012.

The current system of open-access competition has not succeeded in attracting the many businesses which want to use rail for deliveries but do not have the volume of freight demanded by current rail freight operators.

Railfuture believes a freight franchise could balance customer demand and make the economics of collecting, moving and delivering single wagons work for the railway and Britain.

The aim would be to create a system to bring an assortment of lorry-sized loads in a trainload which can be operated punctually, reliably and affordably and which would allow customers with smaller quantities of freight to use the rail system.

Railfuture believes a social franchise could induce co-operation between companies operating in different modes.

The aim would be to enhance the profitability of the small existing wagonload operations, attract business currently lost to rail, reinstate freight deliveries to the whole of the rail network,



Picture: YORKSHIRES FINEST

Back to the future: A class 85 electric loco passes Winwick, Warrington, with a southbound Speedlink train in June 1989

and attract new business to rail. A core company could run the trunk trains on the national network and to mainland Europe, with feeder links from franchised partners able to cope with intermodal swap bodies. Railfuture believes there is a big potential for bulky loads to be consolidated into trainloads.

The freight franchise system would lead to reduced pollution and danger on the roads, less fuel consumption per tonne of goods delivered and better deployment of lorry and trailer fleets.

It calls for detailed research into areas where there is insufficient bulk tonnage for a trainload, but customers would like to remain on rail, or return their business to

rail services.

Currently goods such as agricultural bulks, paper pulp, metals and timber are moving predominantly by road because the financial cost to companies as well as the wider social cost are inadequately assessed.

Motorways, A and B roads and even unclassified roads are being degraded by heavy lorry traffic.

The transfer of freight to the railways would improve safety, reduce congestion, pollution, noise disturbance and damage to roads and would be popular with car drivers and the public in general.

The report can be downloaded at www.railfuture.org.uk/dl478

North West

By Arthur Thomson

Reopening campaign appeals for funds

The Skipton-Colne reopening campaign is launching an appeal for funds. The Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership is aiming to obtain funding to start a £70,000 GRIP3 (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) study. The Selrap campaigners say the £48 million wasted on the West Coast main line franchise fiasco could have been used to reinstate a single-track line from Skipton to Colne. SELRAP, however, is campaigning for a double-track electrified line which includes the upgrading of the existing line to Gannow Junction at Burnley. SELRAP is also angry that the Government plans to spend £32 billion on HS2 which will not bring social and economic benefits to East Lancashire and North Yorkshire, but cannot afford the much smaller amount for Skipton-Colne. There has been much concern



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LOCAL ACTION

expressed by rail passenger groups that investment is not being made available to regional and local areas where passenger growth is so high.

Despite high level meetings with the Department for Transport and meetings with both Lancashire and North Yorkshire County Councils, SELRAP has not been able to secure the promise of the £70,000 funding for the first stage of this make-or-break study.

For further info, contact Jane Wood, Media Officer, SELRAP, jvbwood@hotmail.co.uk

Any donations towards the study can be sent by cheque to SELRAP, Derek Jennings, 3 Hamilton Road, Carr Hall, Barrowford, Nelson BB9 6DE

Windermere branch electrification

The Lakes Line Rail User Group is keen that the branch line from Oxenholme to Windermere is electrified to ensure that through services are retained, and other public transport users in the area report that there are other good reasons.

The Lancaster-Kendal-Keswick bus route is heavily loaded in the holiday season, which is now generally longer. The bus-rail interchange at Windermere is effective and connections are generally good, so this helps to make the case for electrifying the branch line to Oxenholme. This would speed up local trains to the West Coast main line and onwards to Manchester Airport, and eliminate the need for heavy, noisy, though fast, modern diesels. LLRUG thinks that electrification would be relatively cheap. The existing electric supply for the West Coast main line would be adequate and would not need enhancing. When the track was relaid some 10 years ago, it was placed centrally under the overbridges, and LLRUG successfully sought to have room for overhead catenary under the then new Staveley by-pass bridge as well as space for restoration of a second track.

Severnside

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

How campaign group aims to make progress

Efforts to raise awareness of journey opportunities at Ashchurch for Tewkesbury station, which reopened in 1997, were outlined to Railfuture members at Gloucester in November. Speakers were John Stretton and Ken Radbourne from Ashchurch, Tewkesbury & District Rail Promotion Group. John said the group had provided information boards at both Ashchurch and Cheltenham stations. In recent years Ashchurch lost a number of stops by CrossCountry Trains but, from December 2012, an early morning Worcester-Paddington inter-city 125 train is stopping, giving the station a direct London service for the first time in many years. Ken listed many of the destinations served directly from Ashchurch but contrasted its current service frequency with those enjoyed by Audley End, Keynsham and Totnes. He said that local shuttles such as London Midland's former Worcester-Gloucester service were not the answer because people were now commuting much greater distances than in the 1970s.

Neglect and high hopes for the future

Reports of neglected paintwork on a bridge at Sea Mills prompted Railfuture's Severnside secretary to write to Network Rail, expressing concern that repainting appeared to be a low priority, despite the Henbury loop and most of the Severn Beach line being a diversory route for main line trains. Railfuture members

are also briefing Charlotte Leslie, MP for Bristol North West, on the case for complete reopening of the Henbury loop to passengers, instead of as a spur line favoured by consultants to the West of England Partnership. In November the *Bristol Post* reported that hopes for a proper Metro rail system had taken a massive step forward after Ms Leslie led a cross-party delegation of city and regional MPs to meet Transport Minister Simon Burns. The *Post* said the Government has been convinced that it needs to look at the case for reopening Henbury station and the loop, to provide a link to the Severn Beach line. The MP said: "The loop would mean people in north Bristol would have easy access to work places in and around Avonmouth, which has recently been designated an enterprise area." You can sign a petition calling for the reopening of the Henbury loop at: www.henburyloop.bristolpetitions.com

New mayor wants alternative to buses

Bristol Mayor George Ferguson announced on 8 January that he had stopped work on the controversial Harbour section of the bus rapid transit route BRT2 and had asked council officers to look at alternatives. Railfuture, Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways and many others oppose the bus scheme, which would have truncated the Bristol Harbour Railway and prevented it from having a future role in public transport.



Wessex

By John Friedberger
john.friedberger@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ A new model alliance

Over 500,000 passenger journeys to and from London Waterloo each day present a challenge for the new alliance formed by South West Trains and Network Rail's Wessex Region. Performance during the last months of 2012 suffered. The worst day was 22 November when two independent electricity distribution failures led to several hours of confusion. Railfuture members attended a stakeholder conference at which Tim Shoveller, managing director of the alliance, explained how the new structure will work to raise reliability and improve the provision of speedy information to passengers during disruption of services. The huge task of meeting additional capacity demands and updating the infrastructure throughout southern England should be much better coordinated and more efficient as a result. Let us hope so. If successful this model might be suitable for other parts of the country.

■ ■ Positive solution to electrification dilemma

The third rail direct current system has served southern England well over the past 80 or so years, but should it be replaced by the modern international "standard" 25kV? The question has recently become topical following the announcement of plans to install 25kV overhead wires from Basingstoke to Southampton, either through Winchester and Eastleigh or on the longer diversionary freight route via Salisbury (Laverstock Junction). To avoid a dual system it would seem sensible to electrify the Laverstock line as this would enable electric trains to run to Salisbury from both London and Southampton and free up paths on the direct route.

■ ■ Portsmouth services are poor value for money

According to a nationwide survey by Passenger Focus, the Portsmouth main line to Waterloo was 76th out of 77 for "value for money for price of ticket by route". Travel to other cities is also poor. Fastest time to Southampton, 25 miles, is 40 minutes and to Brighton, 45 miles, is 75 minutes. The postponement of a new Great Western franchise means that any prospect of an improvement to the inadequate hourly service to Salisbury, Bath, Bristol and Cardiff will be further delayed. This route still experiences serious levels of overcrowding in standard class only rolling stock on what should be an inter-city service.

■ ■ Modular approach speeds up Wareham's modernisation

As part of the Network Rail Poole-Wool resignalling project, Balfour Beatty Rail has successfully installed two switch and crossing units (S&C) at Wareham and Wool. An innovative approach, part of Network Rail's "Seven Day Railway" initiative, ensured that only mid-week overnight possessions were required. Modular S&C units were partially built at the manufacturer's yard and then brought to the site on specialist wagons to avoid fouling the loading gauge. The modules were then bolted together and the replacement crossovers fully ballasted. The next day's service ran as scheduled with no disruption to passengers.



How gauge enhancement

Rail freight's modal share went up from 29% to 36% following the 2010 gauge enhancement work on the route from Southampton to the West Midlands.

Improvements were made at several points on the line from Southampton via Reading, Didcot, Oxford and Banbury to the West Coast main line at Nuneaton. Now Network Rail needs funds to carry out further work to increase capacity on the route.

With £350 million, it could complete its entire gauge enhancement work throughout Britain.

If more freight goes by rail, the Treasury makes savings on road maintenance, economic growth is stimulated and less carbon pollution is caused.

But if the Government fails to provide the money, five years could be lost in upgrading Britain's rail freight network to

accommodate "high cube" containers. The work might have to be delayed until the next control period starting in 2019. The Government has backed the upgrade of the Felixstowe to Nuneaton route which currently accommodates 29 daily freight trains.

The entire line between Ely and Soham will be double-tracked and the awkward level crossing at Ely station eradicated by 2016. This is particularly significant because the number of containers on just one ship docking at Felixstowe went up from 9,600 to 14,000 last year. Super ships with 18,000 containers on board are likely to be arriving from China next year.

Nuneaton is a crucial point where the two flows from Felixstowe and Southampton join the West Coast main line. Network Rail has recently completed and opened to traffic one mile of

helps rail win business

new track and a flyover, north of Nuneaton station, that allows freight trains from Peterborough to join the main line without the need to cross it on the level.

Electrification work, however, will allow significant progress to be made on gauge enhancement. On the Great Western and in the North West, the existing W10 gauge will be increased by six centimetres to B12 which should clear the way for European size freight wagons to penetrate further into Britain.

The European transshipment gauge should allow regular freight trains to travel from continental Europe to Barking, Essex.

However, the Channel Tunnel has significantly under-performed on rail freight since it was opened in 1994.

If Eurotunnel was prepared to reduce its rates, it is likely that

there would be more take-up on the 35 available freight paths a day through the tunnel. Supermarkets conscious of their public image do not want lorries emblazoned with their logo caught up in road traffic. A freight train carrying the supermarket containers promotes an environmentally friendly image. Tesco has transferred more freight from road to rail than any other retailer.

Railfuture's freight group has asked many members to contact their MPs to encourage the Government to make the necessary cash available to complete Network Rail's strategic freight network upgrade.

Rail freight now removes the equivalent of 6.7 million lorry journeys from our roads. Network Rail wants rail freight to grow by 30% in the next five years.

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright
chris.wright@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Houses will block rail route with Heathrow potential

The former Bourne End-Wycombe line, which is supposed to be protected for possible transport use in local plans and supported by the Thames Valley Multi Modal Study, is to be blocked by house building. Wycombe District Council felt compelled to give planning approval, fearing that costs might be awarded against them at any subsequent inquiry. The Inspector at an earlier hearing had said that there were no firm proposals or funding for use of the route. Buckinghamshire County Council supported that view. The line closed in 1970 and was said to be losing £80,000 per annum. Subsequent studies have failed to recognise the potential of CrossRail to Maidenhead, electrification of the Marlow branch, East West Rail serving Wycombe, access to Heathrow and ever-growing road congestion.

■ ■ Objector uses law to halt progress on London rail link

The Evergreen3 proposal for an Oxford-Marylebone via Bicester service has seen a further setback with a resident of Summertown, Oxford, seeking judicial review of the Transport Secretary's approval of the scheme. The case was expected to be heard in March. Branch officers attended a presentation on the scheme which has already cost over £10 million to develop. The scheme has addressed many issues including bats, newts, badgers, riding school, bridledways, crossings, air pollution, archaeology, noise and vibration. If and when the plan does go ahead, the existing service through Bicester will be disrupted. At the Oxford Bicester Rail Action Group AGM, rail users asked for the closure period to be as short as possible and wanted details about the substitute buses. Bicester Village is set to expand with the relocation of Tesco and has to improve access to the town and station.

■ ■ More long-distance services could use East West Rail

East West Rail, which is now recognised as a strategic route, depends on the Evergreen3 Oxford-Bicester upgrade. The Department for Transport suggests that York-Sheffield-Nottingham-Bedford-Oxford-Bristol and Liverpool/Manchester-Milton Keynes-Oxford-Southampton services could be examined as possible users of East West Rail. At an update meeting in Winslow, we were told environmental surveys are under way and detailed consultation plans are being developed by Network Rail. Plans for Winslow may be modified as electrification may increase demand. Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire county councils have included the scheme in their capital programmes.

■ ■ Objectors use law to try to scupper High Speed Two

Plans for High Speed Two continue to encounter opposition in Buckinghamshire and HS2 is now subject to seven judicial reviews. Milton Keynes Council supports HS2 on the basis that it will create spare capacity for better services on the West Coast main line. HS2 impacts on East West Rail because a maintenance depot will be built near Claydon Junction. Interestingly this connection with HS2 could also be used to feed services on to East West Rail.

■ ■ £20 million fund could help build new station

Campaigners who want a new station at Grove/Wantage Road are hoping it could be a candidate to benefit from the £20 million New Station Fund which was announced by the Government in July last year for "shovel-ready projects" and is being managed by Network Rail. Oxfordshire has the scheme in its local transport plan and the Association of Train Operating Companies proposed the station as a reopening candidate in its *Connecting Communities* document in 2009.

■ ■ Stations could face major changes as rail booms

Milton Keynes Council is proposing that access to Bletchley station should be available from the town centre and that East West rail provides the opportunity to re-design the station which has its entrance on the "wrong" side. Oxford station was the subject of a January public meeting, attended by branch officers. Network Rail explained proposals to increase capacity at the station where use has increased by 40% in 10 years with similar growth expected in the next 10 years.



Scotland steps forward

In a very welcome development, Transport Scotland is working with the Association of Community Rail Partnerships on developing new community rail partnerships for Scotland.

The Scottish network is different from that in England and Wales, with very few branch lines, but a number of long routes like the legendary West Highland and Kyle lines which are key tourist attractions as well as being lifelines to the communities they serve.

Station adoption is well developed in Scotland and strongly supported by ScotRail which has embraced the idea with enthusiasm.

Traditionally Aberdour was the prize-winning station with its wonderful floral displays, but a number of other stations are now also winning awards, while the remarkable Louis Wall has been recognised for his work with station gardens on the Stranraer line.

Scottish transport minister Keith Brown agreed last year to establish a pilot in which local CRPs would be created before April 2014.

A seminar was expected to take place in Edinburgh in February

to start to work out the right solutions for community rail in Scotland and from there, I confidently predict that the drive and interest from local rail supporters will set the heather alight.

ACoRP's new home

The headquarters of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships has moved from Slaithwaite back to Huddersfield and is now, appropriately, housed in a Grade 1 listed railway building which had no further operational use, as it was a water tower built by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway to supply steam locomotives.

Why is this a news item? Because it is a trailblazing example of a listed historic building being converted to alternative use in a sustainable way involving multi-agency funding.

It is a classic illustration of how community rail people work with the resources they have got, and pull in support from a number of agencies to provide a great result for the local community.

In this case, energy is supplied by photo-voltaic cells in the old water tank, which also houses heat exchangers to keep the



Huddersfield water tower: It started life in the steam age but is now providing sustainable offices for ACoRP

building warm and supply hot water. Comfortable offices and a meeting room, as well as a small kitchen, have been fitted into the base of the tower, while the structure and window spacing has remained unaltered.

The water gauge has even been retained, while the original chimneys now contain ducting, avoiding the need for unsightly extractor fans on the external walls.

Innovative, efficient and cost effective, the project has been supported by the Railway Heritage Trust and the European Union as well as by Network Rail, TransPennine Express and Kirklees Council, along with funding from ACoRP itself.

Quite a change from the mark one coach next to the Penistone line bay where the organisation started!

Cornish cream

Great news from Cornwall shows record levels of growth

on the county's rail network of 12% between April 2011 and March 2012, or twice the average growth rate across the South West.

I have reported previously on growth from investment on the Falmouth line, but this month's stunning figure has to be the 61% growth in business at Bugle on the Atlantic line (Newquay branch) following the opening of a new footpath to the station.

The work of the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, long campaigning by Railfuture colleagues, and the sterling work of Cornwall County Council with its steadfast support for the rail network have all produced a rich harvest.

First Great Western and its hard-working staff in the county deserve credit too, along with their regional manager Julian Crow, who was deservedly awarded an MBE in the New Year's honours list.

East Midlands

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

Line speed improvements

Network Rail's latest update for Control Period 4 (ending 2014) includes proposed line speed improvements to 125mph for a few miles to the north of Leicester and on several stretches of line in Bedfordshire. Existing line speeds are no more than 110mph.

Fears over Northampton-Bedford line's future

The Office of Rail Regulation has given Network Rail permission to decommission two miles of disused railway between Far Cotton and Brackmills in Northampton. West Northamptonshire Development Corporation is now in talks to buy the land, while the University of Northampton is planning to develop a new campus adjacent to the line in Brackmills. Railfuture is opposed to any development that jeopardises reopening and there is a possibility that the route could be used as a "sustainable transport green corridor". In 2003, a government-backed multi-modal study said the line should reopen as an extension of the Thameslink network. The cost was estimated at £220 million.

Network Rail's five-year plan for 2014-19

Good news for the East Midlands as Network Rail's five-year plan for 2014-19 includes electrification to Nottingham by 2019. Derby and Sheffield will follow by 2020/1. Sheffield and Nottingham services to London will be operated by trains up to 10 cars long. It also promises the extension of London suburban services to Northamptonshire and Leicestershire, using electric trains, two per hour, plus six trains per hour out of St Pancras to the East Midlands. A new inter-urban service from Leicester and Derby to the North West of England may follow improvements on the Hope Valley route and completion of the Northern Hub project. All Nottingham-Liverpool trains are to be lengthened to four cars and Birmingham-Standed trains should be lengthened to four cars during the day. Birmingham-Leicester services should continue to Cambridge "on some hours". There is disappointment that Market Harborough's proposed line speed improvements are not funded, and Midland main line electrification will not be complete until 2021.

Karlsruhe friendship bridge to span Nottingham station

Construction of the new bridge across Nottingham station has started, right. When completed, trams will cross overhead on the line of the old Great Central route and then go on to Beeston and Clifton. The bridge structure was expected to be pushed across a working Nottingham station in February. It will be officially named the "Karlsruhe Friendship Bridge" to mark the link with Karlsruhe in Germany which is twinned with Nottingham. The German city has set a good example for Nottingham to follow by opening 10 extensions to its tram network since 1990.

How MPs fought for Midland main line electrification

The East Midlands Branch 2013 AGM will start at 13.00 on Saturday 20 April at the Great Central Railway's Lovatt House, 3 Wharnclyffe Road, Loughborough, Leics LE11 1SL. It is next to GCR's Loughborough station. The guest speaker will be Nicky Morgan MP on the Westminster campaign for Midland main line electrification.

Corby station wins promises and formal friends

Rail campaigners in Corby have welcomed the news that their branch will be included in the Midland main line electrification. The second track will also be restored between Kettering and Corby, giving the potential for a Platform 2 at Corby. The Friends of Corby Station group was launched in October, and their first activity was to survey passengers' views on their rail service. They also invited recently elected MP Andy Sawford to an open meeting in February.



Picture: ROGER BACON

Chairman's view: Chaos may lead to progress

By David Berman
Railfuture chairman

david.berman@railfuture.org.uk

2012 was, by any measure in railway affairs, an unusual one. I will not bore you with a recitation of all the much-publicised events that culminated with chaos in the franchising system and repercussions in the rail industry.

Having said that, we did get a very promising High Level Output Specification for England and Wales published by the Department for Transport and likewise for Scotland by Transport Scotland. Of course, that's not the end of the story.

In January, Network Rail published its Strategic Business Plan, the union of its own Initial Industry Plan, published earlier in 2012

and the HLOS statements. If you read the SBP and stayed awake, you will know that it is couched in both realism and ambition.

The programme is achievable. However, now comes the horse-trading as the Office of Rail Regulation assesses the SBP against the Statements of Funds Available issued by the DfT and TS, and its own criteria of how it thinks Network Rail can achieve the programme. It may sound like bureaucratic gobbledegook but this is the system we have in our privatised railway world.

In some respects it is better than the old way under British Rail, when money was given by the Treasury on a year-by-year basis and long-term planning was extremely difficult because of the

uncertainty of funding from one year to the next. In some years, virtually no funding above basic running costs was granted and in others, uncommitted funding was clawed back mid-year to fund other areas of government.

As a result of this approach, BR had to implement a series of maintenance holidays and rationalisations which resulted in ever-degraded services.

If privatisation has achieved anything, it has eliminated the ability of the Treasury to arbitrarily starve the railways of capital funding for investment. Now we need better franchising or concessioning and while we are about it, it is also probably best to exclude the DfT from micro-managing train operating

companies. But, on past experience, I do not propose to hold my breath. The Government usually moves very slowly and often in the wrong direction!

RailAction

Railfuture has launched a new e-zine called *RailAction* which is edited by John Stanford and it has been sent to all Railfuture members who supplied us with an email address.

If you have not received *RailAction* and would like to, please send an email to renewals@railfuture.org.uk

The aim of *RailAction* is to keep members informed, between issues of *Railwatch*, of what Railfuture is doing and what is happening in the wider rail world.

The real value of rail volunteers? It's huge

The new parliamentary group on heritage railways has started work on studying the value of heritage railways, with an initial session on 31 January.

Taking evidence from the railways themselves, rail museums and charter train operators, the inquiry will report on the economic and social benefits of heritage railways to the communities they serve and this will be circulated widely to ministers, officials and planners.

Apart from supporting tourism, the railways provide local employment and valuable skills training in rural areas as well as encouraging volunteering.

Questions from the panel of MPs and peers include the potential use of heritage railways for public transport and plans for extension, including main line connections.

Further sessions are planned over the next three months, following which publication of the report is planned for July.

Charter threat

A growing concern for charter train operators, some of whom use heritage rolling stock including steam locomotives, comes from recent proposals from the Office of Rail Regulation.

It proposes to remove the cap on schedule 8 payments by train operators. Currently limited to £5,000, removal of the cap opens up the possibility of unlimited liabilities for operators if a train failure

causes major delays to other services.

Such liabilities would be uninsurable, and potentially beyond the resources of operators to pay.

Last year, 520 steam-hauled charter trains ran on the main line network and many others were diesel hauled.

Operating steam charters is not a money spinner, and the income is not adequate to cover the high cost of the 10-year boiler overhauls.

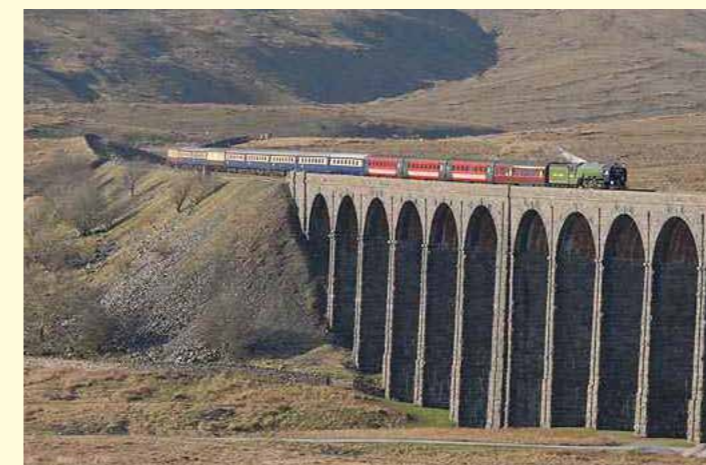
So the business is certainly at risk from the current ORR proposal, and loss of the trains would have an adverse impact on the economy of the towns that benefit from these popular excursions, such as Scarborough, Carlisle, Stratford-upon-Avon and Dartmouth.

Rates

Although railways bring huge economic benefits to the areas they serve, they still have to pay rates to the local authorities which are enjoying this advantage.

Nationally, an aggregate figure is agreed for the national rail network, but heritage railways are charged individually for business rates and how much they pay is a postcode lottery.

The problem is that while eligible for relief, the discount or exemption is a discretionary matter for local authorities. With reduced central government funding, many authorities are tightening up in areas where they have discretion, and one of



Picture: VISIT CUMBRIA

UNDER THREAT: A charter train on Ribbleshead viaduct, on the Settle-Carlisle line, being hauled by steam loco Tornado

these areas is on rates relief for charities and "not for dividend" companies like heritage railways.

With costs of essential purchases like coal and water rising much faster than inflation, most heritage railways are under pressure, and work hard to reduce other costs through efficiency.

Real rate increases clearly take money out of the railways which could otherwise be used to pay for improvements or line extensions.

End of an era

In 1896 the Light Railways Act was passed to encourage

the building of railways more cheaply in rural areas. Many were built and Light Railway Orders under the Act were extensively used from 1960 onwards to transfer the powers to operate heritage railways from British Rail to new owners. These were replaced in the 1990s by orders under the Transport & Works Act 1992, except in Scotland where the Act remained in force.

Changes in legislation now mean that this exception is no longer necessary, and the last Light Railway order, for the Deeside Railway, was signed in December. The Act has served us well over 116 years.

West Midlands

By William Whiting william.whiting@railfuture.org.uk

Plans to extend Midland Metro in city centre development

Developer Argent has submitted plans for the £450 million redevelopment of Birmingham's Paradise Circus. The planning application covers 17 acres of land in the heart of Birmingham and will involve demolishing the old Central Library and creating a series of new squares and streets. £25 million is earmarked for the extension of the Midland Metro from New Street Station to Centenary Square in Broad Street, and £40 million to support site development and business growth activity. It is not certain how the proposed extension will fit in with the existing road network and Railfuture is seeking further information from Centro.

Milestone in New Street station rebuilding

The redevelopment of Birmingham New Street is continuing, with the first phase expected to open to the public in April. This is the Stephenson Street entrance, which will enable the main entrance to be closed for the final phase of the redevelopment. The main entrance has been open for 40 years and its closure is a milestone in the scheme. Passengers will also be able to enter and leave the station from the southern Hill Street side.

Railfuture calls for better Sunday and holiday services

Railfuture West Midlands is raising the issue of Sunday travel with Centro. Sunday is now a day when many people go shopping and visit other centres for leisure. There has been a general increase in travel on that day. The subject is was raised by a member of the branch at a stakeholders conference with London Midland on 21 September in Northampton. For example, the Frankfurt Market operates for six weeks before Christmas (last year it started on 15 November) and there are no additional trains on Sundays to cope with the surge of visitors to Birmingham. There is an urgent need to improve Sunday services and also to provide extra trains before Christmas. The branch also wishes to raise with Centro the lack of rail services on Boxing Day. Most shops are open and there are many sporting events. Birmingham City were at home on Boxing Day so supporters had to travel to St Andrews by bus or car. Also it was one of the busiest shopping days for Birmingham city centre. The Christmas break is important for engineering possessions, but these are not across the whole network. There may be a reduced demand for main line services, but local suburban services on Boxing Day would be useful. The bus service which operated on many routes in the Centro area was well used, demonstrating that there is a demand for public transport on Boxing Day.

New worries over London Midland performance

Railfuture West Midlands has been concerned about the performance of London Midland, which is the main operator of local services in the West Midlands. There has been an improvement in driver availability since the new timetable on 9 December 2012 but some booking offices are being closed when they should be open and there has been no revenue protection on some services.

Station car parking needs to be expanded

There is concern about the provision of car parks in the Centro area where most station car parks are full by 08.30.

New Bromsgrove station

Proposals have been published by Worcestershire County Council for a new Bromsgrove station. The consultation was due to end on 17 March and a planning application is expected in the autumn. The station should open in 2015. The current aspiration for the new station includes four platforms, a 350-space car park and a bus-rail interchange.

Volunteers sought to help Railfuture campaigning

Railfuture West Midlands is holding its AGM at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham, on 27 April 2013 at 11.00. This is an opportunity for members to find out how active we have been over the past year. We are also looking for more people to join the committee.



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

MANCHESTER'S GREAT LEAP FORWARD: The proposed Ordsall curve, which will connect Manchester's Victoria, Oxford Road and Piccadilly stations, is part of Network Rail's plans to improve railway services across the north of England. The new chord is located to the north west of Castlefield Junction, and crosses the River Irwell between Salford and Manchester. The chord and the Northern Hub proposal are expected to boost the general economy by £4.2 billion, creating 20,000 to 30,000 extra jobs in the area

Manchester's response to Beeching negativity

Fifty years after the Beeching cuts emasculated Britain's railways, the network is growing again.

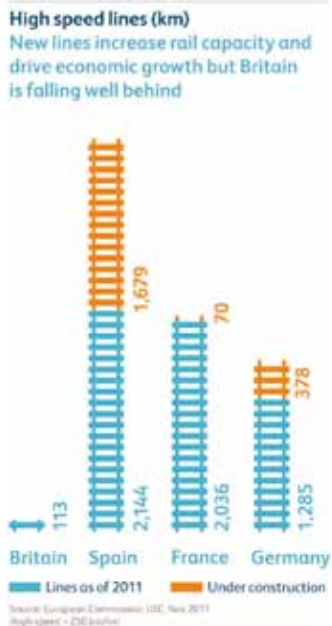
Manchester is expected to be one of the biggest beneficiaries of this expansion with two major projects coming to the city and the surrounding area – the Northern Hub and High Speed Two.

Network Rail held a series of public exhibitions to explain the Northern Hub which will provide two new fast trains per hour between Manchester Victoria and Liverpool, six fast trains an hour between Leeds and Manchester, a new direct service through Manchester to the airport and faster journey times to Hull, Newcastle and the North East.

Then in January, the Government announced the HS2 route to the north of England.

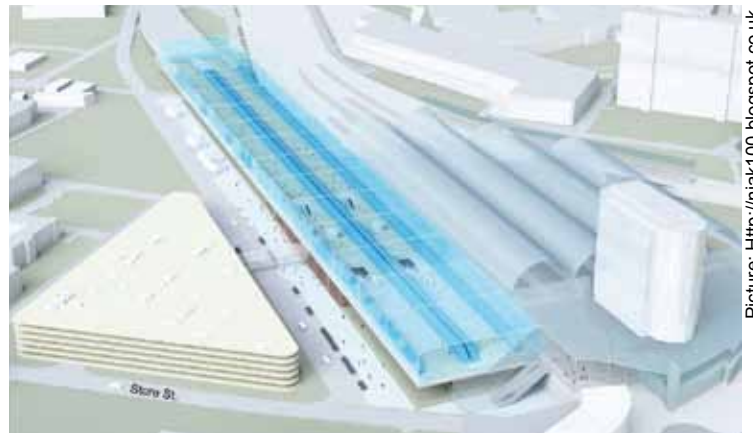
The ill-informed criticism of high speed rail continues in some newspapers who for years have been cheerleaders for the road lobby.

But the truth is beginning to dawn on most politicians of how far Britain has fallen behind Japan, France, Germany and



SOURCE: European Commission/UIC

Spain. Transport Minister Simon Burns returned from a fact-finding tour of Japan's bullet trains impressed by their fantastic reliability and punctuality. He concluded: "High-speed trains



Picture: <http://njak100.blogspot.co.uk>

MANCHESTER'S HIGH-SPEED FUTURE: An impression of how Manchester Piccadilly station will be expanded for HS2

are without a doubt the future for Britain. This can be a critical engine for growth that will help to revolutionise Britain."

He admitted that Britain is now playing catch-up.

Japan invested in bullet trains from the 1960s, at the same time Britain was axing much of its extensive rail network.

France woke up to high speed rail following the petrol crisis of 1973.

Now, a new low-cost high-speed service called Ouigo is being launched in France by state-owned SNCF, to provide competition for the "cheap" airlines. If the railways of Europe can get

their acts together and offer unified pricing, people could have a Europe-wide low-pollution energy-efficient alternative to the cheap airlines which pose massive pollution problems.

But Britain, with its train operators obsessed by self interest, will find it difficult to play an influential part in this process.

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