

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

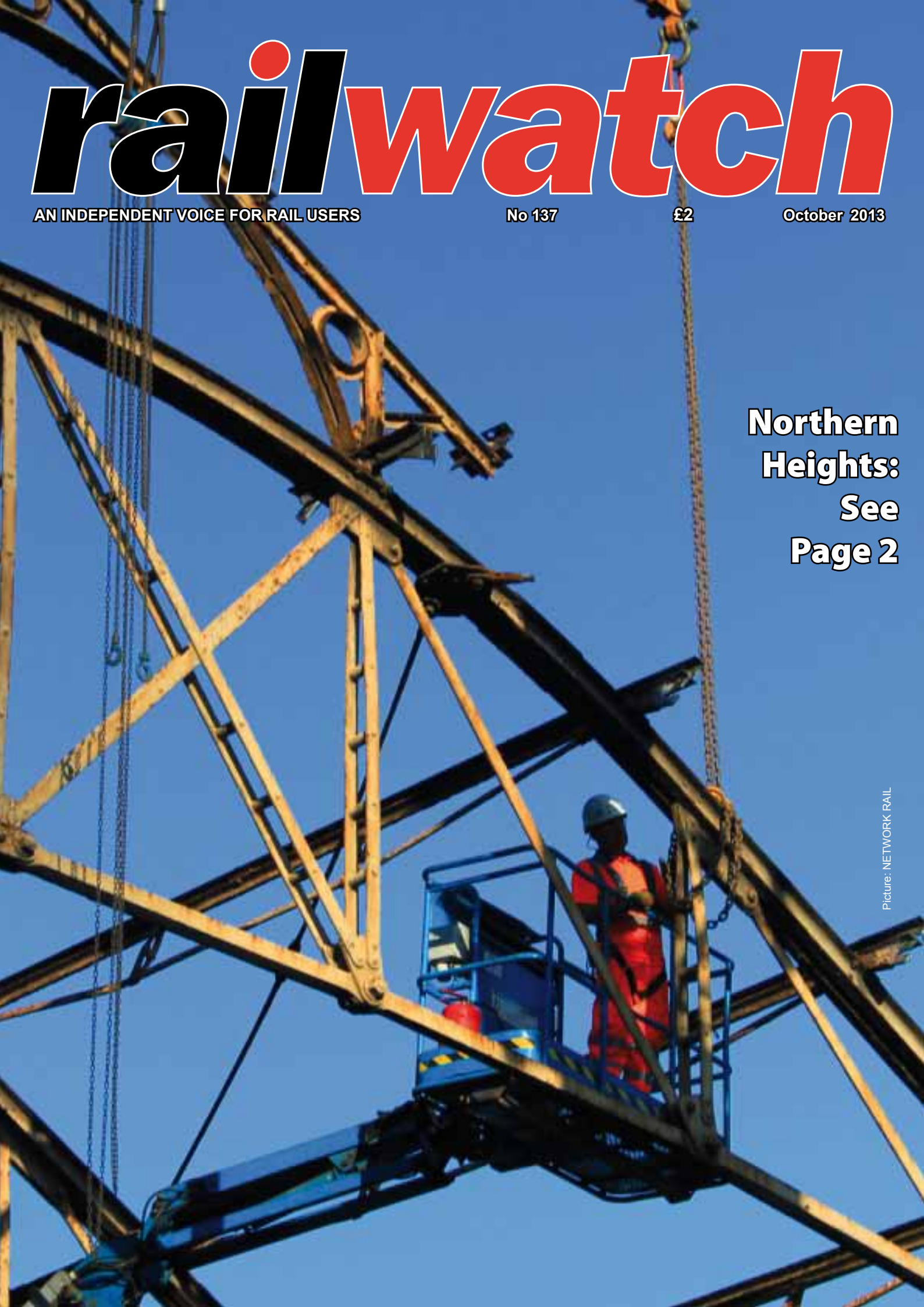
No 137

£2

October 2013

**Northern
Heights:
See
Page 2**

Picture: NETWORK RAIL



HS2 London station

Lords Bradshaw and Berkeley had a meeting with Transport Secretary Patrick McLaughlin in September to brief him on the Euston Express and Euston Cross alternatives (featured in *Railwatch* 136) to official HS2 plans for a London terminus.

They are urging Mr McLaughlin to set up an independent study which could compare the costs and benefits of the HS2 plan for Euston with the Euston Express and Euston Cross proposals.

Railfuture's proud history

The 35th anniversary of the founding of the Railway Development Society, now known as Railfuture, seems a good time to begin a campaign to identify and preserve the archives of the organisation and its predecessors. The board has agreed to a proposal put to it by member Carl Newton, a retired architect, that officers at all levels be

approached to ascertain what records they have in their safe keeping and how those records are being maintained.

In a dispersed organisation, depending so much on voluntary effort, archives tend to take a low profile and indeed even to become a nuisance as drawers and computers overflow, post holders change, and the immediate always looms larger than the past.

Nevertheless our archives are an important data source for ourselves, evidence for our activities to the world at large, and important sources for the history not only of the railways but of pressure groups in general in Britain, and as such should ultimately be publicly accessible.

The first stage in the project is to identify what exists. Already interesting groups of branch and divisional records have come to light. The remaining material from the Society for

the Re-ignoration of Unremunerative Branch Lines UK, dating from the 1950s, has been recovered and is in the process of being catalogued.

The second stage will be to draw up some basic good sense procedures for the future and finally to identify appropriate places of deposit for suitable long-term preservation.

In the meantime all officers should be aware that they have a responsibility for the

proper maintenance of Railfuture archives of whatever date. Archives are not just old papers. A minute created today is an archive. If you have not already done so, please contact Carl (email: Carl.Newton@railfuture.org.uk) if you can assist in any way, notably with information on material which is in your custody in any format.

This will be a lengthy project, dependant entirely on voluntary effort, and will not be a quick

fix. Our archives deserve quality management and they should receive it.

From 1994 Paris to France 2014

The first group visit ever organised by Railfuture (or RDS as we then were) was a day trip to Paris in December 1994, just weeks after the Channel Tunnel opened.

In 2014 we again head for France, for a seven-day visit in the spring. At the time of writing, we are discussing the destination. It is likely to be either Mulhouse, home of the French national railway museum in the east of the country, or Nice on the Riviera.

Details will be in the next *Railwatch* but you can also send an SAE now to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

Abolition of PTEs

The creation of a "Combined Authority" is expected to see Metro, the West Yorkshire passenger transport executive, abolished by April next year.

The 22-member West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority will also be dissolved and it will be replaced by a transport joint committee, similar to that already established in Greater Manchester.

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority will cover the five districts of Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield, Kirklees and Calderdale, while the City of York Council and the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership will be partner members. All the West Yorkshire districts will retain their highway authority functions and there are no plans to subsume these functions into the combined authority.

Seven local authorities in the north east of England are to seek permission to create a Combined Authority by next April. Known as the North East Leadership Board, it would cover Durham, Northumberland and the five Tyne & Wear districts. The Tyne & Wear Integrated Transport Authority would be scrapped as part of the reforms with the Combined Authority acting as the area's transport authority.

Nexus, the Tyne & Wear PTE, will continue to exist during a transitional phase before being subsumed into a larger transport delivery body.

Oliver Lovell

The founder of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group, Oliver Lovell, died of a heart attack, at Moreton-in-Marsh station in June. He was 76.

He was largely responsible for securing the retention of the line



CHAMPION: Oliver Lovell

through Moreton, from Oxford to Worcester and Hereford. He was chairman of the Group from 1978 to 1983 and on the Committee for 35 years.

Another of his achievements was to secure the reopening in 1981 of Honeybourne station, near Evesham, after 12 years of campaigning.

Oliver was awarded a Railfuture certificate in 2012 just as the group realised its long-standing aim of restoring double track over enough of the line to operate a "decent service".

A memorial plaque to Oliver was unveiled at Moreton-in-Marsh station on 14 September.

"If it wasn't for him the CLPG would not have come into being," said CLPG's Derek Potter.

Julian moves on

Railfuture members were pleased to be at a presentation held at Calstock for Julian Crow, who has retired as Regional Manager (West of England) for First Great Western.

A native of St Albans, Julian was born within earshot of the Midland main line, joining BR in 1970 with London Midland Division.

After a period working on planning and operation of Merry-Maker excursions, he became traffic manager at Chester, area manager at Hitchin and then York.

Later he was an InterCity manager at Swindon and Euston and also became route manager for Great Northern and West Anglia.

After privatisation Julian worked at both Plymouth and Swindon.

FGW's Community Rail lines now have their best timetables ever, and are among the fastest growing in the country, carrying record numbers of passengers. Much credit is due to Julian, "a remarkable and unique railwayman" and "a true gentleman".



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

Page one picture

Our page one picture shows a workman on the roof of Manchester Victoria station. He is helping to bring about a £44 million transformation of the station, making it brighter and more spacious.

Network Rail is fitting a new £16 million self-cleaning roof made from ethylene tetrafluoroethylene which is lighter, cheaper and lets in more light than glass (See picture above).

But train services in the Manchester area will also be transformed by electrification work, currently under way.

The first stage of the £400 million electrification programme for north west England was completed from Manchester to Newton-le-Willows and was energised in September.

From December, electric trains will be able to run between Manchester Airport and Scotland.

The first of 10 new Desiro four-car electric trains will be delivered by Siemens to First TransPennine to run this service next month.

As the rest of the electric fleet arrives from the German factory over the next six months, the existing diesel version of

the Desiro used on the Anglo-Scottish service will be displaced for use elsewhere.

In December next year, electric trains will be running from Liverpool to Manchester via Newton-le-Willows.

The new trains are capable of 100mph and will also be replacing 75mph diesel Pacers and Sprinters, used on many other services in the Manchester area.

By December 2016, electric trains should be running to Blackpool and as far as Stalybridge.

By 2018, electric wires will have stretched beyond Stalybridge to Leeds, York and Selby.

The Government also announced in August that the line from Oxenholme to Windermere will also be electrified.

The whole electrification programme will have a massive impact on railway performance and efficiency in the North of England and should enable rail to boost its share of the market.

More electrification is planned for the Great Western and Scotland, but right now, the North of England is leading the way.

railwatch ISSN 0267-5943 www.railwatch.org.uk

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Non-members can subscribe online at <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/books/subscription.php> or by sending £8 (cheque payable to Railfuture) to: Alan Cocker, 11 Franklin Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 9DX.

Copy deadlines: For the next issue, published in December, copy must be emailed to editor@railwatch.org.uk by 29 October. Paper copy can be sent to 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU but must be earlier.

Advertising: Full page: £190. Half page: £95. Quarter page: £45. Small ads are free to members. Otherwise: 30p per word.

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

RAIL ACTION The Rail Action e-zine is published between editions of *Railwatch*. If you did not receive the last issue, please email a request to renewals@railfuture.org.uk

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes
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Hopes rise for electrification

Local councils have asked consultant WSP and sub-contractor TATA Rail to develop an outline business case for electrification of Leeds-York via Harrogate. The study is funded by Metro, North Yorkshire County Council, Harrogate Borough Council and the City of York Council. The *Ilkley Gazette* reports that electric trains would enable a doubling of train frequency and cutting journey times by 15 minutes. "It is excellent news that the business case for electrifying the line had demonstrated good value for money in terms of capital cost against long-term economic benefits and also substantial operating cost savings with modern electric trains replacing the old diesel units," said Brian Dunsby of Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

Electrification should also be extended to Hull, members of the Hull and East Riding Rail Users Association were told at their AGM in July. Mike Jones of Hull Trains told the meeting the wires should be extended the 70 miles from Temple Hirst junction (on the East Coast main line) to Selby and Hull. Mr Jones said Hull Trains was having talks with infrastructure company Amey, Network Rail and with private sector investors, plus the Office of Rail Regulation and the Department for Transport.

Bid for passenger service on freight-only line

Consultant Mott McDonald has offered help to Don Valley Railway, a group of volunteers who want to run a regular passenger train service between Sheffield Victoria and Stocksbridge, where the steel works is still served by freight trains. More info: <http://donvalleyrailway.org>

Bradford's new station must wait for trains

A new railway station planned in Bradford will operate at a loss for its first three years because there are not enough spare diesel trains to run a full service. The £8.9 million station at Low Moor on the Caldervale line between Bradford Interchange and Halifax is due to open in 2015 but only one train an hour will be stopping at the station during its first three years, which will not generate enough income from tickets to support the service. The number of trains is expected to be increased in 2018 when electrification elsewhere frees up diesel trains. "It does sound a bit daft but nobody builds the diesel trains you see in West Yorkshire anymore," said Councillor James Lewis, chairman of Metro. James Vasey of the Bradford Rail Users Group told the Bradford Telegraph & Argus that passengers deserved a more frequent service. He added: "It's very disappointing."

Yorkshire rail link to Lancashire should be restored

The cost of reopening the Skipton-Colne line for passenger trains will be £38 million as a single track or £78 million for double track, consultant ARUP has told the Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership. Alliance Rail Holdings, Lush Cosmetics and Railfuture members donated cash for the next study. More info: www.selrap.org.uk

New attempt to safeguard Beverley-York rail route

Campaigners working to reopen the Beverley-York railway are making a new bid to get the route protected in East Riding Council's local development framework. George McManus of the Minsters' Rail Campaign said he hoped to draw the council's attention to changing attitudes at national level to rail reopening, particularly following the approval of the East West Rail scheme from Oxford to Bedford.



Insulting fares policy

One of the most embarrassing moments for a rail campaigner is to see and hear a fellow passenger being subjected to a train operator's draconian and insulting policy on fares.

All Railfuture members are determined to see better rail services, but the increasing level of fares makes some campaigners wonder whether they are performing a public service or helping aggressive companies to profit from people who need or want to travel.

Most rail staff are intelligent and sympathetic when they carry out their duty of challenging travellers who do not have a ticket – or a correct ticket.

But some train operators insist that people who have innocently boarded the “wrong” train have to buy a full fare ticket in addition to the ticket they have already bought! Some train operators are also unwilling or unable to allow onboard staff to give railcard discounts.

Train operators should be banned from both these exploitative practices. Whatever fare has already been paid should be deducted from any new fare demanded. Rail card discounts should also be allowed, within the time limits that already apply. The Government itself is also guilty on two fronts. It is demanding passengers pay more towards the cost of running the

railway while ignoring the economic and environmental benefit of more people going by rail, rather than road or air.

It is also clinging to a very expensive method of running the railway, which means it now costs more than double what it used to under British Rail. Some of that increase is going to improve the network but a lot is also being wasted on the complicated “money go round” that was created at the time of privatisation in 1993.

Some rail campaigners and increasing numbers of passengers are learning how to obtain low fares by booking in advance.

But the mainstream press is happy to do the work of the road and air lobbies by pointing out ridiculous anomalies.

One report said that for booking five weeks ahead, returning one week later, flying with EasyJet from Glasgow to Bristol would cost £53 while the cheapest train ticket is £141.

It has also been reported that First Great Western was putting up the price of advance tickets bought at stations by a “daylight robbery” level of 11% in September.

Advance tickets are not covered by the “regulated” fares, which will be going up by 4.1% in January, again by more than the level of inflation. Crazy!

Rail strategy needs proper backbone

By Ian Brown

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Growth is the big issue for the rail industry, as I have consistently argued in *Railwatch* for the past two years.

Cost control is important but can be addressed by holding down fixed costs while increasing capacity, a more sensible alternative to Sir Roy McNulty's concentration on reducing costs.

Richard Brown conducted the review of franchising and is now in a better position to lead, moderate and change the tempo of the British government in its approach to rail franchising.

I was delighted to see him say publicly: “Coping with growth is the real challenge. Over the past two years rail has grown at four times the rate of the UK economy overall.”

An excellent analysis, even though there was a hiccup in growth earlier this year.

It is ironic that Sir Roy McNulty has returned to Gatwick airport as chairman having carefully boxed and filed his rail report. He is now proclaiming that the Gatwick-London Victoria service is “third world”. Oh Sir Roy, how could you!

The current combined service to Gatwick, rather than a wasteful but market-led Gatwick Express, is an example of exactly what he was advocating for the railways.

It is much cheaper to operate and more tailored to demand, even if less attractive to air passengers. I note that this is not the strategy for Gatwick airport. Of course there, he wants growth.

Perhaps writing a report for the Government is different to running a business. Running a business, including both railways and airports, is about growth.

Network Rail has recognised this by increasing the number of trains on the system paying access charges.

It has become quite proactive about this, recognising that this means more station platforms, flyovers and increased track capacity and electrification. If you draw a circle around London, you can see a ring of enhanced-capacity stations under construction or recently completed. The ring, going clockwise, starts with Gatwick airport then Reading, Rugby and Milton Keynes, Peterborough and Cambridge. Throw in flyovers at Reading, Nuneaton and Hitchin, and this is starting to look like a serious co-ordinated capacity-



IAN BROWN

enhancement strategy. Join these up with the plans for an electrified western spine for freight and passengers from Southampton to Oxford, Bletchley and Bedford, and this is starting to look like a national strategy.

It would look even better if accompanied by a balancing electrified eastern spine. The eastern spine could link the Channel Tunnel, Medway ports and onwards across the wide but shallow Thames Estuary (dare I say also potentially serving Boris Island airport), as well as linking the new London Gateway container port and the East Coast ports to March, Spalding and Doncaster.

Such a spine would also link into and maximise the potential of the developing Felixstowe-Nuneaton (and eventually Stoke and Crewe) infrastructure corridors.

Watching the number of road vehicles using the Dartford M25 toll crossing at almost any time is a graphic illustration of the size of the market.

Just think what such a spine could do for regional passenger services and links. You could travel by train from Kent to East Anglia and from East Anglia to Lincolnshire.

The other concept that is increasingly relevant is “resilience”. As more passengers and freight depend on rail, the growing system needs to be resilient.

Reliability, which is usually narrowly interpreted as punctuality, is acknowledged as essential. But a reliable system punctuated



An impression of the city which is expected to grow up around Old Oak Common station by 2048

by susceptibility to prolonged maintenance closures or natural disasters is not sustainable as evidenced by the spoil slide at Hatfield and Stainthorpe on the busiest freight corridor in Britain.

For passengers, the idea of putting them on rail replacement buses is increasingly unacceptable and there are green shoots of resilient thinking designed to sustain service for customers.

For example, the intermodal Tesco train from Rugby to Scotland has been running between Sheffield and the East Coast main line during engineering work on the West Coast. This a better solution than resorting to using lorries on the M6 motorway.

A good passenger example is TransPennine Express which is planning for Hope Valley closures by running a Manchester-Sheffield train via Huddersfield and Wakefield which requires drivers to retain diversionary route knowledge.

Where does Railfuture's campaign for rail reopenings come into this? The rail system certainly needs more capacity and it also needs to be more resilient.

The internet was designed with both in mind as a network with strategic linkages – as should our increasingly relevant rail network. Reopening or upgraded use of dormant rail capacity is an essential complement to a strategic network approach.

To improve rail's resilience by creating alternative through routes, the following links should be urgently considered alongside the two “spines”.

I am thinking of five routes, although there are others, particularly in Scotland:

March-Spalding would complete a strategic eastern spine, by linking directly into an upgrade of the Peterborough-Doncaster “joint line”.

Lewes-Uckfield would provide a Newhaven-London regional route.

Skipton-Colne would create a Manchester-Bolton-Blackburn-Burnley-Skipton regional route.

Ambergate-Matlock and on to Peak Forest, Chinley and Buxton would create a regional freight link from the East Midlands to the North West, as well as boosting tourism in the Peak District and capacity in the Hope Valley.

Cheltenham to Stratford-upon-Avon reopening could create a South Wales to West Midlands regional route, would support tourism in the Cotswolds and be useful for freight. These routes would add network capacity, stimulate the economy, provide

improved resilience and give the potential for much-needed local and inter-regional links.

I have not mentioned High Speed Two so far in this context. It is widely recognised that this too is all about capacity.

I wish it had been designed on this basis, maximising capacity particularly into London and on to HS1, and also into Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds, as well as providing increased resilience for the whole rail network.

Instead the regional transport authorities have been left to fend for themselves in providing for onward distribution.

They are banking on achieving this largely by adapting light rail systems. The plan is to link Birmingham International and Curzon Street by extending Centro's Midland Metro. At Toton, Nottingham trams will be essential, at Meadowhall it will be the Sheffield Supertram and at Manchester, Metrolink.

Having HS2 terminal stations at Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds is not the best way to maximise network resilience, to enhance capacity or to expand catchment areas in our three biggest cities north of London.

Currently even London is planned as a terminal, with a resultant over-reliance on the existing and overcrowded London Underground services.

At least here the inadequacy is recognised so an interchange with Crossrail, west of London at Old Oak Common, is planned. Such an interchange needs properly integrated north-south links to maximise the potential for high speed travel from the important catchment area.

There will be huge construction disruption creating a terminal station at Euston West and this plan should be ditched in favour of a through underground station serving Euston and St Pancras International as outlined in the Euston Cross proposal.

Instead of yet another terminal station, an east-west alignment would link directly into HS1, with a proper service from Stratford International via HS1 to Lille, Brussels and Paris.

Stratford International was built in 2008 with public money but has been ignored by Eurostar.

I don't think Railfuture's campaign for a properly planned integrated rail system is quite over yet.

■ Ian Brown CBE FCILT is a former managing director of London Rail and was awarded a CBE for services to railways.

LOCAL ACTION

North West

By Arthur Thomson

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■ ■ Signalling upgrade needed

Network Rail is being urged to address the annual problems of flooding of the railway at Walsden, between Littleborough and Todmorden stations. This flooding almost always closes the busy Calder Valley line, and when this happens, the line is closed between Rochdale and Hebden Bridge stations, a distance of over 13 miles, and replacement buses have to be arranged. Campaign group STORM (Support The Oldham, Rochdale Manchester lines) complain that this involves a substantial increase in journey time as the roads are often very congested.

They also believe that operational flexibility could be improved at such times if the emergency ground frame at Summit West was remotely controlled by Preston or Rochdale West signal boxes. Currently it can be worked only by Network Rail personnel going to the site. With so much re-signalling in the Rochdale, Todmorden and Littleborough area being undertaken, they believe the ground frame should be included. STORM believes that signalling decisions of the early 1970s should not be causing so much upset to passengers when they can readily be alleviated.

Flooding occurred on 29 July, causing the line to be closed for nearly 24 hours. Considerable inconvenience was inflicted on commuter passengers from Manchester to Smithy Bridge and Littleborough.

■ ■ Famous rail fan Pete backs station campaigners

Friends of both Reddish South and Denton stations were active at the Stockport 170 Rail show on 4 August when members met famous rail enthusiast Pete Waterman. Dot Ashworth from FORSS reports that he was very supportive. The highlight of the day was Pete unveiling Virgin Pendolino 390156 as “Stockport 170” to recognise the station's 170th anniversary. The Friends joint stand attracted many visitors, and most people took part in a survey on the groups' campaigns, as well as a raffle. The two Friends groups are running a joint campaign for passenger services to and from Stockport and Manchester Victoria.

On Saturday 15 June, FORSS took a stand at the third annual ReddFest, celebrating all things Reddish. Another survey by FORSS showed that the people of Reddish are crying out for better rail services.

Local MP Andrew Gwynne is very supportive of the joint campaign and arranged a meeting between the Friends of Reddish South and Denton stations with local councillors on 13 August at Denton Town Hall. Stockport Council head Sue Derbyshire, Tameside Council head Kieran Quinn, local Denton and Reddish councillors and Stockport councillor Dean Fitzpatrick who sits on the Transport for Greater Manchester committee were all present and agreed future ways of promoting local rail schemes. Rail campaigners were warned however that progress might well be slow. The FORSS responded by saying that the group had been in existence for five years and knew how slow progress can be.



Rail enthusiast Pete Waterman with Alan Jones of Friends of Denton Station, left, Dot Ashworth and Dave Ashworth, right, of FORSS

Picture: FORSS

Lincolnshire

LOCAL ACTION

■ ■ Market Rasen protest about overcrowding

Passengers are complaining that they are being left stranded at Market Rasen station because the trains are too full. On one occasion in July, 20 shoppers were forced to wait more than two hours for a train to Lincoln, reports the *Market Rasen Mail*.

Market Rasen rail users group's Karen Maloney said: “Over the last few months a Saturday shopping trip has become a lottery.” The rail user group was formed after Christmas last year, when the 17.23 train from Lincoln to Market Rasen was reduced to two carriages without any consultation.

■ ■ Saturdays-only station wins attention after 20 years

A better rail service through Brigg - that is what the town urgently needs, according to North Lincolnshire Councillor Carl Sherwood, who recently stood down after his year in office as town mayor. North Lincolnshire Council, MP Andrew Percy and Brigg Town Council are appealing to the House of Commons transport committee to improve the rail service at Brigg which for 20 years has been open only on Saturdays, with three trains running each way, to Barnetby and Gainsborough, Retford and Sheffield.

“We need a service in the week and we need to campaign for that,” Councillor Carl Sherwood told the *Market Rasen Mail*.

You can contact Railfuture Lincolnshire at: lincolnshire@railfuture.org.uk

Wales

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

■ ■ Railfuture protest at delay to Wrexham-Chester upgrade

Railfuture Wales has expressed its concern that the £36 million project to double seven miles of the single-track Wrexham-Chester line, which was expected to start this year, has been deferred. The upgrade would have speeded up the north-south rail service through Wales, but now Welsh Government transport minister Edwina Hart is reviewing the project. The line was singled in the 1980s to allow for the construction of the A483 bypass.

■ ■ Wrexham-Shrewsbury upgraded during nine-day closure

Railfuture welcomed Network Rail's £10 million investment in the rail line between Wrexham and Shrewsbury when 10 miles of old track was realigned. The listed Cefn viaduct near Wrexham (right) was also water-proofed when the line was closed for nine days at the beginning of September. "The investment follows recent

works to upgrade the railway and station facilities across the area, such as Castle Foregate bridge and the River Severn viaduct refurbishments in Shrewsbury, the upgrades to Chester and Prestatyn stations and new lifts at Wrexham General," said Mark Langman of Network Rail Wales. "The next steps in the programme include our plans to modernise the signalling and control systems between Newport and Shrewsbury and from Flint to Llandudno, starting in 2015."

■ ■ What is needed for a future Welsh and Borders franchise

Railfuture Wales has submitted evidence to the Welsh Government's enterprise and business committee into the requirements for the replacement Wales and Borders franchise. One of the questions posed was whether a not-for-dividend franchise should be considered. This was originally a Railfuture Wales proposal to the Welsh Government.

■ ■ Double boost for Fishguard-Rosslare ferry service

Railfuture Ireland has campaigned for years for the restoration of the rail connection at Rosslare (to Dublin) for the afternoon ferry from Fishguard Harbour. This was achieved this summer and ATW responded quickly by reinstating Rail Sail tickets to Dublin. As a result of increased loadings, ATW boosted the Cardiff-Fishguard Harbour boat train from two to three coaches.

■ ■ Passengers gain information screens throughout Wales

The programme to install digital information screens at all stations in Wales including Sugar Loaf and Gilfach Bargoed halts is nearly complete. The last stations to benefit will be Ammanford and Pantyffynnon.

■ ■ Railfuture to scrutinise new public transport strategy

Railfuture has been invited to submit comments on the latest bus and community transport regional network strategy proposed by the South East Wales Transport Alliance which includes 10 local councils. SEWTA proposes creating a South Wales Metro and several new rail stations.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

Old ways and new in the heart of Europe



Pictures: PHILIP BISATT

The futuristic Liege Guillemins station, which was opened in 2009, with an elderly electric unit from Maastricht

By Philip Bisatt

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Railfuture's 2013 visit to mainland Europe was to Maastricht, best known perhaps in the UK for the treaty that created the European single market.

It is also a fine historic city in the Dutch province of Limburg, close to the borders with both Belgium and Germany.

We left London St Pancras on the 12.58 to Brussels Midi where we took a Belgian domestic train to Liege Guillemins.

This is a superb modern station designed by Santiago Calatrava, where we made a connection with an elderly two-car electric multiple unit for the short distance across the Dutch frontier to Maastricht.

Use of this shuttle service, nicknamed la trotinette (the scooter) is necessary because of the inability of the national railways to agree on continued funding for a through Brussels-Maastricht service, formerly financed by the city of Maastricht. Even so, the city is a good example of how to restrain traffic and give priority to pedestrians, cyclists and buses.

Several of the bridges across the Maas are closed to general traffic, so keeping cars away from the historic core of the city.

We enjoyed a presentation by Gustaaf Begas and colleagues from Railfuture's sister organisation ROVER on the subject of liberalisation and its impact in Limburg.

In the Netherlands there are now many public transport operators, whereas in the past there was only the national railway, NS, and three bus companies for the whole country.

This creates difficulties for ProRail – another Railfuture ally – in coordinating timetables of the various rail operators. As has occurred in many Euro-

pean Union countries, there has been devolution of responsibility to regional level for local rail services, which has generally resulted in these improving.

On the debit side, there is concern that proposals to divide the Dutch inter-city operations into three could lead to a loss of the existing unified system that benefits passengers.

Different operators tend to have different tariffs per kilometre. Within Limburg, local trains and buses are now franchised to Veolia, which has introduced new cheaper-to-run rolling stock which has allowed improved services and significant increases in passenger numbers.

However, there are now separate ticket validation machines for NS and Veolia.

Maastricht's excellent location is reflected in the Euregio ticket which is valid on all modes of public transport in Limburg and adjoining regions of Belgium and Germany (the Euregio Meuse-Rhine).

Several Railfuture members took advantage of this to travel to Aachen in Germany, where as well as visiting the cathedral and the tomb of Charlemagne, the group enjoyed an excellent guided tour of the local rail network, courtesy of Michael Bienick, chairman of the Nordrhein-Westfalen regional association of Railfuture's sister organisation, PRO BAHN.

Most interesting was a trip on the Rurtalbahn from Duren to Julich. This line was closed to passengers by DB in the 1980s, but was reopened with local authority funding using tram-like diesel units run by a private operator.

Such has been the success of the revived service that it is now to be electrified and re-incorporated into the national system!

A visit was also made to the regional transport authority centred on Aachen, the Aachener



A Maastricht-Heerlen train, run by Veolia, at Valkenburg in the Netherlands where the 1853 station imitates the town's castle

Verkehrsverbund where a comprehensive presentation was given by Andreas Warnecke, liaison officer for cross-border public transport in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine. Members of the group also made visits to Spa, Liege, Hasselt, Amsterdam, Arnhem and, more ambitiously, Luxembourg. Also impressive was the local steam heritage railway, the Miloenenlijn (ZLSM

– Zuid-Limburgse Stoomtrein Maatschappij). It is based at Simpelveld in the former Limburg coalfield, but operates over NS tracks and under electric wires into the main line station at Valkenburg, where all facilities are shared, a marked contrast to the costly and inconvenient "Checkpoint Charlies" that seem to be considered necessary at similar interfaces in Britain.

Farewell to Eric

Railfuture stalwart Eric Barbery, who campaigned for better railways throughout his life, has died at the age of 86.

Eric lived just a few yards from the railway for much of his life and was secretary of Railfuture Severnside from the formation of the branch in 1982 until 1994. He was also a member of the freight committee.

He allowed Railfuture to use his house at Ebley, near Stroud, to store campaign material.

Eric was born in Cheltenham, but his family roots were in Plymouth and Cornwall. Eric was evacuated from Plymouth with his sisters back to Cheltenham during the Second World War.

He had a long career with the Great Western, working as a controller at Gloucester, Bristol and Swindon. Throughout his career and after his retirement in the early 1980s he made a vast contribution to the BR staff suggestions scheme.

His proposal for the Filton chord giving direct access to Avonmouth from South Wales was implemented in 1971 as part of the Bristol resignalling scheme. He was a man ahead of his time, seeing opportunities for marketing rail travel to tourists on the Cornish branch lines. He lived long enough to see work begin

on Kemble-Swindon redoubling, for which he had campaigned over many years, as well as the reopening of Ashchurch (1997) and Cam & Dursley (1994) stations. He left a bequest to Railfuture Severnside, some of which has already been used to support the Radstock-Frome reopening campaign.

As a young man he joined the International Friendship League, which organised holidays abroad at a time when this was unusual for people in Britain. He met his wife Rosemary, also an IFL member, as a pen friend. He remained interested in world affairs and world railways all his life.

Eric was still composing emails and letters, particularly concerning rail developments abroad, until shortly before he died.

Mourners at his funeral at Cheltenham Crematorium were told that he worked on the railway because it was his vocation.

He was a good friend to fellow rail campaigners, who will miss his expertise and advice. He is survived by his three daughters and their families.

Donations in memory of Eric can be made to Cancer Research UK, care of Allan-White Ltd, Funeral Directors, Crown Mews, Bath Road, King's Stanley, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire GL10 3JG.

London and South East

By Roger Blake

roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Electrification success at last for diesel outpost

Railfuture chalked up a major campaign success when electrification of the national freight/local passenger Gospel Oak-Barking Line was confirmed in June. Electrification will clear the way for longer trains on this route, which is a rare diesel-worked line in the London area, and Government funding should allow Transport for London to develop plans for extending services to Barking Riverside. Railfuture will now campaign for westward extension of services from Gospel Oak to Willesden Junction and Ealing Broadway.

■ ■ STAR service promised for IKEA and the Lea Valley



Stratford-Tottenham-Angel Road (STAR) services should double in frequency within five years, now the London Enterprise Panel has confirmed £27.5 million to add to Network Rail's £44 million and TfL's £3 million. Angel Road is the nearest station to IKEA's regional outlet and a major Tesco store, but is poorly served by rail at present. The promised improvement is another triumph for the Chingford Line Users' Association, which used a Railfuture Fighting Fund grant to commission a crucial report from *Jonathan Roberts Consulting*. Network Rail now plans to add a third track between Stratford and Angel Road, via the soon-to-be reopened Lea Bridge station.

■ ■ Countdown to change of operation in east London

Two years from now, rail services in east London will be transformed. Transport for London will take over Liverpool Street services to Chingford, Cheshunt and Enfield Town. Railfuture campaigners will be trying to ensure passengers benefit to the fullest extent. Passenger counts carried out by Cambridge Heath and London Fields rail users group are being supplied to the West Anglia Routes Group, which is advised by *Jonathan Roberts Consulting*. Usage of London Fields is estimated in 2011-12 to be almost 900,000, nearly double the Office of Rail Regulation's published figure. For Cambridge Heath, the 600,000 figure is well over twice the ORR estimate. It is important that proper evidence is used when changes are made. Great Eastern services to Shenfield will also be detached from Greater Anglia to be part of the Crossrail operation in May 2015, even though Crossrail will not be completed until 2019.

■ ■ Evidence piling up in favour of bridging the Sussex gap

The Railfuture-commissioned report *Access and Connections: East Sussex – opportunities to align railway investment to the economic growth requirements of East Sussex* from *Jonathan Roberts Consulting* was published in July. It was supported by Railfuture's Fighting Fund. It sets the extension of Wealden line services via Uckfield and Lewes to the Sussex coast in context, and sets "conditional outputs" for the East Coastway and Marshlink routes. Evidence of population, employment and travel data is used to show how rail's role can expand alongside the local communities and businesses. Read more at www.railfuture.org.uk/uckfield+lewes

The county council published its draft rail strategy *Shaping Rail in East Sussex* in August. Railfuture campaigners attended the related stakeholders' symposium. For details see www.railfuture.org.uk/sussex+and+coastway

■ ■ Feedback opportunity to influence the future shape of rail

Railfuture is supporting the regional option for Crossrail 2, which envisages main line trains between a range of existing branches in south-west London and two in north-east London, via Euston. Our branch led the Railfuture response to Network Rail's four Market Studies, which will influence what is spent after 2019. See: www.railfuture.org.uk/submissions We also called for electrification of Hurst Green-Uckfield in our response to the Office of Rail Regulation's review of Network Rail plans for the period after 2014.

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



Your letters

Luggage problems

I hope that among Railfuture's aspirations for passenger services is either greater provision for luggage, or the restriction of luggage carried, by weight or volume, as on airlines. On modern trains there appears to be more and more luggage stowed away in insufficient space, enough to become a health and safety hazard.

On a recent very crowded trip in the west country, my brother, a wheelchair user, was unable to access the designated and booked wheelchair space because it was full of passengers' luggage.

He was left by the station customer assistant in the toilet doorway. Meanwhile his carer, my sister-in-law, sitting in her pre-booked seat was, during the journey, hit on the head by a poorly secured suitcase which dropped on to her from the rack above. She was all but knocked out! My sister-in-law has complained to CrossCountry Trains. Surely there are health and safety rules about how much luggage is carried and how it is secured. Is it not someone's responsibility to see that these rules are followed?

Phyll Hardie, Booty Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0NE
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Positive progress

On behalf of the Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership, I wish to respond to the letter by Alan Platt in the July edition of *Railwatch* which questions the justification for a reopened link between Skipton and Colne.

SELRAP has been campaigning since 2001 and has a wide breadth of support. The group would also like to see the line from Colne to Preston be made into an electrified double track which would draw people from a large catchment area.

This would enable the people in the region to have a 21st

century rail service which is as well-used as the nearby Aire Valley line. It would bring great economic benefit across the North of England and support commuters of all ages by connecting this through cross-Pennine route, the "missing link", to the rail network.

Reopening railways draws in at least twice as much investment as the cost, according to previous studies done on behalf of SELRAP.

SELRAP supports the Todmorden Curve project and the improvements that would bring too.

Our latest patron is Lord Faulkner who has a great interest and knowledge of the rail industry. After his recent visit to see the trackbed he said the reinstatement was very feasible.

SELRAP has also commissioned the highly regarded blue chip rail consultants company ARUP to undertake a GRIP 3 (Governance for Railway Investment Project) study in order to progress the campaign and we thank once again all those members who have responded so generously to our funding appeal for this.

Jane Wood, Media Officer,
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www.selrap.org.uk

Franchise free

I was interested to read about the "franchise fiasco" in *Railwatch* 136 and I am thankful to live in a part of the United Kingdom which retains a nationalised railway and has no franchises. I would echo Christian Wolmar's question "What is rail franchising for?" and I note that Railfuture vice president Peter Rayner despairs of franchising. So do I, but I am lucky to live somewhere without any.

I support the remarks of the TSSA's Manuel Cortes and Aslef's Mick Whelan. Mind you, Mick, you suggest that the Tories are expecting a defeat at the

2015 election. It is a pity that when the Tories were defeated in 1997, Labour had 13 years to renationalise the railways, but failed to do so, just as Labour, when elected in 1964, largely failed to undo the damage done by Beeching.

R A Hunter, 23 Barn Road,
Carrickfergus BT38 7EU

Let's back HS2

Having endured the depressing decades after the 1960s as a member of the various forerunners of Railfuture, struggling to stop the governments of the day emasculating our rail system, I have found the recent turnaround in attitude extremely gratifying.

All I would say now is, however imperfect some may feel the proposed route for HS2 is, and I do not share their concern, please let us appear supportive. It would be tragic if the naysayers could point to the foremost rail advocacy group as supporting them in their attempts to bring the whole project crashing down.

The "Euston Cross" idea for allowing through running on to HS1, as in the July *Railwatch*, is certainly better than my suggestion of an airport-style travelator connection, and seems a very worthy tweak to the overall scheme. I think we had best spend our energies suggesting such, rather than muddying the waters by putting forward completely different routes.

In the same issue, Robert McDougall quite rightly examines the possibilities of forging high-speed routes southwards from the north and includes many useful statistics, though I would query the idea of links to all conurbations of over half a million. High speed rail implies lengthy non-stop sections to have any real impact on journey times. Perhaps a topic for a future round-table discussion?

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St Pancras is best

If High Speed Two ever gets built, surely it would be better for the London terminus to be at St Pancras rather than Euston, thus allowing connections to the existing HS1 to the continent. Indeed, it might be possible to run "through" trains from the

north and Midlands without the need to change.

R A Smith, The Street, Little
Waltham, Chelmsford CM3 3NT

Dogs and trains

The article by David Allard in *Railwatch* 136 was most interesting, as any mention of trams is to me. He might care to compare systems in Europe with those here.

I write from the point of view of a person travelling with a dog. Tram systems and some bus companies in Britain will not allow dogs.

Complaints are dismissed with the words "company policy" and I often hear the shout "No dogs".

Thank goodness that on National Rail trains, one can travel with a well-behaved dog and thanks too to London Underground and metro systems where you can take a dog.

On another topic, I find it a bit of a mystery why the Bath and West of England Showground at Shepton Mallet is not better served by train. The nearest stations are seven miles away at Bruton or Castle Cary.

Both the showground and Glastonbury Festival could be better served by an extended East Somerset Railway which is connected to the main line at Witham Friary.

By contrast, the Royal Welsh Showground, next to the old Builth Wells station, is only one mile from Builth Road.

J Evered, Goylands Close,
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Editors' note: First Great Western ran extra trains to get Glastonbury Festival visitors to Castle Cary station where buses met them.

Hunt for hotels

I am compiling a web directory of quality accommodation near railway stations in the UK. As far as I am aware there is no such directory in existence on the internet. Accommodation will be classified as A - adjacent to a station, or B - within 15 minutes normal walking with luggage.

I would be grateful for any suggestions you may have of any such b&bs and hotels. If you have stayed there that is even better. The accommodation must be en suite and show a majority of good or above ratings on Trip Advisor. I am not interested in hostels or rooms with shared

bathrooms, although I appreciate they might appeal to those on a very limited budget.

Some people prefer the intimacy of a good b&b, others will argue that hotels offer greater flexibility regarding arrival and breakfast times. There is a perception that hotels are usually dearer, but with differential web pricing many are a lot cheaper than b&bs, which usually have a fixed price all year round.

Whether it is a big city or a tiny country station, they will all be shown. The more comprehensive we can make it, the more useful it will be. I want it to be a source of reference for business people as well as leisure travellers and rail enthusiasts.

Martin Hill
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Bus cuts on way

In *Railwatch* 136 I mentioned bus services to towns on the Somerset & Dorset line. I have just received details of proposed draconian cuts by Dorset County Council which, if approved, will remove virtually all supported buses on Saturdays.

That will affect everywhere except the Bournemouth/Poole conurbation and the coastal belt and a few isolated routes elsewhere. Sturminster Newton, for example, will be completely cut off.

The cuts are expected to take place in January. *Railwatch* readers should consider boycotting the county next year, when places like Lulworth Cove, on the Jurassic coast, will become almost inaccessible by public transport.

Readers should also lobby the county council before the decision is made in early October.

Railfuture members should be lobbying for a comprehensive bus network complementing the rail network and serving all towns, large villages and main places of interest, including a bus route following the S&D between Bath and Poole.

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Look to the future

I have decided not to renew my membership of Railfuture after so many years.

I have felt increasingly that we are failing to live up to our society name. Our membership



POWER WALK: MP Richard Fuller, centre, with Transport 2000's Stephen Joseph, left, and MP Iain Stewart led the rail reopening walk. Below: More than 50 people rallied at Bedford's Priory Park and later many walked the route of the former Bedford to Cambridge railway route to Sandy



is too small to affect policy decisions and our influence is spread too thinly. For example, I live in Milton Keynes, a city of 250,000 people yet as far as I know I'm the only member. This results in any branch meetings I

Send your letters to:

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

attend being in Oxford, Reading, Didcot or even further away. I have campaigned for over 25 years to get the East-West line reopened, and now this looks as if it might come to fruition because of the Department for Transport, not Railfuture. The last straw however has been the society's reaction to High Speed Two. At long last we had a government ready to invest heavily in high speed rail and Railfuture refused to give support to HS2 or at least to this HS2, and believe me this is the only one on offer. Already the road lobby is circling like a vulture to grab the money

Next stop Cambridge

MPs Iain Stewart and Richard Fuller joined rail campaigners for a rally and walk between Bedford and Sandy on Saturday 29 June 2013 to show their support for the reintroduction of a rail link between Bedford and Cambridge.

The event was organised by Railfuture and the Campaign for Better Transport following the Government go-ahead for the reopening of the East West Rail link between Oxford and Bedford, Aylesbury and Milton Keynes.

This western section is expected to reopen for train services in 2017 but Railfuture is keen that plans for the central section should be settled quickly.

Railfuture East Anglia's John Henderson worked with Susan Dye of CBT to organise this effective event.

The Bedford-Cambridge section of the former Varsity line between Oxford and Cambridge closed in 1967. Sections of track have been dismantled but much of the alignment survives.

Iain Stewart, MP for Milton Keynes South, said: "The western section is forecast to create 12,000 jobs in the region. I am a strong supporter of extending it from Bedford towards Cambridge and into East Anglia where many more jobs would be generated. It would link the country's main science and research centres."

Richard Fuller, MP for Bedford, said: "We now want to see the Government take the next step and make that link to Cambridge."

available for new roads. And our society, my society, has not only damned the project with faint praise but has appointed Christian Wolmar as president, who practically every week is denigrating the scheme in some publication or another.

And I have been informed that I am in the minority in my views. If that is so, then I will find something else to spend my money on!

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Climate change: What Britain's railways have to offer

Peter Robinson is a spokesman for the Campaign against Climate Change which is allied to the trades union-backed Action for Rail. Here he explains why climate change activists and rail campaigners should co-operate

Railways are already making a major contribution towards averting the crisis caused by climate change.

The train is the most fuel-efficient form of transport and causes far less pollution than travelling by car or plane.

In order to combat global warming more effectively, it is necessary to invest more in rail so that more and more people switch to trains.

Cars, planes and lorries cause 82% of global carbon dioxide transport emissions.

Planes produce eight to eleven times the carbon dioxide of high speed rail and lorries emit about six times more carbon dioxide than trains for every tonne carried.

A greater shift to buses and trains could cut transport carbon dioxide emissions by 80%.

Radical improvements to rail services are required if we are going to persuade more people to switch from air and road travel. Climate activists and rail campaigners should be able to join forces.

You can sign up to the Action for Rail network at its website www.actionforrail.org

Action for Rail argues that in order to improve the railways it is necessary to reform the franchise system, take ownership back into the public sector and operate the railways as an essential service.

The public money going into the railways has increased from around £2.4 billion per year before privatisation (in the period 1990/91-1994/95) to approximately £5.4 billion per year now (in the period 2005/6-2009/10), all at 2009/10 prices.

This does not include the additional funds going into the railways from higher real-term passenger fares.

The cumulative cost of privatisation has been more than £11 billion of public funds. If all unnecessary costs were eliminated and



the resultant saving was used entirely to reduce fares, it would equate to an across-the-board cut in fares of 18%. Since privatisation, the cost to passengers of rail has risen by 17% in real terms.

We have an unnecessarily expensive rail service.

The interest of the railway operators is primarily to maximise their profit for shareholders, not to keep ticket prices down.

In Europe, between 80% and 100% of passenger train services are provided by the public sector.

Chief executives at British train operating companies and at Network Rail typically receive remuneration packages of £640,000 to £1.35 million per year.

The number of private companies now means that there are many more posts for which this salary range is considered appropriate.

At the same time, train operators pay tax at a rate far below the headline 30% corpora-

tion tax rate. In 2005 they paid an average of just 3.8% tax. My figures are taken from the *Rebuilding Rail* report, by Dr Ian Taylor and Dr Lynn Sloman of Transport for Quality of Life, released in summer 2012 (transportforqualityoflife.com).

The railways also have an important role in reducing carbon emissions, especially for regular commuter trips, long-distance inter-urban trips and long-distance freight.

If railways are to play this role and successfully compete against other modes of transport, we need to increase rail capacity and decrease journey times, through more train carriages and enhancements of the railway network, and we need to invest in electrification and designing and building lighter, more efficient trains.

All these investments are more expensive under the current cost structure of the railways. The present Government pol-

icy, which seeks to recover an increased share of the excessive cost of the privatised railway from passengers, is set to cause greater, rather than less environmental damage.

Higher rail fares will force passengers to switch from rail to driving, increasing carbon emissions.

Since privatisation, the real cost of train travel has risen by 17% at a time when real incomes have fallen by 7%, and higher fares will widen this gap.

Rail campaigners can make a great impact at local level by volunteering to help rail user groups and demanding better local rail services.

If you want help with environmental information, you can contact me at AfR@campaigncc.org.

Every individual should raise the need for better railway services with any organisation with whom they are in contact with the aim of broadening our campaign as widely as possible.

Women's Institutes, pensioner and disability groups, trades unions and trades councils are a few of the organisations which could be encouraged to join the rail campaign.

We can offer to provide a speaker for their meetings. Experience has shown that personal stories of what is happening in the railways are very powerful.

We can also help organise public meetings to protect or expand railway services, or on a general theme such as climate and railways.

Action for Rail could be involved by supplying a template leaflet and/or a speaker.

You can help publicise all events by telling friends and sympathetic organisations.

You could use social networks, such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to set up a local organising network with the aim of creating semi-autonomous groups which can liaise with railway groups that already exist.

Action for Rail has already organised a number of events along the East Coast line in the battle to keep it in public ownership.

Events took place at Newcastle, York, Leeds, Wakefield, Doncaster, Peterborough and King's Cross.

Keep an eye on the websites: ActionforRail.org, campaigncc.org, climatechange-jobs.org, greenptu.wordpress.com, theactalliance.com and jobsandclimate.org

Picture: MTC/MGRENDAWN GRAPHICS

Climate change and Railfuture – Taunton 2013

By Nigel Bray, Bruce Williamson and Simon Taylor

Climate change is already threatening chaos on Britain's rail network, delegates heard at the Railfuture conference at Taunton in June.

A key speaker was John Dora whose many years in the rail industry led to some interesting insights about the implications of climate change.

Sophisticated research and modelling by Exeter's MetOffice Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research estimate that weather-related incidents restricting access to the main line along the sea wall at Dawlish could increase by a factor of six between now and the year 2080.

Computer modelling suggests climate-related events occurring once every 100 years would increase to once every 14 years.

As a result, there would be many more "blue" bathometric warnings barring CrossCountry Voyagers from working west of Exeter.

Studies are currently in progress to assess the threat more precisely. By 2040 in the southern half of England and Wales, the risk of track buckling because of increased temperatures means that for two months a year engineers are unlikely to be able to undertake track repairs and replacement.

Weather-related delays already amount to 500,000 minutes per year, costing Network Rail £50 million.

John Dora is a fellow of both the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Royal Meteorological Society. He worked for British Rail at Taunton and later as a principal systems engineer for Network Rail.

The success of the Exeter to Barnstaple line's passenger growth was outlined by John Burch of the voluntary Tarka Rail Association. But he pointed out that Cowley Bridge Junction, where the Tarka line joins the Paddington-Penzance main line near Exeter, has a long history of flooding.

Another location prone to flooding is Staffords Bridge, on the main line a few miles further north. In the early 1960s there was extensive flooding from Cowley Bridge in the Crediton



WEATHER: John Dora

direction on what was then the Southern Region main line from Waterloo to Plymouth and North Devon.

The former LSWR system west of Exeter might have been lost altogether but bridges on what are now the Tarka Line were rebuilt, although singled.

Weather damage on the Tarka line was not confined to Cowley Bridge Junction end. The original signal box at Eggesford subsided in 1967 and was replaced by a prefabricated structure which lasted until 1987.

The Tarka line has about 50 underbridges crossing rivers, and in more recent decades has experienced periods of partial temporary closure, sometimes because of high water levels and at other times to carry out remedial work to reduce the risk of weather-related closures.

John showed slides of a loco and wagons stranded by floods and an Exeter-Crediton shuttle train marooned at Crediton. He said better rolling stock was needed to cater for the massive rise in passenger numbers.

Determination and organisation are vital for the success of reopening projects, said John Chapman, director of Kilbride Community Rail.

The Bere Alston-Tavistock line closed in 1968 but Devon County Council safeguarded the formation. There is now a major flow of commuters and shoppers from Tavistock to

Plymouth but the A386 road is congested. A reopened railway would alleviate this congestion. Crucially, a major new housing development is planned at Tavistock which could provide a source of funding for the reopening because the developer is required to make a section 106 contribution to the cost of associated infrastructure.

The effort required by rail campaigners was emphasised in other presentations by Bernard Lane from the Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways who are supporting the Metro West in and around Bristol, and by Alan Matthews of the Portishead Railway Group. Bernard said many Bristol city councillors in 1995 were not aware of the potential of the local rail network.

The Severn Beach line is now carrying over a million passengers a year and the city council has been able to reduce its subsidy because the improved timetable was beginning to pay for itself.

Alan Matthews said he had hoped to say the Portishead line could be reopened in 2017, 150 years after it opened but unfortunately the date has been put back to 2018 or early 2019. At the start of its campaign, PRG approached North Somerset Council which insisted it had no responsibility for developing rail services, claiming it was entirely a matter for the Department for Transport.

Another reopening campaign was outlined by Dean Cockwell, who is Spetisbury project manager for New Somerset & Dorset Railway. NS&DR has the aim of reopening the entire main line from Bath to Bournemouth, by buying land and working with existing heritage railway sites along the route.

At present NS&DR is talking to Dorset County Council with a view to taking control of Spetisbury station site. At first, NS&DR envisaged the site would become an added attraction to the North Dorset Railway with the station waiting rooms providing an information centre and shop, selling souvenirs and refreshments. Steve Smith



NEW S&DR: Dean Cockwell

from Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group said the formation of his group was prompted by proposed cuts to the Bedwyn-Reading-Paddington service. He summarised the successes of the group as fighting off the 2006 cuts, alignment of Marlborough buses with trains at Bedwyn, inclusion of Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group information in the pocket timetable, which also showed Marlborough bus connections, closing of two-hour gaps in the Monday to Saturday train service, gaining a stop in the 18.33 Paddington-Exeter service, getting Bedwyn station repaired and repainted and forming a good relationship with First Great Western.

Railfuture director Chris Fribbins discussed the imminent consultation into Network Rail's market studies for long distance, London & South East, Regional, Urban and Freight.

John Hassall, chairman of the Severnside branch of Railfuture, summed up the day by saying, "This has been an excellent national conference with a number of high quality speakers bringing delegates up to date on the key issues facing rail users and the industry. Railfuture is keen for greater representation from women, young people and minority ethnic communities.

"Come and see us at our autumn conference in Oxford on Saturday 2 November which is open to all. I would encourage anyone interested to look at the Railfuture website."

Railfuture conference sponsored by **First Great Western**

North East

By Peter Kenyon

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■ ■ Roman search reveals wooden standard gauge track

Archaeologists looking for Roman remains at the former Neptune shipyard on the banks of the Tyne at Walker unearthed a stretch of wagonway more than 200 years old, making it the earliest surviving



example of a standard-gauge railway. In the *Newcastle Journal* picture, above right, archaeologist Richard Carlton is seen on the remains of the early horse-powered railway, which would have supported a constant procession of loaded coal wagons on their way to ships on the Tyne. Tyne & Wear Archive and Museums service has obtained a £9,000 grant to lift and preserve a section of the track.

■ ■ Historic event staged at Newcastle Central station

Work has begun on the refurbishment of the portico of Newcastle Central station. We featured an artist's impression of what the concourse will look like in *Railwatch 136*. Newcastle Central was in the news in July when Durham Cathedral choir greeted an East Coast train to highlight the summer exhibition of the Lindisfarne gospels in Durham. A class 91 locomotive was named Durham Cathedral by the Dean of Durham. Several members of Railfuture North East attended the event and travelled to York where Mallard and five other preserved A4 steam engines were on show to record crowds at the National Railway Museum.

■ ■ Progress on Ashington Blyth and Tyne reopening plan Northumberland County Council, which supports the case for reopening the Ashington Blyth and Tyne line for passenger services has commissioned Network Rail to examine the best option in a Governance for Railway Investment Project (GRIP) study. £750,000 has been allocated for the project.

■ ■ Weather and engineers disrupt summer Metro services

Passengers had to be rescued from trains in the Gateshead area in July when the overhead power network was damaged in very hot weather. Repairs were carried out overnight but this was just a prelude to major disruption caused by major engineering works between Jesmond and South Gosforth. This part of the line carries 30,000 passengers each day, and sees 450 train movements with a train every three minutes. The line was closed for 27 days in August, resulting in a bus replacement service between Four Lane Ends station, the airport and Haymarket. The line was re-ballasted, re-laid and stations revamped. The replacement bus service proved efficient, but lengthened journeys considerably.

■ ■ Biomass power station may bring more freight trains

The Government has approved the construction of a 100 megawatt biomass power station at Battleship Wharf in North Blyth, to be built in 2014 next to the existing rail coal-handling plant. The construction and operation of this facility should provide opportunities for rail freight. At Widdrington in Northumberland, approval has been given for the development of Blue Sky Forest, a multi-million pound holiday and leisure complex with an artificial ski slope. Construction of this will involve 420,000 tons of pulverised fuel ash to be brought to the former Widdrington opencast sidings by rail over a sixth month period.

■ ■ Coastliners back Grand Central's plans for future

Seaton Carew station is to get a Harrington Hump which will assist wheelchair and buggy users on its southbound platform. Coastliners support the extension of Grand Central's operating licence from 2016 to 2026, a necessary preliminary to investment in rolling stock and station improvements. The company would like to bring the second platform at Hartlepool back into use which would give quicker access to local amenities.

Rail is undervalued

By George Boyle

furnessvale@btinternet.com

Official statistics on road and rail freight are concealing the enormous contribution rail makes to the economy and exaggerating the importance of road haulage.

Because market share figures influence Government policy on infrastructure expenditure, this distortion should not be allowed to go unchallenged.

I have analysed the figures for the landside haulage of deep sea containers from our major ports and I believe that around 56% of traffic at Southampton Docks should be attributed to rail, although officially it accounts for only 36%.

At Felixstowe, 47% of traffic should be attributed by rail compared to the official figure of 28%. The problem arises because there are two ways of quantifying the amount of freight carried within Britain.

First, there is freight tonnes lifted. This is simply a figure of how many tonnes are carried. It takes no account of how far the freight moves and gives equal weighting to a load carried one kilometre as the same load carried for 500 kilometres.

Needless to say, this is a much discredited measure, although unsurprisingly, much favoured by the road haulage industry.

Second, there is the measure of freight tonne kilometres. This is a calculation of the weight, multiplied by the distance travelled, which gives a much fairer reflection of the impact.

Given that the average rail haul is over twice the distance of the average road haul, any rail campaigner can immediately see why the simple freight tonnes figure is preferred by road haulage interests.

Container movements from ports are currently counted by the number of containers (twenty-foot equivalent units or TEU) leaving the dock gates. Just like the freight tonnes lifted

figure, this takes no account of the distance travelled, although rail movements will generally involve longer hauls.

I have discussed this with port and rail industry experts and, with the creditable exception of Network Rail, found a general indifference to the distortions in market share this causes.

So I looked at the figures for our two major deep sea ports, Felixstowe and Southampton. Department for Transport statistics for 2011 are the latest available and show the average length of road haul at 93 kilometres, compared to an average length of rail haul at 213 kilometres.

This covers all commodities rather than specifically containers, but is the only figure available and should provide a reasonable assessment of the position regarding containers.

At Southampton, the simple TEU figures say that 36% leave and arrive by rail, and 64% by road. But converting this to container kilometres puts rail at $36 \times 213 = 7,668$ (56%), compared to road at $64 \times 93 = 5,952$ (44%).

At Felixstowe, the simple TEU figures say that 28% are on railway while 72% are carried by road. Converting this to container kilometres puts rail at $28 \times 213 = 5,964$ (47%) with road at $72 \times 93 = 6,696$ (53%).

The good news is that both ports have plans to increase considerably rail's market share in the near future.

I believe the current method of measuring is hopelessly inadequate, and that around 50% of container freight already moves to and from our major ports by rail. This is a far cry from the more miserly figures currently attributed to rail.

Railfuture and its members should take every opportunity to let the public and politicians know the truth.

■ George Boyle is a vice-president of Railfuture.



Containers from Europe at Barking freight depot



Container ship at Felixstowe docks in Suffolk

Rail upgrade needed for container port

The Government should concentrate on improving rail links from the Midlands to the East Anglian port of Felixstowe, rather than the £1.5 billion upgrade of the A14 road announced by the Government in June.

That was what MPs were told by Clemence Cheng, the chief executive of Hutchison Ports UK, the operator of Felixstowe. He said there was great demand to shift freight from road transport to rail.

To many rail campaigners, Mr Cheng's comments come as a breath of fresh air. They believe the Ipswich-Felixstowe line should be double-tracked, the rail infrastructure between Soham and Ely, and between Newmarket and Cambridge improved, and speedy action taken to reopen the "missing section" of the East-West Rail Link between Cambridge and Bedford.

By contrast, the A14 road upgrade was touted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer as important and welcomed by John Cridland of the CBI.

Mr Cheng said that there needed to be more spending on rail infrastructure to secure the port's future against Rotterdam, its arch-rival.

He told MPs on the transport committee that the A14 was important, but added: "It is not that important. More important is rail access." The port has spent

£40 million on its rail terminal and has a long-term target to move more freight by rail, but it has been thwarted by a failure of central strategic transport planning.

There has not been enough effort to ease freight train traffic between the East Coast and the national distribution hubs around Nuneaton.

Mr Cheng said several small upgrades totalling £200 million would deliver a direct Felixstowe-Midlands rail freight service capable of handling the longest 30-wagon trains.

Mr Cheng told MPs that freight travel was the poor relation on the rail network.

"Even though we can handle longer trains, the system cannot cope," he said.

"The problem that we face is that we are fighting with passenger capacity. When it comes to capacity utilisation, precedence is always given to passenger trains. We understand that, but we need to find a cleverer way to deal with it."

This has ramifications for attracting international sea traffic and the very largest quarter-mile-long cargo vessels away from Rotterdam.

He added: "If we do not develop our port infrastructure faster, certainly it will go across to the continental ports."

Freight trains at 25mph

Rail Freight Group's Maggie Simpson said the Government now understood the environmental benefits of rail freight.

She told a rail improvement conference in London in June that Network Rail's work at Ipswich to give freight trains a non-conflicting route from Felixstowe docks to the Midlands and North was welcome.

But she said the average speed of a freight train was still only 25 miles per hour and much more needed to be done.

◆◆◆◆ Test trains from Istanbul are running in a new rail tunnel under the Bosphorus to Asia railwatch October 2013 13

Severnside

By Nigel Bray

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■ ■ Bristol battles

Reopening the Portishead line has been postponed until 2018-19. The reason given for the delay is that the GRIP processes (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) have to be repeated now that the project is part of the Metro West scheme. The vegetation clearance between Pill and Portishead which we reported in *Railwatch 136* was to examine the state of the mothballed track, rather than a serious preparation for reopening. Questioned about the shorter timescale of Ebbw Vale reopening, Councillor Brian Allinson pointed out that English local authorities had to wait for Department for Transport approval before funding could be released, even though the Government claims to be in favour of fast-tracking infrastructure projects.

The scheme to restore four tracks on Filton Bank, essential for the expansion of Bristol's rail network, appears to be within an ace of final approval. In May a ceremony hosted by Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways at Stapleton Road station heard local politicians make speeches in favour of four-tracking. A petition calling on Rail Minister Simon Burns to approve funding was signed by Bristol Mayor George Ferguson and Charlotte Leslie MP. In early June Railfuture received a letter from the Department for Transport's David Sexton indicating that Network Rail anticipated four-tracking, including requirements for Great Western electrification, would be completed by December 2017. Mr Sexton added that if the Office of Rail Regulation considered there were insufficient funds to undertake the work, it was likely match funding between the DfT and other sources would be found.

■ ■ Harbour Railway protected – but only so far

The future of the Bristol Harbour Railway, as reported in *Railwatch 133*, now appears a little more hopeful following a cabinet meeting of the city council in June to review the Bus Rapid Transit BRT2 route. Railfuture is among many organisations continuing to oppose BRT2 in concept and we asked at the very least for the Harbour Railway in its entirety to be safeguarded with a view to future use for light rail or in an enlarged Metro network. The cabinet decided to protect the railway as far as the present limit of track at Ashton Swing Bridge and there will now be another consultation on the route for BRT2.

■ ■ Wellington station reopening hopes boosted

Hopes for reopening Wellington station have risen with a report in the *Somerset County Gazette* in June that Taunton Deane borough, Mid Devon district and Devon county councils were discussing ways to reopen it and also Cullompton. The *Gazette* published a letter from Railfuture, pointing out that the growth in passenger numbers at Somerset's existing stations (up from 1.4 million recorded journeys in 1997-98 to 2.8 million in 2011-12) showed that a new station at Wellington would be popular, especially in view of the Firepool commercial development close to Taunton station and the opportunities the station would provide for Wellington residents to travel to Exeter.

■ ■ First step funding for Cheltenham upgrade and reopening

The newly created Gloucestershire local transport board has been allocated £9.8 million to meet part of the cost of local transport projects and met in July to confirm its prioritised list for submission to the DfT. Railfuture Severnside briefed the promoters of the two rail schemes, rebuilding Cheltenham station (ranked fourth priority by the board) and reopening Stonehouse Bristol Road station (ranked 14th). Although the money awarded by the DfT is lower than the board wanted, the meeting was told even the lower placed projects could still be delivered if funding were secured from sources such as the Single Local Growth Fund.



Wessex

By David Brace
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■ Campaign targets identified

Railfuture members will be stepping up campaigning following the publication of official plans for our area. It is disappointing to see that there are no proposals for dealing with growth and overcrowding. This became clear when the Office of Rail Regulation's draft determination for control period 5 (2014-19) was announced in June. Network Rail will have to find 20% savings from efficiencies, mainly renewals. It is now up to Network Rail to accept or reject the ORR's determination. Assuming it is accepted, there will be several months more delay before Network Rail publishes its implementation plan in March next year when more details should emerge. We now know though that most renewal and enhancement funds on the Wessex route out of London Waterloo will be targeted on London's inner suburban area. We may have to wait 20 or more years for Crossrail 2 to get the capacity we need now! Many of the enhancements planned still require more detailed estimates and so we will not know until 2015 which schemes will be progressed.

The proposed electric spine from Reading via Basingstoke to Southampton is, in the short term, likely only to cause disruption to passengers and, given the opposition already shown by the South Western Railway Alliance, may not proceed at least in the form proposed by the Government. But once the Basingstoke-Reading section is wired and the new western connection from the Great Western main line into Heathrow is built (a Government High Level Output Specification requirement), we will be calling for two trains an hour from Basingstoke to Heathrow via Reading to give Wessex passengers and airport workers a direct service. This, with a link into Crossrail 1, would be of considerable benefit to our region.

■ Most overcrowded trains on the national network

Some of the most overcrowded trains in Britain run though the Wessex area. The fourth, eighth and twelfth most overcrowded trains were on the Portsmouth direct line via Haslemere. All have load factors of 149% and above, according to the Department for Transport's latest figures for autumn 2012. What is of greatest concern is that there is no indication from the DfT, South West Trains or Network Rail that the next control period will even look at capacity relief on the main line services out of Waterloo. All efforts and funding are being directed to the inner suburban and urban lines with longer trains, more trains and longer platforms.

Network Rail's 2011 London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy predicted that main line services into Waterloo from our area will be the most overcrowded route into London by 2031 unless action is taken. Pricing customers off the services was the only likely solution!

■ Wilton station possible reopening

Our branch first began promoting the idea of reopening Wilton station, just west of Salisbury, 20 years ago and the idea has remained on our wish list. Wilton used to have two stations, on the route to Bristol and on the route to Exeter. Privatisation put paid to reopening hopes. Stonehenge, only 10 miles away from Wilton, attracts almost entirely road-based visitors, adding to congestion on the infamous A303 road. Road access in and out of Salisbury is difficult and so is not an attractive railhead. There seems considerable local support for a "Wilton for Stonehenge" station. The project is included in the Wiltshire local transport board's list of schemes for consideration. This list is dominated by road projects but includes some station reopenings and improvements to stations in the county. With bad traffic congestion in Salisbury and planned housing developments, Wilton station's time may have come again.



In brief: Reports of rail campaigners

East West options

Railfuture East Anglia issued an illustrated 10-page document in September, setting out possible routes for the Bedford-Cambridge section of the East West Rail link.

The western section of EWR is going ahead from Oxford, Aylesbury and High Wycombe to Bedford but the aim of the document is to ensure that possible rail routes to Cambridge are safeguarded so that EWR can be extended to Cambridge and East Anglia. The document attracted good coverage on the BBC and in the *Cambridge News*.

A separate non-Railfuture study has looked at an alternative route to Cambridge via Luton.

Railfuture lottery winners

Multiple entries in the Railfuture monthly lottery certainly seem to pay off! Graham Smith has 20 entries each month, and has

picked up four prizes already this year! You too could be a winner with the Railfuture Lottery, helping us raise essential campaigning funds at the same time. Entries cost just £1 each per month and there is a monthly prize fund of over £110, split into six prizes. More details can be found at www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery/ where you can enter using PayPal, or send a cheque for a multiple of £12, payable to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND.

Recent winners February: John Bugler, Fred Golding, Terence Sheppard, Walter Richardson, Peter Spencer, Anne Ambler. March: Robert Burrows, Graham Smith (two prizes), Joan Powell, Keith Porter, David Brady. April: Roger Goring, Susan Demont, P and J Gardiner, Peter Pass, Graham Smith, Michael Groll. May: A.T. Hill, Chris Fribbins, Garth

Smith, Alexander Macfie, Elizabeth James, David Barr. June: Fiona Mackey, Anthony Ford, Graham Smith, John Henderson, Ian and Jane Appleyard, Robert Mains. Jul: Roger Webster, Matthew Blackburn, Mark Edgell, John Johnson, Richard Shaw, David Brady. Aug: William Emmerson, Roger Goring, Roger White, John Barfield, Harry Maughan, P Sherwood.

British Rail success story

A new book *British Rail – The Nation's Railway* says BR was a success.

Described as a celebration of British Rail, the book by Tanya Jackson costs £19 and was published by the History Press in September (ISBN 978-0-7524-9267-4).

Chris Precey

Railfuture's Chris Precey died in September. Chris was both returning officer and national draw organiser. His funeral

took place at the Heart of England Crematorium in Nuneaton. Chris received an award in 2011 in recognition of his 40 years as a volunteer with the British Horse Society. Chris requested that donations in his memory should be made to Railfuture and sent to funeral directors G Seller & Co Ltd, 75 Upper Bond Street, Hinckley, Leicestershire LE10 1RH.

Martin Parker

Railfuture campaigner Martin Parker died, aged 74, in September in Bedford Hospital. Martin who was a former councillor at Bedford Borough, was also a Leighton Buzzard Railway member and chairman of the Bedfordshire Rural Transport advisory committee. The funeral took place in Bedford and donations to Diabetes UK can be sent to undertakers, G & H Seamer, 47 High Street, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1AG.

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright
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■ Evergreen progress

Railfuture campaigners welcomed news that work is under way between Bicester and Oxford to make way for the Chiltern Railways' proposed new service from London Marylebone to Oxford. The project is known as Evergreen 3 and at this stage includes vegetation clearance and protective measures for wild life. Work is also under way at Bicester to create the Gavray Drive chord which will take trains from the Chiltern line westwards into Oxford. The chord work is expected to take six months and the aim is to maintain access to the Ministry of Defence and Banbury Road stone siding. Services from the new Water Eaton Parkway station, which perhaps could be called Oxford Parkway, are expected to start in 2015 and services to Oxford itself in the following year. The Oxford Bicester Rail Action Group has raised concerns about the impact of works on the existing service. Chiltern Railways is seeking revisions to its track access agreement to cover the new half-hourly service which will be operated by Class168 units and cover Oxford-Bicester-London Marylebone in 66 minutes. Some services will call at Islip and all will stop at High Wycombe.

■ East West Rail comes closer as funds are agreed

Planning work has started on East West Rail, east of Bicester, with a consultant being appointed to review options east of Bedford. In June, the Government published *Investing in Britain's Future* which reaffirmed its commitment to rail enhancements including East West Rail as part of the overall investment in national infrastructure. The Department for Transport is requiring £50 million in local contributions to East West Rail and councils have already agreed in principle to provide funds. Buckinghamshire is acting as lead authority to co-ordinate the funding and to provide £10.16 million. It says "bearing in mind the wider economic benefits to GDP and jobs, the local contribution represents an excellent return". Aylesbury Vale Council, Central Bedfordshire, Bedford, Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire have agreed contributions or are in the process of approving them. Bedford Council has reiterated its support for a link east of Bedford. Railfuture welcomes these commitments which will secure a major rail scheme and economic benefits to the region.

Winslow Chamber of Commerce ran a meeting on East West Rail in June. Railfuture attended and learnt of widespread support for the scheme. Some local people are keen that affordable homes are provided near the station while others are worried that developers will want to build too many new houses.

An Oxford University geography undergraduate at Mansfield College is planning a dissertation on East West Rail and is seeking memories of former users and workers of the line. Railfuture, OBRAC and OBRAG have offered to help.

■ Witney rail reopening idea wins public backing

An impressive 94% of respondents to a *Witney Gazette* poll believe reopening a railway to give Witney a service to Oxford is a good idea. Now Witney Town Council has expressed an interest in exploring options, including light rail and tram trains, and support has come from Witney chamber of commerce and Freeland parish council. Railfuture has helped to set up the Witney Oxford Transport Group which plans to keep up the pressure for a sensible public transport link. The MP for Witney is Prime Minister David Cameron.

■ Potential for rail reopenings in High Wycombe area

The Wycombe Society continues to highlight the potential of the Bourne End line. The private Windsor Link scheme, for the town's two stations, has the support of MPs in the area. If successful, a second phase could see the reopening of the five-mile line to Bourne End with the prospect of through services using the proposed East West Rail link.



News from 'Nowhere'

An inquiry into how well people are served by transport links to isolated communities is being held by the House of Commons select committee on transport this autumn.

This will touch on walking, cycling, community transport and, of course, the car. But is it relevant to railways?

Yes, it is! Research by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships for their submission to the committee showed that there were 170 stations serving what could reasonably be described as isolated communities and that some of these were very isolated indeed.

How about Berney Arms in Norfolk, accessible only by train, on foot or by boat, with no road in sight, let alone a bus?

Or Corrou on the West Highland Line, 10 miles from the nearest public road, but with a through sleeping car train to London?

Llangynllo in Powys is fairly isolated too, although it does have a community taxi service twice a day, bookable in advance, to the nearby market town of Knighton, although not on Sundays. Llangynllo however does have four trains a day through to Shrewsbury or Swansea, and two on Sundays on the Heart of Wales line.

Many stations serving isolated communities are supported by station adoption groups

and community rail partnerships which have transformed the appearance and increased the number of passengers at remote stations through local promotion and marketing and by providing a little tender loving care for the station itself.

Cutbacks in local authority expenditure however, have put some of this at risk.

Partnership officers are having to spend more time securing next year's funding and less on promoting and developing their railway.

In some cases, such as Norfolk, the partnership has become a company limited by guarantee to secure a broader base of support. Some councils have cut all funding! Community rail partnerships are brilliant at doing a lot with very modest funding, but they cannot achieve anything with no money at all.

It is time to press your local councillor for support, and your MP to make sure that the money is not then taken away by Government.

Ribble Valley rambling

Railfuture members will be delighted to know that a Sunday service will run throughout this winter on the Ribble Valley line from Blackpool and Preston to Clitheroe and Hellifield with connections to the Settle and Carlisle line. This will serve a number of small, isolated communities and provide excellent



NOT A ROAD IN SIGHT: Berney Arms station with a Norwich to Great Yarmouth train about to cross Halvergate Marsh

bases for walking, so get your boots out and help to swell the numbers on these trains.

The scheme is the initiative of Community Rail Lancashire, and is supported by the designated community rail development fund, paid for by Network Rail and the Department for Transport. The fund is managed by ACoRP.

Sparks effect: The only community rail line served by

TransPennine Express, the Lakes Line from Oxenholme to Windermere, is now likely to be electrified by 2016.

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin has asked Network Rail to prepare the business case, and announced the upgrade during a visit to the line in August. This is a welcome extension of the policy of electrification to local railways. Now, for the next one...

Picture: CHRIS AUSTIN



East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
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and Roger Bacon
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■ ■ Transforming Nottingham

After 37 days of well-publicised closure, Nottingham's new railway opened on 26 August 2013. Six miles of track in the area have been relaid and new signalling installed. Three junctions have been remodelled with two level crossings replaced with footbridges, as well as a new platform at Nottingham station.

Reliability and performance should improve as a result of signal control switching to the state-of-the-art East Midlands control centre at Derby. This has also led to the closure of three old signal boxes and the 1960s Trent power signal box. After local campaigning by Railfuture and others, further enhancements were included to deal with increased rail traffic beyond the initial plan for like-for-like replacement of the 1969 layout.

Throughout the closure, East Midlands Trains organised a comprehensive and well-resourced bus replacement programme in the area with on-the-ground "meeters and greeters" at many stations. There appeared to be no shortage of buses, and even in the middle of the day, 14 buses were waiting for passengers at East Midlands Parkway station, so much so that it resembled an evacuation in full flow.

Unfortunately, EMT's skills in laying on replacement buses were needed again a few days after Nottingham station reopened, when a freight train derailed at Carlton on the line to Newark. The derailment resulted in extensive damage to the track, closing the line for several days.

■ ■ East Midlands Trains want 125mph electric units

East Midlands Trains managing director David Horne has told *RAIL* magazine that favoured rolling stock for the Midland main line would be 125mph multiple units after its electrification. The search for new trains would have to start in the next 18 months or so. Meanwhile Kettering MP Philip Hollobone was told by Transport Minister Simon Burns that "in due course it will be for train operators to determine the types of rolling stock they wish to use to take advantage of the newly electrified route".

Another recent action by the Department for Transport has been to order new Hitachi IEP trains to replace class 91 electric trains on the East Coast main line. This no doubt will lead to pressure to cascade the class 91s on to the Midland main line, something that Railfuture East Midlands opposes as they were designed for the long and straight runs of East Coast and not the frequent stops on the bendy Midland route. We have been told class 91s would be slower than the diesel Meridian trains already in service. Using 91s would be at odds with the stated aim of minimising existing lengthy journey times from Nottingham, Derby and Sheffield to London.

■ ■ Bridge work is step towards higher speed on main line
Two bridges over the Midland main line between Leicester and Market Harborough, at Kibworth and Newton Harcourt, are being rebuilt as part of the project to improve line speeds and prepare for electrification. Bridge heights will be raised to make room for the overhead power cables. At Kibworth, the rebuilding will result in a road closure for 15 weeks leading up to Christmas, although a temporary footbridge will be provided to maintain access for pedestrians and cyclists.

■ ■ Work starts on new £20m Northampton station
A turf-cutting ceremony in August marked the official start of construction work for Northampton's new £20 million station. Later the same month, the old and inadequate footbridge was removed. The new station, expected to open in autumn 2014, is seen as a key element in a regeneration plan, which includes a 1,270-space multi-storey car park and a 28,000 sq metre commercial development in later phases.



Action on airport links

By Trevor Garrod

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Several airports responded to Railfuture international group's 2012 report on *Airport Links* based on the experiences of our members and others trying to reach British airports by public transport.

Southampton Airport's general manager told us of plans to launch an integrated rail-air ticket to London.

He also said the next South West rail franchisee should be required to provide extra space for luggage. He is also calling for capacity improvements so that Portsmouth receives a more attractive rail service to the airport.

Managers of London's Gatwick, Stansted and Luton Airports all sent us copies of reports which they had produced setting out desired improvements to rail

and surface access. Edinburgh Airport told us the tram link due to become operational next year will connect the airport to three rail stations, while a fourth, Edinburgh Gateway, is expected to open in 2016.

Newcastle Airport told us that it was continually lobbying local public transport providers to improve early morning and late night services.

Stansted Airport conducts a regular staff travel survey, which showed an increase in staff public transport usage. Railfuture has often stressed that trains to airports do not just benefit passengers but cater for large numbers of people who work there.

The *Airport Links* report can be viewed on the Railfuture website and obtained in paper version from me at 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

Britain must respond

By Trevor Garrod

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Railfuture welcomed the European Union funding that helped improve rail infrastructure, such as on the important Felixstowe-Nuneaton freight corridor.

In our response to the *Balance of Competencies*, a Department for Transport consultation, we also welcomed the positive action made on passenger rights in all transport modes, not just rail.

Rail campaigners also called for more realistic steps from Britain to implement the goals of the EU's 2009 urban transport action plan and the 2011 EU transport white paper. For passengers travelling from Britain to mainland Europe, information on fares and ticketing remains a challenge, but EU initiatives on passenger information systems and a Europe-wide journey-planner

were works in progress which we hope the British Government will actively support. We questioned the need for a standard European signalling system to be installed on lines that are never likely to carry international trains.

Railfuture members take part every year in the annual conference of the European Passengers Federation. Next year it will be held on 14-15 March in Milan. The Italian city and its region have achieved many positive things in rail transport. The conference will be an opportunity to hear more about these as well as to discuss transport issues at European level.

If any Railfuture member still has a ferry questionnaire to submit, could they please return it to Peter Walker, 26 Devon Crescent, Billingham, Teesside TS23 4BP.



West Midlands

By Peter Hughes

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■ ■ Closed rail line could be reopened for airport services
Rail access to Birmingham airport is good, with 23% of airline passengers arriving by rail, but more than three quarters of those have to change at Birmingham New Street. To improve direct rail access from the north-east, a report has been produced by former rail manager Alan Marshall and surveyor Michael Byng to make a case for the reinstatement of the line from Whitacre Junction to Hampton-in-Arden, closed to passenger traffic in 1917 and to freight in 1930.

Since then the double-track route through rural Warwickshire has been largely forgotten by policy-makers and planners. The proposal, estimated at £240 million, came as a surprise to four Railfuture West Midlands committee members attending a meeting at Birmingham Airport. At the southern end, a new west-facing chord would be required to take the line to Birmingham International station where there is room for new bay platforms. Alternatively if the adjacent West Midland interchange arrives with HS2, the Whitacre link would terminate there.

The euphoria for the rail scheme at the airport authority which wants to expand is not matched by all, but Railfuture supports it. Unless a major contribution comes from the airport, the project looks a long way off, as it may be a low priority for those in control of the purse strings.

■ ■ New Street station is better but still room to improve
Since the opening of parts of the new New Street station, there have been issues about signage (one is pictured, right) and information screens but the new facilities are a vast improvement. Recruitment of extra staff as guides was beneficial, but the ticket office seems to have a constant queue as our numerous and regular checks show never more the seven out of 12 cash desks in service. It is wonderful to have down escalators to the platforms and completion of the project in 2015 cannot come soon enough when patronage is bound to increase still further. By that time, we hope more services will take passengers direct to their final destination, such as the airport, instead of forcing them to change at New Street and adding to the congestion.

■ ■ London Midland cancellations let down passengers

Our local train operator continues to cancel trains because of crew shortages, which do not escape the attention of Centro or the Department for Transport. We are now told that 61 drivers are under training. Reduced ticket-office hours actually produced increased opening at some stations, now that LM honours its franchise commitment in that area. Promised new ticket machines are however slow to appear. Staff shortages also affect the ticket barriers at New Street which are staffed by LM. On occasions one out of four barriers leading off the central concourse is left without staff.

■ ■ Centro looks forward to a year of new stations
Railfuture's quarterly meetings with Centro continue. Recent topics of discussion included the new or extended car parks at six stations, the new service to Stratford via Solihull planned for December, delivery of new trams for service next year before the extension of Midland Metro in 2015 when New Street remodelling will also be complete. It will be a momentous year as we expect to have new stations at Kenilworth, Bromsgrove and Alvechurch.



GREENDAWN GRAPHICS

£250m added value

We all know that railways are special. It is why we became interested in them in the first place.

Apart from being a civilised and environmentally friendly mode of transport, they bring an added quality of life to every community they serve.

We know this instinctively, but it is sometimes hard to articulate it, particularly on heritage railways, which are sometimes dismissed as people "playing trains".

Well, now the case has been made most effectively for us by the MPs and Peers of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail whose report on the Value of Heritage Railways was published at the end of July 2013.

The key figure in their report is £250 million, the estimated value of heritage railways collectively to the British economy.

Not only do heritage lines bring tourists into an area to spend their money, but they employ local staff, buy in local goods and services and their volunteer staff pay to stay or eat locally as well.

The other striking figures that come from the report are those related to the size of the movement: 108 heritage railways and 60 steam centres attract over 10 million visitors a year.

The aggregate route mileage of the lines is 536, roughly

the same as the distance from London King's Cross to Aviemore! 411 stations compare with only 270 on London Underground.

This is a significant group of businesses by any measure.

Another striking fact is that last year, 520 charter steam trains ran on Network Rail, that is 10 a week or almost two a day. Who would have thought that would be possible back in 1968 when British Rail ran its last (standard gauge) steam train? There are a number of recommendations in the report relating to planning issues, skills training and marketing, aimed at the Government and the railways themselves, but the recommendation likely to be of most interest to *Railwatch* readers is that public transport services could be introduced on some lines.

There may be scope to provide general public transport or a more specific "public tourist transport", designed to get people out of their cars to visit sensitive areas such as national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty or small coastal towns which are overwhelmed by cars in the summer. Local



Picture: OLIVER GOODMAN



PULLING POWER: Main line steam trains attract crowds and help support local economies too. This Vintage Trains charter in 2012 is heading through Dawlish to Plymouth

authorities and the railways should work together to identify any opportunities and, like local lines in the national network, a subsidy should be available if required to support such a service. Justification would be on the normal criteria for new rail projects.

There is a useful list of railways in the report showing the constituencies within which they are located, as well as a table of main line

links to heritage lines. The report can be downloaded from the HRA website at www.heritagerrailways.com where you can click on "media and research" or, if you send an SAE to 20A Park Road, Bromley BR1 3HP, I can forward a printed copy.

In the interests of transparency, I should also mention that I am secretary of the All Party Group as well as being an active Railfuture member.

Scotland

By Jane Ann Liston
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Bus link a short-term solution

East Lothian's principal town of Haddington should be reconnected to the railway but, as a short-term solution, Rail Action Group East of Scotland (RAGES) is calling for a good bus link to Wallyford station. Haddington Community Development Trust is joining with East Lothian Council and Prentice Coaches to seek funding. Integrated ticketing and good publicity, with the bus times included in the rail timetable, are seen as essential to ensure success of the 30-minute connecting service. Dedicated Edinburgh-Dunbar trains were reinstated in 2010, and a 22.10 service ex Edinburgh was added this summer. RAGES has monitored steady growth as a result, from around two dozen to well over 100 during the Edinburgh Festival. Now RAGES has called on ScotRail to extend the service to Berwick-upon-Tweed where the station is currently getting a facelift.

Airport about-turn could kickstart Glasgow Crossrail

A Glasgow airport rail link is back on the agenda after AECOM, commissioned by the airport, recommended a rail link to the city centre. The original GARL was cancelled, as was a rail link to Edinburgh airport, by the post-2007 Scottish Government. A revised scheme, dubbed NewGarl, has won backing and could be combined with Crossrail.

The Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Project is throwing up severe implementation problems, following a double dose of cuts to the original project, including abandonment of the Garngad chord and "postponement" of electrification of the lines to Stirling, Alloa and Dunblane from both Edinburgh and Glasgow. Railfuture Scotland is mounting a campaign to get the Almond chord built before closing the Winchburgh tunnel for wiring – otherwise the busiest rail route in Scotland will be severed for three months with no reasonable alternative.

Network Rail denied a press report in August that Queen Street High Level station might have to close for up to a year to allow for platform extensions to be built. It said the closure was likely to be days, rather than months.

The £400 million electrification scheme from Edinburgh Waverley to Glasgow Queen Street, via Croy, Falkirk High, Polmont and Linlithgow, was put out to tender by Network Rail in July. Contracts are expected to be awarded early next year with construction beginning in the summer, with a projected finish date in 2016

Local services needed on West Coast main line

The Beattock Station Action Group has now been going for over a year, with the aim to get Beattock station reopened to serve the towns of Beattock and Moffat. In response to a questionnaire 800 people said they wanted the station to reopen. The station would be on the West Coast main line and the group is campaigning for a local service, starting from Carlisle, to Glasgow and Edinburgh. Interest in the proposals has already been expressed by one possible bidder for the ScotRail franchise. Campaigners were planning to meet the bidder in early September.

Crucial steps towards getting St Andrews back on line

Following the presentation by Starlink (St Andrews Rail Link) to members of Fife Council in spring, a report by the Transportation Service was scheduled to come before the North East Fife Area Committee on 25 September. Less than a week later on 1 October, TayPlan, the strategic planning authority for Tayside and North East Fife, will consider the 'Big Ideas' submitted during its recent non-statutory consultation, of which the St Andrews Railway was one. It is hoped this will result in the commissioning of the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) procedures and the inclusion of the railway into the strategic plan for the area.



Opportunity missed

Andrew Oldfield is correct in stating that Railfuture missed "a golden opportunity to highlight the mistakes of the past". (*Railwatch* 136).

The 50th anniversary of the 1963 Beeching Report should have been used by our organisation to do so. Over 40 lines were saved from the "axe" in the 1960s and I produced a list of them. It is important to tell younger generations – and remind older generations – of the successes of pro-rail campaigners of all parties at that time. I also drafted a leaflet to that effect in August 2012.

However, the Railfuture board did next to nothing, no leaflet was printed and I was ordered by the chairman not to contact Branches, who could have used my material.

Of course, we have in recent years used our book *Britain's Growing Railway* to show people what has been achieved since the 1960s in terms of reopening or building lines and stations. We should also have published the second volume (and we had the money to do it) to coincide with the Beeching anniversary.

There are therefore some questions to answer.

Meanwhile the East Suffolk Travellers' Association, one of the larger local users' associations, obtained excellent

media coverage about the Beeching anniversary in the spring.

It has also now raised almost enough money to pay for a station seat in memory of a member who helped save the Ipswich-Lowestoft line after Beeching wanted to close it, again a reminder to us all that it is sometimes necessary and worthwhile to resist cuts and closures.

Finally, Andrew mentions the Rail Development Weeks, which I and another member co-ordinated in the 1980s. Yes, this would be an excellent project for Railfuture to undertake, perhaps in 2014, when, incidentally, we shall also presumably want to mark the 20th anniversary of Eurostar trains through the Channel Tunnel. Who would like to organise it?

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Jim is the star

Railfuture campaigner Jim Wade was featured on the front and an inside page in *Corby Extra Local* as well as in a feature in the *Northants Telegraph*.

I contacted the media about Jim – who is a former Corbyrail chairman – when he took on a new role as a volunteer adopter of Corby rail station. I hoped we would get some good coverage and we did! Jim was also interviewed on Corby Radio and on BBC Radio Northampton.

Jim says that while he "rarely finds anything out of place", the station is "soulless", so

Your letters extra

he plans to brighten it up with planters and floral displays. Meanwhile, Corby Borough Council is planning a new access to the station from Oakley Road, which will benefit residents in that area of town and students attending Tresham College.

We are looking forward to the Corby line being electrified. Rail workers have already been here to do gauging work and I hear Corby to Bedford will be going "live" first, with Midland main line electric services.

We are also hoping this will improve our northbound connections which currently could not be worse, with an hour's wait at Kettering.

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Another way for HS2

Roderick McDougall calls for a high speed rail network connecting eight core cities in England plus Cardiff, Edinburgh and Glasgow (*Railwatch* 136).

His article covers mainly a proposal by the Glasgow Edinburgh Collaboration Initiative (GECI) for a high speed line from both cities to London. A branch from each city would converge at a place south west of Edinburgh into a single southbound line.

I am disappointed that the Scottish Government appears to favour this idea rather than a south-easterly route out of Edinburgh and a direct line from Edinburgh to Glasgow. Given that the two branches are supposed to form a high speed Edinburgh to Glasgow route, I would have thought that the benefits of higher speed would be negated by the GECI's long detour to the south.

I would favour a south-easterly route out of Edinburgh because it would shorten the route to Newcastle.

According to Mr McDougall's article, more passengers travel from Scotland to north east England than to any other part of England except London. Neither the existing East Coast route nor the route proposed by the GECI is anywhere near direct.

Two further points in favour of the south easterly route are that Lauderdale and Redesdale could be used to minimise earthworks and this route would pass close to Newcastle International Airport.

The south-easterly route would also be more beneficial to those whose journey begins or ends north of Edinburgh. The direct line to Newcastle would on its own shorten the journey time to London but it does not prevent the building of an even more direct route to the west of Newcastle at a later date.

It is not unreasonable for the journey time from London to Glasgow to be longer than from London to Edinburgh, given the longer straight line distance, but Glasgow would gain some benefit from shorter journey times to Edinburgh and a frequent high speed link between the cities.

Another way of improving journey times from Glasgow to London, and connections with the rest of England, is by making better use of existing lines. By linking the Forster Square and Interchange stations in Bradford and electrifying from Carlisle to Skipton via Settle, IC225s or Pendolinos could operate from Glasgow to London via Bradford and either the Midland main line or the south end of the East Coast main line.

It would also provide a shorter route from Glasgow to Manchester (Victoria), Leeds and Hull. Mr McDougall acknowledges in his article that existing lines and Pendolinos would have to be used for journeys from Scotland to Manchester.

I suspect that a powerful lobby in Glasgow has unduly influenced the Scottish Government. The south end of the West Coast main line has speed and capacity restrictions but this is definitely also true of the East Coast main line, north of Newcastle.

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Crossrail downside

I wonder what benefit the rest of the country will get from the £15 billion that Crossrail will cost (*Railwatch* 136). And I do not agree with the implication that we should welcome the fact "it has already boosted property values along the route." Houses are too expensive in the South East as they are, and it is wrong to encourage people who use them as investment rather than as places to live.

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East Anglia

By Paul Hollinghurst
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Wisbech reopening petition

Railfuture East Anglia chairman Peter Wakefield presented our 2,907 signature Wisbech reopening petition to Cambridgeshire County Council in July. The petition calls for reopening of the seven-mile Wisbech-March line to allow for a Wisbech to Cambridge service. Council leader Martin Curtis has since praised us for promoting better transport links to Wisbech and explained that the council has commissioned a feasibility study of different options. More info: wisbechrail.org.uk/

Positive step towards opening station at Science Park

Railfuture welcomed the planning application for a station at Cambridge Science Park and hopes the project can be pushed forward without delay. The new station will help people living near lines from Liverpool Street, King's Cross, Peterborough, King's Lynn and Norwich to commute directly to work at the Cambridge science and business parks. The new station will reduce the number of cars on the M11, A10, A14 and other congested roads in the area.

Railfuture aims in county council's transport plan

Several of Railfuture's aspirations are included in Cambridgeshire County Council's proposed new Local Transport Plan which will decide what infrastructure needs to be developed to support growth in the county up to 2050. It covers East West Rail between Bedford and Cambridge, the Wisbech-March railway, new stations at Alconbury, Soham and Cambridge Science Park, with Addenbrookes, Cherry Hinton and Fulbourn also being considered. The LTP envisages general increases in frequency with most lines ending up with a half hourly service, or better, all day.

Cash needed to secure land for Norfolk Orbital Railway

A key parcel of land has been secured at High Kelling Norfolk, which could allow the North Norfolk Railway to extend from the outskirts into the centre of Holt. The land was obtained by the Norfolk Orbital Railway which is promoting a scheme for through services, using the national rail network, and the Mid-Norfolk and North Norfolk railways. A significant sum has been raised towards the purchase, but a further £85,000 is needed to reach the target. If you would like to donate, go to www.norfolk-orbital-railway.co.uk

Hitchin flyover should cut train delays

Passenger services are now operating over the £47 million Hitchin flyover which allows trains from Hitchin to Cambridge to cross the East Coast main line unimpeded. Timekeeping should improve as a result. By December, nearly 600 trains a week will use the flyover.

Airport aims to boost train services to Stansted

More than 50% of air passengers travel to Stansted airport by public transport, the highest percentage of any major British airport. The airport authorities are now seeking earlier morning trains (starting at 04.00) and have a long-term aspiration to reduce the London journey time from 47 to 30 minutes, while doubling the frequency of trains to Cambridge so they run every half hour. They have asked Railfuture to support these aspirations.

Haverhill struggles to get back on the railway map Haverhill lost its railway services at the same time as "new town" status was conferred on it in 1967. Since then its population has grown to 26,000 and now local MP Matthew Hancock is backing the campaign to get the 15 miles of line rebuilt to Shelford Junction on the West Anglia main line into Cambridge. Railfuture hopes Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Essex County Council can all work together on this project.



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GALASHIELS: Experts have helped protect a small group of bats in 165-year-old Bowshank tunnel which will be brought back into use when the Borders Railway reopens. They have installed one-way bat flaps and pipes to cavities in the tunnel so the bats can escape before reopening work starts in the tunnel. No breeding or hibernation roosts were discovered but some Soprano pipistrelle and Myotis bats were found temporarily residing in the refuges used in the past by railway workers when trains passed. Alternative roost sites have been provided nearby and they are already being used by a small number of bats.

Light at the end of Borders tunnel

The Borders Railway project is on budget and almost to programme. It should be open in the summer of 2015.

The line, being rebuilt by Network Rail, will include 30 miles of new and reopened passenger railway with seven new stations between Tweedbank and Edinburgh Waverley.

Trains will run every half hour at peak times and the overall journey time of less than an hour should make it more attractive than driving a car.

In addition, steam trains will be able to run excursions once the Borders Railway is reopened.

This will be possible because campaigners and a member of the Scottish Parliament won a battle to get the platform tracks at the Tweedbank terminus lengthened.

They had originally been designed for six-car diesel units.

First Minister Alex Salmond said: "There can be few railway journeys anywhere to match the stunning scenery that will line

the route of the new Borders Rail when it opens in 2015, more than 40 years after the last rail service to the region closed.

"I hope that the glorious thought of some historic and symbolic trains winding their way down the new track will be enough to tempt more people to spend some time in the Borders."

Even so, the long single-track sections and lack of dynamic passing loops will make it difficult to run excursion trains except on Sundays.

Transport Scotland policy has been to reduce double track to a minimum but the new build structures will not preclude track doubling and electrification in future.

The 98-mile Waverley line to Carlisle was closed in 1969 by the then Labour British government despite a courageous attempt by rail campaigners to keep it open.

It has been described as Beeching's worst cut.

One of the problems encountered in the reopening work was shal-

low mine workings which had to be stabilised but also the discovery of some unrecorded deep vertical mineshafts which held up earthworks operations.

Much of the present works involve extensive road building. The railway cannot be built until existing roads are closed and that cannot be done until alternative roads are built, which in turn have needed stabilisation of shallow mine workings beneath them.

By October, the Edinburgh city bypass, an extremely busy dual carriageway road, should have been diverted to allow construction of the railway underpass beneath the existing bypass.

When the bypass was built in 1985 there was a major campaign to install a bridge and keep the railway trackbed intact, but the Scottish Office rejected it as it did not want the railway to reopen. That decision has added unnecessary cost to the railway reopening.

Campaigners are grateful the Scottish Government is commit-

ted to this £294 million project. The other rail projects the current Scottish Nationalist administration inherited have either been cancelled or badly cut back with the funding being transferred to major road building.

The Campaign for Borders Rail is already arguing the case for the Borders Railway to be extended another 18 miles to Hawick and eventually to Carlisle.

The campaign gave a briefing to Scottish ministers pointing out that although there have been a number of breaches of the old Waverley route by new roads between Tweedbank and St Boswells, there are "several viable options for new alignments".

More information: www.border-railway.co.uk

ISSN 0267-5943



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