

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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July 2014

HS2 in Birmingham

Futuristic design for Curzon Street station



Picture: BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

HS2 in London: Return of the Euston arch?

Picture: Sydney & London Properties/Atkins



The city of Birmingham is keen that its High Speed Two station at Curzon Street is not just a concrete box.

It wants the station, which will include the remains of the original Robert Stephenson station entrance, to become the centre of one of the biggest urban regeneration schemes in Britain, leading to the transformation of 350 acres of the city centre.

So the city has drawn up its own plan, as shown on page one, which will include extending the Midland Metro trams network through the HS2 station to be built in 2026.

Waheed Nazir, director for planning and regeneration at Birmingham City Council, said: "The potential of HS2 can be realised only if we build a world-class station that seamlessly connects people to the rest of the city centre."

At the London end, the arrival of high speed trains could be the catalyst to bring back the Euston Arch, demolished in the 1960s, as part of a widescale redevelopment of the station. Various schemes for Euston have been proposed, including different ways of connecting

HS1 and HS2, but a Government re-think is now under way, following the publication of the *HS2 Plus* report in March by Sir David Higgins.

The report also recommends an HS2 station for Crewe six years earlier than originally planned, as well as stressing the importance of Old Oak Common where HS2 will connect with Crossrail in west London.

In April, Greengauge 21 published its *HS1 - HS2 Connection: A Way Forward* which also recommends using Old Oak Common and Crossrail to develop more Javelin regional services as well as international services running through to Heathrow, via a new link running east-west avoiding Euston and St Pancras.

This is yet another variation of the Euston Cross scheme, suggested by Lord Bradshaw and Lord Berkeley, and backed by Railfuture which could link Euston with King's Cross/St Pancras and provide for both through regional and international services. Later in April, after a lengthy debate, MPs gave the High Speed Rail (London to West Midlands) Bill a second reading by 452 votes to 41. Now

a committee of six MPs will consider the Bill in detail, as well as an expected 2,000 petitions, before the Bill comes back to the House of Commons.

Construction is expected to start in 2017 and more than two million trees are expected to be planted to screen the line.

Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond has pledged to start a feasibility study which could lead to an early start on building a high speed link to England if Scotland votes for independence in September.

In Kent, seven years after HS1 to St Pancras opened, Chancellor George Osborne has announced plans for an urban development corporation to create a garden city at Ebbsfleet, thanks to the "fantastic infrastructure with a high speed rail line".

In Japan, where high-speed trains have been operating since the 1960s, the latest order has gone to Hitachi and Kawasaki which will build four H5 trains to operate on the latest stretch of high speed line from Shin-Aomori and Hakodate when it opens in 2016.

HS2 meanwhile may be running by 2030.

Sheffield AGM 2014

The Lord Mayor of Sheffield Councillor Vickie Priestley welcomed Railfuture to the city for its AGM on 11 May.

The results were announced of the board election which involved both online and postal voting for the first time this year. Elected were: Ian Brown 288 votes, Jerry Alderson 221, Wendy Thorne 208. Not elected were: Trevor Garrod 189, Andrew MacFarlane 182 and Ian McDonald 113.

Four new vice-presidents were agreed: Martin Vickers, Conservative MP for Cleethorpes, Tom Harris, Labour MP for Glasgow South, Stewart Stevenson SNP MSP for Banffshire and Buchan Coast, and Simon Thomas, Plaid Cymru Assembly Member for Mid and West Wales.

The speakers were Chris Bell of the Don Valley Railway and Peter Marshall of the Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield Rail Users.

See back page for a report of Mary Creagh's speech on Labour's approach to rail.



Welcome:
Lord Mayor
Vickie Priestley



Host:
Railfuture's
Chris Hyomes



**Don Valley
Railway's
Chris Bell:
Campaigning
for trains
to Stocksbridge**



**Penistone
Line's
Peter Marshall:
Visionary plan
needed for
secondary lines**

Pictures: PAUL COLBECK

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes
chris.hyomes@railfuture.org.uk

Opportunities for the future

Professor Paul Salveson was guest speaker at Railfuture Yorkshire's AGM in Leeds in March at which the opportunities and challenges of the post-2016 Northern Rail franchise were discussed. He urged members to get in with some well-argued, innovative ideas to form part of the franchise prospectus, and to push hard for new trains. He also warned that HS2 was weighted towards localised property development at London's Old Oak Common, Birmingham's Curzon Street, Manchester Ancoats and Leeds Holbeck. He called for a route which goes through the city centres of Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds and does not end up at buffer stops. Mike Crowhurst pointed out that the actual route alignment is secondary but how HS2 connects with the rest of the network is critically important.

Leeds curve could play an important role for HS2

Transport chiefs have been told to investigate reopening a rail line that would give Bradford a direct link to the East Coast main line. High Speed Two chairman Sir David Higgins has suggested a fresh look at the Wortley Curve, which could improve services to Bradford and Wakefield. The curve was axed in 1985 even though it allowed trains from London to bypass Leeds. Sir David's *HS2 Plus* report calls for Trans-Pennine links, as well as the North-South route to the capital, to be dramatically improved. It says questions such as "whether to reopen the Wortley Curve to improve services to Bradford and Wakefield are not within HS2's remit, but are hugely relevant to final decisions on the route". The group Bradford Breakthrough which supports HS2 suggested in October bringing back the curve which is largely intact, although overgrown. David Ward, Liberal Democrat MP for Bradford East, said: "HS2 will bring benefits to Bradford, not only in more train journeys but also more investment in the local area. But I would like to see the whole project expedited, to ensure that the benefits and investment opportunities come to our local area sooner rather than decades into the future."

Leeds-Bradford airport rail link desirable says Minister

Aviation Minister Robert Goodwill flew into Leeds-Bradford airport in May and said a rail link to the airport would be desirable. He told the *Yorkshire Evening Post* he understood why airport chief executive John Parkin "is so keen to get a rail connection here, so that people can get on the train, change at Leeds or Harrogate and come into Leeds-Bradford by train."

Bradford Low Moor station may cost £7.5 million

Plans for a railway station in the south of Bradford have "taken a major step forward" as Network Rail has submitted plans for the multi-million pound project, the *Telegraph* & *Argus* reported in March. The station, with a 123-space car park, will be built on land off New Works Road and is expected to open at the end of next year.

Austerity is key in extension to Northern franchise

Aire Valley Rail Users Group is worried that Northern Rail will be under pressure to save money following the extension of its franchise until February 2016. The group reports that there are well-grounded rumours that car park charges will be introduced at stations in West Yorkshire. Northern has seen a staggering 47% growth in passenger numbers since the start of its franchise in 2004 but admits that "this new chapter for Northern" had been shaped by the current period of economic austerity and the Government's ambition to reduce the overall cost of rail for taxpayers.

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Membership £18 per year. Family: £18 plus £2 for each extra person. Pensioners, students and unemployed: £14. User groups, community and parish councils: Please apply for rates.

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Email: membership@railfuture.org.uk

Renewals and other membership queries: Railfuture Renewals, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND. Email: renewals@railfuture.org.uk

Elections Board elections held annually. Nomination forms can be obtained from www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=Elections

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

Railfuture draw winners

The winners of the Chris Precey Memorial Draw were:

£500 K H W Noble, Sowerby Bridge HX6 3EA

£200 Jerome Tucker, Leamington Spa CV31 1JL

£100 Kevin Wells, Harlow CM17 0BU

£50 Karen Packham, SADRUG

£20 J Ratcliffe, Bury BL8 4JN; James Pattison, Montrose DD10 0TR; P A Williams, Caerphilly CF83 1PP; N Spalding, Brigg DN20 9FN.

£10 David Middleton, Poole BH12 1PY; F Toon, Bath BA2 6PZ; Mr and Mrs J Noble, Fareham PO16 8DN; D Seymour, London SE4 1AG; R Hoare, Hythe CT21

4QY; Roger White, Harrow HA2 6JN; Adrian Woollen, Whetstone N20 9DH; P Hurford, Hailsham BN27 4HG.

The Railfuture 2013 draw was scheduled to be drawn in December last year but was postponed when organiser Chris Precey died in September. Tickets were despatched with the December 2013 *Railwatch* and the draw, in memory of Chris, was made at the AGM of his East Midlands Railfuture branch at Loughborough on 29 March 2014.

Tickets for the 2014 Railfuture Draw are enclosed with this *Railwatch*. The draw will be made at the Railfuture conference in London on 1 November 2014.

Passengers unite in Milan

Several Railfuture members attended the European Passengers Federation conference in Milan in March. EPF now has 33 member organisations representing public transport users from 19 different European countries and Railfuture can be proud it has played such a prominent role in supporting EPF since it was set up 12 years ago. Next year's conference will be on 20-21 March in Budapest. A report of the Milan conference is available at www.epf.eu/wp/conference-reports/ or by post from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

Anglo-French Thameslink franchise

The new Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise was awarded in May to a joint venture of Go-Ahead and the French national railway. The new company Govia Thameslink takes over from First in September and the franchise runs for seven years. New Siemens trains are being built and new tunnels constructed at King's Cross to allow Thameslink trains to run through to Peterborough and Cambridge. The current core route runs from Bedford to Brighton.

Photo competition

By Chris Page

chris.page@railfuture.org.uk

Railfuture is planning to publish a set of postcards and Christmas cards which can be offered for sale, sent to new members and used to encourage potential members to join.

We need some stunning photographs illustrating the future of rail, and we are turning to you, our members, to shoot and enter them for this competition!

The competition will be judged by a panel of Railfuture vice-presidents, and the results announced at our autumn conference in London.

The first prize will be a framed fine art print of the Shock and Ore picture (see back page) personally signed by artist Mike Turner. Runners-up will have the satisfaction of knowing that their photograph will be helping to recruit new members to Railfuture.

Your entries should depict an aspect of passenger or freight rail development or rail reopening that is needed, is in progress or has recently occurred.

Each photograph must be accompanied by a caption, not

exceeding 40 words, explaining the development, its location, why it is needed, and the relevance to Railfuture.

For an example see the caption of the Shock and Ore picture on the back page. The technical quality and composition of the photograph must be suitable for use as a postcard; digital photographs must have a resolution of at least 2048x1536.

Entries should be submitted by email to mmc@railfuture.org.uk. We will also accept photographs taken on film, provided that in the event of winning you are prepared to make the negative available for scanning. Entries in the form of photographic prints should be sent to Railfuture, Clara Vale, Thibet Road, Sandhurst, Berkshire GU47 9AR.

The closing date for the competition is 30 September 2014. In addition to the caption, your entry should be accompanied by your name, address and email address or telephone number. By entering the competition you warrant that you own the copyright of the image and that you grant Railfuture free licence to use the image for any purpose in perpetuity.

Rail User Express is published monthly and can be downloaded from the Railfuture website.

RAIL USER EXPRESS

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

Lincolnshire

By Don Peacock
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■■ TransPennine talks

Railfuture Lincolnshire members met senior staff from First TransPennine Express at Cleethorpes in January. Poor train reliability figures immediately after the Hatfield landslip were discussed. We pointed out that a cancelled train means a two-hour wait for passengers travelling east of Scunthorpe. We were disappointed that from May the first service in each direction was split at Sheffield for the benefit of local commuters but to the detriment of long-distance passengers who have to change trains. This will be particularly inconvenient for people travelling to Manchester Airport. We suggested timetable changes which TPE agreed were practicable and something to aspire to. But TPE warned there would be no improvements during this franchise which runs until 2016. We were advised to get involved in the franchise renewal consultation process. We asked TPE to look at the problem of trains at Cleethorpes arriving and departing a long way from platform ends, leaving passengers with an unwelcome walk. TPE is also considering extending waiting room opening hours. The TPE team invited us to visit TPE headquarters in Manchester later in the year to discuss any ongoing issues.

■■ Farewell to signal boxes when York takes control

The North Lincolnshire resignalling project was explained at a Railfuture meeting in Cleethorpes in February attended by Network Rail project manager Ben Lynch and his assistant Alan Pattison, along with local MP Martin Vickers. The project is effectively the completion of an earlier one abandoned because of funding cuts years ago and includes Scunthorpe-Cleethorpes, the Barton branch and Immingham-Gainsborough. The main construction period will be from summer 2014 to January 2016. When completed, signalling control will pass to the new York regional operating centre and signalboxes will be closed. The enhancements include additional signal sections between Barnetby and Scunthorpe to enable line speeds to be raised to 75mph. Level crossings will be renewed with most becoming manually controlled barriers with obstacle detectors, while three will be remotely monitored automatic half barriers. A five-day blockade will be needed for Immingham-Scunthorpe and a 12-day blockade for Brocklesby Junction-Cleethorpes, at the end of 2015. There appears to be no intention to enhance the signalling on the Grimsby-Barnetby section of route, so the maximum line speed here will remain at 60 mph, as opposed to the average for cars and vans on the parallel A180 road of 75-80 mph.

■■ Local rail users join Railfuture at AGM

Railfuture Lincolnshire's AGM in March was held in Market Rasen to help raise the profile of the local rail user group. Members of the public joined us to hear presentations from Johnny Wiseman, East Midland Trains route manager for the Sheffield area, Peter Meyers of Northern Rail, Lynda Bowen from Market Rasen Rail User Group and David Harby, chairman Railfuture Lincolnshire.

■■ Get-together to mark 30 years of rail campaigning

Railfuture Lincolnshire branch was formed at a meeting in the Cardinal's Hat in Lincoln in 1984 and we would like to contact all who attended that meeting. The committee is planning a lunchtime social event to mark the occasion. If you were one of the 28 there or know anyone who was, please contact Mike Savage: michael.savage73@ntlworld.com.

■■ Historic maritime names given to local trains

Both East Midland Trains and Northern Rail have named class 153 units with local connections. At Lincoln, EMT named a unit *X24 Expeditious* to commemorate the midget submarines designed and built by Marshall's and Sons of Gainsborough. Northern Rail named a unit at Barton on Humber *John (Longitude) Harrison* to commemorate the inventor of the first accurate marine chronometer.



Diesel plan needed as well as electrification

By Ian Brown
ian.brown@railfuture.org.uk

I received considerable feedback from Railfuture members about my *Railwatch* article entitled "Urgent: 120 diesel trains needed now" where I advocated the procurement of a steady flow of diesel multiple units, at the rate of 120 vehicles per year for the next eight years.

The growth in rail journeys has continued at twice the rate of Britain's gross domestic product. The Office of Rail Regulation figures published on 24 April 2014 show a further increase in passenger journeys of 3.3% to a record 1.27 billion a year.

The best performing areas were London (not including the South-East) with 7.7% more, followed by Anglia with 4.0%, Scotland 2.9% and the West Midlands 1.9%.

Interestingly, those areas were all ahead of the overall South East figure of 1.8%.

Wales recorded growth of 1% while the only region to see a decline in ridership was the North-West with a drop of 1.1%.

Also of note is that rail is increasingly being used for trips to the seaside and popular leisure destinations, a preserve for years associated with the car.

The bubble is likely to burst if the rail industry cannot accommodate this growth.

The challenge is to devise where these trains can come from, now that diesel multiple train building in Britain has lapsed.

Electric units are still being built in the UK, with Hitachi setting up in the North East to build the new inter-city express trains, and Bombardier busy in Derby building trains for London.

The recent decision to re-gear the Pacers to do an additional million miles each, a fleet mileage equivalent of a return trip to the moon, does not increase capacity, it only defers replacing them.

The issue needed a crisis to bring it to a head in the pre-election political jungle.

A series of local difficulties exist, with overcrowding at Bolton deterring potential passengers and, with no trains to operate the new Blackburn to Manchester service, reduced opportunities to attract new passengers.

But suddenly and unexpectedly a row blew up about capacity with the introduction of new electric trains for TransPennine's Manchester to Scotland service.

The transfer away of the fleet of class 170 Turbostars to operate Chiltern's new Oxford-London service provoked an outcry in the North of England. If not ade-



IAN BROWN

quately addressed, this shortage potentially hurts passengers and potential passengers over a wide area, including Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds and Hull, where the prospect of service withdrawal of packed regional services is real.

These are services which provide an acknowledged direct benefit to the regional economy.

Do not blame Chiltern for taking these trains and do not blame TransPennine either. Its franchise was up so it was hardly in a position to lease trains it was not contracted to run.

This shortage of trains resulted from the West Coast franchise fiasco, which led to medium-term franchising being put on hold pending the strengthening of the Government's franchising arm as recommended by Richard Brown.

In the meantime there was a series of short franchise extensions where operators have no security nor time to plan for train procurement. A return to medium-term franchising should help.

The class 170 row comes at a bad time politically, so the pressure will be on to find a quick solution or a temporary fix, hopefully before this article is published.

One of the other causes of the shortage is that the cascade of electric trains from the South to the North West is so slow as to be almost glacial.

On the horizon I have great hopes for Rail North. The transport authorities in the North of England tried hard to persuade the Government to devolve franchising from London to a consortium of passenger transport executives.

The Government preferred to let franchises centrally, but it did agree that the management of the franchise be devolved. Rail North has emerged as a consortium of these bodies and includes surrounding local authorities.

Rail North can expand or contract rail services. Transport for London started on this basis and moved on to direct franchising, so it is quite possible that Rail North might emerge from an



SUNDERLAND: A class 142 Pacer crossing the River Wear. In 2014, the Pacers are being given a new lease of life. Voith final drives and cardan shafts are being fitted to the Pacers operated by Northern Rail and Arriva Trains Wales to "improve reliability and reduce maintenance costs", Angel Trains has announced

ugly duckling compromise into overseeing real development of local and regional services across the North West and North East.

This will take time to establish and the shortage of diesel multiple trains will tighten its grip in the short term.

So where can new trains come from? If there is funding demand and sufficient orders, suppliers will undoubtedly respond.

On the question of funding, Thameslink needed a huge fleet of electric trains of a new design. Two years of delay resulted because suppliers were expected to provide their own financing.

Funding is therefore critical. Crossrail learned from these difficulties, albeit part way through the procurement, and went for direct funding. The result was the effective and speedy procurement of a large fleet of 65 nine-car trains.

Transport Scotland is funding a large order for ScotRail on the same basis. The order for new electric trains for the Edinburgh to Glasgow and Central belt electrification schemes is procured through the franchise process but funded by Transport Scotland. The model clearly works.

It is doubtful if it would work, however, for small orders of diesel multiple trains for short or medium term franchise holders, particularly if planners are left with incomplete information on the cascade of diesel trains following electrification.

Nobody seemed to be providing an overall plan to equip the North of England with trains. A strategic plan for diesel multiple trains is required and only the Government is really in a position to underwrite a strategic purchase.

To make such an approach viable in terms of risk to Government, a specific resource requirement to meet demand needs to be built into franchise specifications. All this is perfectly possible within the current rail industry structure, but it is unlikely to emerge just from existing market forces.

Network Rail has its friends and detractors, although the detractors are probably fewer after its initiative to cap bonuses at 20%.

On balance, Network Rail is well ahead of the rest of the industry both in terms of strategic planning to enhance the capacity of the network and delivery of electrification.

In the next five-year control period from 2014 to 2019, there is a clear and funded delivery plan for what the Government wants, and the plan is policed by the Office of Rail Regulation. While the plan includes the infrastructure for electrification, it does not provide the trains, either electric or diesel.

A similar strategic funding plan is required as a backdrop to the franchising process to ensure that what the Government buys through the franchise process can be delivered in a way designed to meet national, regional and local objectives in the three key areas of social inclusion, economic regeneration and indeed transport requirements.

Let us hope that the backlash from the current structural fault in the industry results in orders for new diesel trains for a growing network.

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

North West

By Arthur Thomson
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■■ Skipton-Colne funding breakthrough boosts confidence

Lancashire county councillor Azhar Ali brought good news to the AGM of the Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership on 10 March. He confirmed that the council would be providing £10,000 towards the study needed to progress the line's reopening under Network Rail GRIP 3 procedure, the governance for railway investment projects. SELRAP believes it has secured a further £6,000 from Pendle Borough Council and will seek more from other partners. SELRAP chairman Derek Jennings thanked the ARUP team in Leeds for help and advice in producing earlier GRIP reports and thanked SELRAP members for their huge support for the appeal so far. Another appeal will be made to progress the engineering study to clear the way for the line to be reopened as part of a major cross-Pennine route linking Liverpool to Hull.

Liaison officer Andy Shackleton spoke about the 1B study undertaken by ARUP and completed this February, from which the benefits to cost ratio was found to be very promising. If the number of passengers is greater than calculated, for every £1 spent there could be benefits worth up to £6.50. That would be on the basis of the initial number of passengers increasing by 30% over the first 10 years of operation. Councillor Ali told the AGM that he supported the funding package for a GRIP feasibility study and insisted that the Skipton-Colne line, while benefiting the local economy, was also of regional and national importance. He reminded the audience too that the trackbed is protected. He acknowledged the importance of gaining the support of Craven Council and North Yorkshire County Council. Derek Jennings read out his chairman's report which included the following statement "I think we can say that today we are nearer to achieving our goal than we have ever been."

■■ Poetry platform at Glossop recalls First World War

The Friends of Glossop Station launched a new Poetry Platform display in April. This now features 10 poems chosen by Penny Greenwood to commemorate the centenary of the 1914-18 Great War. Penny has deliberately chosen poems that reflect young lives cut short in service of their country. They include one or two well known ones, including *The Send Off* by Wilfred Owen, *Dead Man's Dump* by Isaac Rosenberg and lesser known ones such as *North Sea* by Jefferly Day – a most poignant poem. The group asked Neill Manchee and Jean Wharmby from Glossop British Legion to unveil the display and Neill gave a short address. The display has been created and designed including motifs and illustrations by Paul Marsh from the Friends. On Thursday 17 April two new sash windows were installed replacing those that had been boarded up since the 1960s. Two years of patient negotiations were rewarded with a grant from the Railway Heritage Trust and Northern. The Friends are delighted that for the first time in over 60 years, grade 2 listed Glossop station is looking good.

■■ City centre ticket campaign launched by STORM

The holder of a rail ticket issued at a Greater Manchester rail station to one of the stations in Manchester City Centre can travel free on Metrolink within the central zone. Now that Metrolink has opened the extension from Rochdale rail station to Rochdale town centre, STORM (Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester rail lines group) is campaigning for a similar concession to be granted to holders of rail tickets to Rochdale bought at any Greater Manchester station, so they can travel into the town centre on the Metro.



SELRAP newsletter

Wales

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

■ ■ Storm-ravaged Cambrian Coast line partially reopens

The Barmouth-Harlech line that was blocked by storms in January reopened on 1 May after £10 million worth of repairs, which involved 40 tonnes of debris being removed and 6,000 pieces of "rock armour" restored to protect the line from the sea. The section from Harlech to Pwllheli remains closed for a £20 million project to replace the 154-year-old Pont Briwet road and rail crossing over the Afon Dwyryd.

■ ■ Row over who pays for Valleys electrification

Prime Minister David Cameron's statement that payment for the Valleys electrification, including the main line from Cardiff to Bridgend, is the responsibility of Welsh Government has provoked anger in Wales, especially because responsibility for major infrastructure projects lies with the UK Government and have not been devolved. It was originally expected that the Welsh Government would receive an automatic payment based on the "Barnet formula" being applied to Crossrail. This would have been enough to pay for electrification, even without taking into account extra expenditure on Crossrail rolling stock and infrastructure work for High Speed Two. Welsh First Minister Carwyn Jones has insisted that the Welsh Government should not be expected to pay for electrification of the North Wales coast line because it should be viewed as part of the HS2 project.

■ ■ Progress on rail modernisation in North Wales

A project manager (connectivity), based at Denbighshire County Council, but working across the six North Wales counties, has been appointed to develop the business case for rail modernisation across North Wales. Network Rail also appointed consultants in December to establish a business case. Phase 1 established that there is a strategic case for rail investment in North Wales, and suggested service enhancements that would generate an economic benefit. The economic growth opportunities of improved connectivity to which rail will contribute now have to be quantified.

■ ■ New services for the Cambrian and Heart of Wales line

Welsh transport minister Edwina Hart announced in April that the Welsh Government will fund additional services on the Cambrian and Heart of Wales rail lines. The Heart of Wales Line Forum was also given funding to explore the possibility of further improvements. The new services will create 20 new train crew and depot jobs. The changes, which will be on an initial three-year trial basis, will be implemented in May next year. The announcement was welcomed by all rail campaigners including Railfuture.

■ ■ Railfuture backs rail to boost tourism by 10%

The Welsh Government's enterprise and business committee inquiry into tourism will judge progress so far on the stated aim to increase tourism earnings by 10 per cent by 2020. Railfuture has explained how an integrated transport system in and to Wales will boost tourism.

■ ■ Fears for strategic vision as transport consortia close

The Welsh transport consortia held their final meetings in March and closed at the end of the financial year. Railfuture Wales is concerned that in future there will not be overall coverage of transport interests in Wales, with emphasis being concentrated on city regions and the North Wales coast.

■ ■ Welsh reopening campaigns win public support

An action group supported by Monmouthshire County Council has been formed to campaign for a station at Magor and Undy. It hopes to raise £40,000 for a feasibility study. Councillor Frances Taylor, who is a member of Magor with Undy Action Group on Rail, said 12,000 cars currently pass through Magor every day. A campaign was also started this year for the reopening of Aberystwyth-Carmarthen. After several packed public meetings, Traws Link Cymru published its manifesto at www.trawslinkcymru.org.uk.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk

Railfuture awards for rail user groups

If you know of a rail user group that is doing good work, you could enter it for the 2014 Railfuture Awards for Rail User Groups. Closing date is Tuesday 30 September 2014.

Awards will be given for best newsletter, best website, most effective campaign in 2014, most effective 2014 new group, most outstanding individual RUG campaigner in 2014. There will also be a judges' special award.

The newsletter and website awards are not open to last year's winners. Details

of last year's awards are available at www.railfuture.org.uk/article1392-RUG-Award-winners-2013

The RUG Awards will be presented at Railfuture's autumn conference in London on Saturday 1 November.

Entries can be sent to Roger Blake, 70 Dynevor Road, Stoke Newington, London N16 0DX or by email to roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

The judging panel will be made up of Railfuture vice-presidents.

Let's bring back the lines we need today

A competition for Railfuture members: Tell us about your top reopening scheme

By Chris Austin

chris.austin@railfuture.org.uk

I am working on a new book with my co-author, Richard Faulkner, about the lines that closed in the 1960s and 70s which today would have formed a valuable part of the national rail network.

Lines such as East-West from Oxford to Cambridge, the Waverley route, and of course the Great Central, which could have been our High Speed Two.

The book will analyse many of the successful reopening schemes for which Railfuture members have campaigned over the years and will have a unique chapter on the railway "whistleblowers" (not the guards!) who helped to prevent more closures than actually occurred and directly saved lines such as the Cambrian Coast.

We are inviting Railfuture members to suggest their own ideas for inclusion in the book.

We are not looking for branch lines, but for main routes, and

particularly for lines that would have provided a missing link in today's network, such as Matlock-Derby, that could both provide more capacity and an alternative route in support of the "seven day" railway.

We would need details of the line, its present condition, and why you think it would form a valuable part of today's network.

For the best entry, we will include your ideas and send you a free copy of the book when it is published by Ian Allan Publishing at the end of 2015.

Disconnected! will be a sequel to our first book, *Holding the Line*, a political and social history of railway closures in Britain which has proved very popular and is now out of print.

Thanks to all Railfuture members who have bought and read this first book.

Like it, the second book will be available to buy (at a discounted price) through the Railfuture website.

Ideas can be emailed to me at austinc2@googlemail.com, or sent by post to me at 20A Park Road, Bromley BR1 3HP.

Trekker competition winner

The winner of the Trekker competition in Railwatch 139 was Mr R A Hunter of Carrickfergus. He has received two Trekker tickets for Iarnrod Eireann.



Picture: DAVID ALLARD

The Railfuture party alongside a Basel tram

Eurostar celebration

By John Stanford

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A Railfuture party celebrated 20 years of Eurostar services in April, by travelling to Paris and on to Mulhouse for a week-long trip. In Paris we used an RER train that passes under the city, in the way that London's Crossrail will in 2018.

To get to Mulhouse in Alsace we travelled by TGV through Dijon and then along the newest part of France's high speed network, which is used for services to Switzerland, and from southern France up the Rhone Valley to Germany.

Long-distance trains previously used the slow, if scenic, line along the Doubs valley.

We stayed at the traditional Hotel Bale on the edge of Mulhouse town centre for the week.

On Tuesday we visited the old town centre and the tram network after which we caught a train up the Thur valley, along France's oldest railway lines, into the Vosges mountains.

A visit to Wesseling had been arranged by Michel Foudrat of FNAUT, Railfuture's associated organisation in France.

The role of the railway in the town's history was explained, and the hopes that it will also be important in its regeneration.

On Wednesday a trip using Basel's local railways and tram routes had been organised by Juerg Tschopp of VCS, a Swiss organisation representing the interests of passengers. The day was made easier by buying a cross-border ticket covering both the train from Mulhouse and the Basel suburban networks. These included a narrow gauge line, connected to the main line, to Waldenburg, and in the afternoon a tram route out into the countryside west of the city that started life as a steam railway in

the early 20th century. A similar ticket was used for Friday's trip to the historic German city of Freiburg-in-Breisgau that used a line across the Rhine, recently reopened for regular passenger traffic, with a connection to the German rail network at Mullheim.

The group was met by Josef Schneider of Pro Bahn, one of Railfuture's sister organisations in Germany. We were taken by tram and bus to the Vauban Quarter, an area developed as a new suburb designed to be as sustainable as possible.

After a hearty lunch, members took the train to Schluchsee, a mountain resort over 900 metres above sea level for coffee and real Black Forest gâteau. The day was only marred on the return journey by a late-running German train that missed the planned connection to get back to Mulhouse and we realised that there remained, in more than one country, a need to improve passenger information.

Thursday was the May Day public holiday, on which the railways ran a limited service.

The opportunity was taken to visit Strasbourg, Colmar, Belfort, Delle and Zurich as well as the French national railway museum at Mulhouse.

On Sunday, the sun shone for our return journey which again went smoothly as far as St Pancras, although some members expected a longer than usual return home as the West Coast main line through Watford was closed for the weekend.

The group was grateful for the help of Michel, Juerg and Josef and to Trevor Garrod who coordinated everything, for making the stay in this region such an interesting and enjoyable one.

We did not blame them for the wet weather!

◆◆◆◆ China is supplying 10 new inter-city trains for the Baghdad-Basra line in Iraq

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright
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■ ■ East West Rail

East West Rail was the subject at the AGMs of both Oxford Bicester Rail Action Committee and the Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users Association in March. Phase 1 (Oxford to Bicester) is on schedule for completion by August 2015. Buses, with provision to carry cycles (which may be another first for Chiltern Railways) replaced trains from mid February. The route had 241,000 journeys in 2012/13. Work on the new chord at Bicester and new bridges is under way and environmental measures completed with newts, badgers and bats safeguarded. Work at Oxford Parkway station has started. Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin visited to review progress on the key regional link. Railfuture is disappointed that the completion of Phase 2 (from Bicester to Bletchley) may be delayed to 2019 and work on Bedford-Bletchley may be minimal initially. The crossing at Woburn Sands is a concern while Bow Brickhill crossing could be replaced by a bridge. Survey work and a review of crossings is under way. Transport & Works Act powers are to be sought for the project. Doubling of the Aylesbury to Princes Risborough line is likely. Meanwhile, Bletchley to Bedford usership has bucked national trends, remaining static for the past four years at 250,000 per year.

■ ■ Economic benefits of rail development recognised

The economic strategy of the local enterprise partnership recognises the key role for East West Rail and Winslow station. A loop on the Aylesbury-Risborough line is sought to increase capacity. The potential of the Wycombe-Bourne End line is recognised. Improved links to Taplow and Iwer are proposed due to demand changes from Crossrail.

■ ■ Oxford looks forward to a beefed-up rail service

Oxford City Council has briefed members on rail developments in the city and the progress on planning conditions which was the subject of the branch meeting in May. The county council is suggesting that the Cowley branch is reopened to passengers to generate jobs. At Bicester, the council seeks to improve links to the stations, to facilitate EWR work and a freight interchange at Graven Hill. The council will seek extra calls at Culham, a station at Grove, the revitalisation of Banbury station and review options for Witney and Carterton. The local transport plan is about to be updated and Railfuture will make a submission.

■ ■ Crossrail extension may save work at Maidenhead

The Government's announcement of Crossrail being extended to Twyford and Reading is welcomed and may reduce the infrastructure needs at Maidenhead. Two trains per hour will serve Reading from late 2019.

■ ■ Rail link to Heathrow will bring in millions of pounds

Rail access to Heathrow from the south-west will bring economic benefits of £160 million, while service improvements to the Reading-Waterloo line will produce £183 million of benefits.

■ ■ Five-year plan is a welcome boost for Thames Valley

Network Rail's five-year plan, including significant work in the branch area, is welcomed. This includes electrification, including Thames Valley branches, Oxford station redevelopment, Marylebone-Oxford, EW Rail, Reading works and the Heathrow link. Platform extensions on the Chiltern line at Bicester North, Haddenham, Princes Risborough, Wycombe and Beaconsfield are also planned.

■ ■ Experts get together to deliver a better Bletchley

West Bletchley Council is seeking to set up a joint working group with Milton Keynes Council, Network Rail and Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Council on the future development of Bletchley station. Milton Keynes Council has undertaken a study on the options.





Brunei in Ireland

The Dawlish storm damage reminds me that there were similar problems a century ago on another coastal railway built by Brunel, the Dublin-Rosslare line on the east coast of Ireland. Coastal erosion at Bray Head resulted in the line having to be moved a short distance and necessitating a new tunnel of about 1,000 yards in addition to the several short tunnels already at Bray Head.

An inland diversion, again involving a new and long tunnel, might be the solution at Dawlish. Such a route would ensure continuing rail connection with Newton Abbot and Torbay, whereas a reopening of the "withered arm" would involve a tortuous approach to Plymouth and might cause Newton Abbot and Torbay to lose out.

Turning to Ian Brown's article, particularly his reference to the "Nodding Donkeys" which I am reluctant to dignify with the name of Pacers, Ian sees no early end to these wretched contraptions, and the only end I envisage is scrapping enforced either by the European Commission or by the Health and Safety Executive. Ian mentions the coming local government elections, while *Railwatch* notes the coming European Parliament elections. As Ian recommends, get lobbying. Candidates should be urged to pressure the Health and Safety Executive and the European Parliament to condemn the Pacers which are Leyland National bus bodies stuck on to a freightliner chassis. The buses are long gone and it is time for the Pacers to follow them to extinction.

R A Hunter, Barn Road, Carrickfergus BT38 7EU

Bi-modes needed

How apposite that Ian Brown's item on a requirement for new diesel trains appeared on the same page in *Railwatch* 139 on which we are told that Barrow

fears losing its through trains to Manchester because of electrification.

There is an answer, but it involves consigning hydraulic and mechanical diesel units to history and following the French in producing bi-mode units with electric traction motors. Their



World's first hybrid
December 2007 Railwatch report on the "world's first hybrid"

ubiquitous AGC range seems suitable for branch line and up to three hour inter-urban journeys.

As electrification extends, more services will be running for at least part of their route under the wires, so why not provide flexible units which offer the opportunity of through services off the electrified network, such as to Barrow and on the Calder Valley, plus perhaps to Oxford and Worcester, once Reading is wired? A Leicester-London semi-fast service via Melton Mowbray and Corby could be provided when the Midland main line is wired. Doubtless readers can think of many other examples.

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Rail life returns

There were three items in the local action columns of *Railwatch* 139 that are worth bringing together: the reintroduction of a potentially useful level of services at

Dunston and Blaydon in the North East, at Melksham in Wiltshire and at Manea in Cambridgeshire.

All these stations had been semi-dormant with only a handful of stopping trains. These may have been useful to those with regular travel needs that happened to coincide with the timetable, but for anyone else the only option was road transport.

For a generation or so, the option of travelling by train will have drifted from the mindset of the majority in those areas.

OK, Manea passengers will have to pay attention to the timetables if they go shopping in Peterborough from Manea, as will students from Melksham going to college in Swindon, but at least now the possibility exists.

These are not the first dormant stations to be revived and must not be the last, but their geographical spread in a single timetable change is worth noting and is a welcome addition to the benefits of enhancements on the rail network.

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UKIP's rail line

I am a Labour party member, but you were wrong to omit UKIP from the four "main parties" giving their views on railways in *Railwatch* 139 prior to the May European election.

UKIP is currently outpolling both the Greens and the Liberal Democrats, and indeed gained more MEPs than either at the last European election. What is more, I would love to know what a Euro-sceptic view on rail provision actually means.

Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby DN31 2JP
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Trevor Garrod of Railfuture's international group reports: "We wrote to UKIP in the summer but had no reply."

A fine mistake

Network Rail is facing the biggest fine in its history after

RAIL ACTION

The next issue of the *Rail Action* e-zine will be in August. *Rail Action* can be downloaded from the Railfuture website but it will be emailed to you direct unless you have requested it not to be.

failing to ensure that enough trains run on time. It is expected to be fined about £70 million.

The fine will leave Network Rail with less money to improve things, so the service is likely to get even worse. How does that benefit rail users? Or am I missing something here?

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HS2 alternative

I share Ted Bottle's ambivalence towards the High Speed Two project (*Railwatch* 139), and support the reopening of lines. Where is the environmental impact assessment of HS2? Why has not Railfuture published it? Are we just a mouthpiece for the privatised rail industry?

Worldwide, high speed rail has a place in inter-continental transport. In Britain, surely it is more important to secure routes such as those affected by the Dawlish disaster.

Martin Smith's letter asks why Milton Keynes should be denied a high speed route to the north. We have one, the West Coast main line.

What would be the cost of restoring the Great Central line to Rugby, and then quadrupling the Rugby-Birmingham line?

Much less than HS2, I would venture, even with rebuilding Brackley viaduct.

I suppose Chiltern would not like disruption of their Ruislip layout, but Old Oak-Ashendon Junction-Rugby looks good to me.

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Blinkered mentality

I must correct a mistake initially made in the *Yorkshire Post* and now perpetuated in *Railwatch* 139 regarding reinstatement of the Northallerton-Ripon-Harrogate-Wetherby-Cross Gates railway line.

Readers will have been puzzled by claims of only £45 million to reinstate Northallerton-Ripon-Harrogate, which is 24 miles in length. The correct estimate of £48 million is for nine miles between Ripon and Harrogate priced to be planned and constructed concurrently with resignalling/track redoubling between Harrogate and York and electrification of the whole Harrogate Loop, after 2018-19. Electrification would be relatively

cheap as there is only one overbridge involved and this was raised shortly before closure in 1967.

My group is currently trying to raise £18,000 for a business case. Leeds Metro and North Yorkshire County Council have been asked to contribute equally, but one authority has refused claiming lack of funds (what, only £9,000 in a multimillion pound budget!) because of austerity cuts, while the other claims reinstatement will never happen, so why waste £9,000. Blinkered mentality.

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First class victory

According to *Railway Magazine*, First Great Western is to convert one first class coach in its InterCity 125 trains to standard class to increase capacity. However, the coach will be fitted with eight table bays in response to complaints from passengers who dislike airline style seating.

This also provides a better balance between passenger space and luggage space. The coaches thus treated will seat 80 passengers. Let us just hope they manage to align the seats properly to the windows.

This vindicates the arguments put forward by the Railfuture rolling stock design panel.

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Who pulls strings?

Between 1948 and 1996, there was one train operating company, British Rail, and one shareholder – the British public.

In 1984, Philip Bagwell wrote: "Properly utilised railways are more energy-efficient, safer, faster and more economical of land use than road transport. Why spend billions of pounds on roads when the existing rail network is under-utilised? Why is it that only in Britain the Government seems bent on wrecking the railway system ..?"

[from Mr Bagwell's book *The End of the Line?*]

Was it the road lobby, the oil lobby, or the motor industry that has been pulling the strings?

In the 1970s, an energetic public transport executive director and his team in Tyne and Wear



Picture: PHILIP BISATT

Franchise failure on this overcrowded line

Passengers wait to squeeze on to a "full and standing" 0846 Saturday service from Weymouth to Gloucester at Castle Cary. The corresponding service in the opposite direction on this day was just as full.

The Weymouth-Castle Cary line has seen no improvement in service levels for 10 years, despite a substantial growth in passenger numbers. The weekday frequency falls to as low as three-hourly at some times of the day. The root of the problem lies in the Department for Transport's service level agreement specified when the seven-year Great Western franchise was awarded in

2006 to First. The franchise was extended last year by Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin to September 2015.

The original deal, not varied when the extension was announced, allows services on the line to run as infrequently as one train every three hours, while requiring only eight trains each way daily – a pretty minimal level of service.

Railfuture Wessex and Severnside will be lobbying for an improvement, aiming to secure an hourly service when a new franchise is awarded next year. The existing infrastructure may also need to be upgraded.

created a light rapid transport system integrated with the publicly owned bus service. The fares were cheap and there were ramps or lifts at stations. By 1983 Tyne and Wear Metro carried 1 million passengers a week.

The Government hit back by preventing buses and trams working together to create an efficient public transport network. Despite this, the survival of branch lines shows that members of the public have done some string-pulling themselves.

Now we must ensure that Bristol's Henbury freight line is transformed into a passenger line before housing estates are built in the area.

As for train operators, why are some train franchises run by state-owned German, French and Dutch companies? Is it to keep their train fares four times cheaper than ours?

The case for rail continues to be made by academic studies sponsored by rail workers' unions which, on the whole, are ignored.

And why is the Government now determined to destroy an example of good practice, East Coast Trains, which is run by Directly Operated Railways?

In Bristol, we want to get councillors out of their cars to create a transport system like the one in Tyne and Wear in the 1970s.

Julie Boston, Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways
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Senior railcards

I was unpleasantly surprised by changes in the procedure for renewal of senior railcards.

When I approached Maldon District Council to renew mine and my wife's, I was told they had to be renewed online.

My wife ran into trouble because

her passport had expired and she does not drive so she has no driving licence.

After a series of expensive phone calls, her card and mine were renewed over the telephone.

The new procedure was inflexible, cumbersome, decidedly not user-friendly and appears to discriminate against those who do not have online access, who do not drive, or do not have a current British passport.

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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

Trains run again at Dawlish but what about the stormy future?

By Gerard Duddridge

gerard.duddridge@railfuture.org.uk
Storms which smashed through the sea wall at Dawlish on the night of 4 February and left the rail tracks suspended in the air received massive attention in newspapers, and on radio and TV. Torbay, Plymouth and Cornwall were cut off from the national rail network for two months until the line reopened on 4 April.

There was massive inconvenience to rail passengers and loss to the regional economy but, as a result, for the first time the need for a back-up railway line was taken seriously by Network Rail and the local authorities.

A new line is needed west of Exeter, both as a diversionary line and to increase day-to-day track capacity. At peak times the coastal line is already close to capacity, and there are plans for a two-trains-per-hour metro-style service between Exeter and Paignton.

With stops at Exeter St Thomas, Marsh Barton (planned by Devon County Council), Starcross/Exminster (proposed by Railfuture), Dawlish Warren, Dawlish and Teignmouth, just over half the hourly track capacity is taken up.

With hourly trains from Paddington, CrossCountry services and hopefully more long-distance services to Paignton there will be little capacity left.

Reopening the Okehampton route has been supported by Railfuture for over two decades, and was included in the 1993 and 1997 versions of the *Bring Back Our Tracks* leaflet and the *A to Z of Rail Reopenings*.

In 1997, Railfuture said: "Tavistock to Okehampton would provide a useful inland diversionary route between Plymouth and Exeter. The existing coast line via Dawlish is vulnerable at times in the winter. Restoring services to Okehampton and Tavistock would also provide an important social service in an area isolated from the rail network and greatly improve access to the Dartmoor National Park."

If, at sometime in the following 17 years, action had been taken to reopen the Okehampton line as a back-up, trains could have continued running to Plymouth and Cornwall when the 2014 storm struck.

The Okehampton line would not however have helped South Devon and Torbay.

As it turned out, Network Rail had to pay £16 million compensation to train operators, and replacement bus services are rumoured to have cost £1,000 per coach per day, with some drivers requiring overnight accommodation.



BACK IN ACTION: The sun is shining again as a local train leaves Dawlish, heading west, to areas which were cut off when storms smashed the sea wall and left the track dangling in the air. Repairs took two months

To reconstruct the Okehampton line, 21 miles of restored track between Meldon and Bere Alston would be needed and the route would be 5.75 miles longer than the Dawlish route between Exeter and Plymouth.

Higher potential line speeds, up to 100 mph on some sections, however make this an excellent diversionary route. Non-stop trains would take under 55 minutes to Plymouth, and even allowing seven minutes for reversal at Exeter St Davids, diverted trains normally scheduled to call at Newton Abbot and Totnes would arrive on time in Plymouth.

With this reconstructed Okehampton line, Waterloo to Exeter trains could be extended to Plymouth. Exeter to Plymouth would take one hour 12 minutes, with five stops of one to two minutes dwell time.

Commuters from Tavistock would reach Plymouth in 22 minutes from Tavistock North station, and 19 minutes from a halt at Monksmead. Sourton could be the site of a West Devon and Okehampton parkway station near the A30 trunk road. It has good road links from North

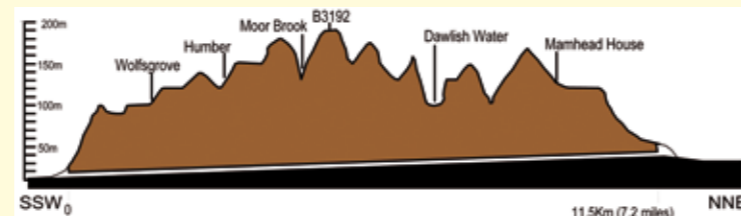
Cornwall including Launceston and Bude. It is unfortunate that within Tavistock part of the West Devon Council offices and around a dozen houses have been built on the trackbed instead of to one side. However, there is strong local support for reopening the Okehampton route.

The Okehampton reopening is the only option that backs up the entire Exeter to Plymouth line. If there is disruption west of Newton Abbot, trains become trapped at the Plymouth Laira depot, and the sleeper service to Cornwall is lost, together with any freight won back to the railway.

The tight curves between Newton Abbot and Plymouth may increase the need for track maintenance

work and there are five large viaducts and three tunnels to be maintained. In January to February 2014, closure of Whiteball Tunnel between Exeter and Taunton for three weeks demonstrated the importance of a back-up route, in this case the Honiton diversion between Exeter and Castle Cary.

Another possible back-up route may be the former single track Teign Valley line from Exeter to Newton Abbot. Diverted Exeter to Newton Abbot expresses would be about eight minutes slower than on the coastal route, but diverted stopping services would be on time as a result of missing stations on the coast, such as Teignmouth. Only 15.25 miles of track is



A seven-mile Little Haldon Tunnel could provide a direct Exminster to Newton Abbot inland route but would need to be bored under a series of hilly peaks

missing between the surviving track at Alphington, and Heathfield near Newton Abbot, but there are potential problems.

Unfortunately two miles are under the A38 trunk road near Chudleigh, although rebuilding alongside seems possible. The A30-A377 road junction on the edge of Exeter cuts the trackbed with no easy solution. In the Alphington and Ide areas, four houses block the line and 17 or more are built far too close. More worrying is a rock fall within the 829 yard Perridge Tunnel between Ide and Christow. Rocks are piled to roof height under a collapsed section, which may be the site of an unknown construction shaft, or be caused by a major weakness in the tunnel design.

The tunnel appears to follow a tightly folded anticline structure in the rocks, which are shale and thin 10 cm wide beds of fine-grained sandstone. So the tunnel could be following the weakest direction of already weak rocks.

There have been calls for a faster service to Plymouth via a completely new inland main line between Exeter and Newton Abbot. Railfuture previously identified a route from Exminster

via Chudleigh, with a 2.25 mile tunnel through the Haldon Hills. Environmental objections and proximity to the valuable ball clay pits of the Bovey Basin could delay such a route for years.

Another alternative would be a new direct line from Exminster to Newton Abbot, which would cut journeys by six to eight minutes. However, the cost of tunnelling seven miles under Little Haldon might equally sink this project.

A less direct variation would be the Great Western Railway's pre-war plan for a new Exminster to Newton Abbot line, which would save four to six minutes. Earlier plans had been for the line to leave the coastal route at Powderham or Dawlish Warren. There would have been two miles of new tunnel, but today the line would emerge into a large area of housing between the planned second and third tunnels in Teignmouth.

In Railfuture's 2000 *Rail Strategy* we suggested extra tunnelling to pass beneath the housing and a junction with the coastal line near Dawlish Warren. In 2008 Teignbridge District Council dismissed Railfuture's objection to the Sainsbury's supermarket that now blocks the route at Shutterton Bridge.

For reduced journey times between London and Plymouth there are cheaper options to consider, for example, the Crofton curves near Great Bedwyn, the slow line speeds over junctions for trains calling at Westbury, and various curves to the west of Newton Abbot.

On balance Railfuture Devon and Cornwall supports the Okehampton option to secure all-year-round reliability of rail services to Plymouth and new services to West Devon.

Exeter-Okehampton-Plymouth would be a good back-up mainline, with the option of double track. It would be less expensive than tunnelling a new Exeter to Newton Abbot line through the Haldon Hills, and is less likely to run into long planning delays and debates over route options.

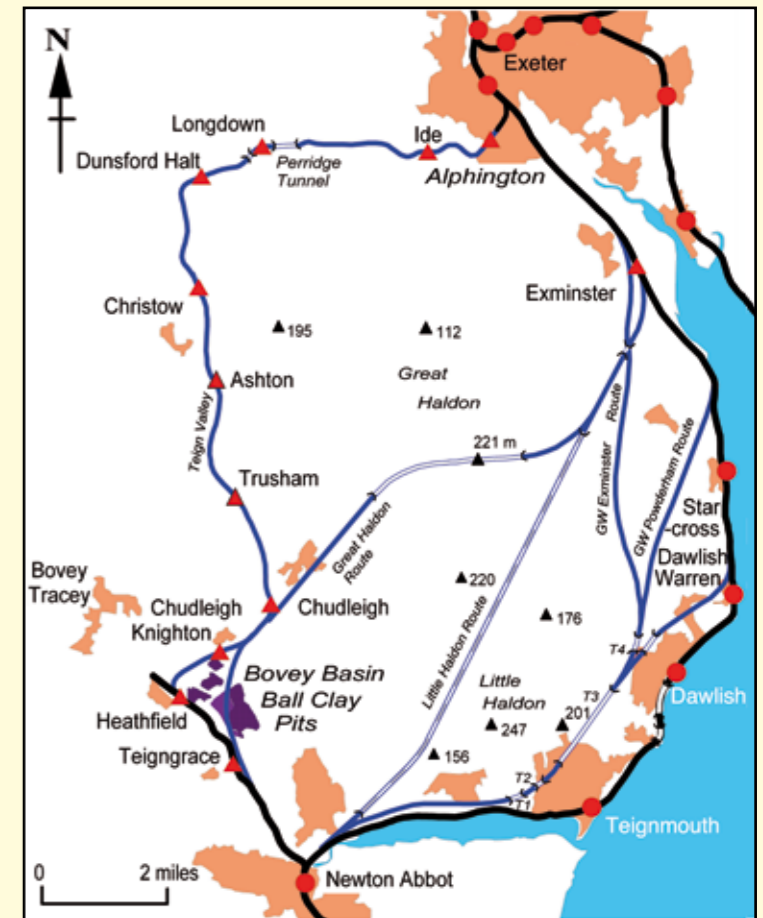
However, Railfuture would not rule out a new direct Exeter to Newton Abbot line to give shorter journey times in the longer term, and believes a route should be identified now, and given protection from housing and other developments.

Railfuture's policy for the past 14 years has been to challenge the long-held belief that the main line railway along the coast can be engineered to stay open for 365 days a year. The events of February to April show we need an additional railway line.



The Okehampton back-up route

This map shows one alternative route via Okehampton which could be reopened. The missing track is shown in blue and existing stations in red (not all shown), with possible new stations in blue



Possible new alternative lines

The inland Exeter to Newton Abbot routes are shown in blue and existing lines in black. Red triangles show former stations while the black triangles show the high altitude of the Haldons. Example ball clay pits are shown in purple.

North East

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

Reality contrasts with Tyne and Wear Metro future plans

Despite successful work on the infrastructure of the Tyne and Wear Metro, there were considerable service failures in 2013 which culminated in the imposition in January of a £500,000 fine by Nexus on the operators, DB Regio. Since then Nexus Rail, which maintains the infrastructure, has undertaken an extensive operation cutting back vegetation growth at the trackside to avoid further problems caused by "leaves on the line" and the operators have mounted an intensive programme to clean up the interiors of the trains. Automatic gates installed at city centre stations, which are backed up by touching-in posts throughout the network, are still not fully operational. More favourably, the cost of the Metro concessionary "Gold Card", available to the over-60s, has been halved.

In March, Nexus announced future aspirations for expansion. These include a link to Washington, which was developed as a "new town" in the 1960s and was the subject of a recent "Connect us with the Metro" petition. In its announcement, Nexus referred to plans for a street tramway system which hark back to the "Project Orpheus" which bit the dust in 2003. The ongoing work to refurbish the 35-year-old Metro trains has passed the halfway mark. Future plans include new trains for the 2020s or 2030s (see BBC illustration right). This is significantly different from Manchester where 21-year-old trams have been replaced by entirely new vehicles and new lines commissioned to destinations east and south of the city.



Picture: BBC

Innovative pupils urged to devise rail reopening plan

The South East Northumberland Rail Users Group has set up a schools competition to boost its campaign to reopen the Ashington Blyth and Tyne line. Schools have been invited to submit a short video setting out the business case for the reopening. The prize is a visit to Northern Rail's control centre and a meeting with the constituency MP at Westminster. The specification for the next East Coast franchise has provoked dismay in Morpeth as the improvements in service levels introduced in the June 2011 timetable appear to have been reversed. Regional TV news followed up the reports.

Complex timetable torpedoes Thornaby's hopes

Rail campaigners from North East Coastliners have been quizzing managers about the loss of the connection between TransPennine and Northern services at Thornaby. It transpires that the timings of the Middlesbrough-Newcastle-Hexham service are determined by those of the Newcastle-Carlisle trains, which in turn are dictated by the few Glasgow-Dumfries-Carlisle-Newcastle trains operated by ScotRail. Improvements at Thornaby can be made only after the new ScotRail franchise is agreed.

Coastliners are liaising with the North East local enterprise partnership which is campaigning for rail improvements, including lifts on the Coast Line platforms at Newcastle Central. Network Rail is soon to take over control of Newcastle Central station.

Improvements under way to both stations and track

Correspondents report that lifts are being installed at Northern Rail's Metro Centre station. Extra car parking and a ramped access to the Carlisle platform at Hexham station are also being provided. Meanwhile Tyne Yard on the south bank of the river has a new network of sidings to facilitate Network Rail's high output ballast cleaning operations for the NE region.

High-speed start to a career in railways

By Marin Marinov
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RailNewcastle is a three-week intensive programme in rail logistics which takes place every summer in June and July in Newcastle upon Tyne.

The programme is partly funded by the European Commission, via its lifelong learning programme and is also part of the Erasmus programme to encourage students to study or work abroad.

Its purpose is to create an environment for higher education institutions to work together in developing an innovative course in rail logistics that promotes a multidisciplinary approach, works with students from different backgrounds and combines various teaching and learning techniques, including lectures, discussions, research projects, technical visits, workshops and seminars.

The students participating in RailNewcastle gain knowledge in rail logistics and learn skills in research techniques and analysis, presentations, problem solving and team working while also improving their language and intercultural skills.

RailNewcastle is a collaboration which embraces the Higher School of Transport in Sofia, Bulgaria, Universitatea Politehnica din Bucuresti in Romania, Universitet Gent in Belgium, University of Applied Science Ingolstadt in Germany, Sapienza Universita di Roma in Italy, Instituto Superior Tecnico in Portugal, Newcastle University, Yildiz Technical University in Turkey, the Silesian University of Technology in Poland as well as Democritus Thrace University in Greece. The number of participants normally includes 60 students and 20 professors/lecturers.

The objectives of RailNewcastle are threefold:

- To enable participants to work together on railway logistics problems in multinational and multidisciplinary groups and hence bring a European context into the topics discussed

- To create new teaching, training and learning resources for railway education and research under one banner, which can be used for knowledge sharing in the future

- To explore future possibilities for multinational university degrees and collaborative research programmes

RailNewcastle is unique in allowing lecturers and students



Students and teaching staff from RailNewcastle pictured on a visit to the National Railway Museum at Shildon

from various EU countries to work together, share their experience and develop a new, relevant programme in rail logistics which is based on participants' knowledge, expertise, experience, knowledge of best practice and teaching and learning skills.

The intensive programme lasts three weeks, and each week has a different focus. The first concentrates on lectures and discussions focused around logistics and supply chain management, rail and multimodal transport, rail infrastructure and ITS, vehicles, environment and safety, rail operations, time-tabling and control.

During the second week students are split into groups to work on rail and logistics-focused research projects. At the end of week two, students produce a research report and a poster. The outcomes of the research projects are presented and discussed during a set of thematic seminars in week three.

The third week involves technical visits to Tyne and Wear Metro depot, National Railway Museums and Network Rail. Workshops on rail transit systems, train-path bidding and aspects of railway history are also included.

The expected outcome of the programme includes a new curriculum for the field of rail logistics and a collection of teaching materials, rail and logistics-focused research

projects and articles developed during the programme. The RailNewcastle intensive programme is recognised in the students' home universities and is designed with the aim of improving the quality and increasing the mobility of students and teaching staff

through multilateral cooperation between higher education institutions in Europe.

■ Dr Marinov is manager of the Rail Education Group, NewRail, Newcastle University. Additional material by Anna Fraszczyk and Phil Mortimer.

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Visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/newrail/education

Picture: ANNA FRASZCZYK, NewRail, Rail Education Group

Severnside

By Nigel Bray
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Station reopening campaign

The main political parties on Bath & North East Somerset Council sent representatives to Railfuture Severnside's meeting in Bath in February, where guest speaker was Duncan Hounsell of Salford Station Campaign. He described how the leaders of the reopening campaign for Salford, on the main line between Bristol and Bath, spent more than six months talking to politicians and industry professionals, achieving a breakthrough in early 2012 when the station was included in the Greater Bristol Metro (now Metro West) project, subject to a business case. The campaign was assisted by Jacob Rees-Mogg, MP for North East Somerset, who presented a 2,000 signature petition to the House of Commons.



Duncan Hounsell said a recent feasibility study by Halcrow was favourable to reopening. A study in 2000 predicted 400 daily journeys and annual revenue of £250,000 based on villages of similar size, but did not take into account local factors such as congestion on the A4 road.

Salford would be the nearest station to Bath Spa University. Nearly 1,000 cars a day travel through Salford en route to the university, which has written to the council to support reopening. The university is keen to have a minibus link with Salford station to reduce pressure on its own car park. There is land at the station site for a larger car park than the one at Keynsham and the campaign now estimates likely revenue from ticket sales at more than £750,000 per year. The campaign wants the council to make plans for reopening the station in case money becomes available from the Local Stations Fund in the approach to the general election.

MP backs campaign for integrated buses and trains

Railfuture Severnside's AGM at Highbridge in March was addressed by Tessa Munt, the MP for Wells, and Mathew Morgan, First Great Western station manager for North Somerset. Tessa Munt listened to our concerns, including resilience of the rail network and long-standing difficulties with transport integration in Somerset. She invited suggestions for improvements, particularly at Highbridge & Burnham station, where the bus timetable board is blank, even though First Bus, WebberBus and Hatch Green Coaches operate services from a stop a few minutes walk from the station.

Mr Morgan answered questions about staffing, car parking and possible retail tenancies at stations. He said FGW had no plans to reduce ticket office hours at Bridgwater. Asked about bus-rail interchange at Highbridge, he said FGW would be working with First Bus to provide information and signage.

Solving Somerset's transport problems

The April edition of *Rail Professional* published my article, Solving Somerset's Transport Problems, describing Railfuture Severnside's campaign for an integrated transport authority for Somerset or the whole of the South West and our meeting with Transport Minister Baroness Kramer.

Welcome for £700 million Western Hub investment

Following the Government's announcement in April of a £700 million Western Hub initiative, based on Bristol Temple Meads, which would include Phase 1 of Metro West and quadrupling of the main line at Filton Bank, I was interviewed on University of the West of England Radio. I said Greater Bristol needed the investment to catch up with other major British conurbations which already enjoyed good suburban rail services and that it would help reduce air pollution, particularly if local routes were electrified.

Wessex

By David Brace
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■ Gateway to South Downs

A new community rail partnership has been formed covering a number of stations on the Portsmouth Direct route north of Havant. The stations included in the East Hampshire CRP are Liphook, Liss, Petersfield and Rowlands Castle. These are the four stations within the recently created South Downs National Park. Substantial funding and support has been provided by the national park. The CRP describes the train service as the gateway to the South Downs and follows the format adopted elsewhere in Britain to encourage support for local train services and to help integrate the railway into the community. Several meetings have already been held as well as a public event at Liss, plus some organised walks and cycle rides.

■ Engineering works and bustitution

Network Rail, through the South Western Alliance, has adopted two very different methods of carrying out major engineering works over the winter and spring.

Version one led to minimal disruption for passengers. When the track between Basingstoke and Salisbury was renewed, high output equipment was used on mid-week nights. This approach meant that very few replacement buses had to be run, mainly to cover for lightly used last trains. This also gave the engineers a little more time each night. As a bonus, the last jointed track has now been replaced on this route.

Version two caused major problems for passengers. For the major switch and track renewals at Southampton West and on to Bournemouth and for the commissioning of new signalling west of Poole, more than two months of weekend closures were imposed, with no trains through Southampton and numerous replacement bus services providing stopping and fast services. While well managed and probably necessary given the scale of the works, it did cause substantial inconvenience to passengers, especially those with bikes, buggies and baggage. Railfuture Wessex was asked to give its views to local paper *The Southern Echo* and we supported the need for the paper to describe the difficulties in carrying them out without the lines being closed. We advised that the paper should view it as a successful investment story. At least rail passengers in our area now have the summer months without any more bustitution.

■ Campaign for better trains to match price of rail travel



The branch secretary of Railfuture Wessex was interviewed live on BBC Radio Solent in response to the Office of Rail Regulation's financial report for 2012-13. He was able to make the point that, given the high cost of long-distance commuting in our area, more appropriate long-distance rolling stock

is needed rather than the class 450 trains with 3+2 seating (see picture). This has been a long-running campaign, particularly for commuters on the Portsmouth Direct line who suffer not only the class 450s but also have a poor journey time to London compared with many other routes.

■ IC125 to boost Bristol-Weymouth route in the summer

Railfuture Wessex is pleased to see that First Great Western will run an InterCity 125 train on the Bristol-Weymouth line to provide extra capacity on summer Saturdays. Weymouth is a popular Dorset coastal resort and the normal two-car diesel units cannot provide anywhere near the needed capacity.



MAKING THE CASE FOR RAIL IN THE FENS

Rail Summit One: Wisbech

Stephen Barclay, the MP for North East. Cambridgeshire, talks to Chris Austin

The market town of Wisbech in the Fens has attractive riverside buildings, but in economic terms, has become a bit of a backwater.

The economic development that has boosted the corridor from Stansted Airport to Cambridge and Ely has not reached north Cambridgeshire, even though it is within the area of the Cambridge and Peterborough local economic partnership, which has the fastest growth of any local enterprise partnership.

Originally the town was served by two stations, the Midland & Great Northern and the Great Eastern, with direct services to Peterborough and Great Yarmouth until 1959, and to King's Lynn, March and Cambridge until 1968. A freight link on the eight-mile line from March was retained until 2000.

Just 20 miles to the east is the successful Fen line, electrified by Railfuture vice-president Chris Green in 1992 and now thriving, in stark contrast to the moth-balled Wisbech route.

The desire to improve prospects for his constituents is the main factor that convinced MP Stephen Barclay of the need for better links between the two parts of the county. The 4,000 signatures on the reopening petition served to underline his judgement here. Restoration of the line has been proposed several times before but has never got anywhere. The first problem was that it had no business case and that previous studies had shown little benefit in return for the capital cost of restoration. Looking more closely at the scheme, Stephen

Barclay saw that earlier analysis had focused on the transport case, but not evaluated the wider economic benefits.

In addition, the scheme had no champion, partly because of the poor economic case, and partly because the local authority had run into difficulties with previous major transport schemes, including the notorious St Ives busway.

Stephen Barclay pays tribute to Martin Curtis, the leader of Cambridgeshire, for supporting the wider benefits study which transformed the case for the line. Now the project has a sound business case and full support from the county council and the LEP as a priority.

In political terms, Stephen Barclay has built a strong case for the line, not primarily to link Wisbech to the national network, but in support of the Government's £1 billion Cambridge City Deal, designed to develop the potential of this internationally renowned city.

For this reason he actively supported the new station planned for Cambridge Science Park, despite some local criticism that it was not in his constituency.

But he saw that the political case for Wisbech would be made much more effectively through enabling the wider benefits of the Cambridge project to be achieved, by providing access to affordable housing for the new workforce, rather than the narrower case for a rail link to the town which, on its own, had failed to establish a business case in the past. A 40-minute rail trip in the future compares with a drive of an hour and 40 minutes today. At a crucial point in the discussions, he convened

a Wisbech Rail Summit at the House of Commons on 11 March which drew together all those involved in making the case for reopening, including Railfuture and Transport Minister Stephen Hammond. This provided new impetus for the scheme and demonstrated the number of serious players supporting it.

He remains concerned that the cost of transport projects remains too high and subject to too many planning stages, each involving use of expensive consultants.

"There is a need for an honest debate, rather than a sham consultation," he said. He believes people should be offered a choice of what might be achieved, together with an understanding of its costs or requirements. The Wisbech rail link will work only

if new housing can be built for the people who will use the line, and if the costs, particularly on the line's many level crossings, can be kept to reasonable levels.

Other issues remain to be resolved, such as the timing of funding to complete planning by Network Rail, but he is on the case and has already discussed this with Cabinet Office minister Greg Clarke.

Stephen Barclay's thoughtful and strategic approach has built a strong case for Wisbech, and we will see passenger trains there, perhaps as early as control period six (2019-24). This is a textbook case on how to tackle reopenings, but you cannot take anything for granted and we all need to continue to make the case until the trains start running.

AND IN SUSSEX BY THE SEA

Rail Summit Two: Hastings

By Chris Page

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Journey times between Hastings and London will be slashed when new trains capable of 140 mph are introduced in little more than five years time.

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin made the announcement at a Hastings Rail Summit convened by Amber Rudd MP in March.

"We are now firmly on the journey to vastly improved rail travel to and from Hastings" said Ms Rudd, MP for Hastings and Rye, who has spearheaded the campaign to upgrade rail services and revitalise the local economy.

Network Rail's route managing director for the South East, Dave Ward, committed to developing the project during the coming investment period and to building the partnership with stakeholders needed to deliver the project soon after 2019.

High-speed Javelin trains running between London St Pancras and Bexhill via Ashford International will achieve a journey time between London St Pancras and Hastings of 68 minutes, compared to over 100 minutes via Tonbridge in the peak today. The new service for Hastings and Bexhill will also reduce crowding on the line through Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks.

Railfuture director Roger Blake said: "This is a phenomenal success for East Sussex, which will stimulate economic growth in Hastings. With our support, the county council has secured the first of two priorities in its new rail action plan within six months

of publishing it. We will continue to work in partnership with East Sussex, Kent and Brighton and Hove, and the local enterprise partnership, to ensure that this promise is delivered and to achieve East Sussex's second priority of electrifying the Uckfield line and reopening from Uckfield to Lewes, enabling through services from London via the Weald to Brighton and Sussex coast destinations."

Railfuture and the St Leonards and Hastings Rail Improvement Programme, a member of the East Sussex Rail Alliance of local rail user groups, have been campaigning for electrification of the whole Marshlink between Hastings and Ashford International. Currently electrified track from Hastings to Ashford reaches only as far as Ore, the first station.

Network Rail plans to electrify the line between Ore and Ashford, raise the maximum speed, extend the loop at Rye, and remodel the western junctions at Ashford to create a connection between the Marshlink line and High Speed One.

The prolonged closure of the Tonbridge line has highlighted the limitations of that route for much improvement, whereas the planned upgrade of the Marshlink route for a new Javelin service has a strong business case.

This summit is an example of good campaigning practice, exemplified by creating a memorable media image which can be associated with the long-term campaign.

See www.railfuture.org.uk/article1456-High-Speed-Hastings
Local Action: See column right



Manea today, Wisbech tomorrow: Stephen Barclay MP, left, at Manea where passenger numbers have tripled since Greater Anglia increased the number of trains calling

Picture by courtesy of the ELY STANDARD

London and South East

By Roger Blake
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■ Hastings rail summit



At a rail summit in March, Railfuture presented local MP Amber Rudd with a model Javelin train, donated by Hornby Hobbies of Margate. Ms Rudd is seen in our picture with Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin and Greg Barker, MP for Bexhill. Mr McLoughlin confirmed that the high speed train service from London St Pancras to Ashford will be extended to Hastings and Bexhill soon after 2020. There is a business case for the upgrading of the Marsh Link route via Rye which will clip 10 minutes off the Hastings-Ashford journey, while also giving a service to St Pancras in just over an hour. Ms Rudd presented Mr McLoughlin with a painting of a Javelin train at Hastings. Railfuture commissioned the picture from artist Mike Turner (see back page). The good news for Hastings and Bexhill is a campaign success for local rail groups including Railfuture-affiliated Marsh Link Action Group and St Leonards & Hastings Rail Improvement Programme.
Read more at www.railfuture.org.uk/Marshlink

■ New trains as Overground takes over West Anglia

Transport for London has announced an order for 39 new trains to follow its takeover of 24 stations on West Anglia's routes to Enfield Town/Cheshunt and Chingford from 31 May next year. Eight of the new four-car trains will be for the Gospel Oak-Barking route. This Overground expansion will be a milestone in the devolution of rail services in the capital, advocated by Railfuture campaigners. The former Silverlink Metro network has been transformed since it was taken over by TfL in 2007. We will recommend that the Overground takes over South Eastern Metro services at the next opportunity in 2018. The end of the Greater Thameslink management contract in 2021 will open up similar prospects for inner Great Northern and Southern services.

■ Step at a time for Uckfield-Lewes reopening

One year ago Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin visited Lewes to see local MP Norman Baker and announce a review "to examine if reopening the Lewes-Uckfield railway line will meet the demand for the future growth in rail travel". Network Rail's report has been published and its Sussex Route Study is now expected as a consultation draft this autumn, which will be a step towards identifying schemes for the next control period, 2019-24. Railfuture will continue to advocate the benefits of reopening Uckfield-Lewes, for East Sussex economic activity and connectivity, communities and colleges, and London commuters.
More information: www.railfuture.org.uk/Uckfield+Lewes

■ Women will be stars of Railfuture conference

Our branch is organising the 1 November national Railfuture conference in London around the theme "A successful railway: meeting the challenge". We plan to have an all-female platform of speakers. A flier is included with this *Railwatch*. Book now at www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences

■ Stay up to date with our campaign activity at

www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East



East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
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■ ■ A long look forward

David Horne, managing director of East Midlands Trains, was the main speaker at Railfuture East Midlands AGM in March. He said diversionary routes via Corby and Syston, and the Erewash Valley, were vital in providing a main line service to London and as such needed to be electrified, along with the Midland main line. Market Harborough improvements were needed and Network Rail is working on the costs again of getting this done prior to electrification. When electrification means Meridians are no longer needed on the Midland main line, they could be used on Liverpool-Manchester-Sheffield-Nottingham-Peterborough-Norwich services. If EMT obtains a 30-month franchise extension to October 2017, there will be just seven weeks before electric trains are expected to run up the Midland main line to Corby. The Department for Transport is asking train operators to decide which electric trains to operate and this decision will have to be made well before 2017. All options are on the table. A direct Leicester-Manchester service, via the Hope valley line or Stoke-on-Trent, is an aspiration for EMT.

■ ■ Not enough information for diversions

There was insufficient information available to passengers when CrossCountry Trains diverted trains on the Leicester/Nottingham to Birmingham services in February. The only apparent information was a small A4 poster at Leicester. It was not possible to obtain full timetable information either in print or on the internet. This was poor given that train frequency was halved, timings were revised and journey times were longer.

■ ■ Easter disruption leaves passengers confused

Passengers entering Nottingham station's newly opened concourse at Easter looked in vain for London on the recently installed information system. A poster gave information about "essential engineering work between Leicester and Bedford".

Little information was provided on the internet and those booking on the National Rail website were routed to London via Grantham and the East Coast main line as long as they purchased full fare tickets. Passengers who had bought EMT cheaper advance tickets were not allowed to travel via the East Coast route and their journeys were by rail to Kettering via Syston and Corby, bus to Bedford and rail to London. As engineering work takes place to electrify the MML over the next few years we expect EMT to provide better information for passengers.

The refurbished entrance, booking hall and new ticket office at Nottingham station were opened to passengers in March, part of the £50 million redevelopment of the station, which has been funded through Nottingham City Council's workplace parking levy. Shops and cafes, and a cycle hub are also planned. New Alstom trams are being delivered for the city's tram network, which now requires passengers to buy a ticket before boarding.

■ ■ Corby anniversary

The fifth anniversary of the opening of Corby station was celebrated on 28 April with the official opening of a new pedestrian access. New steps leading to Oakley Road will cut about 300 metres off the walking distance to the town centre and to Tresham College. Passenger numbers have increased year on year, and will increase further as services are improved with the forthcoming doubling of the track towards Kettering and then electrification. Northbound connections at Kettering, however, have got worse over the five years. Corby trains arrive at Kettering just as a northbound train is departing, leaving passengers with an hour's wait.



Parliamentary salute to rail

By Chris Austin

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Rail campaigners, MPs and peers gathered in Parliament in March at a Railfuture event to press for continued investment to match the success of the railways.

The event highlighted the growth of railways across the country and the vital role the network plays in contributing to economic growth as part of an integrated transport network.

To achieve this, Railfuture was working with Government and the industry to achieve a wide range of improvements, particularly in reliability (highlighted by the recent floods) and capacity to cater for the growth which continues despite the recession. The meeting was designed to contact MPs in relation to local rail campaigns benefiting their

constituencies and to listen to the concerns and priorities expressed. Speaking at the Railfuture reception, vice-president Caroline Lucas MP said our objectives are a bigger, better railway both in terms of passengers and freight to meet more of Britain's transport needs.

She said that from her perspective there was a very strong environmental argument for this but there are other arguments for growing the rail network as well.

To achieve this, she said "sustained levels of investment are needed and Railfuture absolutely campaigns and lobbies for that".

She added: "It has been pretty successful in recent years and has played a key role in the opening and reopening of 370 stations and 500 miles of railway line in

the past 50 years". Railfuture is independent of all political parties, trades unions and commercial interests, Lucas added and one of its great strengths is that it is very well connected to the grassroots through its different branches.

There are around 20,000 individuals and affiliated members and it is linked up with around 300 rail user groups, which meant "a real expertise" that they could benefit from.

Transport commentator and Railfuture president Christian Wolmar said: "It is great to celebrate the success of the railways. It is quite extraordinary the difference between then and now," he added, referring to the 20 years since privatisation. Everyone accepted the railway was a vital industry that needed to grow

and referred to the £57 billion programme for the next Network Rail control period and with the coming of High Speed Two.

He said there was a real political consensus and he said Railfuture had played its part.

Wolmar recalled a conversation with a consultant who worked on East-West Rail, something Railfuture had been "campaigning for an awful long time".

The consultant noted that for the first four or five years he was not sure it would happen, but then the climate changed and soon you will be able to get two-thirds of the way between Oxford and Cambridge, and experts were now looking at ways of completing the route.

"And that picture is repeated around the country," he said.

A brighter future

Time flies, and the community rail strategy is already 10 years old this year. It has been a decade of growth, innovation and ever closer community involvement on 73 lines around the country, with almost 1,000 stations adopted by local user or amenity groups. So, is it "job done" and on to the next project, or can we take the principles of community rail further?

The good news is that the Department for Transport, which embraced the community rail development strategy in 2004, wants to take it further in the next round of franchises, starting with Northern. The new franchising director Pete Wilkinson is a great advocate of the concept. In an address to the Railway Study Association in November, he said: "There are today over 50 Community Rail Partnerships putting real money, real people-power and real innovation into rail."

He wants future franchises to be judged on quality and price, rather than on price alone. This could potentially open up many opportunities for community rail lines where a lot of passenger and community benefits could be secured for a little extra financial support, particularly in the early years of a franchise. The new franchise design could be the vehicle for delivering a range of new projects, and community rail partnerships

could be leading these on their lines.

The department has been impressed with the work initiated by partnerships on stations, such as the innovative eco-station at Accrington and the striking new building at Burnley Manchester Road.

It wants to see more done to develop stations as community hubs, something that partnerships have been particularly good at. In some cases, Wilkinson acknowledges it may be necessary to restore or replace a station building to achieve this, and there are credits for doing this in a sustainable way.

Going a step further, the new franchising director has made clear his willingness to look at self-contained business units running the larger community rail lines or a group of smaller ones. He believes, as do some of the partnerships themselves, that this can give much closer local engagement of the local community, a better design of local train services and perhaps even some cost savings, although that is not the primary objective.

One approach might be to facilitate the establishment of a local depot on longer community rail lines such as Esk Valley, to allow a better spread of trains to be run, covering a longer operating day. Either way, such an approach will certainly produce an improvement in



More hub stations like environmentally friendly Accrington are in prospect for the next round of franchises. The station is the home of Community Rail Lancashire

revenue as the services are developed in line with local demand and are actively promoted. Sustainable lines are what we are all looking for.

The problems of managing financial risk of smaller operations, which I outlined in the last issue of *Railwatch*, would be addressed by Network Rail retaining ownership of the infrastructure, and the train operator "hosting" the business unit and providing the back-up a smaller unit would require, at least in its early years. A small dowry might be available to allow the unit to be established and start work. This welcome new

approach by the DfT will put new money and management into making local lines sustainable.

The Welsh Government has also earmarked £150,000 to sort out how local management arrangements for the Heart of Wales Line would work, and has allocated funding for additional early morning commuter trains from Llandovery to Swansea and Llandrindod Wells to Shrewsbury.

Ten years on from the strategy, and over 20 years on from the pioneering partnerships, community rail is now coming into its own.

Picture: TRANSPORT EXTRA

West Midlands

By Steve Wright

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■ ■ Newsletter initiative

Railfuture West Midlands has begun to produce a monthly newsletter for branch members and has invited members to play a more active role by contributing news and pictures.

■ ■ Bonus for Lichfield

CrossCountry trains to Sheffield had to be diverted via Lichfield because of engineering work in February so, for one splendid week, Lichfield residents enjoyed a non-stop express service to Birmingham, and the opportunity to travel to Derby, Sheffield and other exotic northern destinations, over the Lichfield-Burton line. The Lichfield Rail Promotion Group is campaigning to reopen this line for regular services. LRP members suggest a Birmingham-Nottingham train could be re-routed this way and a new station could be provided at Airewas, 200 metres from the entrance to the National Memorial Arboretum which attracts thousands of visitors every year.

■ ■ MP welcomes Chase line electrification work

Preparation work has finally started on the electrification of the Chase line. Three bridges are being modified to accommodate the overhead line equipment at Bloxwich Broad Lane, Hednesford Station Road and Walkers Rise. Cannock MP Aidan Burley has been told the project will be ready for electric trains to start running in December 2017 although suitable rolling stock has to be found.

■ ■ Metro is growing and further extensions are needed

In Birmingham, ground work is mostly complete and lines are being laid, ready for the planned opening next year. There also seems to be agreement and funding to extend beyond New Street Station to Centenary Square. Centro has been considering how to serve the projected High Speed Two station and has proposed a route between Snow Hill and Moor Street stations via Carrs Lane or New Meeting Street. It is possible the tram line could later be extended to the airport.

■ ■ Norton Bridge flyover approved but more needs doing

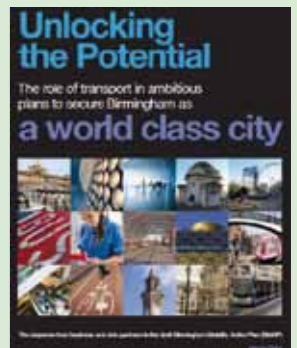
The Government has approved a flyover at Norton Bridge to separate Stafford-Stoke trains from Stafford-Crewe traffic. Railfuture is hoping the work will include a realignment of the Stafford-Crewe slow lines.

■ ■ Bus replacement on West Coast main line

Passengers from the West Midlands to London had to travel by bus for parts of the journey because of engineering work over the May bank holiday. Similar problems will be repeated over seven holiday weekends until next April as work on the West Coast main line in the Watford area continues.

■ ■ Vision for transport developed for next 20 years

Railfuture members heard how Birmingham City Council is developing a 20-year vision for transport, the Mobility Action Plan, which will aim to reduce pollution and improve road safety. The council's Mel Jones told Railfuture West Midlands AGM in April that a consultation process took place from November to January. More than 80% of people want improvements to public transport which should be quicker, easier, more reliable and cheaper to win over car drivers. A white paper will be published in the summer.



■ ■ Millions of pounds for new stations and bigger platforms

The Government announced in April that it will provide £4.75 million of the £13 million needed to build new stations at Coventry Arena and Bermuda Park and extend the platforms at Bedworth.

By Jane Ann Liston
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Decision awaited on two new stations

In recognition of the importance of rail accessibility to the future social and economic well-being of east Berwickshire, Scottish Borders Council has pledged £1.28 million towards a new Reston station, while East Lothian has also confirmed it will contribute to a reopened East Linton. Both stations are proposed as part of an improved Edinburgh to Berwick-upon-Tweed rail service, and attracted support from all political parties. As the population of East Linton expands, with even more houses currently being built, a reopened station will be a great benefit. Reston, around 40 miles from the Borders Railway, enjoys support from all local community councils as well as the towns of Eyemouth and Duns. The project would provide extensive parking space for park and ride in East Berwickshire. The stations would improve the local economy, making the area attractive to investors and tourists, provide access to a wider jobs market and further education. It would also reduce the need to travel by road. A decision from Scottish transport minister Keith Brown is awaited.

ScotRail bidders meet campaigners
 Rail Action Group, East of Scotland has had meetings with all five bidders for the new ScotRail franchise, bids for which were to be submitted by April. The winner will be notified in October, with the new franchise starting in April next year. RAGES has also met First Group, one of the three bidders for the East Coast franchise, which is expected to start in March next year, and hopes to meet the other two bidders. RAGES is making it clear that passengers want existing long distance and cross country services retained at Dunbar and Berwick-upon-Tweed. Demand also exists for a near-midday Edinburgh-London service calling at Dunbar. www.rages.org.uk/

Politicians back Beattock station

In recent weeks Beattock Station Action Group has met all ScotRail franchise



bidders. The group is working with the South West of Scotland Transport Partnership with a view to undertaking an appraisal report and identifying the best way to reopen the station at the earliest opportunity. The campaign has attracted backing from local politicians. www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/

Potential for Parliament station

Cuts in the Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme have given a breathing space to argue for a restored passenger service, based on a revised layout for the proposed sidings at the site of the former Abbeyhill station. Despite official encouragement to submit a request for a station at Abbeyhill as part of the programme, Network Rail's plans were such that a regular passenger service could never have been permitted, as it would have had to encroach on the East Coast main line rather than using the redundant trackbed between the Calton north tunnel and Abbeyhill. A station at Abbeyhill would serve the Scottish Parliament and it would be a pity if the chance was lost if the sidings were laid out to preclude a passenger service.

At the east end of the city, the newly elected Portobello Community Council is keen to campaign for a reopened Portobello station. Along with other representatives from the community council, Lawrence Marshall was to meet MSP Kenny MacAskill in May to discuss how best to progress this matter. The immediate goal is to make sure that any remodelling of Portobello junction allows for a station there which could be served by both the Waverley line to Tweedbank and East Coast main line services to North Berwick and Dunbar. After that, the

necessary hoops need to be negotiated to prove that a station at Portobello would be worthwhile. https://sites.google.com/site/capitalrailactiongroup/

Fight for Glasgow Crossrail

Work continues to secure finance for an evaluation of the Glasgow Crossrail project. A new route has been identified for a link to Glasgow Airport. There is concern that the disruption caused by the improvements to Glasgow Queen Street station, the terminus of Scotland's busiest rail service (Edinburgh-Glasgow), should be managed so as to be kept to a minimum, carrying out the works to the tunnel while the station is closed. The written petition demanding that the mitigating Almond Chord be constructed before the Winchburgh Tunnel is closed for several weeks has been followed up by an e-petition.

St Andrews and Fife

TayPlan, the strategic plan centred upon Dundee and including north east Fife, has declined to include a reopened station at St Andrews (although it includes a reopened station at Newburgh on the Ladybank-Perth line) because the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance evaluation has not been carried out. A useful meeting with transport minister Keith Brown, arranged by Willie Rennie MSP, and attended by Rod Campbell MSP, Cllr Tim Brett of Fife Council and me, took place at the Scottish Parliament, where the Minister stated that local authorities, such as Fife Council, and regional transport partnerships, such as SESTRAN, have money to carry out STAGs. SESTRAN receives its money from local councils but Fife Council has decided not to finance an evaluation of St Andrews, preferring to support one for Newburgh. Since both the Tata Steel report from 2012 and ScotRail agreed that the STAG, estimated to cost £100,000, is the essential next step, this inertia is disappointing. It is hoped some behind-the-scenes discussions with a quiet word in the appropriate ear might unblock the logjam. Meanwhile round the coast, the Levenmouth station campaign has been relaunched. www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/ and http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/ and www.lmrc-action.org.uk/

Taking note of your views

By Chris Page

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I gave the raw results of the *Have Your Say* survey in *Railwatch* 139.

The statistics were useful, but the offers of help and imaginative individual answers may prove more valuable in the long term.

There was some wry humour, for example the question "How did you first hear about Railfuture?" brought one response "From my girl friend, now my wife."

However the effort made by members to respond to the survey will be of value only if Railfuture takes notice of the opinions expressed and changes the way the organisation works.

I have passed on positive and negative feedback given by individuals and relating to specific branches to those branches for action.

The key lessons that we can take from the results are:

- We need to heal our divisions, agree on policy, and communicate with one voice
- We need to focus on specific issues where we have a chance of succeeding
- We must empower the branches
- Branches must engage their members – more open, local, well publicised meetings
- At least half the members want to campaign, but they need to be mobilised, guided and led
- Provision of access to the network is important to our members
- We must not appear to be rail buffs or anoraks
- The most successful method of recruiting has been through friends – we must give members the materials to recruit with
- Potential members want to be able to believe that Railfuture will be successful, or have evidence of its success
- We must become more relevant to rail users
- The key issue is rail capacity
- Attracting rail users requires

local campaigns and targeted materials

■ We must engage the RUGs, colleges and universities

■ We should consider a membership gift pack

■ *Railwatch* needs a refresh and to be more positive

These were put to the board in March, which decided that:

■ The Marketing, Media and Communications Group will develop recruiting literature that can be distributed with *Railwatch* for members to give to friends, colleagues and relatives to encourage them to join. When you no longer have a use for this issue of *Railwatch* or any of the literature enclosed with it, please do not throw it away but pass it on to a friend, colleague or relative.

■ We will publicise the annual RUG Awards more widely

■ The *Railwatch* editorial group will review the layout of the magazine

However these points are merely scratching the surface. Each year in October we run a Branches and Groups meeting, with varying degrees of success.

This year we will dedicate this event to understanding the lessons above, and any others the branches may wish to raise, and agreeing the actions required to implement them.

For this to be effective it is important that the chairman or secretary of each branch and the leader of each group is present at the meeting, so that all branches and groups can commit to an action plan.

To ensure that this is successful and does not come across as the Railfuture board telling the branches what to do, I am recommending to the board that we engage a professional facilitator to run the meeting.

While this will be expensive, he will have no axe to grind, so will deal equally with board and branch members alike. I look forward to meeting representatives of every branch at the meeting.

East Anglia

By Paul Hollinghurst
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£1bn for Cambridge transport

The Government's budget statement included a City Deal for Cambridge releasing significant funding to improve access and commuting to Cambridge. The City Deal will eventually provide £500 million and, with matching developer contributions, is expected to amount to £1 billion. The county council has published its draft Long Term Transport Strategy which includes a number of possible rail developments including Wisbech, Haverhill, East West Rail and new stations, including Addenbrookes.

Cambridge plays host to high-tech rail conference

Railfuture East Anglia is hosting the 2014 conference *Rail: The Engine for Change in high-tech Cambridge* at the University Centre in Cambridge on 21 June with an impressive line-up of seven speakers. More details at www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/#2014_cambridge

New chord speeds rail freight to the north

The new Ipswich freight chord opened on Monday 31 March, cutting journey times for services from Felixstowe towards Ely, although this currently moves the bottleneck to other points on the line including single-track sections on the Felixstowe branch itself. Railfuture East Anglia supports electrification from Felixstowe to Nuneaton for both freight and passengers, as well as upgrades to remove bottlenecks.

Greater Anglia hires trains to cope with shortage

Abellio Greater Anglia has admitted it needs to take action along with Network Rail to improve the poor service from Ipswich to Felixstowe. There has also been a shortage of rolling stock so AGA is hiring in locomotive-hauled stock from May 2014. A direct Monday to Friday off-peak service will be introduced from Cambridge to Stansted Airport using rolling stock which is otherwise spare between the peaks.

Peterborough is key to Anglia links from East Coast

Railfuture East Anglia Branch has submitted updated aspirations to bidders for the East Coast franchise. We want to see Peterborough turned into an exemplary interchange between services from East Anglia and the fast trains on the East Coast main line. www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+East+Coast

Long-term planning for East West link to Cambridge

Oxford to Bedford is now expected to open in May 2019, following a two-year Transport and Works approval process. A full track upgrade of Bedford to Bletchley will not happen until 2024. Route options east of Bedford are currently being studied.

Haverhill backs plans for reopened rail link

Well-attended meetings involving MP Matthew Hancock and Cambridge county councillors Ian Bates and Jeremy Smith, and a public meeting on 16 April in Haverhill gave unanimous support for a reopened railway providing a link from Colchester to Cambridge. Railfuture East Anglia chairman Peter Wakefield's presentation is at: www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Haverhill

Economic benefits boost case for Wisbech rail reopening

A significant amount of progress has been made towards the reopening of the seven-mile March-Wisbech line with a Rail Summit about the reopening organised by MP Steve Barclay, and the publishing of the economic benefits study showing a strong case for the reopening. www.wisbechrail.org.uk

Keep in touch at www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia

Twitter: @RailfutureEA

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You get four copies of *Railwatch* magazine a year and the chance to help make Britain's railways great again

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You can buy entries using PayPal on our website, or simply send a cheque, payable to Railfuture Lottery for a multiple of £12 for a year's entries to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND. Recent winners:

Sep 2013: Ron McLean, John Tarbuck, Roger Blake, John Ward, Michael Breslin, Neville Bramhall. Oct: Michael Breslin, John Bissett, David Saunders, John Ward, Peter Yates, Alan & Hilary Everett. Nov: Peter Clark, Graham Smith, Michael Groll, Frank Connolly, David Webb, Charles Burns. Dec: Stephen Hutchings, David Bailey, Michael Humphrey, Graham Collett, Peter Pass, Nigel Perkins. Jan 2014: Gerald Chandler, Graham Smith, Harry Maughan, Michael Tombs, Lindon Stone, Jane Vokins. Feb: Andrew Marsh, Cedric Martindale, David Brady, Ian Clatworthy, Garth Smith, David Stocks. Mar: Walter Richardson, David Allard, William Morton, David Stocks, Francis Thomas, Roger White. Apr: Robert Burrows, Michael Breslin, Graham Smith, Garth Smith, Janet Cuff, P Sherwood.



Shock and Ore: The Marshlink line will be electrified between Ashford and Ore soon after 2019, fulfilling a long-running Railfuture Sussex campaign. This Javelin high speed train at Hastings (the artist was commissioned by Railfuture to provide a vision of the future) will cut travel times to London and rejuvenate the local economy. See also page 15 for Sussex by the Sea and Local Action

Labour backing for East Coast

Labour's shadow transport secretary Mary Creagh congratulated Railfuture members for the fantastic job they do in campaigning for better rail services.

Addressing Railfuture's AGM in Sheffield in May, she said Labour was still looking at "all options" for the railways, except one.

She said: "We will not be going back to British Rail."

Ms Creagh is MP for Wakefield which is served by East Coast Trains, run by Government's Directly Operated Trains.

The present coalition Government is trying to get EC back in the private sector but Labour wants it kept in the public sector.

Despite speculation in the media that Labour is considering returning rail franchises to



Shadow Transport Secretary Mary Creagh at Sheffield

public ownership, she did not say whether Labour wanted to keep EC as a comparator for the private franchises or would aim to bring the other rail franchises back into the public sector.

She reminded the audience however that Network Rail was coming back on to the Government's accounting books this year. But she said there was dissatisfaction with how current franchises had been extended without a proper public examination of the

advantages of doing so. Passengers were kept too much in the dark about the finances of the railways and also about the best fare deals on offer. Fares were going up to such an extent that people could often not afford to use rail. She said regulated fares had gone up by 20% under the present Government so a Labour government would give passengers the right to obtain the cheapest fare that was available.

When questioned about concessionary fares, she pledged that Labour would be targeting help to young people, especially those who were trying to find jobs, rather than senior citizens.

Railfuture president Christian Wolmar, who chaired the AGM, said it was an exciting time for the railways but he also raised the problem of finance, warning that there was a £350 million hole in this year's Department for Transport's budget.

He said Railfuture should take advantage of Chancellor George Osborne's belief in rail as a strong engine for regeneration.

FRANCHISE PROFITS ROW

Commentators argue private companies are making big profits thanks to taxpayer subsidies of the franchise system which should be ended. Martin Griffiths, chairman of the Rail Delivery Group, insists the private sector does "not siphon off large profits" though Go-Ahead shares increased in value by 9% on 23 May, the day it was awarded Britain's biggest rail franchise.

Professor Paul Salvesson believes there should be a mixed economy with not-for-dividend companies, possibly several regional companies, running the trains, with employee involvement.

Ironically, nationalised railways will make an impact on British rail franchising: the governments of France, Germany, the Netherlands and Hong Kong, through their state companies, are bidding for UK rail franchises.

Picture: PAUL COLBECK

