

*rail*watch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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London's Bridge to the future

SEE PAGE 2

The new London Bridge

Passengers returning from their August bank holiday walked blinking into a bright new London Bridge station.

To be precise, two-thirds of the new concourse at Britain's fourth-busiest (but not very lovely) railway station opened.

Our front page picture shows the view from the platforms looking down the escalators to the new concourse.

The picture (right) shows the view from the concourse looking up to the platforms.

Four years of enormous effort has gone into rebuilding the grimy old station and realigning tracks as part of the £6 billion Thameslink project which will be completed in 2018.

It will transform rail travel through a wide swathe of the south east of England, with improved connections to more destinations including Cambridge and Peterborough.

Network Rail is also untangling the track on the approaches to London Bridge station, as well as building new flyovers.

There have been well-publicised problems for passengers though because trains have been cancelled and delayed as Network Rail and train operators struggled to cope with the 56 million passengers who use the station every year. Most of the passengers have been far from happy.

Dyan Crowther, Govia Thameslink Railway's chief operating officer, said: "Our passengers are benefiting from the newly unveiled escalators, stairs and lifts and will be impressed by the new concourse. We are looking forward to the completion of the station in 2018, with its new track and signalling, allowing the return of a new and improved Thameslink service."

When Thameslink is complete in 2018, passengers will benefit from new, longer and more spacious trains running every two to three minutes through central London in the peak.

The new concourse at London Bridge will be bigger than the pitch at Wembley stadium, increasing passenger capacity by 65%. London Bridge is London's oldest surviving rail terminus,

Government will deliver HS2 'as planned'

The Government gave an assurance in September that work on High Speed Two from London to the West Midlands through Warwickshire will start next year, after the Commons public accounts committee questioned whether there was a realistic timetable for the scheme. Transport Secretary Chris Grayling told the BBC: "We aim to deliver as planned in the middle of the next decade the first stage and we will, later this autumn, be setting out some detail, the remaining routes."

and first opened in 1836 and the five-year rebuilding project has been complicated by train operators and the Government being embroiled in a dispute with rail union RMT which objects to drivers being made responsible for closing train doors.

Many people think it is a simple matter of extending practices which operate elsewhere without problems.

But former BR chief Alan Marshall believes that the situation has changed since driver-only operation was introduced more than 30 years ago. Passenger numbers have trebled and new 12-car trains are running that can carry 1,100 people.

He highlights a Rail Accident Investigation Branch report into a "trap and drag" incident which occurred last year when a woman's hand became trapped in a train door at Hayes and Harlington station.

She sustained hand, head and back injuries, with the driver unaware of what had happened and no despatch staff on the platform. It was only later that Great Western safety managers, viewing CCTV images, realised the seriousness of the incident.

The RAIB's report highlights similar previous incidents at Huntington, King's Cross, Brentwood and West Wickham.

The report draws attention to "a lack of awareness among operational staff of the limitations of existing train door interlocking technology, and the importance of the final safety check when despatching a train."

Mr Marshall concludes: "The default position might become that the drivers release the doors, as they do already on Pendolinos and Voyagers, but responsibility for closing might vary according to characteristic of service, type of train and station layouts."

The RAIB has also called for rolling stock companies to redouble efforts to equip train doors with sensitive edge technology to ensure that – if even the flimsiest item is trapped – the traction interlock is safeguarded.

Mr Marshall believes an inquiry into the dispute should look into all these issues.



Part of the new London Bridge station concourse which opened at the end of August. The project will be completed in 2018

Picture: NETWORK RAIL

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pilning station is losing its footbridge as part of the Great Western electrification programme with the result that some people will have to travel to Severn Tunnel Junction station and back again before they can alight or board. Campaigners want a better deal. Details: savepilningstation@gmail.com

The cost of reinstating five miles of track to Wadebridge, Cornwall, is £54 million, according to consultants for Cornwall County Council. The cost should actually be £15 million, based on other rail reopenings. Railnews September 2016

Only two models of car deliver their advertised fuel economy when driven on the road, according to Emission Analytics. Diesel cars are emitting many times the official limit for nitrogen oxides.

Using the train between Manchester and Leeds is impossible for disabled people, said Declan O'Neill of Oldham in a letter to The Guardian.

Trains are continuing to run on

60 miles of the Settle-Carlisle line despite a landslide at Eden Brow. A replacement bus operates over 12 miles of the route between Carlisle and Armthwaite. The whole line will be back to normal in March.

An experimental rail service will be introduced between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard in May next year, to connect with the West Somerset preserved line to Minehead, thanks to an initiative by Taunton Deane Borough Council.

The Rail Delivery Group was planning to hold a "summit" in September to bring together passenger train operators and the government "to tackle some of the complexity around rail fares and ticketing."

Rail Minister Paul Maynard said in August that an extra £20 million will be made available to reopen rail stations. Up to 75% of the cost of a station can be provided from the New Stations Fund which has already been used for Ilkeston and Kenilworth.

Big league rail freight for Ireland

By Lee Davies

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We do not hear much about the railways of Ireland but here is some good news.

Iarnród Éireann (Irish Rail) has now completed a series of three freight train trials that will enable loads to be increased by 50%.

The final trial in June was a multimodal service operated from Dublin Port (North Wall) to County Mayo in the north west of Ireland. Until now trains on this route have been operated with a maximum of 18 wagons (carrying 36 standard containers) and this trial has now pushed the limit up to 27 wagons (carrying 54 containers).

The train, hauled by a class 201 General Motors diesel, the most powerful to operate in Ireland, was 440 metres long with a trailing load of 1,110 tonnes. The train, operated on behalf of International Warehousing & Transport of Dublin, is the longest commercial freight train to operate over the Iarnród Éireann network. Recently a trial of an 18-wagon, 390 metres long, 1,100 tonnes pulpwood train also operated successfully between Limerick and Waterford.

Longer trains on the network will boost the competitiveness of rail freight to industry. The environmental benefits of rail freight would also be enhanced by operating higher capacity services – currently moving freight by rail instead of road reduces emissions up to 75% per container, and longer trains could see emissions reduced to one-tenth of the road equivalent.

Iarnród Éireann's general manager for freight, Glenn Carr, said that Iarnród Éireann is currently working with existing customers as well as freight forwarders, ports and the Irish Exporters Association to identify further opportunities and trends for rail freight development within the Irish and European market. In 2015, 96.4 million tonne kilometres of freight were clocked up by rail in Ireland.

Principal rail freight traffic on the Irish network currently includes containers from Ballina to Waterford and Dublin Ports, pulpwood from Ballina and Westport to Waterford Port, and zinc ore from Tara Mines in Navan to



AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE ROAD JUGGERNAUT: This freight train, hauled by two class 86 electric locomotives, is on its way from Felixstowe, Essex, to Trafford Park in Manchester. It is much better than the containers going by road but if the Government and Network Rail could agree to complete the upgrade of lines from Felixstowe through Ely to Nuneaton, as advocated by Railfuture, the environmental payback would be even greater

Picture: ROBIN PATRICK

Dublin Port. Subject to the successful conclusion of trials, the company expects to commence the operation of longer freight trains for customers from the fourth quarter of 2016.

MENDIPS FREIGHT

DB Cargo has renewed its contract to deliver aggregates for Mendip Rail for a further five years.

DB Cargo delivers more than 100 trains of aggregates every week from quarries in Somerset to London and the south east.

The class 59 "jumbo" locomotives haul the heaviest trains in the UK, which are 44 wagons long and can carry over 3,300 tonnes.

Mick Tinsley, head of building, infrastructure and construction at DB Cargo said: "I am very pleased to see our long-term relationship with Mendip Rail being extended further. Our proven ability to reliably deliver the high volume requirement of the contract is a major factor in Mendip Rail choosing to continue working with DB Cargo UK."

"Over the coming years we are jointly committed to meeting the increasing demands of the busy South East construction market."

DB Cargo serves 33 depots for Mendip Rail, loading materials at seven points:

- Aggregate Industries Torr Quarry (Somerset)
- Hanson Aggregates Whatley Quarry (Somerset)
- Aggregate Industries Isle of Grain Wharf (Kent)
- Hanson Aggregates Machen Quarry (South Wales)

■ Midland Quarry Products Cliffe Hill Quarry (Leicestershire)

■ Hanson Aggregates Dagenham Wharf (East London)

■ Avonmouth Docks (Bristol)

The trains split into two or three smaller trains in West London, to deliver aggregates to their final destination with greater efficiency and a reduced environmental impact.

The products delivered include aggregates for use in concrete and asphalt and rail ballast for the London Underground network.

DB Cargo has also introduced a dedicated management team, with joint management reviews held daily at the Mendip Rail offices at Merehead in Somerset.

Mendip Rail has also hired 130 freight aggregate wagons from VTG Rail UK, which will be in use on the Somerset to London route this summer.

TYNE UPGRADE

Andrew Moffat, chief executive of the Port of Tyne, has announced the start of building new facilities to handle, store and transport wood pellet for Lynemouth Power Limited.

LPL is making good progress with its plan to convert the power station in south east Northumberland from coal to biomass. The Port of Tyne has secured the agreement to handle, store and transport up to 1.8 million tonnes of wood pellet every year once conversion is complete.

Construction has begun on the port's estate at Tyne Dock in

South Shields to build a 75,000 tonne storage facility, three enclosed conveyors and transfer towers, three silos, a rail loading silo and other works.

The Port of Tyne is contributing £13 million to this huge project with most of the investment being made by LPL.

Mr Moffat said: "The fast approaching end of coal imports has been challenging for all UK ports that have been handling this cargo, but the strategy of diversification at the port ensures that we are not reliant on any one sector."

"We have been at the forefront of developing expertise and facilities to handle the renewable fuel, wood pellet, and I am delighted that LPL have chosen the Port of Tyne as a key partner in this significant development."

"The project will provide new jobs, and support jobs indirectly, both in construction and in operation, for many years to come."

"The port has been investing in building a strong, diverse business for almost a decade."

"We had a challenging year in 2015 which also included restructuring the business, winning new business and ensuring that customer service remained top priority."

"With the ongoing support and commitment of our employees and all of our stakeholders, we look forward to working together to deliver our future strategies to ensure that the Port of Tyne continues to be a vibrant and sustainable port and an important economic driver and enabler for the regional and national economy."

East Anglia

By Paul Hollinghurst
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New faster trains in East Anglia franchise

The winner of the East Anglia Rail franchise was finally announced on 10 August with Abellio continuing to run services until 2025. We are pleased by the planned 2019 replacement of all the trains with electric and bi-mode units, built by Bombardier and Stadler. The new trains will be a minimum of three carriages which will be a relief to passengers suffering overcrowding. Free wifi will be available to all passengers.

Service upgrades are promised, including London-Ipswich in 60 minutes, and Norwich in 90 minutes (on some services), the extension of Norwich-Cambridge services to Stansted airport, and through trains between Lowestoft and London. The Ipswich-Peterborough service will be increased to hourly. Abellio will serve the new station at Cambridge North with two trains an hour. Nearly £60 million will be spent on improving stations, with major schemes at Broxbourne, Cambridge, Cheshunt, Harlow and Southend Victoria.

We are disappointed there is only one additional morning peak service from Ipswich to Cambridge. It means Newmarket has only a fraction of the trains to Cambridge that similarly sized Ely has. The franchise announcement had nothing to say about reopening to Wisbech so Railfuture East Anglia will be continuing the campaign for this important scheme. We also want to see the line to Haverhill reopened.

<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Greater+Anglia>

Cambridge CyclePoint biggest in Britain

The official opening of Cambridge CyclePoint was performed on 26 June by transport minister Robert Goodwill. The building, next to the station, holds around 3,000 cycles on three floors and is the largest in Britain. Mr Goodwill said: "This superb new CyclePoint will help get people out of their cars and make cycling the natural choice for short journeys, improving health, air quality and cutting congestion." The Cycle Point has a cycle shop and hire facility on the ground floor. It is open 24 hours a day and is free. It could be improved by a direct link to the station footbridge for which passive provision has been provided.

<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Cambridge+Railway+Station>

West Anglia upgrades needed to match rival

Cambridge's transport links are being held back by the limitations of the West Anglia main line, according to the West Anglia Task Force report on the London, Stansted and Cambridge corridor. Irregular services, long journey times and unreliability are obstacles to growth. Huge capacity increases on the West Anglia main line are needed. Railfuture East Anglia wants West Anglia services to Ely, March and Wisbech developed to match the King's Lynn-King's Cross corridor.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Stations
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East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
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County rail strategy needs to aim higher

Railfuture East Midlands submitted a detailed response to the county council's draft Leicester

and Leicestershire Rail Strategy, welcoming its positive tone but suggesting further additions to the Action Plan. We want to see promotion of the Leicester to Burton-upon-Trent reopening which will require significant infrastructure work including reinstating the west to north curve at Knighton Junction, Leicester (see item below). The county council also needs to work with other authorities to reopen the Castle Donington line. In addition, there is potential for new stations on existing lines. The county's poor rail connectivity to other regions could be improved by reopening a disused dive-under at Nuneaton to provide a direct Leicester-Coventry service. Direct services from Leicester to the Thames Valley could be introduced using the planned East-West Rail link from Bedford. New services could also be provided along a circular route from Kettering via Corby, Oakham and Melton Mowbray to Leicester and back down the Midland main line, with the potential for reopened stations at East Goscote, Thurmaston, Kibworth and Desborough.

Leicester-Burton needs more promotion

A report commissioned by Leicestershire County Council and North West Leicestershire District Council has concluded that reopening the line from Leicester to Burton-upon-Trent would not be financially viable. Upgrading the freight line for 75mph passenger trains would cost £175 million according to the consultants, with an estimated economic benefit of only £340,000 per year. This would not meet the Government's requirements for a viable business case. Railfuture East Midlands is disappointed by this conclusion and the low gross value-added figure quoted in the county's draft rail strategy. We have drawn attention to the success of the Robin Hood Line in neighbouring Nottinghamshire, which has many similar characteristics and also had to overcome significant infrastructure difficulties. The Leicester-Burton line is a crucial missing link in the county's and the wider regional rail network. It also offers a degree of compensation for areas of North-West Leicestershire that will be affected by the construction and operation of High Speed Two but will not directly benefit from HS2 stations.

There is better news from across the county boundary, with the South Derbyshire Local Plan safeguarding land with the potential to be used for railway stations at three sites. Two of these, at Castle Gresley and Drakelow, are on the Leicester-Burton line, while the third is at Stenson Fields on the main line between Derby and Burton, an area of recent housing development.

Corby disruption vital for future growth

The line between Kettering and Corby closed for six weeks during September and October for works on bridges and viaducts, with a replacement bus service being provided. The blockade is part of the £103 million project to re-install double track (the line having been singled in 1986). Railfuture's David Fursdon has kept the *Evening Telegraph* and radio stations updated, pointing out that the disruption is vital to ensure improved services on the line in future. With the cooperation of Corby MP Tom Pursglove, he has also helped to ensure that the booking office and Loco Coco cafe remained open while the work was done.

North of Corby, Railfuture would like to see a south-to-east chord built at Manton Junction, which would improve connections to the east from the southern part of the Midland main line. This would particularly benefit freight from

Ketton Cement Works near Stamford, as well as opening up opportunities for new east-west passenger services.

Ilkeston station

Work is continuing on the new Ilkeston station, with the old footbridge demolished and a new one installed. Opening of the much-delayed station, at one time programmed for 2014, is now projected for the start of the new timetable in December 2016.

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Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes
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Moorsbus director Helen Gundry and TPE's Charlie French at Thirsk

Train links boosted by Moorsbus

Train-to-bus connections to some of Yorkshire's best countryside are being promoted by TransPennine Express and Moorsbus. Moorsbus buses met trains at Thirsk over the August bank holiday to link to North York Moors national park, including Helmsley for Rievaulx Abbey, and Sutton Bank. The Moorsbus network was saved from closure three years ago by a group of volunteers who set up the Moorsbus Community Interest Company.

More info: <http://moorsbus.org/>

Route changes to HS2 for Sheffield

The proposed High Speed Two station at Meadowhall has been abandoned in favour of serving Sheffield Midland by a spur from near Mansfield over existing lines. The proposed alignment has also been modified so the high speed line stays closer to the M1 and M18.

Loco-hauled trains to boost capacity

TransPennine Express's Chris Nutton explained how its new franchise would benefit passengers, at a Railfuture Yorkshire June meeting in Huddersfield. Loco-hauled trains with five coaches are to begin running in 2018 to increase capacity. A new timetable in December next year will improve links from Huddersfield and all stations to Leeds.

Experience pays with Pacers and electrics

Former Railfuture Yorkshire president Gerald Egan has died. Gerald, as station master at Leeds, had to cope when the "dreaded 141 Pacers" were forced on Harrogate line passengers. Later when the line to Leeds was electrified, Gerald had to reassure dubious railway professionals doubtful that the service would be viable. As most Railfuture members know, if you improve the service, passenger numbers grow. The Leeds-King's Cross service is now so popular it is twice as frequent as when it was launched.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch
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Pellets from USA for British power stations

By Lee Davies

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The Port of Tyne recently recorded the largest ever cargo of wood pellets ever handled in a single shipment – the bulk cargo vessel MV Agnes delivered a record 57,845 tonnes of wood pellets.

The wood pellets are destined for one of the UK's largest energy producers Drax Power based in North Yorkshire.

Arriving from Virginia in the United States, at 225 metres long the MV Agnes is also the largest wood pellet vessel ever handled at the port.

Steven Harrison, the port's chief operating officer said: "The port was the first to work in partnership with Drax in handling large volumes of wood pellet as it began to convert from coal derived electricity generation to renewable energy in 2010.

"The significant investments in the port's infrastructure in recent years have enabled us to accommodate some of the world's largest cargo ships and the MV Agnes represents a milestone in terms of our ability to handle such large cargoes on the Tyne."

The MV Agnes was unloaded in six days. The wood pellets will be stored at the port's purpose-built facility and supplied on demand to Drax via the port's direct rail terminal – eliminating road miles and congestion and reducing the carbon footprint.

Peel Ports Liverpool bulk terminal is also fully operational for the import of biomass for Drax

Northern ports strategy

PD Ports has signed an agreement with other major ports across the North of England in an unprecedented collaboration to ensure its unified voice is heard by Government to improve freight and transport links.

The award-winning ports and logistics company with operations at Teesport, Hartlepool and



KEEPING FREIGHT OFF THE ROADS: A train to Knowsley, Merseyside, from Wilton, near Redcar, being hauled by a class 66 diesel loco in July photographed near York

on the Humber has been holding regular roundtable discussions with Port of Tyne, ABP Ports and Peel Ports.

They have brokered a groundbreaking pact, announced in Liverpool, to pursue a Northern Ports Strategy, work together to create new jobs in and around ports, and boost investment in an East-West freight supercorridor with improvements to rail infrastructure being the ultimate priority.

While 95 per cent of British goods come and go through ports, the region is home to 24 per cent of the UK population but transports 56 per cent of the UK's rail tonnage, 35 per cent of road tonnage and accommodates 35 per cent of total port throughput.

However, 60 per cent of freight destined for the North is delivered to southern ports, leading to unnecessary motorway traffic, delays, pollution and inefficiency.

Freight terminal reopens

Potter Logistics has reopened its rail freight terminal in Knowsley,

Merseyside, after a decade of closure. The service recently welcomed its first train since 2006 and has since resumed operations.

Network Rail has reconnected the Potter Logistics terminal to the West Coast main line at Wigan, which serves as a link to the rest of the UK and Europe via the Channel Tunnel.

Trains are stopping at the terminal twice daily during the week and once on a Saturday, with the service being used initially to move freight from Knowsley Industrial Park to the North East.

Potter Logistics managing director Matthew Lamb, said: "We are delighted that the Knowsley train terminal connection has reopened, which allows Potter Logistics to further extend its rail activities.

"Freight trains into Knowsley represent a significant milestone for the terminal and open up the adjacent terminal land for rail freight usage."

Founded in 1965, Potter Logistics is a specialist company which

serves the chemical, agricultural, pharmaceutical and food industries. It has offices in Droitwich, Ely, York, Ripon and Selby, as well as its Knowsley operation.

Welcome back Sunderland

DB Cargo UK has sealed a contract with scrap metal merchants Ward Bros (Steel), a customer new to rail freight. Ward Bros transports materials from its scrap processing facility at the Port of Sunderland to the CELSA Steel's UK works in Cardiff.

The trains carrying the metal are the first to run out of the Port of Sunderland since 1998.

As scrap metal is not compacted, the length and size of the MBA wagons means that a heavy weight of material can still be carried, despite its large size.

DB Cargo UK is operating one service per week for Ward Bros, carrying around 1,250 tonnes of material on each train.

The scrap metal is processed at the CELSA steel works to make finished metal products, including reinforced steel bars used in the construction industry.

Government backs rail freight with new strategy

The Rail Freight Group issued an immediate welcome to the Government's new rail freight strategy on 13 September. Developed with input from the industry, the strategy sets out the case for supporting rail freight, and highlights where action can unlock barriers to growth. Rail minister Paul Maynard said the Government has estimated that rail freight generates around £1 billion from improved productivity and contributes £600 million by reducing road congestion, carbon emissions and air pollution. With

significant private sector investment being made by rail freight operators, customers, ports, terminals and the supply chain, the Government aims to provide a stable environment for growth, including network capacity and track access charging. The strategy also talks of helping the industry in key areas such as developing skills, innovation and communication, which are all vital for future success. RFG's executive director Maggie Simpson said: "The rail freight sector is changing and freight operators and their customers

are working to deliver growth in new and existing markets and to be fit for the future. This strategy will help to provide the stable and supportive environment they need." Freightliner's Russell Mears said: "It sets out a clear vision for how rail freight can continue to grow and identifies opportunities for partners to innovate in order to help deliver increased environmental and air quality benefits." The strategy is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/rail-freight-transport

London and South East

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

Lea Bridge station proves popular

Newly reopened Lea Bridge station is attracting large numbers of passengers and there are plans to build 300 new homes nearby. Based on passenger numbers in the first 10 weeks since opening, the station is expected to attract 250,000 in its first year, well up on predictions. Railfuture hopes the station will attract a million passengers a year fairly soon. Capacity will be improved when Network Rail installs an extra track on the line north to Tottenham Hale and Angel Road which will serve the Meridian Water housing development. Abellio East Anglia has committed to provide a train every 15 minutes during its new franchise.

Big results for London's small stations

Cambridge Heath and London Fields were closed after fires in the 1980s. Both reopened but London Fields was "temporarily" closed for nearly five years! Twenty years ago Railfuture campaigners set up Cambridge Heath and London Fields rail users group and have carried out twice-yearly passenger counts ever since. They have published an 11-page illustrated progress report, supporting research by the official watchdog London TravelWatch. The data have been used to support lobbying for improved services and station facilities but also to challenge the Office of Rail and Road usage estimates. Read more: <http://bit.ly/2ceaoSY>

Railfuture backs another small station

Bricket Wood is the only station on the Watford Junction-St Albans Abbey line with an intact original building, albeit boarded up. Railfuture has contributed to a trust aiming to restore it for local community and passenger use.

Out and about as Railfuture takes a stand

Taking Railfuture's campaign messages out and about is a vital part of gaining influence and recruiting members. The Railfuture stall with its banner and publications went for the fifth year to Uckfield Festival's Big Day in July, and to Haywards Heath station's 175th anniversary in September. In November we will be contributing material, as all branches are entitled to do, to the national stand at the annual rail exhibition in Birmingham's NEC.

New target for high-speed Hastings

Electrification of the Ashford-Hastings MarshLink route, as a part of improvements to deliver quicker journeys to Bexhill and Hastings and stimulate their fragile coastal economies, was ruled out by Network Rail at a local MPs' transport summit in March. Now Network Rail has told the local rail user group in Bexhill that the MarshLink upgrade programme will be spread over a much longer period. Railfuture and other local campaigners are now concentrating efforts on lobbying to secure the two most critical parts of the package. We want the service to be run by bi-mode Javelin-type electro-diesel trains procured through the process for the next South Eastern franchise which is due to start in June 2018. That will also require track work at Ashford International station to allow trains to travel from High Speed One on to the MarshLink route. We want direct services to start running as soon after 2019 as possible but by 2024 at the latest.

Hackney interchange is a passenger success

After only one year in use, the step-free walkway between Hackney Central and

Hackney Downs is a proven success. The walkway sees more passengers than over 80% of British stations. The figure is 25% more than the number Transport for London predicted for 2020. Railfuture believes such cautious business case modelling, also known as "pessimism bias", regularly underestimates the value of new facilities for passengers.

Railfuture London and South East's quarterly newsletter raise can be found at www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East+branch+news
Twitter: @RailfutureLSE

Scotland

By Jane Ann Liston secretary@railfuturescotland.org.uk

Borders line reopening celebrated

The Borders line reopening conference was hosted by Railfuture Scotland, appropriately at Newtongrange, one of the new stations on the line. David Spaven and Ann Glen gave an outline of the history of the campaign, the construction of the new line, its successes and shortcomings. The conference also heard from advocates of new rail services in Fife, at Levenmouth and St Andrews. Railfuture Scotland has also attended model railway exhibitions at Perth, Cupar and Glasgow.

Seamless West Coast journeys needed

Railfuture Scotland responded to the British Government's InterCity West Coast consultation. Railfuture is keen to see "seamless journeys" and community development, although the franchise will serve only big cities. There is still much uncertainty over the route of High Speed Two to Scotland and how it could affect local and freight train services where it uses "upgraded" classic lines. It is to be hoped that this will not be an excuse to postpone other train service improvements.

Beattock in trio of reopening studies

The battle for a reopened station at Beattock has made significant progress in 2016. A study initiated by the volunteer-led Beattock Station Action Group and undertaken by Peter Brett Associates offered several options. The South West Scotland Transport Partnership's board meeting on 15 July decided that an official examination under the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide system will be undertaken. The estimated cost of a so-called STAG 1 report is around £15,000 plus. Dumfries & Galloway Council will be expected to pay up, as part of its ongoing bid for money from the Scottish Government's station fund. SWESTRANS also called for a STAG 1 examination for reopening stations at Thornhill (Dumfries) and Eastriggs (between Greta Green and Annan).

Despite a report that South Lanarkshire Council would fund a STAG report into reopening Symington station on the West Coast main line, no funding source has been identified. Reopening Symington and Beattock would return rail services to the largest rail-less area in the British Isles. South Lanarkshire will however fund a £250,000 station car-park at Carstairs, now imperative for the successful Railfuture-backed reinstated rail service to Edinburgh. Should local councils have to fund STAG inquiries and station car parks, after nine years of Scottish Government funding cuts?

Rail reopening would aid Fife regeneration

Levenmouth Rail Campaign believes reopening stations at Leven and Cameron Bridge would stimulate economic recovery in the area across the Firth of Forth from Edinburgh. A station at Cameron Bridge would also enable drinks



Councils have offered to increase their contributions for East Coast main line station reopenings at East Linton (to £3.44 million) and Reston (to £2.84 million) if the Scottish Government takes on the risk element as well as its already promised 50% of construction costs. Rail Action Group East of Scotland, East Lothian and Scottish Borders councils and the South East Scotland Transport Partnership have appealed to Minister for Transport Humza Yousaf to take on the risk (optimism bias) element of Network Rail's costings. RAGES has also linked with the South East Northumberland Rail Users Group to campaign for a better local rail service on the East Coast main line between Newcastle and Edinburgh.

See also pages 14 and 15

company Diageo to switch its freight to rail. The campaign argues that the improved Fife Circle rail services have helped combat deprivation in the Cowdenbeath and Lochgelly area.

Election year potential for St Andrews

The St Andrews Rail Link campaign made a coherent case for St Andrews to the chief executive of Fife Council. Next year's council elections may provide an opportunity for generating the necessary political will. As extra encouragement for the politicians, StarLink is also about to commence fund-raising to commission a STAG pre-appraisal.

Scottish Rail Contacts

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES) www.rages.org.uk/
Beattock Station Action Group (BSAG) www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/
St Andrews Rail Link (StarLink) campaign www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/
LevenMouth Rail Campaign www.lmrc-action.org.uk/
Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG) www.capitalrail.org.uk/
Newburgh Train Station campaign www.newburghtrainstation.org.uk/
Forth Rail Link www.forthrailink.com

www.railfuturescotland.org.uk

Rail Stars

By Roger Blake

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Thirteen rail user groups have submitted 16 entries for the fifth annual awards contest.

The winners will be presented with framed certificates by Railfuture president Christian Wolmar at Railfuture's autumn conference in Birmingham on Saturday 12 November.

The groups reflect the broad spectrum of local rail development campaigning for the benefit of passengers, with interests as diverse as opening a new station or being friends of existing stations, improving train services and station facilities on existing lines or lobbying for new passenger services.

The two most sought-after awards this year are for Best Website with five nominations and Best Newsletter with six. Other awards available are for Best Campaign, Best Campaigner, Best Social Media, and Best New Group.

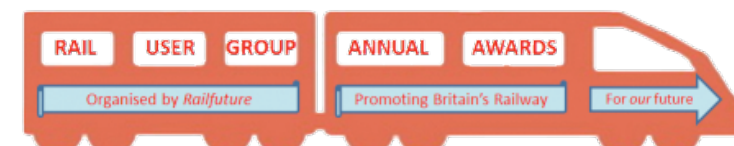
Seven of the rail user groups submitting entries are from the North West of England, with two from London and the South East and one each from Wales, Wessex, the North East and Yorkshire – a very clear leaning this year towards northern England!

A group of Railfuture vice-presidents will be the judging panel, under the ever-watchful eye of President Christian Wolmar.

They can also make a Judges' Special Award. Last year it went



BORDERS STAR: Author Ann Glen on board one of the inaugural trains on the Borders Railway. Ann was one of many who campaigned for years for the line to reopen and she was guest speaker at the Railfuture Borders celebration conference at Newtongrange in June



to Railfuture Scotland for all those who had contributed over the decades to the campaigns for reopening the Borders Railway on the former Waverley line.

Bookings for November's conference are still being taken but the closing date for RUG award entries has now passed.

RUG Awards for 2016 will be given for:

- 1 Best Newsletter - Gold and Silver awards
- 2 Best Website - Gold and Silver awards
- 3 Best Social Media Promotion
- 4 Best Campaign
- 5 Best Campaigner (Railfuture members only)
- 6 Best New Group
- 7 Judges' Special Award

An American rail enthusiast ... in Oban

By Allison Cosgrove

allison.cosgrove@railfuture.org.uk

I was delighted to meet Alan Yorker, a past president of the USA's National Association of Railroad Passengers, and his wife Janie when they came to Oban for a holiday in July.

Alan has been a long-time member of Railfuture (and an admirer of the Railfuture lottery) with a particular interest in Scotland as his mother's family came from the Western Isles. Over a cup of hot chocolate we discussed railways, including Alan's favourite station, Glenfinnan. Alan explained that NARP was founded in 1967 in response to concerns that passenger services were in the charge of private owners.

Railway use was dropping and President Eisenhower had authorised a programme of highway building after seeing Germany's post-war autobahn construction. America's long-distance rail travel was waning and freight use decreasing. Alan said there was a "total bias" against rail. NARP worked hard to save

◆◆◆◆ You can join the Railfuture lottery at www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery

Franchises delayed by Brexit

By Phil Smart

phil.smart@councillors.ipswich.gov.uk

The contest for the East Anglian franchise went to extra time and penalties but, in a Government announcement on 10 August, was finally awarded to Abellio.

That was two months after it was expected, following the submission of tenders in December by Abellio, First Group and National Express.

But in February, the Government announced a referendum on European Union membership would take place in June and the Brexit result threw the franchise competition in doubt.

Most rolling stock is priced in Euros and even those from UK factories are assembled from imported components. The bids all included replacement of up to 1,000 new vehicles at about £1 million each.

Because of the drop in the value of Sterling, around 15% was added to the cost of new trains.

Of greater concern was the impact on projected revenue with many economists forecasting a slowdown. The Government can give financial support to franchisees if there is an economic downturn but this franchise required a bail out before it had even been awarded.

Negotiations took place and the final agreement could prove expensive for the taxpayer.

This is not just East Anglia's problem either, because recent awards for East Coast, ScotRail, Northern and TransPennine may also need bailing out in the post Brexit climate.

Railfuture believes the responsibility must lie with the Department for Transport and the Treasury – not passengers – and there should be no compromising on train fleet specifications.

The only service improvement beyond those specified in the invitation to tender, is the doubling of the Ipswich-Peterborough service frequency to hourly. The timetable improvements will have to wait a further year (until 2020) once the new trains have been delivered.

We understand that some infrastructure improvements in the bid were not taken up, and campaigning must continue for faster journeys between Ipswich and Cambridge and the reopening to Wisbech.

railwatch October 2016 7

Euston Cross is vital

As a member of the informal Camden HS2 group, I have been rather concerned that in recent months the Euston Cross scheme has been downplayed, as I believe that connectivity with HS1 is one of the most important considerations, and indeed would regard a Euston Cross type link between Old Oak Common and Stratford, with connections with other inter-city routes out of London, as more important than the rest of HS2.

I was therefore heartened to see the map in Ian Brown's article in *Railwatch* 148 as evidence that Railfuture is still pursuing the idea, which is also mentioned in Graham Nalty's letter.

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HS2 for 21st century

Ian Brown's article on "Making progress towards a bigger and better railway" in *Railwatch* 148 suggests that the Euston Cross station is a better solution than the present proposal for an enlarged Euston. I agree.

From my perspective at Derby, getting to central London is fine, but going beyond to business customers in the greater South East often requires a lengthy and inconvenient rail journey across London, although Thameslink is very good for destinations it serves.

While the majority of passengers on HS2 wish to go to central London, quite a large number will travel beyond. For HS2 to achieve the maximum gain to the UK economy, journeys beyond London need to be speeded up, not only by faster HS2 trains, but also by more efficient interchange between HS2 and trains from London serving the South Coast.

On this basis, I consider it to be far more important for HS2 to link with Thameslink, by quick platform to platform walk, in the manner of the Euston Cross proposals, than with Crossrail.

To make HS2 effective at the London end, it really needs to split into three directions. The first and most obvious is to link with HS1 (with platforms at Stratford under the existing main line station as Stratford International is too remote). The second is to link with Gatwick airport and Brighton. The third is to serve Heathrow and Portsmouth, with connections to Southampton and Bournemouth. Some of these requirements may conflict,

but present plans fall far too short of this ideal. We could do a lot better.

At Stuttgart and Vienna, terminus stations are being replaced by through stations which deliver three major benefits. They are more efficient to operate the services, requiring less space. They cost less to build in areas of the highest property value as a result. And they open up new markets beyond the buffer stops of the terminus, increasing passenger numbers and revenue. Terminus stations on high speed lines are last century's technology.

In the 1980s, most people north of Watford, including myself, used trains only for journeys to London and used their cars to all other major cities. HS2, with its parkways and city centre terminus stations, appears to be far more appropriate to the transport needs of the 1980s than the present day.

Railfuture should speak louder on the concerns of rail travellers of the 21st century on HS2. Ian Brown is right in suggesting that joined-up thinking is required in South Yorkshire. What has been announced by HS2 Ltd since Ian's article is even less joined-up than before.

Graham Nalty, Alvaston, Derby
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Curb the cars first

I am fairly sceptical about Railfuture East Anglia's support for a light rail tunnel under Cambridge city centre. A similar proposal has been made in Oxford for a tunnel under the High Street – for buses!

An underground line for a city the size of Oxford or Cambridge cannot be justified, on grounds of cost and accessibility. Boarding a tram at street level is much easier than going underground, and city centre tram stops can be much closer together. If public transport is plagued by inner city congestion, the answer is not to put it underground, but to restrict private motor traffic in principal streets used by public transport. Why should trams be banished underground, leaving more space for motor traffic in the streets above?

In many European cities it is accepted that pedestrianised streets can be shared with public transport. Freiburg-im-Breisgau is an example of an ancient university city comparable to Oxford or Cambridge, where light rail is successfully integrated with the old city centre. Nicholas Falk and Reg Harman have published a viable

light rail scheme for Oxford (*Tramways & Urban Transit* 929, June 2015), and a similar system for Cambridge need not go underground.

Martin Smith, Bath Street,
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Night trains

I was very interested to read the *Railwatch* 148 article "A Future for Night Trains".

It is very important for a new economic and financial case to be made for night trains for both Britain and Europe, since they have advantages over airlines.

I am all too familiar with the effects of aviation since I live under Heathrow's flightpath. Furthermore, aviation is one of the major causes of global warming and climate change. European sleeper services could be revived, especially if they connected with Eurostar services and Channel Tunnel Shuttle services at Calais.

Simon Barber, Kingsmead,
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Invest in renewables

We should celebrate the fact that electric trains are popular and, providing the power is from renewable sources, are non-polluting, with no climate-damaging carbon dioxide emissions. This is important as globally 2015 was the hottest year ever. I would therefore counter G P Brown's scepticism about wind power (*Railwatch* 148) by noting that being located next to the Atlantic, we always have the benefit of useable wind somewhere. No country can cut off the supply.

We need politicians to talk less about "subsidy" for the industry and more in terms of "investment" in our future energy security – and to power our trains.

John Davis, Harpenden AL5 5UD
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Double tracking

Mike Bond is right to highlight the huge capacity and reliability benefits from the recent double tracking of the Cotswolds line (*Railwatch* 148). In contrast, David Dixon seems to forget about freight, charters, traffic growth and diversions on the Highland main line in his assertion that it does not need doubling (*Railwatch* 147).

The Scottish Chambers of Commerce issued a press release in April which said: "Scotland's northern cities

need to be better connected, and single track sections of the railways linking Inverness, Aberdeen and the Central Belt are unacceptable in the 21st century."

"Unacceptable" is very strong language and rail improvements were their second priority, after faster broadband, for improving the Scottish economy.

The Highland main line is also dependent on the single track link to Edinburgh via Newburgh. Because of delays on the HML, on 8 August, the TransPennine connection at Edinburgh was lost and next day, the 10.45 from Inverness was later still and terminated at Perth because of the lack of capacity on the Newburgh line. This happens regularly. We should not underestimate the inconvenience and future deterrent to through passengers.

A loop would be helpful at Newburgh, but better still would be to adopt Transform Scotland's Inter City Express proposal to rebuild a direct link from Perth to Edinburgh via Kinross using some of the former trackbed. Currently trains from Perth to Glasgow take 55 minutes for the 62 miles, but 78 minutes for the 57 miles to Edinburgh via Newburgh.

Opening a fast 50-mile direct route would save 30 minutes between Edinburgh and Perth and also to stations north to Inverness. It is imaginative development not penny-pinching which is required for Scotland's strategic railways.

R J Arden, Southside Road,
Inverness

Rail for Maldon

A rail link worthy of consideration for reinstatement must be that between Maldon and the Great Eastern main line at Witham, Essex. The population of Maldon has grown over recent years and a lot of people drive to Witham to commute to London, causing parking problems in Witham.

Add to this the relatively poor road links from Maldon and the need for a rail link is apparent. Such a link could not follow the original trackbed as much of it has been built on but I am sure that this could be overcome.

Roger A Smith, Station Road,
Witham, Essex CM8 2FP

Positive charge

I would like to respond to Rex Hora in *Railwatch* 148. He believes electrification of our currently diesel operated sections of service will come to a grinding halt after the 2020

Thomas and a 2016 dispute

"Why have you only got two carriages attached?" asked the boy on the other platform.

"Because it's rush hour," laughed Thomas.



Cartoons: @PhillLucas

While most Railfuture members groaned at the industrial disputes on the railways, comedian Phil Lucas saw the funny side with the help of the Reverend W Awdry's creation, Thomas the Tank Engine, and some words of his own

election. He further states that whoever wins the next general election, the railway electrification plan will become a victim of "low carbon" policies.

He appears to take a cynical view of low carbon policy but it is necessary to combat dangerous climate change. The subject of climate change is too often pushed under the carpet and there are many climate sceptics. It is time everyone woke up to the issue and our leaders stopped burying their heads in the sand over the issue.

I would not be surprised if a future government did drag its heels over electrification, which frustratingly is the current situation. But let us not be too pessimistic. Think positively, keep campaigning and live with hope.

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Electric benefits

In reply to Rex Hora's letter in regard to my letter in *Railwatch* April 2016 about an all-electric railway, he says railway electrification will come to a grinding halt after the 2020 general election whichever party wins. I think that he is wrong about that, indeed it would be very strange indeed if that were to be the case. He says paradoxically that electrification will become a victim of low carbon policies again. I think he is mistaken about that too. How does he know whether

their energy costs would be three times that of diesels? As far as cost is concerned, a huge amount of money would be saved, thanks to the health benefits alone.

James Knight, Church Road,
Basildon SS14 2LD

Global tickets

In May I made a trip to Germany using an Interrail Global pass. Apart from the fact that I saved a little on travel from Brussels to the German border at Aachen, I was also able to take advantage of the newly introduced facility to use a Global pass in your home country for travel to/from your port (or station) of exit/entry. I was therefore able to travel from Tipton, West Midlands, to Euston, and back again.

London Midland did not check tickets on the trains to and from New Street. Virgin trains had a quick check on the way to London but did not bother to clip the ticket. No problems so far. On the return journey my friend and I were waved through the barrier at Euston. There was no ticket check on the train.

Send your letters and emails 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 but include your postal address

So, the new facility appears to be working OK, from my limited experience. I would be interested to hear from others who have used this new facility what their experiences have been so that I can report back to the Interrail folk that we met last year in Utrecht. Ultimately we will be in a position to update the web page on the Railfuture website on travel using Interrail.

Donald Payne
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Machine failures

With respect to the article in *Railwatch* 148, my local station Barnt Green is unstaffed and, according to Network Rail statistics, it has 250,000 passenger entries/exits a year. There is one ticket machine which does not even accept cash. It is on platform 3 which is not convenient for people travelling to Alvechurch or Redditch. It takes at least 45 seconds to complete a transaction and is not adequate at busy times. What's more, the machine is often not working. Some conductors issue tickets on the train, while others do not.

As well as enforcing revenue protection policy, the company should also look at how easy it is to buy a ticket.

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East West choices

Network Rail has now published its Summary Report on the options for the Central Section of East-West Rail at <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/East-West-Rail-Engineering-Summary-Report.pdf>. It seems to have attracted very little attention.

No consultation is planned until the "line-on-the-map" is finally announced, which is a shame, as several possible options seem to have been glossed over. East-West rail has the potential to solve existing operational problems if the options are assessed sensibly.

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Fare evasion

I was interested in the article on fare evasion (*Railwatch* 148) and how it is tackled in one area.

I travel regularly on two routes from Nottingham – run by different companies – and am regularly amazed by the complete lack of ticket checks during these journeys.

I have contacted the managing directors of both companies to identify journeys with no ticket

checks. The responses have been markedly different.

One company (75 minute journey with frequently no checks), the response: "We take this seriously and will act." I still rarely have my ticket checked. From the second company (two-hour journey), I always receive an in-depth reply, expressing concern and promising action. Again nothing material happens.

If a ticket inspector on a two or four coach train cannot be bothered to check tickets on a 75/120 minute journey, the railway will continue to lose millions in fare evasion.

I offered my services (free of charge) to both companies as a "mystery shopper" to check the diligence of inspectors but did not receive a reply.

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HS2 choices

As a member of both Railfuture and the Chiltern Society, I have always been torn as to whether HS2 is really worth it. Following the recent political happenings, I am definitely of the opinion that HS2 is not worth it. Will the next government still want to commit £50 billion of extra expenditure on the railways over and above what Network Rail spend in the upcoming control periods?

Spread out over several control periods, sums of £5 billion per period would be welcome additions to the monies spent. I am sure readers from all over the, currently, United Kingdom could draw up local requirements lists.

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Directors' thanks

We would like to say "thank you" to members who voted to return us for a further three-year term as directors of Railfuture. We are also grateful to Chris Page for stepping up to take on the challenges and opportunities of being Railfuture's national chair.

We now look forward to working with him and our fellow directors, local branches, national groups, affiliated rail user groups and all members to adapt our organisation to changing times.

The next three years will be exciting times, with eight new franchises to be awarded and the preparations for Network Rail's next five-year control period 6 from 2019.

Allison Cosgrove, Scotland; Chris Hyomes, Yorkshire; Roger Blake, London & South East

Railfuture on the right track to raise our profile

By Chris Page

Railfuture Chair

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My vision for Railfuture is of an independent non-political organisation whose views are respected by the rail industry, to which decision makers come for advice, and which rail users are proud to join.

The Railfuture board has endorsed that vision and agreed that to achieve it we must raise our profile. Having senior rail industry people such as Ian Brown and Stewart Palmer on our board and among our vice-presidents increases our credibility, but more is needed, so Railfuture must change.

While our individual views may differ, externally we must speak with one voice. What we propose must be feasible, viable, realistic, well informed and relevant.

In the wake of the European Union referendum, it is clear that the Government must show confidence by continuing to make the big rail investment commitments which promote economic growth.

I set out our top ten recommendations for rail in an open letter to Chris Grayling, the new Transport Secretary.

[An edited version of the letter can be found on page 13]

However this only scratches the surface. There are many other issues facing the rail industry. To agree on what we propose, we must work together productively. At Railfuture's branches and groups day in October this



CHRIS PAGE: Railfuture's new chair explains his vision

year, Ian Brown will introduce some of the key issues, on which attendees will then decide and agree our position. I would like as many active Railfuture members as possible to attend and have an input, so that we are all committed to Railfuture policy.

Our membership is stable, but that is not enough. We need more active members with the time and inclination to lobby and campaign actively and effectively, as it is by campaigning that we raise our profile and influence, so that people find out about us and consider joining.

We must widen our appeal to existing and potential rail passengers of all ages and backgrounds, by focusing on service-related topics which interest rail users in Britain, for instance better services as well as a bigger network.

Railfuture has recently entered into a collaboration agreement with Young Rail Professionals, which encourages young people to consider a career in the rail industry. The next step is to engage with them at branch level and to organise joint events and attract members. We have received feedback that our

responses to consultations are well regarded by the Department for Transport, Network Rail and others. The media come to Railfuture for quotes on rail issues which impact upon the travelling public.

Our Annual Review, distributed with the previous issue of *Railwatch*, was structured by what we do, not by our organisation, to reflect better how we are seen by others. If we are seen to be working together effectively, Railfuture will have more influence and so gain more active members.

As chair, the first step I have taken to change Railfuture is that almost all board directors now have specific roles. The board elected Allison Cosgrove as vice chair, and she will take the lead in helping branches to grow and campaign effectively.

Ian Brown continues as Policy Director. His role is to define the Railfuture position on rail issues. As communications director, Chris Hyomes is then responsible for communicating that message consistently across all channels via press releases, social media, website, *Railwatch*, and *Rail User Express*. As campaigns director,

Roger Blake will ensure that our key campaigns are pursued professionally and effectively.

Stewart Palmer is our governance director, assisted by Wendy Thorne, who ensures that Railfuture operates ethically and complies with legal obligations.

Our finance director Jerry Alderson has taken responsibility for our information technology but will continue to ensure that Railfuture meets its financial commitments and operates efficiently.

Finally we need a membership director to increase active Railfuture membership, but none of the present board has the necessary skills or affinity with the wider variety of people that we need to attract to Railfuture. If you know a potential candidate or a source of potential candidates, with the right experience, either inside or outside Railfuture, please get in touch.

The board works well as a team to manage Railfuture, but the directors cannot do everything themselves. We need members to recruit friends, colleagues or relatives – and welcome new members into their branch to make them feel at home.

You can support Railfuture actively just by writing an article for the website or *Railwatch* – last year 21 different contributors wrote articles for the website but we need more. You can take photographs of railway best practice and submit them for our Go & Compare campaign at www.railfuture.org.uk/Go+and+Compare.

Help us by assisting at a Railfuture stand at a public event or representing a Railfuture campaign. Ask for extra copies of *Railwatch*, leaflets and the *Annual Review* to take to meetings and events of other organisations which you attend, to spread awareness of who we are and what we do. Take note of your achievements on behalf of Railfuture, so we can publicise them to the media and in our *Annual Review* for 2016.

As Railfuture's new chair, I want a successful rail industry that grows sustainably, so I support initiatives which make rail services more attractive and enable rail network expansion. In my election statement I committed to include members in agreeing a realistic position on key issues, promote our position professionally, and improve our internal communication to make Railfuture more successful. In return I ask that members work together actively to campaign, increase our influence and grow our membership.



ALLISON COSGROVE: Railfuture's vice chair, with her 11-year-old grandson Callum and Barrie Forrest, promoting Railfuture with a stall at the preserved Aln Valley Railway



IAN BROWN: Railfuture's director of policy pictured in the centre when he was London's rail chief, with London Assembly member Jennette Arnold and Hackney Councillor Guy Nicholson when major improvements were introduced at London Fields station

NEWS IN BRIEF

London pollution

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan is creating five low emission zones to cope with toxic air quality hot spots, caused by road traffic. He has however backed the expansion of City Airport, despite 1,409 objectors, on the grounds of supporting business, even though 85% of all flights are for leisure. Research by Fight the Flights shows that people living near the airport suffer worse noise pollution than those near Heathrow. London is top of the UK league for exceeding pollution limits. More than 9,000 early deaths in London are attributed to air pollution. Most A-roads are over pollution limits. For more information: www.hacan.org.uk and www.londonair.org.uk

Scottish pollution

Air quality safety standards are being breached in 32 pollution zones in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and smaller towns such as Crieff and Linlithgow. Road traffic is the main source of air pollution. In Scotland 2,500 people a year suffer early death because of toxic pollution, compared to 200 deaths in road crashes.

Lorry cartel

Europe's biggest lorry makers have been fined £2.5 billion by the European Commission for operating a price-fixing cartel, run by MAN, Volvo, Daimler, Iveco and DAF. "Unfortunately none of the money has been dedicated towards remediation of environmental damage," said Jos Dings of the campaigning group Transport and Environment.

Level crossing threat

Network Rail has withdrawn its plans to close the pedestrian level crossing at Halesworth station. The decision came in August after a stormy meeting in July. Network Rail still wants to close 13 level crossings in Suffolk, as well as others in Cambridgeshire and Essex. In Japan, modern technology is used at many pedestrian level crossings, which have lights and automatic gates linked to the signalling system.

Trains and buses for the rich

"A developed country is not a place where the poor have cars," said Gustavo Petro, mayor of Bogotá. "It's where the rich use public transportation."

Train factory

Spanish train builder CAF is to open a train factory in Britain after winning £850 million contracts to build trains for Northern and TransPennine.



STEWART PALMER: Railfuture's governance director, pictured in 2007 at Weymouth when the SWT introduced a new improved clockface timetable

Severnside

By Nigel Bray
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New authority will aid public transport

A Greater Bristol combined authority is likely to be created next year to include the area currently covered by Bristol City, South Gloucestershire and Bath & North East Somerset councils. The *Bristol Post* reported on 25 July that the councils had signed up to the plan as part of a devolution deal offered by the Government. The combined authority, to be headed by a Metro Mayor, would not be a merger of the three councils but would have responsibility for housing, planning and transport, making decisions currently made by central Government. The deal, which would offer Greater Bristol £900 million over a 30-year period, awaits approval by Parliament in October but has the potential to make a substantial improvement to the local rail and bus network.

Mayor backs area-wide station study

Roger Bealing, secretary of the Friends of Ashton Gate Station, has received a very positive response concerning the proposed station on the Portishead line at a meeting with a Bristol City Council officer. A feasibility study carried out in 2015 produced a disappointing benefit-cost ratio for the station but had not considered the potential traffic from nearby premises such as Babcock Engineering, Imperial Tobacco International, University of the West of England Arts faculty and Ashton Gate stadium. The stadium is being rebuilt and Bristol Sport claims it will be the largest conference venue in the South West. Roger Bealing understands that the new Bristol mayor, Marvin Rees, will be seeking a full study of all Bristol suburban stations including those proposed on the Henbury loop.

Hub may help rail passengers get the bus

Work has started on the Gloucester transport hub, approved as the last act of the Gloucestershire Local Transport Board, which was dissolved in April. The new bus station, although still on the opposite side of a dual carriageway from the railway station, will at least give a better impression of the city for people arriving by train. We hope to seek ways of improving interchange in a consultation on the adjacent King's Quarter redevelopment.

Railfuture wins speedy action from GWR

Information about bus connections from Kemble station is now clearer thanks to prompt action by GWR to a request from Railfuture that the Onward Travel poster be moved from inside to outside the ticket hall, which closes at 13.30, because buses to Cirencester and Tetbury run until early evening. GWR station manager Richard Morrish, based at Gloucester, resolved the problem within 24 hours of being approached.

Link to heritage line boosted by survey

Minehead Rail Link Group, which is affiliated to Railfuture, recently surveyed 180 businesses in West Somerset, nearly all of whom wanted to see regular train services between Minehead and Taunton over the West Somerset Railway. The group and Minehead Chamber of Commerce believe this would help West Somerset reverse the decline in visitor numbers and help retain younger people in the area by improving access to jobs in Taunton and beyond. Bath Spa University is undertaking a study into the business case for

a regular service which it intends to publish in November.

www.railfuture.org.uk/SevernsideBranch
[Twitter @RailfutureSSide](https://twitter.com/RailfutureSSide)

Wessex

By Tony Smale
tony.smale@railfuture.org.uk

Railfuture advice to SW franchise bidders

Stagecoach and the joint venture of First Group and MTR were invited in June to bid for the South Western franchise. The Invitation to Tender from the Department for Transport came late – at the end of June. The successful bidder will be named in February and the franchise should start in June. The ITT provides for a speeding-up of services, more capacity, reduced dwell times at stations, a better passenger experience and a “more sustainable” future for railways on the Isle of Wight. Railfuture chairman Chris Page and Wessex committee member David Brace met both bidders before and after the ITT. First Group was not forthcoming with its proposals on confidentiality grounds but Railfuture reminded First what improvements passengers want. Stagecoach required Railfuture to sign a confidentiality agreement and, in return, told Chris and David of a number of proposals it would adopt if it won the franchise. We now have to wait for the DfT decision.

Isle of Wight rail campaigners celebrate

Rail campaigners on the Isle of Wight sent a strongly worded letter to the Secretary of State for Transport on 28 July, giving formal notice of their intention to seek a judicial review of the Invitation to Tender document for the South Western franchise. Campaigners joined forces last year under the banner Keep the Island Line in Franchise (KILF) to fight a proposal in the draft ITT which required rail services on the island to be a self-sustaining business – and outside the SW franchise. They argued that the IoW Council did not have the resources or expertise to work with the Department for Transport to create a self-sustaining business or to take on running the line. They also questioned why the Island Line was required to be self-sustaining when no other branch line in Britain was required to break even.

When the ITT was published in June, there was anger and amazement when the campaigners discovered that the unworkable requirement had been copied across in its entirety from the draft document. In its letter to the Secretary of State, KILF questioned the intention of the DfT to treat Island Line differently without any justification. At this point, Railfuture Wessex stepped in to suggest that KILF could apply for a grant from Railfuture's Fighting Fund to help with the cost of the ongoing campaign. This was not necessary because, within a couple of weeks of receiving KILF's letter, the DfT backed down and the offending paragraph was amended so that the need to become “a self-sustaining business” was watered down to read “a more sustainable business.” The DfT claimed that KILF had misunderstood the meaning of the phrase “self-sustaining”, but said it would be amended anyway to “remove any scope for confusion.”

KILF campaigners were delighted that the DfT had dropped its discriminatory Island Line objective, saying that it was both indefensible and inequitable. They added: “This is a victory for all those Island Line users who made representations to the DfT on this point but had been ignored until now.”
www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+Branch

West Midlands

Coventry fights for its inter-city trains

The possibility of cuts to Coventry's inter-city service to increase the capacity of services to other stations prompted councillors to respond to the Department for Transport's consultation on the future of the West Coast main line franchise from April 2018.

New franchise for West Midlands

In the same month, the DfT named two shortlisted bidders when they issued invitations to tender for the West Midlands passenger franchise which from 2017 will cover local and inter-regional services centred on Birmingham and along the West Coast main line. London & West Midlands Railway is a joint venture by Govia and Keolis while West Midlands Trains is a subsidiary of Dutch-owned Abellio, with East Japan Railway and Mitsui as minority partners. The West Midlands rail consortium of 14 local authorities worked with the DfT to specify the franchise, and will be involved in overseeing it. But one rail campaigner commented: “It is a scandal that the two bidders are being given carte blanche to renege on any commitment to support reopening of lines and stations or provide more and longer trains, but rather to rip out loos and seats and make even more people stand in cramped discomfort for their journeys. Not good enough!”

Network Rail planning for 114% growth

Consultation closed in September on Network Rail's draft West Midlands and Chilterns Study which was issued in July. The study expects 114% growth in West Midlands rail use over the next 25 years and envisages development of the “Midlands rail hub” with chords at Bordesley and extra platforms at Moor Street and Snow Hill stations. Electrification is proceeding between Walsall and Rugeley as well as Barnt Green-Bromsgrove (up the Lickey incline) but future electrification (possibly in the 2020s) could also include Bristol-Birmingham, Birmingham-Derby, Leamington-Coventry and the Birmingham-London Chiltern line.

Combined authority with lots to do

The new West Midlands Combined Authority has now taken over responsibility for transport and has posted its initial priorities. It is planning for tram extensions to Edgbaston, the airport and Wednesbury to Brierley Hill. It also wants to see Coventry station redeveloped to include a new bay platform for Nuneaton services.

New Street gets its Metro connection at last

Railfuture was pleased to see the Metro extension to New Street station (Stephenson Street) open. We have pointed out potential trip dangers from high kerbs. A temporary fence however has forced passengers to take a longer route than necessary. Railfuture was also pleased to see improvements suggested by us being implemented at New Street. More information screens and better seating are helping to make passengers' lives better. Railfuture will be monitoring the final stages of the upgrade at platform level.

Walsall-Wolverhampton campaign goes on

Railfuture is now targeting the campaign for a restored Walsall-Wolverhampton passenger service, with proposed stations at Willenhall, Darlaston and Portobello to be a priority.
Railfuture West Midlands contact:
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Railfuture's top ten recommendations

Railfuture wrote to new Transport Secretary Chris Grayling welcoming him to his new job and suggesting discussions on the following top ten recommendations for rail.

1. A growing railway to meet social, economic and regeneration objectives and passenger aspirations

Priorities

■ Fairer, simpler, easy to purchase, flexible, more integrated fares with good information. Value for money fares

■ Passenger growth to be encouraged not priced off. Adequate train and system capacity to give a reasonable expectation of having a seat

■ Investment in the digital railway to increase capacity and resilience, and provide high quality passenger information. This includes retro-fitting rolling stock with wifi and power sockets

■ Better facilities on stations including adequate shelter and seating, plus affordable car and bike parking

■ A more sensible approach to allowing mobility impaired people and people with prams and luggage to use public transport

■ Better rail access for areas of social deprivation, including Wearside, Teesside, Skelmersdale, Wisbeck and Lincolnshire

■ Better rail access to Britain's national parks and resorts

2. Integration of HS2 into regional transport

Priorities

■ A review of the Euston HS2 station development with its huge footprint and poor interchange, with a view to better connectivity in London and the South East via West London, Euston and East London (Stratford)

■ A reappraisal of regional connectivity at non city centre stations with a view to better city centre access and regional connectivity, including Birmingham International, Toton, South Yorkshire options and links to the West and East Coast main lines

■ HS3 – needs to be properly linked into the north's regional rail system and HS2

3. Electrification: Complete Great Western and Midland main line schemes and increase focus on value-for-money incremental schemes to cut costs and increase capacity.

Priorities

■ Incremental electrification in North West and North East England including TransPennine

■ Implementation of a proper cascade of electric rolling stock

◆◆◆◆ Join Railfuture online at www.railfuture.org.uk/join



ELECTRIFICATION UPGRADE: Trains between South Wales and London are being diverted until 24 October while electrification work is carried out in the Severn tunnel

to maximise the benefits to the regions of the huge investment in the London area

4. Invest in new links to reduce dependence on London's existing rail network for passengers and freight

Priorities

■ Realise the potential of Crossrail 1 by providing a link to the West Coast route in West London

■ Construct further cross-London rail routes, eg Crossrail 2

■ Realise the potential for Thameslink and the London Overground by developing strategic transport interchanges for orbital journeys

■ Creation of a London passenger and freight bypass through key economic growth areas Oxford/Aylesbury-Milton Keynes/Bedford/Cambridge

5. Invest in freight on rail by improving capacity from ports to increase efficiency and competitive freight train operation

Priorities

■ Felixstowe-Peterborough track capacity

■ Freight spine: Oxford-Bletchley (for West Coast route), Bedford (for Midland main line)

■ Liverpool across the Pennines to Hull

■ Buxton Quarries to Midlands and London capacity upgrade

6. Devolve city transport networks to cut costs for integrated heavy and light rail transport

Priorities

■ London: Further development of the Overground system

■ Cardiff: Integrated Welsh Valley transport system

■ Bristol: Formation of an Integrated Transport Authority

■ Northern cities: Powers to invest in and integrate the North's rail system

■ Cost-effective solutions including light rail for smaller economic growth areas such as Oxford and Cambridge

7. Scotland: Organise for continued investment in Scotland's railways and economy including better links to England

Priorities

■ Formation of a Network Rail (Scotland) including transfer to Scotland of Network Rail's electrification and upgrade projects from their current base in York

■ Complete the Edinburgh-Glasgow (EGIP) upgrade to integrate the Central Belt with Glasgow and Edinburgh

■ Improve regional links between Scotland and England (Borders Line extension to Carlisle, Edinburgh-Newcastle regional service)

■ Improve links between Scotland and HS2 to facilitate economic ties between Scotland, Northern England and the West Midlands

8. London airport development: Provide upgraded rail capacity to serve any additional runway location chosen by government and to enable more rail travel at other airports serving London

Priorities

■ Rail links from Heathrow to the West of England, Wales,

Southampton, Surrey, South West London and HS2

■ Increased rail capacity to Gatwick, including additional peak and diversionary route for South Coast services

■ Capacity and speed upgrade of rail link to Stansted Airport

■ Capacity works at Stansted Airport station for improved service to Cambridge, Norwich, Peterborough and the Midlands

■ Provide a track link from Luton Airport to Luton Airport Parkway

9. Regional airport development

Priorities

■ Create a regional network based on Manchester International Airport (Ordsall chord and better link to north Manchester and Yorkshire)

■ Rail link into Glasgow Airport, matching improvements at Edinburgh

■ Rail connection from North Wales and Chester into Liverpool John Lennon Airport

■ Local rail link from Leeds into Leeds/Bradford Airport

10. Railway organisation. Improve the cost and the efficiency of Britain's railways to aid investment in growth

Priorities

■ Devolution of the sponsorship of rail services and projects

■ Passengers want to see costs minimised but a safe service

This is an edited version of the Railfuture letter to Mr Grayling. The full text can be seen at www.railfuture.org.uk/display1338

Thames Valley

By Martin Smith
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Forward thinking from Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire County Council has urged Network Rail to give a firm commitment to the £75 million rebuilding of Oxford station, including two extra through platforms, to be completed before 2024. Included in the county rail strategy are the restoration of quadruple track from Oxford to Radley, reopening the Cowley branch to passenger traffic, a flyover east of Didcot, and through trains between Oxford and Heathrow via the proposed western access to Heathrow. The county proposes the development of a transport hub at Culham, serving housing development on the airfield site, and new stations at Grove (Wantage) and Heyford Park (Ardley) which we had not expected. Former Chiltern managing director Adrian Shooter had suggested some years ago reopening Ardley to serve development at Upper Heyford airfield. Both Chiltern and Great Western Railway have expressed an interest in running to Cowley (Oxford Business Park). The county's strategy is welcome, but the big question is, how will it be funded? It is regrettable that electrification to Oxford is not being co-ordinated with rebuilding Oxford station and quadrupling to Radley. We trust that overhead line masts will not be installed where they could obstruct future developments.

Backward thinking from South Oxfordshire

South Oxfordshire District Council has rejected proposals for housing development south of Oxford, because it would be in the Green Belt. However Railfuture believes the site is sustainable, near to employment locations, easily served by the Oxford bus network and close to stations on the Cowley branch. Instead, the council proposes building 3,500 houses on Chalgrove airfield in open countryside, which will lead to many additional car journeys on the local road network, with a B road giving the only connection to the outside world.

Worries over Great Western plans

There are several concerns for the Thames Valley area following GWR managing director Mark Hopwood's reported plans for the franchise. As electrification will go only as far as Newbury, there will be a reduction in through services to London from Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn. We knew Henley and Bourne End would lose through services to Paddington because the branches will not be electrified. However there is no mention of the proposed chord at Bourne End which would enable half-hourly through services between Marlow and Maidenhead. Although Didcot-Oxford is not expected to be wired until June 2019, fast services can be operated by new AT300 bi-mode trains. Existing diesel Turbos will probably provide the service for Appleford, Culham and Radley in the interim.

Rail in reserve for Witney improvements

Oxfordshire County Council has decided to extend the A40 dual carriageway three miles to the east, to a park-and-ride bus station at Eynsham, as well as providing bus lanes along the whole route from Witney. Although not a rail option, this scheme would not inhibit the long term ambition of reopening the Witney branch. Railfuture has held a meeting with officers of West Oxfordshire District Council, stressing the importance of improved bus links, and also of protecting the line of the old railway in the Local Plan. The district council

has decided that future development should take place east of Witney which will bring more passengers to Hanborough and ultimately strengthens the case for restoring the rail link. Railfuture has supported an appeal relating to housing development adjoining Hanborough station.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Thames Valley Branch
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Devon and Cornwall

By Philip Shelton
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Cullompton station for 10,000 new homes

Cullompton is one step closer to having a railway station as money has been pledged to develop early plans. Mid Devon District Council, Taunton Deane, and Cullompton and Wellington town councils have committed £100,000 for a feasibility study. With 10,000 homes planned in Cullompton, the town council knows that traffic problems will increase. The Devon & Somerset Metro project group, which is behind plans to see railway developments in Cullompton and Wellington, will now invest the money to commission early studies. Engineering design work can then be used to lobby the Government. Railfuture is represented on the group, which is chaired by Tiverton and Honiton MP Neil Parish.

Survey to assess rail improvement proposals



Proposals for improvements for rail passengers in Lostwithiel (logo above) put forward by the town council's portfolio holder for transport Tim Hughes, include a new footbridge, reopening the branch line to Fowey and converting clay train sidings into a car park. Cornwall County Council has agreed to carry out a door-to-door survey in Lostwithiel to assess what improvements should be prioritised. The local councillor is also campaigning for more passenger trains to stop at Lostwithiel, including the sleeper to London. Rail Freight Group chairman (and Railfuture vice-president) Lord Berkeley who lives locally is supporting reopening the branch to passenger trains. Railfuture expects current use of the sidings to be investigated before conversion to a car park is considered.

New station for Marsh Barton

Construction of the new Marsh Barton station is expected to start in autumn 2016 with trains on the Paignton-Exeter-Exmouth route serving the station from winter 2017-18. An interim stopping pattern at the station is planned from December 2017 to December 2018 because of constraints caused by the current timetable. This will result in a less than hourly frequency at some times of the day but with a reasonable peak service. A better calling pattern is planned from December 2018 to coincide with the rewrite of the timetable, but capacity constraints may mean that a half-hourly frequency may not be achieved at all times of the day.

New homes could lead to Cranbrook East

A study has been undertaken to establish the feasibility of creating a second station east of the 2015-built Cranbrook station. The economic case for Cranbrook East is positive and rail

would be well placed to provide good access for new homes in the area to key destinations around Exeter and beyond.

Tavistock reopening plans

Devon County Council is considering land acquisition and design options to extend rail services from Bere Alston to Tavistock.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Devon and Cornwall Branch

[Twitter @RailfutureDC](https://twitter.com/RailfutureDC)

North East

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

Development plans for the region

Tobyn Hughes, transport manager for the new North East Combined Authority, gave an illustrated address to Railfuture North East in July. He explained how the new authority, with an elected mayor, will spearhead development in the region.

Confusion over plans for Metro and rail

The South East Northumberland Rail Users Group has tried to persuade the media not to conflate all the development proposals mentioned above as Metro extensions. The plans include reopening the Ashington line by 2020, with a direct route to Newcastle Central rather than using the existing Metro line which has 13 intermediate stations. SENRUG and Rail Action East Scotland are jointly launching a campaign for a new Newcastle-Edinburgh service with Beal and Belford stations reopened south of the border, and with Reston and East Linton in Scotland.

Northumberland County Council surprise

Northumberland County Council has sprung a surprise by buying the shopping centre in Cramlington, a new town created by the council in the 1960s. SENRUG's campaign to move Cramlington station to a site next to the shopping heart of the town has become more relevant and it is hoped the county council will take it over. An improved train service with a 30-minute frequency is essential.

Bonanza for Morpeth as Virgin responds

Morpeth is set to enjoy a boost to its inter-city rail services as Virgin Trains announced they will double the number of weekday services from London calling at the station from December.

The two existing direct evening services from London to Morpeth at 16.30 and 18.30 will be augmented by a morning service leaving London at 09.30 and an early afternoon service at 13.30, giving four trains from the capital to Morpeth every weekday. It also means Morpeth will get additional trains to Edinburgh at 12.57 and 16.57. New direct services to London will leave Morpeth at 15.15 and 19.56 every weekday. SENRUG's Dennis Fancett said: "These new train services at Morpeth are the culmination of lengthy negotiations between us and Virgin Trains. We are pleased that Virgin listened." SENRUG has also been promoting bus links to Morpeth station. Plans by the Greater Morpeth Development Trust for the station are a step nearer fruition. The impressive portico will be opened up and a new toilet, cafeteria and ticket office included, providing a station worthy of the town.

Coastliners community rail partnership

Coastliners users group is in the process of changing its status to improve its service to the Durham Coast passengers. The group advocates introducing a service from Yarm and Eaglescliffe direct to Sunderland.

www.railfuture.org.uk/North East Branch
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Fresh vision for railways in the North East

By Peter Kenyon

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A new overview for rail services in the North East has emerged with the creation of the North East Combined Authority.

The authority envisages £1 billion of investment in both Tyne and Wear Metro and main line services over the next 20 years.

The Metrofutures vision, which includes reopening freight lines and building new stations, was explained to Railfuture North East by Tobyn Hughes, transport manager for the new authority, in an illustrated address in July.

The new authority, with an elected mayor, will spearhead development throughout the region whose identity was "shaped by railways".

The regional transport agency Nexus will be submitting a detailed business case this year.

There is urgent need for a new fleet of trains to run services on the 78-kilometre Metro network which could also replace Pacers on the electrified national network.

The NE Combined Authority believes there is a good case for dual voltage vehicles capable of operating on the 1500v DC system on the Metro lines and the 25kv AC Network Rail standard system.

This would allow the re-electrification to main line standards of the lines from Pelaw to Sunderland, currently wired for 1500v DC, and facilitate the future electrification of the whole Durham coast line.

Electrification south from Sunderland, through Ryhope and Seaham towards the Horden/Peterlee area, would allow these centres of population and business to be served by a Metro-style service. It could also facilitate better long-distance links from cities and towns along the Durham Coast line to other parts of the North.

The new fleet of trains, together with the necessary upgrades to the signalling system, electrical supply system and depot facilities, has an estimated price tag of some £550 million.

Clearly the North East is going to need some of the millions we were encouraged to expect from the Brexit process.

Development of new Metro and conventional routes is cleverly proposed by the improvement of the existing freight-only lines in the area, and reopening some abandoned colliery routes.

Initially diesel and subsequently electric trains could run from Ashington to Newcastle Central, via a passenger interchange

◆◆◆◆ Rail User Express can be downloaded from www.railfuture.org.uk

FLYING SCOTSMAN 'SPECIAL' MAY BE PRELUDE TO RAIL REOPENING



Picture: TREVOR WATSON

MORPETH: Flying Scotsman coming off the freight-only Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line

The famous steam locomotive Flying Scotsman ran over the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line in Northumberland on 11 June.

The steam special could be the prelude to the reopening of the freight line for passenger services.

Flying Scotsman was hauling a charter trip from Cleethorpes to Morpeth which included running on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line.

Despite no announcement of the run, spectators were out in force and also used the platforms at Northumberland Park Metro station where the train ran parallel to the Metro line. Metro drivers were instructed not to obscure the view!

The campaign to see passenger services restored took a significant step forward in 2008 when Railfuture-affiliated local rail user group SENRUG chartered a special train to run round the line. See picture right.

Chartered from Northern Rail with sponsorship from Wansbeck District Council, the train made three trips round the line, with each trip including both the Morpeth-Choppington-Bedlington and the Northumberland Park-Newsham-Bedlington-Ashington sections, both of which have been the subject of reopening studies. John Brierley's picture shows the train passing the disused platform at Bedlington station. Tickets were completely sold out within days of release, indicating the high level of local support for the reopening scheme.



Picture: JOHN BRIERLEY

BEDLINGTON: The 2008 campaign train



Picture: NEXUS

PELAW: The overgrown Leamside line can be seen going under the Metro line

at Northumberland Park on the Metro. This would realise the ambitions of the South East Northumberland Rail Users Group. The mothballed Leamside line could provide both Metro and local rail services for Wearside and Durham, realising the long held aspirations of Railfuture North East. The overgrown Leamside line goes under the Metro line at Pelaw.

The current concession with Metro operator DB Regio will end in March next year, after which Nexus will take operations in-house, with the intention

of finding a new operator to take over from April 2019. Developments in the governance and administration of transport in the region are also anticipated.

Rail North Ltd, a new body made up from 25 local transport authorities across the North of England, which at present works in partnership with the Department for Transport, is expected in the next seven years to take control of decision making and financial planning for rail transport in the north. A North East Rail Management Unit will be created for the NE Combined

Authority, the Tees Valley, Cumbria and North Yorkshire. Arriva, operator of Northern Trains, will create a business unit dedicated to the area.

The NE Combined Authority area, formed from urban and rural authorities and stretching from the Scottish border to County Durham, covers a population of almost two million. The development of efficient transport links is essential for future economic growth.

More info: www.nexus.org.uk/sites/default/files/Metro%20Futures%20brochure.pdf

North West

By Arthur Thomson
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Cumbrian Coast connections improve

Sufficient rolling stock for the Barrow-in-Furness line has become a major issue and was highlighted in Railfuture North West England's most recent newsletter. Arriva was proposing to replace an existing 08.50 departure from Barrow with one at 09.17, but since then has abandoned that proposal in favour of keeping the 08.50, which provides a better connection from the Cumbrian coast line. Through journeys from Barrow to Manchester are down to two a day (one on Saturdays) and apart from one train from Millom only, none of them connects with incoming coast line trains. The Copeland Rail Users Group is assured this is a problem only until 2018 when there should be eight through trains a day to Manchester. The group recognises that since Arriva took over all Furness line trains in April, staff are getting better at holding connections at Barrow.

Furness line

Staffing levels are being increased following the doubling of funding for community rail partnerships. CRP officer Jim Trotman told the Furness Line Action Group AGM that there are now four staff, rather than two. A new umbrella website covering all the Cumbrian lines is planned, plus a Twitter account. The line has seen improvements, with one new shelter at Kents Bank and two at Dalton. The cost of Dalton station buildings refurbishment for use by Community Groups has been reduced from the initial £250,000 down to £28,500. Two new Friends groups have been formed along the line at Silverdale and Kents Bank, with the latter seeking to provide seating on the foreshore. Jim also revealed that £4,000 had been raised towards the £15,000 cost of preparing a funding bid for investigation into the Staveley-Burneside passing loop to increase capacity on the Windermere branch.

A greener gateway for Forest of Bowland

New information boards have been installed at Giggleswick, Clapham, Bentham and Waddington stations recently, which highlight the opportunity to explore the Forest of Bowland. Lancashire Councillor Albert Atkinson and Karen Booth of Northern unveiled one of the large information boards at Clapham. As well as a map and photographs, these boards show suggested walks and cycling routes, plus local places to visit, eat or stay.

Gerald Townson of the Bentham line community rail partnership, at the Clapham ceremony, commented: "The Bentham line makes it easy for people to visit the forest and help keep their journey environmentally friendly." He added: "This is the start of a good partnership with our friends in the Forest of Bowland area of outstanding natural beauty and follows on positively from the *A Day in the Life of Bentham* photographic project last summer, initiated by the Friends of Bentham station. This initiative is part of the much larger *Rail to Trail* scheme launched last summer, being developed by the CRP in conjunction with the Lancaster and Skipton rail users and Northern, to encourage walking and cycling from all the stations on the line.

2017 Steam day at MCRUA

A Mid Cheshire steam day is planned for next year, organised by the community rail partnership and Mid Cheshire Rail Users

Association, based on one held in 2008. To keep fares low, the organisers are seeking sponsorship of £25,000. In December 2017, the Manchester-Chester Sunday passenger service increases to hourly so it will be difficult to fit a stopping steam train into the service pattern. So 2017 is a golden opportunity. Please contact the CRP's Sally Buttifant (sally_b_creative@hotmail.com) or MCRUA chairman John Oates (john.oates@mcrua.org.uk) if you have ideas for sponsorship of the Steam Day. Previous events generated lots of excitement and attracted thousands of people.

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Cymru Wales

By Rowland Pittard
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Contrast in campaign for Cambrian stations

Railfuture is a member of the Cambrian Rail Partnership which is seeking additional services and stations on the Cambrian line. There has been little progress towards a new station at Carno, near Newtown. But more than 40 miles along the line, the prospects for a reopened station at Bow Street, near Aberystwyth, were discussed at a Ceredigion Council meeting and exhibition.

Infrastructure changes for new franchise

Railfuture Cymru Wales responded to a consultation started in July by the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee on the new Wales and Borders franchise. We urged that sufficient funds are made available for the expansion of rail services, not repeating the mistakes in the 2003 award of a "no growth" franchise. The new franchise is expected to be awarded by the Welsh Government following a transfer of powers from the UK Government. The current franchise operated by Arriva Trains Wales expires in 2018 and in anticipation of the devolution of powers, the Welsh Government has set up an arm's length organisation called Transport for Wales to manage the process. Expressions of interest from bidders are currently being sought and an initial shortlist will be drawn up in December 2016. Bids have to include proposals for operating the South East Wales Metro, an integrated public transport network covering Cardiff and the Valleys and extending from Chepstow to Maesteg. Bidders have the opportunity to propose a light rail solution on some of the valley lines to replace the current heavy rail services.

Another innovation is that infrastructure will be the responsibility of the franchisee on the busier valley routes, rather than Network Rail. The route network and services of the new franchise will be similar to the existing one, operated by Arriva Trains Wales. Railfuture Cymru Wales is pleased to receive this news as there had been reports that certain cross-border services could cease to operate, requiring passengers to change trains at stations such as Chester and Shrewsbury. Express longer-distance bus services are to be part of the Metro network but local bus services will not be included. Railfuture is concerned that full integration of public transport services will not be achieved.

Several steps forward as stations improve

The new footbridges with lifts at Port Talbot and Ystrad Mynach have been completed and opened. Port Talbot has a new ticket office on the bridge, and at Ystrad Mynach a new ticket office has been built on the down platform.

Footbridges with lifts have been installed at Llandaf and Radyr but the lifts await commissioning.

Long way round for Severn Tunnel closure

The Severn Tunnel is completely closed from 12 September to 21 October for electrification work. Railfuture Cymru Wales first raised its concerns about replacement services in May but were not provided with the complete picture by Great Western Railway until August at a stakeholders meeting. Only a few of Railfuture's suggestions were taken forward and at the time of the meeting GWR had not provided printed timetables showing the replacement services. When Bristol Parkway was closed on 29 August, GWR did take note of our suggestions. For the tunnel closure, the services provided by GWR were reduced by 75% between Cardiff and Newport. CrossCounty was making some additional stops at Severn Tunnel Junction station. Morning commuter services from Swansea to Newport and return were also reduced even though sufficient trains are available at Swansea. An ATW Cardiff-Cheltenham service was truncated at Gloucester, thus removing an alternative service into South Wales during the closure.

Bus hub Pembroke Dock boasts one bus

A new train-bus interchange called The Hub has opened adjacent to Pembroke Dock station but at present it is served by only one bus service.

Bus integration confusion at Ruabon

When Arriva was awarded its infamous "no growth" Wales & Borders rail franchise in 2003, some public transport users consoled themselves that at least modal integration would improve. As Wales' biggest bus operator, Arriva would naturally understand the importance of coordinating rail and bus services in a country where many towns were removed from the rail network in the 1960s. In the event, Arriva placed bus and rail in separate silos because of competition regulations. Even during unplanned railway closures, Arriva rail tickets were not accepted on Arriva buses.

Undaunted, the Taith transport consortium installed a bus turning circle and bus stop immediately outside Ruabon station, railhead for the popular tourist town of Llangollen. GHA Coaches ran its Wrexham-Llangollen buses through the interchange, and when GHA went into receivership in July 2016 a local independent stepped in, again serving the interchange. The longer distance rail replacement bus service to Bala and Barmouth never used the interchange. Simultaneously another bus operator launched a service competing with the existing Wrexham-Llangollen services but omitting Ruabon interchange. That operator is ... you guessed it, Arriva!

Big train meets little train

A new guide called *Big Train Meets Little Train* was launched in August to promote public transport to visit the 11 preserved narrow gauge lines in Wales. The guide was a winner in a competition sponsored by the Department for Transport. The guide can be viewed and downloaded at <http://bigtrainlittletrain.owenf.info>

A new £2.2 million station is to be built at Caernarfon by the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railway. Building is expected to start in March and the station should be open by 2018.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk
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Tram-train solution for Leeds region

By Paul Abell

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The refusal in May by the then Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin to approve further work on the Leeds trolleybus scheme may have a silver lining for the people of the Leeds City Region.

Unusually, the Department for Transport has permitted West Yorkshire to use the £173 million earmarked for the trolleybus scheme for other transformative transport improvements in the region.

The All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group, which usefully is chaired by Leeds North West MP Greg Mulholland, has pointed out that this funding gives Leeds a rare opportunity to start a modern light rail network, the most transformative transport improvement imaginable for Leeds.

Experience in other British cities has shown that it is prudent to start with a single route to establish light rail in public consciousness, so the APPLRG has put forward the present Leeds-Harrogate-York railway as a suitable basis for a light rail service to get the ball rolling.

The importance of this line is shown by the fact that it was included in the most urgent Tier One lines for electrification in the Northern Sparks report produced by the North of England Electrification Task Force in March last year, but clearly the present delays in railway electrification schemes mean that it would be rather optimistic to expect Network Rail to do the job any time soon.

Conveniently, the details of a Leeds to Harrogate and York light rail scheme were considered some years ago by the transport authority (before the cancelled trolleybus scheme became the imposed flavour of the month), while Mr Mulholland can add local knowledge because the line passes through his constituency.



THE OLD WAY OF DOING THINGS: A Pacer on a York-Leeds service in 2009. A tram-train would allow new flexible services to Harrogate and other Yorkshire destinations while sharing the existing line that serves Harrogate with both main line services and freight trains

The need to accommodate the main line trains on the Harrogate-Leeds-London service means that such a light rail service would have to be provided by tram-trains, a proven concept in Germany even if the repeated delays with the long-awaited Rotherham pilot have marred its image in this country.

The routing flexibility offered by light rail would make it attractive for the York end of such a route to avoid the busy East Coast main line and help to promote the new York Central development, then extend to Askham Bar and Copmanthorpe. At the Leeds end the tram-train gives the chance of freeing up space at Leeds station by leaving the Harrogate line south of Burley Park station and following the Kirkstall Road corridor and Wellington Street into the city centre. Naturally there would be an interchange with Leeds station, while a city centre loop would serve the Headrow, bus station and Vicar Lane areas.

The frequency envisaged is four to six trains per hour (two on

the less-busy section between Harrogate and Poppleton), with new stops at a number of places including Horsforth Woodside and Arthington (where a park and ride site has already been identified).

To the airport and Bradford

Poor access to the Leeds Bradford Airport at Yeadon is recognised as a problem, to the extent that improving road access comes with a price tag of £40-75 million.

A trip to Newcastle shows how Metro access to the airport is a much smarter alternative. North of Leeds a link could very conveniently be built from the Harrogate line at Horsforth, giving the chance of an extension through Shipley into the centre of Bradford, and hence also giving that city easy access to its airport. In Bradford itself there is a clear need (recognised more than a century ago) for a direct rail link between Forster Square station and Bradford Interchange, then it would be relatively straightforward to continue the loop

through Pudsey back to Leeds. Another corridor crying out for improved rail transport is from Leeds to the Five Towns around Wakefield. Transferring services to a city centre loop from the congested platforms of Leeds station would free up space for long-distance services, and HS2 when it arrives. It was no coincidence that my train into Leeds taking me to the APPLRG launch of this scheme was held up outside Leeds station while a couple of other trains departed.

The need for congestion relief

York and Leeds both suffer greatly from traffic congestion, especially in peak periods. The 21st century, light rail solution offered by the Leeds-Harrogate-York route is too good to miss. The diesel rolling stock on the line, Sprinters and Pacers, is coming up for replacement in any case and there is a chance to prompt significant modal shift by offering passengers attractive vehicles which will tempt them out of their cars and take them closer to where they want to go.

Light rail link to Blackpool North is on target for 2019

As a student, Railfuture vice-president Paul Abell worked on the Blackpool trams for three summers as a conductor. Now he is happy to report the latest development of the operation.

The ongoing electrification of the Preston-Blackpool North line is to gain a direct link with the modernised Blackpool & Fleetwood tramway. A new bus and rail interchange around North Station is to have a light rail component after the completion of a line up Talbot Road from North Pier.

An island platform tram terminus on the site of the present Wilko store will give convenient and level access through the existing

underpass to train services at North Station. Construction of the new 500-yard line was approved by Blackpool Council on 29 June, and an application for a Transport & Works Act Order covering it was submitted on 13 July.

Commendable foresight meant that the points necessary to connect the Promenade tramway with a line up Talbot Road are already in position. They were included in the modernisation of the Promenade tramway in 2011-12. Providing the Transport Secretary makes a favourable decision on the TWAO within around 12 months, and final funding approval is forthcoming from the Lancashire

Enterprise Partnership around the end of 2017, it is hoped that construction of the line will start at the beginning of 2018 and trams will be running to North station by April 2019.

A peak 10-minute frequency is proposed, with alternate trams continuing northwards along the Promenade towards Bispham or southwards towards the Pleasure Beach.

Two more five-section Flexity 2 trams have been ordered from Bombardier to augment the fleet of 16 which was delivered for the modernisation of the Promenade tramway. The last trams to serve Blackpool North, via Dickson Road, were withdrawn in 1963.

What a difference a day makes and a challenge for Railfuture

By Ian Brown

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Railfuture, with its web pages, has covered Brexit pretty comprehensively, and to the credit of the organisation this has been done in a timely way without taking sides. It has proved a useful approach as most other commentators have preached nirvana or doom depending on a particular perspective.

In the context of our wish to see big investment in the railways, the good news is that the franchise process did not falter with the East Anglia franchise award, resulting in complete renewal of the whole train fleet and, importantly, capacity provision for continued growth in passenger numbers in an important region of the UK.

Other recent pre-Brexit awards also contained massive commitment to expansion of new rolling stock and passenger amenities. Indeed our own campaigning on the Thameslink rolling stock has resulted in serious consideration of retro-fitting of passenger amenities such as wifi and tables.

The East Anglia news was good, coming so closely behind the Brexit vote, but the bigger test will be the following franchises such as the West Coast main line when more time is available to study the consequences of Brexit, particularly in the context of procurement – of the franchise itself and also in terms of new equipment for growth.

So far so good, giving an impression of little change. Two things have changed – politics and the politics of railways.

A different political scenario

Politics did change. We have a new government team, a new



THE BENEFITS OF ELECTRIFICATION: Three electric former Thameslink trains at Liverpool Lime Street with a Pacer on the left. The 319s are already providing more capacity and comfort for passengers travelling from Liverpool to Wigan and Preston. As electrification spreads across the north west of England, more of the unloved diesel-powered Pacers will be displaced

Secretary of State for Transport – Chris Grayling – and a new team of ministers. We have written to Chris Grayling with key Railfuture demands and will be following this up early next year with a session to brief MPs, following consultation with members, on key areas that concern Railfuture’s members. Our case for investment in a bigger, better railway in Britain will have to stand alongside every other

transport cause, from an additional runway at Heathrow to major new investment in road capacity.

There are also our MEPs. Brexit may take two years to execute, but the influence of MEPs in lobbying Brussels for a bigger better railway in Britain disappeared overnight, so reducing any effect of European Union checks and balances on the UK government in terms of the rail industry.

We have reformatted Railfuture’s international activity to strengthen our knowledge of best rail practice overseas so as to be able to bolster our arguments for campaigning in the UK. We will not be campaigning in Brussels but we will be strengthening our links with politicians in Britain, both at national level and, through the Railfuture branches, at regional level.

A different railway approach

Brexit in the UK and Donald Trump in the US have spawned populism, replacing traditional political thinking along party lines. Railways have got caught up in this too which is dangerous in the context of Railfuture’s remit of campaigning for a bigger, better railway in Britain. The bitter dispute about the role of conductors on Southern is an example of this. Long gone is

normal industrial negotiation, the safety card has been played and replayed and the whole saga has descended into a populist campaign on abolishing franchises, with a view to bringing back BR. The passengers are the last set of people to be considered in such a scenario.

Similarly the Jeremy Corbyn “sit on the floor in” might have been a contrived populist stunt, but one performed against the background of a very real issue – overcrowding on the East Coast main line. Was it successful? Yes it was, whether the actual event was contrived or real. That matters less. However populism dictated that the “let’s provide more capacity” message was eclipsed by “let’s nationalise the railways.”

Railways have become more political with polarised arguments replacing the core needs of investment in more capacity, more resilience and an overall better passenger experience. Railfuture will continue to campaign for our aims of seeing the railway improve. Being non-party political and increasingly informed and engaged with stakeholders is a key strength for Railfuture. Members join Railfuture because they want to see a bigger, better railway and we must continue to ensure we have the skills to

encourage this. Increasingly the emphasis is at regional level with the role of Railfuture’s branches in liaising with bodies such as integrated transport authorities. This is a major opportunity for all Railfuture members to get involved with our work, actively engaging in the process of fostering improvements.

Railways at the heart of the political agenda – joining the big three

Education, health and the economy traditionally dominate the political agenda as national election issues. This changed with the election of a Mayor in London, where transport was a key issue. Nationally other issues such as immigration have been added. Transport is now in this category, with HS2 being the issue that has placed transport alongside these other issues at the top of the political agenda.

Lamentably the environment, a key issue for Railfuture members in wanting sustainable transport, has been largely ditched as a political imperative, now consigned to the “we will attend to climate change when we have sorted out all these other issues”. We have therefore lost a key campaigning tool.

We might think that rail rising up the agenda would be a good thing. In some respects this is true, particularly now that provision of rail projects is now firmly associated with the economy rather than the environment. The business case for big rail projects was built upon contribution to the economy. Crossrail in London was justified on this basis, as are the Edinburgh-Glasgow Improvement Project and the Northern Hub in Manchester. The difficulty here is the ability of the industry to deliver. Main line electrification, set against other criteria including rolling stock replacement, is more difficult given project delays and cost overruns. People are getting impatient that the benefits are not being accrued in a timely way. The weakness here is that other transport capital schemes such as road schemes can be perceived as delivering similar benefits and are capable of effective

delivery. Road schemes have long been subject to a “preparation pool” approach and can be added to the roads programme when funding allows. At the most recent AGM, Railfuture members voted to continue our support for electrification, but for future schemes increasingly to focus our campaigning on smaller incremental schemes that are more deliverable and can bring benefits earlier. The Government’s previous approach to North West England electrification, although delayed in terms of implementation was an excellent example of this approach. Each relatively modest stage brought significant regional benefits, starting with Manchester to Newton-le-Willows giving Manchester to Scotland electric services, then to Liverpool giving Liverpool to Manchester Airport, then to Wigan, etc. The Northern Electric scheme, albeit using old cascaded trains, has been massively popular, particularly as passengers and politicians have seen the benefits. Even with this excellent scheme the initiative has been lost, with delays to the later Manchester to Bolton, Wigan, Preston and Blackpool sections.

Disappointingly, the populism agenda is increasing in dominance. HS2, which re-established railways on the political agenda, is a case in point. The populist agenda is to shout “ditch HS2 and spend the money on other projects” as chosen by the proponent. Railfuture was very unhappy about HS2 when it was conceived solely for speed to single unconnected end points, airline style. There is still work to be done, but generally the consultation process has resulted in a realisation that HS2 should be about system capacity and resilience.

Better solutions are emerging to integrate HS2 north of London, in the West Midlands (Moor Street proposals and light rail), Sheffield (city centre access) and Leeds (moving the HS2 station nearer to Leeds station). The two big gaps of serious concern to our members are the lack of connectivity in London from HS2 on to the rest of the rail network and HS1 and the need to properly plan HS3 between Manchester and Yorkshire in an integrated way, so bringing earlier and greater benefits to the Northern region as a whole. Branch campaigning by Railfuture in voicing these concerns and tabling ideas and solutions has been significant. This is why people join Railfuture. We can make a difference and we are increasingly being

listened to. The populist agenda is less productive. It seems to infer transferability. There is no evidence for this. Ditch HS2 and reopen my favourite branch line in effect means ditch HS2.

On reopenings, Railfuture has established strict criteria with a view to focusing our campaigning on proposals that are deliverable and have a strong business case. This increases our credibility with stakeholders and importantly, our chances of success. Oxford to Cambridge and to Wisbech are two strong examples.

The role of Railfuture

Rail is now high up on the political agenda, whether it is arguing about HS2, nationalisation or concerns about reform of rail operations such as the role of the guard. There is no guiding mind such as a strategic rail authority for our railways, and the role of Brussels has receded in terms

of new initiatives in Britain. The opportunity is there but the decision process is not stable on account of populism.

This is an opportunity for Railfuture to make a difference, provided we are seen as informed, constructive and aware of the many forces around us.

Have we the capability to do this for our members? The answer is yes if we take the organisation as a whole with active branches supported by Railfuture Group engaging with stakeholders and responding to rail consultations. This infers active involvement by a growing number of members with a broad range of age, skills, experience and social background.

I cannot think of a better time in recent history to campaign for a bigger, better railway in Britain.

■ Ian Brown CBE FCILT is Railfuture’s director of policy

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Trains still vital in post-Brexit Europe

People will continue to travel by train to Paris, Brussels and other European cities even after the Brexit vote.

Despite the uncertainty, Railfuture will also continue to campaign to make those journeys easier and cheaper for both British travellers and those coming to the UK.

Railfuture's new chair Chris Page was invited by *Rail Professional* magazine to explain what Brexit means for the railways.

He warned that higher prices for imported rolling stock and components could affect decisions on whether to buy new or refurbish existing trains.

Brexit could also have the effect of delaying some rail projects.

While reminding readers of some of the concerns, Chris reminded them that transport is recognised as the key to economic growth and that priority should be given to projects which will stimulate growth.

He also welcomed Transport Secretary Chris Grayling's announcement that investment in the future must continue.

The full article can be read at https://issuu.com/railpro/docs/sept_issue/67

Britain was earlier than other European countries in introducing passenger rights, franchising and the separation of operation from infrastructure.

Railfuture has also welcomed European Union investment in British railways.

We have promoted the London CIV or Euro High Saver ticket which enables Eurostar travellers from outside London to buy one ticket which includes the British journey to London and London Underground links.

Railfuture's David Allard has warned that the phone booking facility for the London CIV ticket has been withdrawn, but it can still be bought on the Eurostar website by clicking on "London". This leads to a list of British provincial destinations.

Railfuture and its predecessors have a long history of interest and involvement in international travel and cooperated in 2002 with similar bodies in nine other countries to form the European Passengers Federation which includes non-EU states.

British involvement is also likely to continue in multinational bodies such as CER, UNIFE, UIC and UITP which represent train operators, rail manufacturers or urban and regional public transport providers.

Companies such as Abellio, Arriva and Veolia operate at an



Picture: SIEMENS

Germany's new high speed fleet is launched

The latest European high speed train was launched in September by Siemens which is currently also supplying new trains for Eurostar.

The ICE 4 was shown off to the public in Berlin, with Siemens announcing that the train would allow Deutsche Bahn to usher in a new era in long-distance travel.

Passengers will be able to sample the first two ICE 4 trains over the next few months but they will not enter regular service until New Year.

One of the aims is to provide more flexibility, with five different carriage types and 24 different train configurations.

There are six power cars, for example, for a 12-car ICE 4 with a top speed of 155 miles per hour.

An ICE 4 is around 100 tons lighter than a comparable ICE 1, but has a higher seating capacity and large windows provide good views.

The 300 new trains will gradually replace DB's Intercity and Eurocity fleets, some of which date back to 1971. Gradually the early ICEs will be replaced by ICE 4s.

The trains are expected to generate around 70% of DB's revenue.

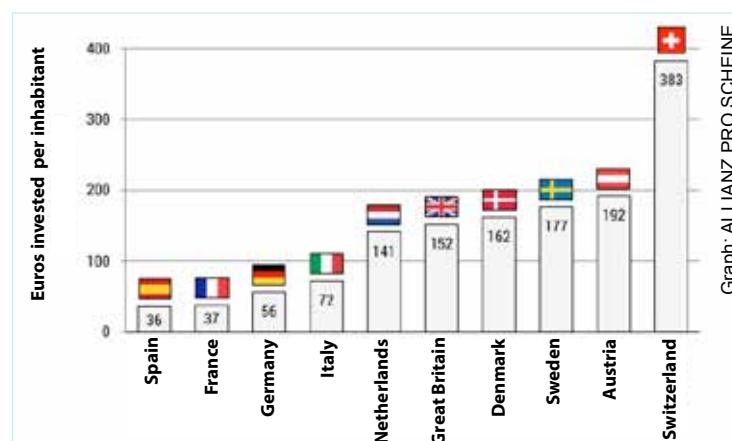
Railfuture members will remember that an ICE made an appearance at London St Pancras in 2010, amid hopes that DB would introduce direct services between London and Berlin.

Following the Brexit vote, we may have to wait a long time before the next DB ICE glides into St Pancras.

international level, as do manufacturers such as Siemens, Bombardier and Alstom. Coincidentally, in the same month as the Brexit vote, the European Commission announced £4.2 billion of funding for 88 rail projects as part of its Connecting Europe Facility. It was also revealed in July that Austrians travelled further by rail than the residents of any other EU countries in 2015.

Non-EU Switzerland had an even higher rate of rail use.

In the EU, passenger rail's share of the overall market increased by 0.3% while rail freight was static. Research commissioned by Germany's Alliance for Rail however shows that Germany rates poorly for rail investment per capita. British investment in rail looks better. See chart below.



Graph: ALLIANZ PRO SCHEINE

The European Passengers Federation will hold its 2017 conference and annual general meeting in Rotterdam, on Friday and Saturday 17-18 March.

Bookings will start in December at www.epf.eu.

At the end of September, a party of Railfuture members went by high speed train to western France for a four-day break, staying at St Nazaire, near Nantes.

In 2017 it is planned to return to German-speaking Europe, with a week-long trip to Innsbruck in Austria, in April or May.

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