

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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**Julie
Walters
on the
rail trail
SEE PAGE 2**

Picture: Ray King



Railways are getting good coverage these days on TV, radio and in the newspapers, thanks partly to Railfuture campaigning.

In June, Julie Walters was spotted on Scotland's Kyle of Lochalsh line filming for a new Channel 4 series called *Britain's Coastal Railways*.

Channel 4 commissioned the four-part series with the Oscar-nominated actress travelling on some of Britain's most famous coastal railway routes.

The actress, who starred in Channel 4's 2015 drama series *Indian Summers*, the film *Billy Elliot* and the *Harry Potter* films, was followed across a variety of landscapes, from Scottish beaches to Cornish fishing villages.

The Kyle line is recognised as one of the most scenic in Britain and can be used to get to and from the Isle of Skye. Many of the passengers are tourists, but it is also an essential link for local people.

It was proposed for closure in the Beeching report 54 years ago but was reprieved. It has featured in several films, including Michael Palin's *Great Railway Journeys of the World*. The line is occasionally used for special tourist trains, such as the nine-day Great Britain Tour which is operated by the Railway Touring Company.

One of the routes used by the Great Britain Tour is the Glasgow to Carlisle line via Dumfries, one of the most beautiful lines in Britain, which has only a very sparse service on Sundays when many leisure passengers would use it. Campaigner Graham Lund, who works in England's Lake District and visits his family in Girvan, on the Stranraer line in South



DINGWALL STATION: At the north-eastern end of the Kyle of Lochalsh line on the day Julie Walters was filming. The station boasts the excellent Tina's Tearoom as well as an on-platform pub, called The Mallard



KYLE LINE: The 2012 Great Britain Tour train near Loch Carron



THORNHILL STATION: As it was just before the First World War

Ayrshire, said: "Train frequencies on the Dumfries and Stranraer lines are atrocious on Sundays. Weekend holiday breaks by rail

are either very restricted or non-existent." Campaigners are fighting for better services on both lines as well as for the reopening

of Thornhill station. Thornhill was where John Buchan's hero Richard Hannay leapt off the train in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. The station succumbed to the Beeching cuts and has been seeing trains pass through without stopping for 50 years. Right in the middle of a 30-mile station-less gap in the line between Glasgow and Carlisle in south-west Scotland, Thornhill is determined to look to the future and get its station back.

Campaigner John Burton said: "Thornhill cannot live on nostalgia and is determined not to become merely a retirement destination or a dormitory town for Dumfries.

"It is a living community and needs better access to the wider world to promote growth and give local work to young people. A railway station would be a huge step in the right direction."

Now, a Thornhill Station Action Group has been set up and is attracting packed-out public meetings.

With solid support from local businesses, the group is working with Dumfries and Galloway Council and the local MP and MSPs towards a new railway station which they say will help to secure the economic future of the area.

The Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance process, STAG, has put Thornhill forward to Stage 2. No doubt it will be some time before the trains stop again, but the community is determined.

There is also a campaign to reopen Easttriggs station, which is on the Glasgow South Western line, south of Dumfries.

Picture: Ray King

Picture: Ray King

Election welcome panel is ready

By Stewart Palmer
Governance Director

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The board of Railfuture runs the company and is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the organisation.

In any company, directors have specific and onerous legal responsibilities, and it is therefore important that any potential board member has a proper understanding of the responsibilities they will assume if elected to the board, and the values and behaviours that they would be expected to adopt.

On 3 June 2017 the board approved a new process that will operate from this autumn for all new directors and any existing director seeking re-election.

In accordance with the articles of association of the company, any ordinary member can stand for the board. This is not going to change.

However, from now on any member who is considering standing will have the opportunity of a structured discussion with a panel of Railfuture vice-presidents, who will explain the responsibilities of a director, answer questions and provide clarity.

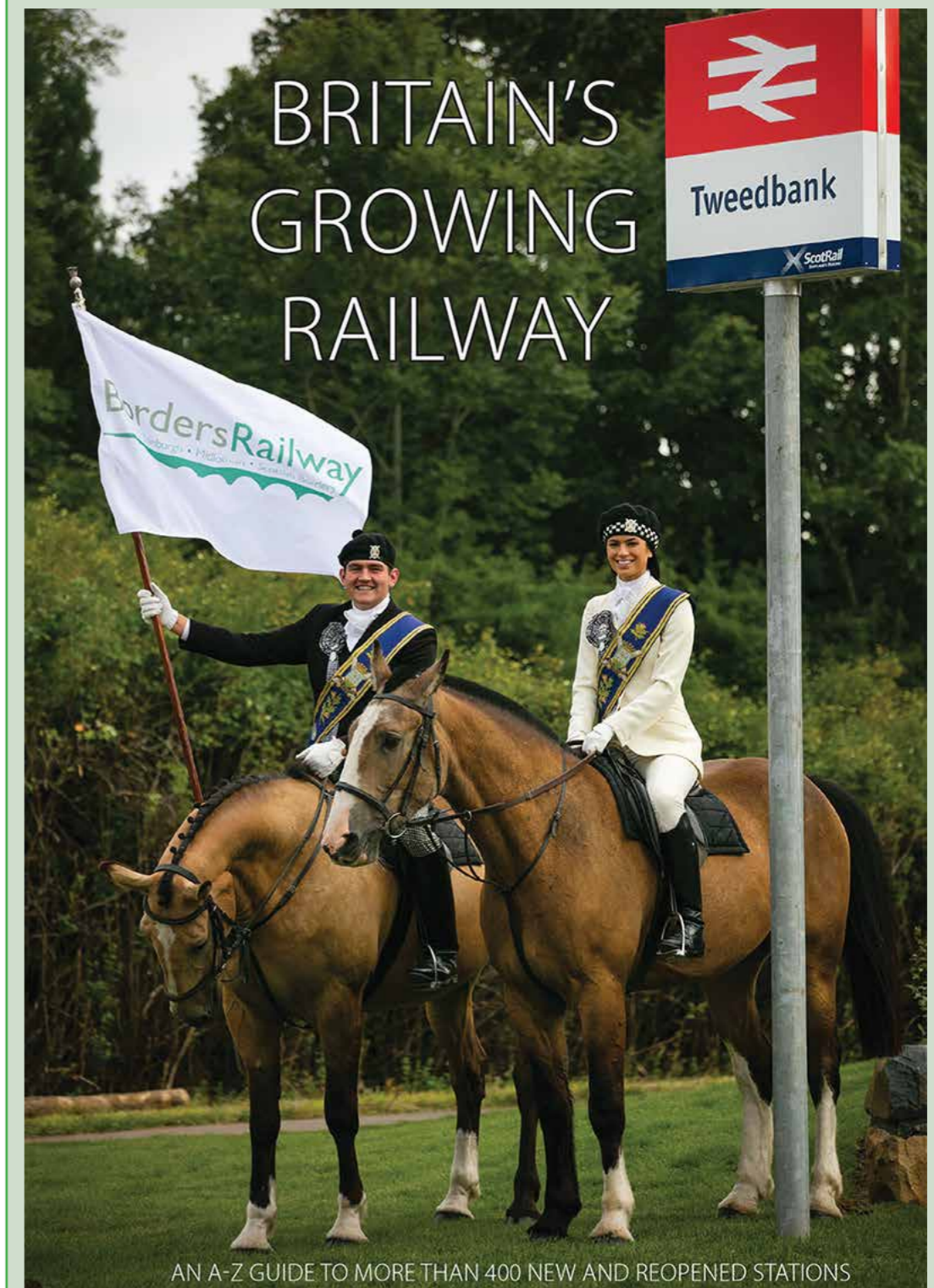
This will also be an opportunity for the individual to explain their understanding of Railfuture's policies and values and to demonstrate the strengths and qualities they can bring to the board.

The vice-presidents are not themselves board members and will not approve or reject candidates. The purpose of this discussion is not to bar anybody from standing, but to make sure that any potential board members make an informed decision whether to stand or not.

The election returning officer may not endorse the candidate's election statement if the candidate decides to stand but has not taken the opportunity to have a discussion with the vice-presidents' panel.

If you are thinking of standing for the board in 2018, please advise the company secretary Lloyd Butler by 1 November 2017 so a discussion can be arranged before nominations close.

◆◆◆◆ Railfuture conference 4 November 2017 at The Curve, Leicester LE1 1SB



AN A-Z GUIDE TO MORE THAN 400 NEW AND REOPENED STATIONS

Railfuture's new book Britain's Growing Railway has been well received by members and reviewers. "It is a wonderful work of reference and an inspiration to remind us of all the good news of railway expansion," said the Reverend Edmund Worthy of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart church, in Wellingborough, Northants.

"The fact that almost all the reinstated stations and routes have been successful way beyond what was hoped should give inspiration to anyone interested in the future of our railways."

The book is "indispensable not just to rail campaigners but transport professionals, local authority politicians – and those chapesses in Government". This verdict comes from Paul Salvesson, railway expert and author, who is currently visiting professor in transport and logistics at the University of Huddersfield. He said: "Editors Jerry

Alderson and Ian McDonald have done a superb job building on Alan Bevan's original work." Paul highlighted the 2016 openings of the Norton Bridge Chord (north of Stafford) and the Chiltern line through Bicester to Oxford. He added: "Both projects have been incredibly useful for different reasons. The Norton Bridge Chord has shaved several minutes off running times from Stafford to Stoke and removed a serious bottleneck on the West Coast main line. Chiltern has opened up an enormous new market for travel to and from Oxford

"I look forward to reviewing the seventh edition, with lots of reopenings up north as well as Tweedbank-Carlisle, Lewes-Uckfield, March-Wisbech, Bere Alston-Tavistock, and quite a few more."

The book costs £9.95 postage free from www.railfuture.org.uk/shop/books.php?id=bgr1

Fight for passenger choice

By Stewart Palmer

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When the Department for Transport announced that First/MTR had won the South Western franchise, Railfuture wrote to the Competition and Markets Authority expressing concern about the fact that both routes from London to Exeter were now controlled by the same owning group.

Many passengers have a choice of which route to use and, for historic reasons, fares and car parking charges tended to be lower on the former South West Trains route. We were very pleased that the authority agreed with our concerns and ordered an investigation. As a result of this, First/MTR has given the authority a series of guarantees about the pricing and availability of unregulated fares (princi-

pally advanced purchase tickets) between Exeter and London via Salisbury. Railfuture will monitor this locally to make sure they honour those guarantees.

However, we are disappointed the authority did not press for equal treatment for all users on the line – not just those who use Exeter itself – as we requested.

In addition, our concerns about car parking charges were ignored. This episode underlines the need for a strong Railfuture with grassroots activists to try to protect passengers' interests.

We have secured some protection to prevent Exeter passengers being ripped off, but this is not as much as we believe they should have been given.

The fight to get the same treatment for all users on the Salisbury-Exeter line will continue.

Rail user awards for 2017

By Roger Blake

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Eighteen entries from across Britain are going for gold in this year's annual Awards for Rail User Groups.

The entries come from eight Railfuture branch areas, ranging from Scotland to Devon.

As in previous years the hotly contested categories are for Best Newsletter, Best Website and Best Campaign. Does that mean nominations for Best Campaigner, Best Social Media and Best New Group are all in with a better chance of an award?

The judging panel of Railfuture vice-presidents will meet in October to give its

verdicts. They will also decide who is to receive the Judges' Special Award, given to an individual, group, project or campaign that they wish to single out for particular praise.

All will be revealed at Railfuture's annual autumn conference in Leicester on Saturday 4 November. Speakers will come from today's railway, from those of yesteryear, which are still very much alive in the heritage sector, and from proponents of a reopened line for tomorrow's railway.

Bookings for the conference will be accepted until Thursday 2 November, at www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences

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Smell stays after electrification U-turn

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling told voters during an election campaign visit to Derby that he wanted to see “smelly diesel” trains replaced. Exactly 65 days later he announced that diesel traction would continue up the Midland main line north of Kettering. People living near the line will not swallow his excuse that using bi-mode trains would avoid the disruption that electrification would entail. Many of them have already endured disruption as several local roads were closed for six months for the rebuilding of bridges over the railway. Railfuture’s East Midlands committee is working on a campaign to have the electrification reinstated. Those of us in the Loughborough constituency have particular sympathy for our MP, Nicky Morgan, who led what appeared to be a successful parliamentary campaign for electrification, but has now seen the Government’s promises broken.

Revolt over new franchise

Railfuture East Midlands has been working on our contribution to Railfuture’s response to the public consultation on the next East Midlands rail franchise. The start of the new franchise has been put back to August 2019. The public consultation closes on 11 October 2017. We are particularly concerned about the proposal to separate the London-Corby “commuter” services from the inter-city services, with none of the latter stopping at Luton, Bedford or Wellesbourne. A protest petition (bit.ly/EMrailpetition) in Bedford attracted more than 5,000 signatures. Northward travel from these towns is already less than ideal, and having to change at Kettering would make it even more difficult. Bizarrely, the consultation document suggests that electrification to Corby will mean the end of direct trains from London to Oakham and Melton Mowbray, when one of the few positives about introducing bi-mode trains to the network is that it would make such services easier to provide.

Away from the Midland main line, our aspirations for the franchise include: improved capacity and frequency on the Derby-Crewe line; reopening the line to Ollerton from Shirebrook; direct trains from Nottingham to Coventry via Leicester; direct trains to Manchester from Leicester via the Dore South curve. We support the transfer of Birmingham-Standed services to the East Midlands franchise, which would give flexibility to provide new through services, for example Birmingham-Norwich, but we reject the proposal to split the Liverpool-Norwich service at Nottingham or Sheffield.

East Midlands councils have usefully issued a “model consultation response” to help other stakeholders. Many of their priorities reflect those of Railfuture.

Airport links improvement

East Midlands Airport has offered to contribute a £2.5million “rail enhancement package” if services at East Midlands Parkway station are improved. Currently the three services per hour at the parkway station are all timed within 15 minutes of each other, leaving the station without trains for the remaining 45 minutes. As well as improving the timetabling of existing services, the airport operator wants direct rail links to cities such as Coventry, Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent. In return, its package will improve links from Parkway to the airport for customers and employees.

Friends of Narborough station

A new user group, Friends of Narborough Station, was inaugurated on 17 August. This is a combined rail user and station adoption group and seeks to enhance the amenities and train services at Narborough as well as take on aspects of the station environment. East Midlands Trains was also represented at the meeting and supports the initiative. This group is particularly welcome in being the first on this route and we wish them every success.

Meeting with City Mayor

Three members of the Railfuture East Midlands committee have had a very positive meeting with the City Mayor of Leicester, Sir Peter Soulsby, and the Assistant Mayor (Energy & Sustainability), Adam Clarke. Topics discussed included electrification, improved connections (e.g. to Manchester and Coventry), and the National Forest Line (Leicester to Burton-upon-Trent). Both the City Mayor and Assistant Mayor have been invited to speak at the Railfuture conference in Leicester on 4 November.

Market Harborough improvements

Network Rail held another public information event on 27 June on its plans for straightening the line at Market Harborough. Work on the new car park, on the east side of the line, has started. When completed, the land currently occupied by the car park on the west side will be free for construction of the new track alignment. Harborough Rail Users support the plans, but would like to see more shelter on the platforms and better access from the booking office to the platforms.

Harborough Rail Users have also persuaded East Midlands Trains to look into better rail replacement bus services during Sunday closures, so that there will be a connection to the 10:20 northbound service from Leicester. At present, the earliest bus arrives in time for the 12:24 service.

Trade shows

Ariadne Tampion and Steve Jones (chair and secretary of Railfuture East Midlands) visited the Railtex and Rail Live trade shows to better inform our campaigning. The VivaRail D-Train exhibited at Rail Live may have potential as a low-cost option for a reopened National Forest Line.

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Rail for the Greater Norwich Local Plan

Railfuture East Anglia is submitting evidence to the Greater Norwich Local Plan calling for more use of rail to support transport planning in and around the city. This includes the addition of a South Norfolk parkway station on or near the site of the former station at Fornsett. The new station would serve the growing community of Long Stratton, which could expand to a population approaching 10,000, plus new housing proposed under the Plan.

Borders Railway lessons for East Anglia

We welcomed Railfuture vice-chair Allison Cosgrove to our June meeting. Allison shared the lessons to be learned from the Borders Railway reopening, where the growth in passengers has exceeded expectations. Economic regeneration has also resulted in new businesses locating near the railway.

Twitter: @railwatch

The original line was closed around the same time as the link from Bedford to Cambridge, whose revival has been our main campaign for 20 years. The East West Rail consortium has engaged Atkins consultants to examine the benefits this line can bring east of Cambridge. There are encouraging signs that the lessons from the Borders informed the East West conditional output statement. In August we issued a press statement welcoming the findings, which call for a three-fold increase in services between Cambridge, Norwich and Ipswich, with target journey times of under an hour as part of the East-West service pattern.

Railfuture improves new trains

Railfuture members were invited to look over the mock-up of the new Stadler trains for the London-Norwich line. The design team listened to our representations. Toilets are now better distributed along the trains, each with its own retention tank and water supply, and the location of the buffet counter has been improved by moving it away from the doors. The bi-modes now have two toilets per set rather than one. Members also visited Derby to see a mock-up of the new Aventura units.

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Northern protest over electrification

More than 29,000 people signed a petition calling for more investment in transport in the north of England, after rail electrification plans were scrapped. Ed Cox, the director of the Institute for Public Policy Research North think-tank which organised the petition, said: “The Department for Transport just isn’t listening. Its response has been to patronise northern commuters.” A transport summit held by local authority leaders at Cloth Hall Court, Leeds, in August was told “an outdated, expensive and slow transport system” was holding back growth in the North of England. Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, told the *Yorkshire Post* the nation is “London-centric” and “too centralised”. Among the delegates who attended the event were the leaders of Leeds and Newcastle councils, Liverpool City Region Mayor Steve Rotherham and business representatives. In a joint statement, the northern leaders called for the government to commit to “new investment in modern local infrastructure”.

At-a-glance guide to campaign

The Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership has produced a six-page at-a-glance guide to its campaign to get the “missing link” line reopened. It is available at www.selrap.org.uk

OBE honour for Harrogate champion

Brian Dunsby of Harrogate Line Supporters Group was honoured with the Order of the British Empire in June for services to businesses and the community in Harrogate. Brian is campaigning for extra services on the line and to have the single-line section between Knaresborough and Poppleton doubled. He is also calling for new parkway stations at Leeds Bradford Airport and Flaxby Moor Business Park, along with additional platforms at Leeds and York stations.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch
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www.railfuture.org.uk

I think we have a problem with strategy

By Ian Brown
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As part of the National Rail and Light Rail Awards judging panels over many years, I continue to be amazed by the commitment, competence and sheer ingenuity of people in the rail industry delivering improved services, new trains and also projects.

Many projects are small and complex but delivered competently. However, these are often overshadowed by glitches with large projects which we have just seen at London’s Waterloo and the Bolton station rebuilding project which was affected by a bridge collapse. The press has enjoyed this, establishing the word “misery” almost as a railway technical term.

These projects are essential. All this work is aimed at precisely what Railfuture campaigns for – a bigger, better railway in Britain. This means more and longer platforms at key stations, increased route capacity, including a properly integrated HS2 and new trains to go with it. We should encourage continued investment in the railway and not allow the populist element of the press or uninformed politicians to use problems as an excuse to divert money away from railway projects.

Strategic failures

Having said this, failures, through lack of any effective strategic oversight of the rail industry as a whole, are potentially inflicting massive cost and reputational damage to the rail industry and hence risking investment in future projects. The electrification fiasco is the biggest example of this (see Chris Austin’s article on pages 10-11).

I would just add a few observations here, as this was a situation that could and should have been predicted and hence avoided. The problem is structural in that the rail industry was not equipped to implement such a vast programme in an holistic way. This includes trains, service delivery and improved and cost-effective service for passengers.

Lessons were learned by British Rail – and forgotten

Looking back for lessons, this is just like the 1960s when BR embarked upon electrification of the West Coast Main Line, although BR did actually complete the project. The then Secretary of State did not cut back the scheme at Rugby!

Many readers will be aware that BR started with the other end, that is Manchester to Crewe – a cunning move to get this right, although risky as it could have resulted in an isolated electric



LIVERPOOL: An uncertain future for rolling stock. The diesel class 185, on the left, works the TransPennine route which may now not be electrified after the Government pulled the plug on three electrification schemes and cast doubt on the TransPennine route. The class 150 Sprinter (second left) dates back to 1985 and has been a stalwart of regional rail services. It has been in great demand as ever more people want to travel by local trains. The two class 319s (right) have been cascaded from Thameslink. This cascade has been dependent on incremental electrification schemes in England’s North West, coupled with new class 700 electric trains for Thameslink

railway, just like Manchester to Sheffield. BR got a lot better with the Preston-Glasgow and then the East Coast electrification schemes.

Even so, BR was criticised for providing lightweight equipment causing the wires to fall down when the wind blew on exposed sections. This is unlikely to happen with the over-engineered structures being provided for GW electrification.

The programme should have continued, with more infill around major cities including Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Edinburgh using the skills acquired, and most importantly incorporating the very expensive lessons learned. This is continuous development used in the automotive and aerospace industries.

Lack of industry strategic capability planning

A lack of strategic industry planning led Network Rail to agree to do far more electrification schemes faster than the industry had the capacity to deliver – all at “efficient” costs. This had to end in tears. Network Rail could have chosen to do this pro-

gramme incrementally, with one route following another. It did not. When the contractor pulled out of the contract to electrify Manchester-Preston it was clear that there was a cost problem and that contractors could not absorb such cost escalation. The cost projections of the GW electrification then completely blew it, so the programme was halted, albeit mitigated by bi-modes as described by Chris. It is a pity that it did not adopt the incremental “bite-sized lump” approach implemented by Lord Adonis when Secretary of State in North West England, where each small, if painful stage brought service benefits and lessons learned were applied to the next stage. This approach should be adopted for the Windermere branch, Bolton-Wigan and Manchester-Leeds. The outcry about even thinking of not electrifying Manchester-Leeds, suggested by Chris Grayling as “smart”, illustrates an important issue that Railfuture members are very aware of. Investment in good transport infrastructure is all about the

regional economy. This will be the key factor in determining whether electrification and infrastructure upgrades will come back on to the table in Britain.

The Scottish Government has taken a different view. Despite some early cutbacks and difficulties with interpretation of European Union clearance guidelines, they have persevered and Glasgow to Edinburgh (via Falkirk High) is set to open before the end of the year. The incremental approach has been adopted. Now the difficult bits including Glasgow Queen Street station are nearly complete, additions such as to Stirling and even Edinburgh to Glasgow Central via Shotts become cost effective and deliverable.

Whatever happened to the planned cascade of electric trains?

A consequence is that the planned cascade of electric trains across the network is largely no more. GWR are transferring Thames Valley “Turbo” diesel multiple units to the Bristol area, a very welcome development

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HS2 must be part of the overall approach

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given that Bristol appears to get the rawest deal in terms of rail investment. The strong economy of Bristol deserves better.

The other brighter spot in this context is the cascade of diesel trains to England from Scotland as a result of Transport Scotland persisting with Central Belt electrification.

Otherwise it is storage for relatively new electric units or scrambling to fit diesel engines on electric multiple units to protect the value of owned assets. Strategic? No.

HS2 route now fixed

High Speed Two is now also seen in the context of the regional economy. Railfuture has consistently pressed for HS2 to be provided in a way to maximise the capacity and resilience of the rail system and to be properly integrated so that regions can gain the economic benefit of rail investment. HS2 is going ahead and the route is now fixed north of Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds.

There are inconsistencies such as serving Nottingham and Derby by a parkway station and tram connection at Toton, then doing the exact opposite by providing a loop on the existing railway through Sheffield. Time will tell which approach is best for these important cities.

All change at Crewe

HS2 has just released its consultation on an HS2 station at Crewe (next to the current station, not the earlier Basford Hall marshalling yard scheme with its massive loss of inter-connectivity).

Railfuture has responded to this consultation and you can see the response on the Railfuture website. This illustrates just how far thinking has moved on at HS2.

The consultation is all about increasing capacity on HS2 itself by operating double trains splitting at Crewe, about regional connectivity and particularly about planning for housing. Our voices have clearly got through.

While this new approach is to be supported by Railfuture, the pity is that if the whole of HS2 had been planned on this basis we would have a very different HS2 plan, properly and consistently integrated into the rail network and regional economies.

As we have it, the North West leg is shaping up well when compared to the North East leg, which is far less satisfactory. Our campaigning for better links into Toton, Sheffield and Leeds continues, but a radical solu-



Picture: RAY KING

OXFORD: A class 180 diesel train in December last year. Plans for electrification from Didcot to Oxford are now in doubt, according to local MP Layla Moran who said it may now never happen. Mrs Moran, who represents Oxford West and Abingdon, has asked Rail Minister Paul Maynard to commit to the project. He has said bi-mode trains from London to Oxford would be electric as far as Didcot and then switch to diesel mode for the 15-mile journey to Oxford. He said "ongoing assessments" were taking place and there would be "further announcements in due course" although the DfT insists "no changes" have been made to the planned electrification, according to

the Oxford Mail. Mrs Moran said: "This is seriously worrying. Residents were promised that electrifying the railway to Oxford would go ahead. We welcomed it to not just reduce carbon emissions, but also to reduce noise pollution. The Government has already gone back on one promise by delaying it and I fear that the Department for Transport's jargon-filled letter is a signal that electrification may never happen."

Electrification between Didcot and Oxford has already been deferred to control period 6 (2019-24). Plans to electrify the East West Rail link between Oxford and Cambridge have also been scrapped

tion such as is now on the table for Crewe does not appear to be forthcoming.

Obsolescence?

Railways are not obsolete worldwide – even the United States, the land that killed urban transportation by favouring the motor car industry, is investing in higher speed passenger rail and improving the economics of rail freight. Every US city is building or wants a light rail system. They are increasingly turning to Britain, including Network Rail, to help them.

If you read transport websites, you will see the headlines are full of innovation: electric cars, self driving cars, convoys of trucks on the slow lanes of British motorways with a driver only in the front vehicle (this was the original concept of the train!) and a hyperloop that would get you from Bristol to London in 20 minutes.

All this may seem very exciting, but much of it will not solve the problem of road congestion. This will continue to get worse as the population and the demand for mobility continue to increase.

Railways, both heavy and light, are a sustainable solution in a properly planned integrated transport context.

They need to be strategically

planned as part of regional economic and housing plans. We must not allow this to be lost in a wave of populism or frustration.

We must get away from "my constituents are sick of seemingly endless rail strikes and project overruns", for whatever reason.

Rail user groups

More recently, I have participated in Railfuture's Rail User Group Awards judging. Many committed people are tirelessly working with rail operators to provide more welcoming stations. It is also clear that this brings benefits to passengers and brings passenger needs to the attention of rail operators. This is worthwhile and, after much campaigning, is gaining recognition in that franchise competitions increasingly include meeting the needs of local groups. This is good work and when seen across the network is significant.

So do we have a problem?

We should not have, but we do. The problem is that the lack of strategic direction in the rail industry is causing problems which are negating much of the good work done by so many people within and outside the industry.

The problem, exacerbated by project glitches and no particular appetite from either side to sort

seemingly endless strikes, is having an effect in a key area – stakeholders. This is dangerous in a populist world.

However, it represents an opportunity for Railfuture as a campaigning organisation. As Brexit wobbles clarify, demand for rail travel will resume its upward trend. With a generally low rail market share, external changes can have a huge effect on demand for our railways. The question is will the industry be ready?

Our role as Railfuture members – through Railfuture branches and by informed responses to industry consultations – is to campaign to ensure it is. Few organisations take a strategic view right across Britain's rail industry. Railfuture does, and this is increasingly being recognised.

Please support Railfuture branches by adding your views and contacts within the rail industry, to strengthen our efforts to ensure stakeholders and the local press realise that strategic investment in our rail network, properly delivered, can address many economic, environmental and social objectives seen as essential political imperatives in an increasingly devolved Britain.

Ian Brown CBE is policy advisor to the Railfuture board.

Scotland

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■ ■ Campaigners get together

Railfuture Scotland recently hosted a successful Groups Day in Perth. Nine rail campaigning groups were included, from the Campaign for Borders Rail, seeking to extend the new line beyond Tweedbank to Hawick and across the Border to Carlisle, to Friends of the Far North Line, who are trying to improve the speed and reliability of journeys between Inverness and the northernmost towns of Wick and Thurso. These have actually become slower within the past 10 years and suffer from an increased number of cancellations.

The Friends of the scenic West Highland line reported on success in achieving a better service between Glasgow and Oban, but expressed concern about the forthcoming change of rolling stock with its greatly reduced number of bicycle spaces, surely a perverse decision for a prime tourist line.

The South West Community Rail Partnership explained concerns about the future of rail services to Stranraer (which has lost its status as a ferry terminal) as well as to Ayr and Girvan. Nearer the Central Belt, Rail Action Group East of Scotland are still waiting for their promised stations to open at East Linton and Reston. Capital Rail Action Group detailed some of its aims for suburban services within Edinburgh. Fife was well represented with members of three campaigns present: Newburgh Train Station, Levenmouth Rail Campaign and StARLink. Newburgh is working on producing its own pre-STAG (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide) report. Levenmouth is smarting over receiving no funding from the Edinburgh City Deal, as are other revenue projects. It is difficult to understand why after having had not one but two STAG evaluations carried out, courtesy of Fife Council, Transport Scotland has requested even more information for a more robust business case.

Undeterred, StARLink is working on ensuring that the study into a St Andrews railway stays in the Tay Cities Deal and hopes that the Scottish Government will have a change of heart as regards revenue projects. In addition to the 2012 TATA report, StARLink now has the Peter Brett Associates Policy Review, which received a generous donation from Railfuture, as well as a statistical analysis carried out by a university expert, detailing the problems suffered by St Andrews from being accessible only by road.

■ ■ Farewell to campaigner Big Al

Glasgow City councillor Alistair "Big Al" Watson, a passionate supporter of the city's Crossrail project which has still to be implemented, died in June. The former train driver was an advocate for public transport throughout his political career. He stood down from the chairmanship of Strathclyde Partnership for Transport in 2010 because of ill health. He represented Cardonald on the city council for 22 years.

Contacts:

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland:

www.rages.org.uk/

Beattock Station Action Group:

www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/

St Andrews Rail Link campaign:

www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/

www.facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign

[twitter@StARLinkRail](https://twitter.com/StARLinkRail)

Levenmouth Rail Campaign:

www.lmrc-action.org.uk/

www.facebook.com/Levenmouth-Rail-Campaign-43283261690648/

www.facebook.com/Levenmouth-Rail-Campaign-43283261690648/

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

Capital Rail Action Group:

www.capitalrail.org.uk/

Newburgh Train Station campaign:

<http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/>

Forth Rail Link:

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■ ■ Timetable innovation success

Govia Thameslink Railway's 2018 timetable consultations last autumn and this summer included proposals to cut the through service between Ashford and Brighton, operated by only an hourly two-car Turbostar. Last year we said that if it could not be retained with rolling-stock which could add capacity, the through service should not be split at either Hastings or Eastbourne but instead have an overlap in the middle of the route. A replacement four-car Electrostar between Brighton and Hastings would add much-needed capacity, and the two-car Turbostar continuing to run between Ashford and Eastbourne would maintain connectivity. An interim rolling-stock solution for that eastern section might have to wait for the post-GTR franchise after 2021, as it would later be followed by the operation of through HS1 services interwoven with a local all-stations MarshLink shuttle.

The five rail user groups in the Hastings & Rye and Bexhill & Battle areas have all agreed the concept, have acted in concert to convince GTR to demonstrate its practicality in a draft timetable, and have moved on to secure the public backing of the two local MPs. A campaign became a negotiation, and everyone now hopes to hear encouraging news from the Rail Minister when he addresses the fourth Hastings Rail Summit in October.

■ ■ Uckfield line electrification campaign

A report on Southern by ex-Virgin boss Chris Gibb has backed electrification of the Uckfield line, and the local MP has jumped on the idea as a means to deliver better services for her constituents. We agree with both, as a more reliable branch and a more flexible fleet to operate it would demonstrate our strategic approach to evolving electrification. With the line feeding into the vital East Croydon-London Bridge leg of the Thameslink network, it is those wider network benefits which are, with due respect to commuters at Uckfield line stations, of even greater significance and value. We are however under no illusions about the lack of capacity, not just in the rail industry but also in the electricity supply industry, for efficient project delivery. While Gibb correctly identified GTR's parent Govia as a possible third-party midwife to deliver the project rather than Network Rail, electrification of the line itself must be accompanied by reinforcement of the supply of power to it from the National Grid, neither cheap nor easy.

■ ■ Overground extension

A recurring London theme is the way redundant industrial sites from the 20th century are giving way to new residential sites for the 21st century, and all with rail access. Since Lea Bridge station reopened last year, an adjacent housing development has begun replacing derelict factories. The Lea Valley's Meridian Water development is replacing empty warehouses and now work is in progress to reinstate track and add two more trains an hour to serve its 10,000 homes. Beam Park on

the site of Ford's stamping plant will have a new station on Trenitalia's Essex Thameside route. Barking Riverside, formerly a power station site, can now provide nearly 11,000 homes, since TfL was granted powers in August to construct and operate an extension of the Gospel Oak-Barking line. Railfuture has supported it every step of the way, through every consultation and at October's Public Inquiry. We hope to be on the first train in 2021!

See the Railfuture website for latest news

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■ ■ Railfuture blooms for Hykeham

This is one of two planters that Railfuture Lincolnshire sponsored at Hykeham station. They are placed in the car park/transport



Picture: DAVID HARBY

interchange each side of the bus shelter. They have been planted up with herbs grown by branch chairman David Harby and are watered and looked after by the station adopters, David and branch member Chris Brown. Hykeham is a fast growing area on the outskirts of Lincoln. Passenger numbers have grown from 14,314 in 2006 to 71,056 in 2016 and are expected to reach 100,000 by 2018. A 20-space car park and cycle paths to the station were funded in 2014 from a local sustainable transport fund grant. When the rail service was improved in 2016, branch members delivered 2,000 leaflets to local homes, promoting the station and Railfuture.

Railfuture monitors large planning applications to look for opportunities to attract section 106 agreement funding for station facilities. As a result, at Hykeham platform improvements, an extra 65 parking spaces, a bus shelter, a bus service and footpath links to the station have been funded by Persimmon Homes.

The planters are part of the Hykeham in Bloom campaign which includes the station garden being developed by the station adopters.

Progress has been slow in 2017 because of the delay in transferring ownership of some of the car park land to the railway. The work at the station was inspected by the East Midlands in Bloom judges as part of the Hykeham in Bloom entry and the branch chairman was delighted to be at the awards ceremony in September where the entry received a Silver Award. Station adopters at Habrough (including another branch member) and Spalding both received Judges' Awards for their efforts.

Carolyn Sharp from Skegness, with her canine friends Rupert and Charlie, is on a short-list of seven nominations for Outstanding Volunteer Contribution at the Association of Community Rail Partnership awards in October.

Branch members were present at the DfT consultation event in Lincoln for the next East Midlands franchise, with some making pertinent comments about the inadequacies of the current service in Lincolnshire.

Electrification flaw

The transport secretary's cancellation of several railway electrification projects is fundamentally flawed. The decision will leave several major cities dependent on diesel powered/bi-modal trains for the foreseeable future. This is a cheap fix and follows a dismal pattern of binary investment decisions regarding the electrification of the main line railway system in Britain.

Worryingly, internal resistance to main line electrification within the Department for Transport seems to have won the day. Having been castigated for a failure to develop this option on a rolling basis to secure the benefit of faster and more reliable trains in 2009/2010, the DfT had a Damascene conversion, aided and abetted by Network Rail, and supported a range of projects including main line electrification, infilling existing schemes, and developing an electric spine between Southampton and the Midlands/Yorkshire.

The DfT was, however, intent on the deployment of bi-modal trains which they had advocated as a replacement for the existing high speed fleet, leading to proposals to electrify the Great Western route which was, perversely, preferred as the primary route for modernisation. The GW electrification scheme was originally to stop at Cardiff, leaving Swansea to be served by bi-modals in diesel mode.

This lunacy was overturned after protests but the massive overruns and incompetence that characterised this scheme (look at the National Audit Office report 2016) led to a return to the original half-baked plan.

The cancellation of the Midland main line project condemns cities in the East Midlands and South Yorkshire to be served by cheap bi-modal options. In any sane evaluation it beggars belief that this option is seen as justifiable. Having "paused" schemes as a consequence of overruns for which they were culpable, the DfT and Network Rail have effectively crippled the economic potential of this region and also failed to deliver a more connected electrified rail network. This leaves the rail sector with a series of lines which do not provide a national system. Echoes of the position which crippled the West Coast main line under the modernisation plan of the 1950s and 1960s. The cities which would have been wired up under the MML scheme now



This postcard of a cat wearing a station master's hat is one of the novel marketing methods which rescued a Japanese station from closure. The 10-mile long Kishigawa line of the Wakayama Electric Railway now attracts tourists who come to see the cat, travel on the cat-themed trains and pick their own fruit in the market gardens along the route. Tama the stray cat was fed by passengers and proved so successful in attracting travellers that she was appointed station master and chief operating officer of Kishi station. A study estimated that the publicity surrounding Tama contributed £7.5 million in two years to the local economy. Passenger numbers grew by 10% in one year. When Tama died, a statue was created for her in a nearby Shinto shrine and she was succeeded by Nitama, in the picture above, who served her "apprenticeship" at Idakiso station

have to wait the arrival of HS2 (this year, next year, sometime, never). The missing link in terms of rail mileage between Bedford and Leeds is relatively small and could have been wired up quickly had there been competent project management in Network Rail and the DfT. Both organisations were rightly castigated for incompetence.

This has led directly to the dilution of intentions to create a modern electrified railway on a national scale able to service both passengers and

freight transport. The decision to abandon plans to wire up parts of the network effectively destroys one of rail's big advantages of being able to operate using a mix of energy and fuel inputs and not be utterly dependent on the continuing supply of liquid hydrocarbon fuel and the emissions this creates at the time and point of use. The decisions by Chris Grayling and the DfT are short-sighted and fundamentally wrong.

Phil Mortimer by email

Railfuture's vision: A railway system that provides services which travellers and freight forwarders want to use, and which offers more journey opportunities to more people and more freight

Bi-modes are back

British Rail's class 73 electro-diesels have been around since 1962, and only 49 were built. It is interesting that "bi-modes" have now reappeared.

Wesley Paxton, 17 Annerley Road, Annan DG12 6HE

Station canopies

It was interesting to see John Gilbert's letter about station canopies in *Railwatch* 152. Passengers at Hereford are well protected by Victorian platform canopies, but immediately outside the entrance and booking hall there is nothing, so passengers get soaked waiting for buses or taxis. I agree with Simon Barber's letter that toilets are absolutely essential.

And of course the demise of luggage capacity, including space for bikes, is a very sad development. Some things on the railway are going backwards.

It's daft for instance that to get to many preserved steam railways, people have to go by car.

I would also like to see more railways reopened. Somehow a rail service should be provided for the Glastonbury Festival.

HS2 will provide precious little benefit to anyone in the West of England or Wales. Station and line reopenings and redoubling of track are sorely needed in this area and would cost a fraction of what is being lavished on HS2, Crossrail and Thameslink.

The Heart of Wales line should be given its own curve, east of Llanelli, so trains would not have to reverse. Even better, there could be a cut-off at Craven Arms to allow trains to get directly to Hereford, which is a "natural" centre for this area. Connections at Craven Arms are so poor at the moment that to get to Hereford or South Wales via Ludlow is almost impossible.

JH Evered, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5RB

Parkway problem

Two brief points on *Railwatch* 152 Letters. HS2 at East Midlands Parkway instead of Toton: It might be difficult topographically with a power station alongside and the rocky Red Hill just to the North. As to narrow replacement canopies, not only do they let in the rain but also can be a false economy over time as it seems to be deemed necessary with any



Virgin's new nine-car Azuma bi-mode train, which is capable of travelling on both electric and diesel power, visited Scotland for the first time in August, pictured above in Dunbar. The run north of the border was part of the testing programme by manufacturer Hitachi before the 65-strong fleet is deployed on the East Coast main line next year.

Virgin Trains East Coast plans to accelerate journey times between Edinburgh and London by 22 minutes, bringing regular journey times down to just four hours. The Azuma can accelerate faster than existing trains but will also boost capacity out of London King's Cross by 28% at peak times. Hitachi is building the Azuma fleet at its £82 million factory

slight threat of frost or snow to employ someone to spread salt overnight along the exposed edge.

John Davis, Harpenden, Herts

Track quiz

Work is proceeding apace on the track bed for the third track between Tottenham Hale and Angel Road to accommodate the proposed service from Stratford. There are some implications which I have not seen discussed.

The existing two tracks will no doubt become the slow tracks when the whole section is four-tracked. It makes sense because the station platforms, not needed for the fast trains, are already in place. If Crossrail 2 happens, this will certainly be the case as the tunnel ramp south of

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Railwatch also welcomes articles and pictures
Please use email if possible but include your postal address

Tottenham Hale is designed to rise on the west side. The new third track will then presumably become the down fast. Hopefully it is being engineered with this in mind.

Angel Road station is at present extremely inconveniently situated and it makes sense to reposition it south of its present site. In fact the plan for the Meridian Water development which the station will serve shows a new station in this position. It should be renamed Meridian Water.

This station would need to be on the existing tracks with an island platform on the east side for the use of the Stratford trains. When four-tracking is completed and stopping trains use only the present tracks, this platform face will become redundant and will presumably be fenced off.

*Chris Barker
Redston Road, London N8 7HJ*

Tory benefits

"Tories will starve rail of cash" is hardly an appropriate headline in a non-partisan magazine for the page 3 article in *Railwatch* 152.

It represents an interesting contrast to Alan Williams' June *Modern Railways* "Between

the Lines" comment: "It seems generally accepted that over the last more than half century, the rail industry has benefited more under Conservative administrations than Labour."

Peter Wood, Lutterworth Road, Sunderland SR2 9AX

Elderly benefits

I do not agree with the Green Party's policy of free travel for the elderly. They are not automatically the poorest section in society, and would benefit more from better train or bus services than free fares.

Second, the remark about having less space for luggage includes a reference to children's buggies. These should simply be folded up, otherwise a train (or bus) operator potentially loses revenue.

*Tim Mickleburgh,
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Thanks, Railfuture

We are Railfuture members and longstanding supporters of reinstatement in full of the Carlisle-Hawick-Edinburgh railway. In our youth it was our route from Nottingham to Edinburgh. When reconstruction

of the line to Tweedbank began we registered to receive regular Borders Railway newsletters. To say the least we - and our friends - were enthused by the regular, well illustrated updates charting progress along the route.

This week, after a long pause, we were delighted once more to receive and read *More Connected*, the first of what look to be a new series of news updates on how the reinstated railway is already benefiting the economy and businesses along the route. We realise that some of you may already be aware of this, however with the recent news being so full of anxiety and gloom, we wanted to celebrate something positive with Railfuture's readers.

With best wishes and thanks for all that Railfuture is doing.

*Ann and Peter Mackness
Sulgrave, Northamptonshire
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HS2 is of no value

I am undecided as to whether to renew my Railfuture membership because I find *Railwatch* biased in favour of HS2, an horrendously expensive project which will bring little benefit to the UK as a whole. There are no aspects of this new railway which are positive. One example, of which there are many, is the choice of Euston as the London terminus. Any new line from the north should at the very least terminate at Clapham Junction to relieve pressure on the capital's transport network. The enormous cost of HS2 could fund ALL the rail improvements across the country.

*Mike Rawson
mike.rawson21@gmail.com*

Okehampton plea

As some of you may know, we are trying hard to get our daily rail service to Exeter re-started after a 45-year break. People of Okehampton have been pressing for this for 10 years. Maybe we are seeing some progress after Chris Grayling's electioneering faux pas in Truro?

Taxpayers (you and I) have spent £900 million on Reading station, £800 million on Plymouth, £40 million on Waterloo, and God knows how much on HS2, so come on Government! We only need a measly £1 million. You can see our line at: <https://youtu.be/NgdHdiDs53w>

*Bob Rush
bobrush@rush.gb.net*

Letters extra: Page 18

Campaigners' anger and dismay at backtrack on electrification

But we fight on

By Chris Austin

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Substantial cutbacks to the railway electrification programme were announced on 20 July, the day before the start of the parliamentary summer recess.

With "spin" about the benefits of bi-mode trains and avoiding the need to erect "intrusive wires and masts" in the Lake District for the Windermere electrification, the Department for Transport presented the sorry tale in a positive light.

But the repercussions will affect the railway for years.

As the DfT was rowing back on rail electrification, it also announced the end of conventional petrol and diesel car sales by 2040, and a £1 billion fund to develop electric and "ultra low emission" vehicles – on the road.

The problem

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling made the announcement, but he had little choice given the rocketing costs and delays resulting from Network Rail's inability to deliver the Great Western and Gospel Oak-Barking projects at anything approaching the original cost estimates or within a reasonable timescale.

The Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Project has also been delayed, although this results principally from a late change in technical standards imposed on Network Rail. Other schemes, including Manchester-Preston-Blackpool, have progressively slipped over the past two years while costs increased.

Indeed, the whole of the Control Period (2014-2019) investment programme has been something of a disaster, and ministers have lost confidence in NR.

Chris Grayling's comment that



Picture: RAY KING

DUMBARTON CENTRAL: All of Scotland's electrification schemes have proved highly successful and British Rail-built class 318 trains are still providing good service 30 years after they were built. The electrification of the main Edinburgh-Glasgow line via Falkirk High is nearly complete and work has already started on the Edinburgh-Glasgow route via Shotts which will enable the electrification of 46 miles of track by March 2019

"Network Rail's progress on improving its efficiency in recent years has fallen short of my expectations" is a stern rebuke.

The phrase "the Government requires more assurance on the likely costs of the work programme" is a sign that NR will be kept on a tight rein for a long time to come.

Bi-mode myths and reality

Bi-mode trains have offered ministers a way out. Why spend all this money, risk delay, disruption and overspending, when you can change from electric to diesel when the wires run out?

In the short term, this may work, and indeed will allow the new inter-city trains to be introduced earlier than otherwise.

It also allows the Cotswold line and the Berks and Hants line to have new trains many years before wiring the lines would be justified.

The new trains can also reach Sheffield, by running 74 miles under the wires from London to Kettering before switching to diesel for the remaining 90 miles.

In the long term, it is not a good strategy, for four principal reasons.

1 It prevents the decarbonisation of the railway. The inherent advantage of an electrified railway is that it can draw power from any source and so be absolutely sustainable, something not yet possible with other transport modes.

2 It is inherently inefficient to carry a diesel engine and a fuel tank to run in non-electrified sections. It adds weight and increases unreliability. The train continues to rely on fossil fuel.

3 It will soon not be acceptable to run diesel engines continuously in city centres. That is why a deadline has been set for petrol and diesel cars. The railway must prepare for that, and electrify urban areas around Sheffield, Nottingham and Bristol.

4 Partial electrification restricts the ability to electrify local services or to deploy efficiently the current fleet of electric multiple units.

One approach might be to aim to electrify the gaps on the main lines by the time the diesel

engines of the bi-modes require replacement. This would allow for infill electrification of other urban routes before 2040.

Understanding costs

Network Rail needs to proceed with electrification at an affordable price. The cost savings and environmental value of electric-only traction over the life of the train must exceed the capital cost of the infrastructure works required. The Government says cost escalation is the main reason it has deferred its SOFA (Statement of Funds Available) announcement until the autumn.

It has given the Office of Rail and Road even tighter guidance in relation to regulating Network Rail's costs, with a clear statement that the Transport Secretary "expects ORR to take a rigorous and robust approach to hold NR to account for improving cost-effectiveness, securing deliverability and reducing unit costs, during the remainder of CP5 (2014-2019) and throughout CP6 (2019-2024)."

This is more difficult than it sounds. Network Rail does not appear to have a clear picture of the reasons for the disastrous overspend on the electrification work it has done so far.

More needs to be done to understand the causes before they can be rectified for future projects.

Railfuture believes a rolling programme provides certainty for the supply industry, allowing it to keep expert teams together. This also applies to the electricity supply industry of whom rail



Picture: RAY KING

BEDFORD: A new Siemens-built class 700 train emphasises how electrification 35 years ago transformed the Bedford-London service. The BedPan catenary was designed for suburban services and may have to be upgraded once the Midland to Derby, Sheffield and Nottingham line is electrified for higher speed inter-city trains.

is a large customer. The National Grid had just started consulting on a site at Braybrooke near Market Harborough in June. What is missing, as Christian Wolmar has argued, is the need for Network Rail to manage the projects and learn by experience.

This is not possible when even project management is contracted out. The Rail Safety and Standards Board is carrying out a review of electrification standards and technical standards for interoperability.

Historical background

It is sad to see history repeating itself, as this is similar to the situation faced by the British Transport Commission in 1960.

It was fighting to save the Euston to Manchester and Liverpool electrification project where costs had more than doubled.

The Government wanted to cut back on rail investment (Beeching thought diesels would be more efficient) and did not trust British Railways to spend money

wisely. It was not until the mid 1980s when BR chairman Robert Reid showed that costs were under control that BR was allowed to press ahead with East Coast electrification.

That was achieved through careful planning and specification and strong project management.

It is disappointing that the Great Western electrification did not draw on the experience of previous schemes, even though undertaken 25 years ago.

RAILFUTURE AND THE PROSPECTS FOR ELECTRIFICATION ON BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS

By Chris Austin

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The political decision has been made and the Government will not do a U-turn.

Over time, attitudes will change, but that will require evidence that Network Rail has solved the problem in physical and financial terms.

It will also probably require a change of Transport Secretary as well. They do come and go fairly frequently.

Against the hard realities, what can we in Railfuture do?

We need to build a strong case for electrification as the basis of a sustainable public transport network. We may think we have done this, or that the case is self-evident. Both industry and Government need to be convinced, as do the advisers, think tanks and other transport and environmental pressure groups. There is much work to do.

Railfuture believes the priorities are:

1. The Government and the rail industry should re-commit to the electrification of

the busier parts of the network as part of the decarbonisation of transport.

2. Electrification should take place on the basis of a rolling programme to enable the supply industry to recruit and train skilled staff, and to invest in research with some certainty. The same is true of the electricity supply industry which must invest to provide capacity for an expanded electrified network.

3. The industry should undertake a rigorous cost-based review of the causes of cost escalation and delay in electrification, including the question of standards and the relevance of European-based technical standards to the physical constraints of the British rail network.

4. The priorities for future electrification should be related to demand, with the busier routes being electrified first. Priority should be given to schemes that have recently been cancelled or deferred. Beyond that, the next priority should be infill schemes where the network effect would allow more efficient deployment of rolling stock and a cascade of diesel units

to provide additional capacity to cater for growth or to replace older vehicles.

Confusion and incoherence

The Government announcement leaves the railways in confusion. The Midland main line (north of Kettering), Cardiff-Swansea and Oxenholme-Windermere schemes are cancelled. The transport secretary has warned that TransPennine is "unlikely", but there is no information on Cardiff Valleys. We are left with an incoherent network with gaps like Didcot-Oxford and Manchester-Leeds imposing inefficiencies in rolling stock deployment and reducing the value of investment already undertaken.

There has been a strong political reaction in the areas denied electric services. Perhaps some changes may be announced later in the year, but the picture remains confused.

Railfuture will revise its policy to reflect the new reality, and to help campaigners. We will continue to highlight the reasons for the delays and the implications of the Government decision.

Electrification is still the best option for Manchester

By Ray King

Full electrification of the TransPennine route must continue to be considered alongside any alternatives, Transport for Greater Manchester has argued, insisting that the use of bi-mode engine technology is "relatively unproven".

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling seemed to suggest that the link is unlikely to be fully electrified and instead a "smart" approach could be taken using bi-mode locomotives.

However, in a report prepared for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority's Metrolink and rail networks sub-

committee, TfGM said it stands by the original investment plan and wants full electrification of the line. The report, submitted by Amanda White, TfGM's head of rail, added that electrification guarantees lower operating costs, better performance and greater capacity, while acknowledging the escalating cost of electrification infrastructure.

Scrapping the Oxenholme to Windermere scheme will mean that four direct Manchester Airport to Windermere trains will be operated by new class 331 electric trains from May next year. Revised proposals will see services to and from Manchester Airport operated by bi-mode trains.

These trains will operate in electric mode between Manchester Airport and Oxenholme and then under diesel power between Oxenholme and Windermere.

Class 769 Flex trains (30-year-old class 319 electrics with a diesel engine added) will operate most or all of the services on the Wigan North Western-Stalybridge and Wigan North Western-Alderley Edge lines from May 2018. New class 802 Hitachi bi-mode trains will operate the Liverpool to Newcastle and Edinburgh and the Manchester Airport-Newcastle lines via the North TransPennine route from 2019.

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■ ■ MetroWest costs face scrutiny

The West of England Combined Authority has responded to Railfuture's concerns about the escalation of cost estimates for MetroWest Phase 1 (*Railwatch* 152). James White, the authority's transport and rail coordinator, said he shared our concerns and welcomed our support for taking a pragmatic approach to the project. The authority and Network Rail are now assessing what infrastructure would be necessary for an hourly rather than half-hourly service on the Portishead line. A new capacity analysis was being undertaken to see how an hourly service would work. Options for a 45-minute and half-hourly peak service were also being examined but a good business case would still be needed whatever the outcome of these studies.

■ ■ Rail Manifesto impresses the Mayor

On 19 July the *Bristol Post* extensively reported the *Rail Manifesto* launched by our affiliated group Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways, whose secretary Christina Biggs was quoted as saying: "It is only through reinvesting in rail that we can get Bristol moving again. We have reached a critical point with congestion." FOSBR has proposed station reopenings and greater integration with other modes, both in terms of interchange and intermodal ticketing. Dr Biggs was hopeful that the creation of the West of England Combined Authority would lead to a designed plan to expand Bristol's rail network. Metro Mayor Tim Bowles has told her he always carried a copy of the FOSBR *Rail Manifesto*.

■ ■ Why rail projects get delayed

At Railfuture's July meeting in Taunton, guest speaker Gideon Amos, a vice-president of the Town and Country Planning Association, described his involvement with the Felixstowe-Nuneaton upgrade and said Britain suffered from the lack of an infrastructure plan. Asked about the delay to enhancements in the West of England, he said the problem was the time taken to get through Network Rail's Governance for Railway Investment Projects process, leading to projects which everyone supported being stalled. The proposed rail link to Bristol International Airport would benefit a wide area including Taunton. Mr Amos joined Railfuture after the meeting and has helped with publicity for the branch including a posting on Facebook.

■ ■ Somerset alliance for public transport

At the full meeting of Somerset County Council on 19 July, Railfuture Sevenside chairman John Hassall asked Councillor John Woodman, Cabinet member for transport, whether the council would reinstate its public transport forum. Mr Woodman replied that SCC had no intention of doing so because the forum had been overtaken by more specific discussion groups and routine consultations. David Latimer, acting secretary of our member Minehead Rail Link Group, asked whether the council would work with train operators, local authorities and interested parties to explore the opportunity for a regular train service between Minehead and Taunton. Mr Woodman said his council supported organisations seeking to expand transport choices for residents but did not have sufficient information as to the feasibility and viability of a non-heritage rail service. Undeterred, Somerset campaigners are planning to form an alliance to press for higher

priority to be given to rail and public transport improvements. An inaugural meeting was planned for late September.

■ ■ 90th birthday party for Bristol station

A community event to celebrate the 90th birthday of Bristol's Parson Street station, which opened in 1927, was due to take place on 3 September. Although the station suffered from derisory train services in the 1990s, usage has increased from under 2,000 recorded journeys in 1997/98 to 127,000 in 2015/16 according to the Office of Rail and Road. This dramatic growth augurs well for the new stations proposed for MetroWest. Following concerns raised by David Wood about vegetation covering the west end of the platforms and compromising their ability to accommodate longer trains, Railfuture has written to the GWR station manager. We have also invited Friends of Parson Street station, which is hosting the event, to consider applying to the GWR customer community improvement fund towards the cost of enhancements.

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Wessex

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■ ■ Proposals for the West of England Line

Political momentum is building along the Salisbury-Exeter line for improvements to the service and infrastructure to keep pace with continued growth in patronage and plans for new housing developments. Railfuture Wessex has published a proposal document detailing practical steps that can be taken to solve capacity and reliability issues, both in the short term and in future when funding becomes available. Additional class 158 and 159 units should be allocated to the route as part of rolling stock cascades to permit most trains to be at least six-car length as far west as Yeovil. The existing passing loop at Tisbury needs to be lengthened in both directions to provide more operational flexibility. Additional passing loops are also required, first in east Devon as part of the Devon Metro scheme, then in the Crewkerne area. The primary concern is to allow a more frequent and reliable service to operate west of Salisbury, but an equally important consideration is the need to provide robust diversionary paths for Great Western services when needed. The full document can be read on the Wessex page of Railfuture's website.

■ ■ Island Line renaissance

Rail users on the Isle of Wight are heartened by the enthusiasm for the Island Line shown by their new MP, Bob Seely. He has even been reported as calling for reopenings to Ventnor and Newport, although Railfuture questions some of the costings. The IoW Council is currently examining the findings of a transport review, published in July by the Task Force led by former Great North Eastern Railways chairman Christopher Garnett. Railfuture fears that very few of the proposals for developing the Island Line contained in the review will be taken forward as the council has little cash to spare. Hopes are resting on the promised review of Island Line operations by the new franchisee, South Western Railway. Early signs are that managers are receptive to the idea of re-introducing a 20-minute frequency service,

Twitter: @railwatch

which we pointed out can be achieved using the existing infrastructure.

■ ■ Dorset may lose Waterloo service

Several weeks before the publication of South Western Railway's draft December 2018 timetable, rail users in south Dorset had responded angrily to the company's plan to replace one of the two trains to Waterloo each hour with a new service linking Weymouth and Portsmouth. The assumption is that minor stations would have only the Portsmouth service, forcing passengers to change at Southampton for a London train. This is one of many issues that Wessex Branch will be examining during the timetable consultation period.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+Branch
[Twitter @RailfutureWessex](https://twitter.com/RailfutureWessex)

West Midlands

■ ■ MP protests over Staffordshire changes

Stoke-on-Trent MP Ruth Smeeth is angry that several stations in Staffordshire will lose direct trains to London when the new West Midlands franchise starts in December. London Midland's Crewe-London Euston trains currently stop at Alsager, Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent and Stone, but they will be re-routed via Stafford. The Department for Transport says passengers will still have a direct service from Stoke to London via Virgin Trains, and there will be a new West Midlands Trains direct service to London from December 2018 from Crewe on the Stoke-on-Trent to Birmingham New Street route that will stop at Stone, Kidsgrove and Alsager every hour.

■ ■ Chase line electrification work

The Tame Bridge Parkway-Rugeley Trent Valley line was closed on Sundays in September to allow for electrification work on the Chase line. Electric trains will be able to run along the whole of the line from Birmingham New Street to Rugeley Trent Valley, replacing diesels, from December next year.

■ ■ Rail benefits in 10-year plan

The West Midlands' £3.4 billion plan for transport for the next 10 years was approved by the combined authority in September. The plan aims to prepare local transport infrastructure for HS2, which is expected to operate to Birmingham from 2026. It also mentions new heavy rail connections to Wolverhampton, with stations at Willenhall and James Bridge and electrification of the Wolverhampton-Shrewsbury line. A large part of the plan involves extending the Midland Metro in Birmingham, Solihull and the Black Country, as well as rail infrastructure to open up new passenger routes, such as through the Camp Hill Chords project which aims to provide rail services for Castle Vale and Castle Bromwich in the north and Moseley and Kings Heath in the south. There could be new stations at Moseley, Kings Heath, Hazelwell and Balsall Heath. Some, but not all of the necessary funding is identified. West Midlands Trains, which takes over the franchise in December 2017, has pledged to reopen the freight-only Camp Hill line from Kings Norton to Moor Street to passengers by December 2019.

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Rail freight is answer to road pollution

By Philip Bisatt

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There is now a renewed focus on environmental and economic concerns that highlight just how important rail freight is.

The Government has announced that diesel and petrol cars will be eliminated by 2040, but there has been no mention of phasing out diesel lorries.

The electrification of cars, for which it is estimated that the UK would require 10 more power stations, is at face value a good thing.

However, according to Frank Kelly, professor of environmental health at King's College London, and chair of the Government's advisory committee on the medical effects of air pollutants, we do not just need cleaner vehicles – we need fewer of them.

It is insufficient to focus on tailpipe emissions, important though that is. Attention is now beginning to focus on what has been termed the Oslo Effect – non-exhaust emissions generated by vehicles breaking down road surfaces and by the degradation of tyres and brake linings.

After a detailed study of all forms of road-based pollutants by Oslo University, these pollutants have been described as a "ticking time bomb for public health".

It is estimated that 90% of PM10 and PM2.5 particles from traffic are from non-exhaust sources. These particles are even more dangerous to our health than exhaust particulates.

Moreover, there is a positive relationship between vehicle weights and these non-exhaust emissions, suggesting that a particular focus needs to be given to lorries. The heavier a vehicle is, the more tyre wear there is and the quicker the asphalt wears away. This accumulated dust does not magically disappear, but blows along the transport corridor, causing damage to all who breathe it in.

We must work harder to transfer more of our road freight to rail, and be much more innovative about how we deliver the goods sustainably over "the last mile" in our urban areas.

One area in the country where this problem is thrown into sharp relief is in the south-east corner of England, where the ferry ports and the Channel Tunnel generate huge quantities of road freight, all concentrated on Kent. There is a strong possibility that this will get even

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



LOUGHBOROUGH ON AN AUGUST SUNDAY: Freight where freight should be, on the railway. The diverted train of tank wagons is on its way from Kingsbury, Wset Mifflands, to the Humber oil refinery. The big crane in the background is ready to lift the bridge in place over the Midland main line on the following weekend to link the two parts of the heritage Great Central Railway

worse over the next few years, as Brexit will require traditional border controls.

Inevitably there will be demands for public money to be used to increase road capacity or to create lorry parks – ignoring the fact that there is substantial unused rail capacity, especially in the Channel Tunnel.

The Government must ensure rail capacity to the Tunnel is used to its full potential.

In its response to a recent Kent County Council transport consultation, Railfuture called for a standing annual conference between the Kent local authorities, Eurotunnel, rail freight operators and the Department for Transport to examine how freight traffic can be transferred to road from rail. Should the UK, or specifically Kent, consider following the Swiss approach of charging lorries crossing its territory? Railfuture wants to see distance-based road user charging introduced across the country, so that those who use and wear out the roads most are required to pay for this.

A study commissioned by Freight on Rail estimates that lorry operators are paying for only 30% of the costs they impose on wider society. It is thus artificially cheap to send goods by road, rather than by rail.

In the meantime, Swiss Federal Railways reports: "More than 17,000 freight trains have passed through the Gotthard Base Tunnel since its opening in June

last year." Yes – 17,000 freight trains in a few months! A clear message to us in the UK that long-distance freight should exploit the potential of rail carriage through the Channel Tunnel.

More freight is already being moved by rail on the Rotterdam-Genoa corridor, and the Gotthard tunnel's full potential will be reached in 2020.

Creating the first flat, low-level route through the Alps is a breakthrough for rail freight between northern Europe and Italy. The Swiss government and local authorities have actively legislated that freight should be on rail, for all the environmentally sound reasons we know so well.

The "last mile" is mentioned above, and the contribution of rail to improving the environment in urban areas needs to be incorporated by Government in the National Planning Policy Framework, along with improved policies to safeguard and enable sites for rail projects.

Railfuture has written in support of the proposed West Midlands interchange at Four Ashes, but more action is required. Some regions of the UK have no facilities to handle modern intermodal freight.

Extra light van movements have led to an increase of about 6% in urban traffic, with its associated pollution and congestion.

Online shopping sites are resulting in a race to the bottom in transport terms by offering

"immediate" and "free" delivery using competing delivery firms.

Of course, in reality there is no such thing as free. Transport corridors become increasingly nasty places to live along.

So there must be serious action to return parcels traffic to rail, with consolidation centres for last-mile delivery in town.

In our response to the East Midlands Trains refranchising consultation, we urged that the success of "Intercity railfreight plc" is replicated in the new franchise and extended nationwide. We have also argued that freight train paths must be maintained along the entire length of the Midland main line.

Decarbonisation of our transport networks must proceed apace. It is sad that rail electrification, with concomitant enlargement of overline structures that reduce loading gauge constraints to freight, has been, at best, suspended.

The Oslo Effect shows that rubber tyres and asphalt are not the way forward, and that the tried and tested solution remains the steel wheel on steel rail. Electric traction enables longer, heavier, more efficient and faster freight trains. These longer trains produce 78% less carbon dioxide, fewer harmful PM10 particulates, and 15 times less nitrous oxide than lorries – and they do not produce rubber, stone and tar dust.

Solutions do not primarily require technology. They require commitment.

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■ ■ Oxford station plans

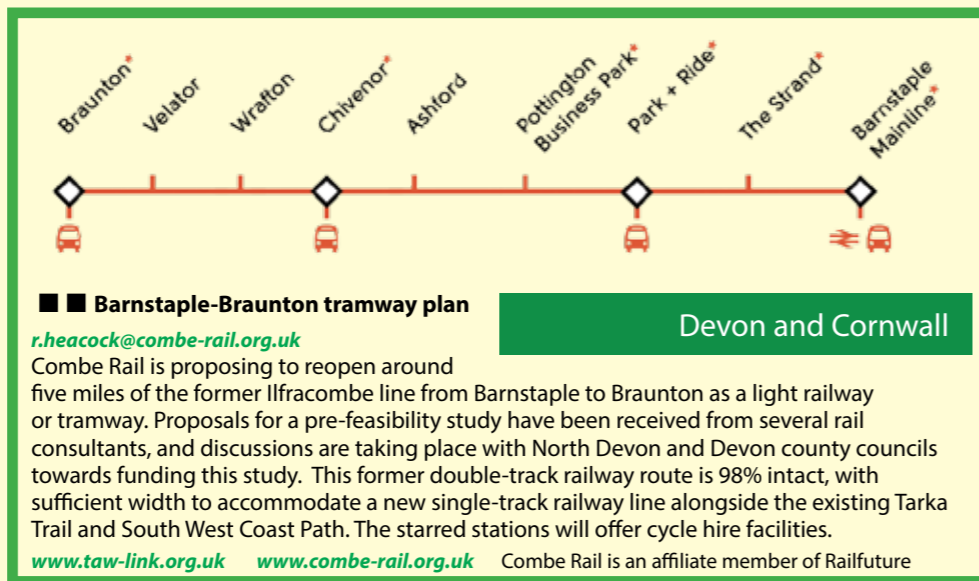
Oxford City Council has unanimously approved its *Draft Oxford Station Supplementary Planning Document* which was put out to public consultation on 30 June 2017. Railfuture Thames Valley in its comment stressed the need for a covered walkway connecting the new station with the proposed bus station on the other side of Botley Road, and has also suggested a clock tower should be provided to enhance the station and to make an architectural statement. The city council hopes work on rebuilding the station, building a new bus station and hotel, and a multi-storey car park can begin "as early as the autumn" and has claimed that the project could be completed in four years. If this sounds optimistic, we must assume that "work" means design work. Architects and engineers have to be commissioned to produce detailed designs. Planning permission has to be obtained from the city council for the buildings and from the county council for the engineering works, widening Botley Road bridge and associated road works. There has to be a public inquiry, and objectors may apply for a judicial review. Objectors have already started campaigning. Invitations to tender must be issued and contracts signed before the first bucket of concrete can be poured. This process alone may take four years and, allowing another four years for construction, Railfuture Thames Valley hopes to see the new station opening, possibly even with electrification from Didcot, in 2025.

■ ■ New homes, new stations?

Railfuture Thames Valley welcomes the Department for Transport's decision to grant £2.3 million from the New Stations Fund towards the £16.5 million cost of building Reading Green Park station, which will be completed in three years. This station will serve 7,500 new jobs and 1,500 new homes in an area with poor road connections. Elsewhere in the Thames Valley there are ambitious plans to build thousands of new houses in Oxfordshire which will have major implications for transport. In addition to Green Belt development south of Oxford, it is proposed to put 4,400 new homes in the Green Belt north of Oxford, with the suggestion for a new station at Yarnton. A development of 3,500 new homes is proposed for Culham, convenient for the railway station, and 2,100 new homes at Berinsfield. Didcot is to be doubled in size as a "garden town" with 15,000 new homes. In the planners' dreams, it will be served by a fixed link transit system with autonomous vehicles or pods, running south to Harwell Campus using the track of the old Didcot to Newbury railway line, and north to Culham with a new bridge across the Thames. Oxfordshire County Council has approved the building of 2,500 new homes on the Grove airfield site, but is still delaying any decision on the proposed Grove/Wantage railway station.

■ ■ East West Rail consultation

Railfuture Thames Valley has submitted a response to the Network Rail consultation on the western section of East West Rail (Bicester-



Bedford), and committee members have visited the NR presentations at various towns and villages along the route. We have made the following comments:-

- Provision is needed for independent double track access to north bay platforms at Oxford
- Increased rail traffic over Bicester London Road level crossing needs to be reviewed with the highways authority
- Passive provision needs to be made for a station at Steeple Claydon
- Need for improved access to Winslow station
- Redoubling of single-track sections between Blechley and Bedford
- Reinstatement of bay platform 4 at Aylesbury for terminating services from Marylebone
- Claydon Junction to Aylesbury should be re-doubled and Aylesbury-Princes Risborough maximum speed should be raised to 50+mph
- Passive provision for electrification of entire EWR route (which has been de-scoped from present proposals)
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■ ■ North versus South — the arguments

We all deplore the continuing north-south gulf in rail spending, and will campaign vigorously in support of any feasible methods put forward to narrow it. As our colleagues in the Northern group of transport activists' roundtables put it: "If it is good enough for London, it is good enough for the rest of the country." But we have some good reasons to feel positive about improvements promised for the North East of England.

■ ■ Morpeth improvements

From December, five more daily CrossCountry calls will double the level of inter-city service at this important county town railhead. In theory, Morpeth is now on the PlusBus network. There is a turning-circle for buses at the station to improve this valuable interchange. Alas, Northumberland County

Council has proved reluctant to publicise this and there is not even a bus-stop pole – yet.

■ ■ Coast Line enhancements

Grand Central's fleet seems to be in a state of good-natured turmoil. The InterCity 125 trains are expected to move elsewhere at the end of 2017, and several replacement class 180 five-car units from First Great Western are being refurbished. The European Train Control System is being installed to cope with in-cab signalling, which is to be brought into use on the East Coast main line some time after 2020. Teething troubles arising from this have, apparently, reduced service reliability for a time. However, the IC125s will not go down without a fight. They are being remarshalled into two eight-coach formations, to cope with heavy loadings at weekends and around Christmas/New Year. The class 180 trains can be coupled to make a 10-coach train, but IC125s cannot run in multiple. At long last, the Department for Transport's New Stations Fund has promised £4.5 million for the Horden/Peterlee park-and-ride station. This should open in or before 2020, and the Coastliners rail user group hopes that Grand Central will stop some trains there. Hartlepool station is now equipped with ticket barriers. Coastliners, and others, want rail users' journeys to be as quick and as smooth as possible, but we recognise the need to collect fares and check all tickets effectively. Hartlepool's booking-office hours have been extended slightly on Mondays to Saturdays, but the office is closed on Sundays. We await developments with interest.

■ ■ How widely can a community spread?

Coastliners' efforts to work out how to establish, or to become, a community rail partnership have been well supported by local bodies so far but every time we look round, there are stated aims to widen the scope, not just of ours, but of everyone else's in the North East. Now Grand Central has made contact with us on the subject. We are always receptive to ideas, but we just wish that a format could be worked out to let us and our fellow user groups develop a convincing and lasting rail partnership here in the North East.
www.railfuture.org.uk/North East Branch
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Ancient and modern rails in the snow

By Bernard Marriott
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Railfuture members travelled through the Channel Tunnel in spring to visit Austria.

The trip to Innsbruck attracted 23 people who went via Paris, Basel and Zürich, returning via Munich, Würzburg, Cologne and Brussels.

The trip was led by Trevor Garrod who arranged a variety of optional activities, as well as meetings with like-minded organisations.

Paris could learn from London about how to make a cross-capital journey easier, but from Paris the TGV took us to Basel where we met Jürg Tschopp of the Verkehrsclub der Schweiz.

Basel

The Basel hotel presented us with a free Mobility Card (an all-system travelcard) for the duration of our stay. From Basel we joined the EuroCity train to Zürich where we took the Austrian Railjet to Innsbruck, passing through Liechtenstein without stopping, and then going under the Arlberg Pass and along the spectacular Inn valley.

Innsbruck

The city of Innsbruck is the capital of the Tyrol with buildings and ambience to match, and mountains towering to north and south. It has a small tram system.

We were greeted with snow and sleet, but a small group of us chose to take one of the rural trams, known as the Stubaital-bahn, rising around 500 metres through woodland to Fulpmes. As we gained altitude, snow completely covered the tracks, although the tram was very sure-footed and got us to our destination on time.

Bregenz and Lindau

Part of the group took a train from Innsbruck to Bregenz, which has a pleasant frontage on Lake Constance, then a 20-minute ferry ride to Lindau, Germany.

Lindau was a real treat, especially arriving by ship. The centre is pedestrianised and it is built on an island with a road bridge and a four-track causeway serving a large railway station. Two tracks arrive from Germany and two from Austria.

Salzburg

Another part of the group went to Salzburg, where we were greeted by Peter Heibach and Dr Karl Schambureck of Pro-bahn Österreich. Peter Heibach was able to obtain for us a comprehensive group ticket so we went by trolleybus (a nostalgic moment for someone brought up in London in the 1950s) to the



ZILLERTALBAHN: Diesel locos propel coaches



ACHENSEEBAHN: Europe's oldest cog railway

Old Town, and up the funicular to the Fortress. In the afternoon we rode the Lokalbahn as far as the newly extended (in 2014) terminus at Ostermiething.

Bozen and Bolzano

A group went to Bolzano in Italy. Until 1919 this was Bozen when it was part of Austria Hungary. Our local train from Innsbruck arrived at the frontier Brenner station, where we changed on to an Italian train. The centre of Bolzano has changed little since imperial days, the two exceptions being Mussolini's handsome train station and his bus station, which could do with a bit of smartening up.

ZillertalBahn and Achenseebahn

A short train ride from Innsbruck took us to the junction at Jenbach, where we took either or both of the ZillertalBahn and the Achenseebahn. The ZillertalBahn is a narrow gauge (760mm) adhesion railway extending 32km up the Ziller valley to Mayrhofen. It is largely locally owned, runs a half-hourly daytime service and, apart from one steam train a day, uses diesel locomotives to propel carriages.

The railway is part of the Tyrolean integrated tickets scheme, Verkehrsverbund Tirol (VVT). The VVT has run since 1995 and provides tickets between any pair of zones in the Tyrol, which may be used on any form of public transport. Needless to say it can claim great success in terms of convenience, including "expanding public transport by more than 60%". Our politicians please note!

The Achenseebahn is considered to be Europe's oldest cog railway which is still steam operated, using locomotives dating from the opening of the line in 1889. It rises 440 metres in less than 7km and uses the Riggengbach rack system, terminating at Seespitz am Achensee from where there are steamer trips on the Achensee.

Hungerburg and Nordkette

The mountain north of Innsbruck

is the Nordkette, rising nearly 1,500 metres from Innsbruck. Access to the summit (for non mountaineers) begins on the Hungerburgbahn, a funicular which was reconstructed in 2007 and now begins underground, crosses the River Inn and tunnels through the mountain. The compartments of the train are suspended from a frame so that each remains upright at all times. The stations were designed by the late Zaha Hadid, the Iraqi-British architect.

From Hungerberg, there is a cable car to Seegrube, and another from there to Hafelekarr from which we enjoyed a panoramic view of the city below us.

Würzburg

We departed in warm spring weather with the journey home from Innsbruck by regional train up the side of the Inn valley and over the mountain to Munich. Through spectacular scenery, the train had plenty of spare capacity most of the way, plenty of leg-room and panoramic windows. Just what train travel ought to be like. From Munich we took the InterCityExpress to Würzburg, a medieval city on the River Main. There is a busy tram system with five routes.

We were met by Aljoscha Labeille of the Verkehrsclub Deutschland who took a party round the Würzburg Residenz, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the evening we were joined by Dr Christian Los, and Pro Bahn member Lukas Ifflander, and we enjoyed a first class meal in a local weinstube.

Last leg

On the last day we went from Würzburg, changing at Cologne and Brussels. Arrival at St Pancras was dead on time, and most of us were dead beat after a thoroughly enjoyable and busy few days.

What did we learn from the holiday? Had we not been set on the joys of train travel it would probably have been cheaper to go by air. Points to ponder:

1 While railway tickets are very much in the computer age, the system behind them is still in the Dark Ages. National Rail offers special domestic tickets under international (CIV) conditions of carriage for use in association with Eurostar, but they can be very difficult to discover and obtain. They should be easy additions, similar to Plus Bus.

2 Crossing Paris. Métro-inclusive tickets are urgently needed.

3 Each leg of our journey involved different tickets, either a group ticket or a set of individual tickets. Apart from the lack of consistency, a group ticket with a string of reserved seat numbers was not the easiest way for 23 people to find a seat.

4 Reserved seats on trains were indicated on small screens on the edge of the luggage rack, as in the UK. But their operation appeared to be both consistent and rational. British train operators seem to revel in different ways of displaying and updating information, including lengthy scrolling texts. None of this on the Continent. Screens simply showed the start and finish of the current reservation. No scrolling. Simple.

5 Almost invariably platforms were divided into sectors, and there were posters or indicators showing where each carriage stopped. You could easily stand on just the right part of the platform. Remember BR InterCity's coloured sectors?

6 Departure sheets were printed on yellow paper, and Arrival sheets on white paper, something that could easily be copied here.

So, plenty of work still to be done! Our thanks go to Trevor Garrod for his work and good nature, seeing us around all sorts of hitches. Many contacts arose through the European Passengers' Federation, of which we are a member. Contact with our colleagues abroad is essential if the hurdles to long-distance rail travel abroad are to be overcome.

Our vision for Railfuture:

An independent organisation whose views are respected by the rail industry, to which decision makers come for advice, and which rail users are proud to join

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■ ■ Windermere electrification axed

Cancellation of the Windermere-Oxenholme electrification scheme has brought confusion as to the long-term fleet plans for the line. Northern has said that from May 2018, former class 319 Flex bi-mode trains, redesignated as class 769s, will operate on the line. From 2019, Northern says these will be replaced by new CAF diesel multiple units, though some sources suggest these will be in addition to the 319s. If the CAF diesels took over in 2019, it would mean a brief period of through services able to operate electrically under the wires south of Oxenholme with 769s, then back to diesels. This would seem to fly in the face of Government ambitions to help with emission targets by reducing diesel usage. However, the Department for Transport has also asked Northern to identify alternative fuel options. The announcement cancelling electrification made reference to both battery and hydrogen technology.

■ ■ Website to boost campaign

Friends of Reddish South, the group campaigning for the return of a full passenger service to the line in south-east Manchester, has got a new website to promote their cause.

<https://friendsofreddishsouthstation.co.uk/>

■ ■ Reduced peak service proposals

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester line (STORM) has drawn attention to unsatisfactory features in the proposed timetables for May 2018 and December 2018 which are facing local passengers on the line through Rochdale. Briefly these are a reduction in number of morning peak trains from most Rochdale area stations (except Rochdale, where an increase is proposed). The first morning peak trains would arrive in Manchester up to 15 minutes later than at present. The timetable also fails to give Littleborough and Mills Hill an off-peak service which measures up to the demand, three trains per hour. In the case of Littleborough, the last point could be easily addressed. Littleborough will have two through trains to Manchester Airport in the morning peak and two from the Airport in the afternoon peak. Having these services call all day should be possible and would be of great value to passengers. They will be the only through trains locally to Piccadilly and Oxford Road where there are both employment and leisure opportunities. STORM thinks that the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive is more vocal in its concerns about changes to the timetable along the line than Transport for Greater Manchester.

■ ■ Petition for Transport in the North

A petition started by the Institute for Public Policy Research to persuade Transport Secretary Chris Grayling to spend more money on transport in the North of England reached over 86,000 signatures. The petition follows the Government's announcement that it would not proceed with electrification of the Oxenholme-Windermere line and would look at "intermittent" electrification of the TransPennine rail route, with the use of bi-mode trains to fill the gaps where there were no wires. The petition calls upon the Transport Secretary to:

□ Pledge his immediate backing for the Northern Powerhouse rail programme including a new state-of-the-art 30-minute Manchester-Leeds rail link – a Crossrail North
□ Make an immediate commitment to at least £59 billion "catch-up cash" over the coming

decade to support the transport priorities being developed by Transport for the North
□ Give Transport for the North the same powers as those enjoyed by Transport for London so that it can also raise private finance towards its own transport priorities.

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/crossrail-north-now>
www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthWestBranch
Twitter @RailfutureNWest

Cymru

Wales

rowland.pittard@railfuturewales.org.uk

■ ■ Electrification progress

Installation of masts west of Severn Tunnel ceased in April but bridgework continues. A new contract has been let for installing masts and overhead wiring starting early next year. Rogiet Road bridge at Severn Tunnel Junction reopened on 10 September thus completing the upgrade work to nine over-line bridges in Monmouthshire. Work continues on bridges west of Newport including two near Marshfield and two in eastern Cardiff. The most complex is Splott Road bridge which is being replaced in two stages enabling the road and footpaths to remain open. There are a number of buildings near the bridge which has required line closures. Network Rail has reconsidered the situation where the South Wales main line passes under the Cardiff Valley lines and over the feeder to Cardiff Docks immediately east of Cardiff Central station, and has decided to lay slab track under the bridge and over the feeder which in turn will result in further line closures between Cardiff and Newport. The new Hitachi inter-city express trains are working as far as Carmarthen but the line west to Pembroke Dock has yet to be cleared.

■ ■ Electrification regress

UK Transport Secretary Chris Grayling announced the cancellation of the Cardiff-Swansea electrification in July despite the completion of all surveys for bridge work, the completion of the electricity supply, a new depot at Swansea Maliphant sidings with electric masts in place and the Port Talbot West resignalling being immunised for electric traction. Railfuture Wales described the decision as hugely disappointing and reflecting a lack of ambition. Electrification through to Swansea would have removed the need for the expensive bi-mode trains, given faster journey times, attracted more passengers from the congested M4 and reduced pollution from diesel emissions. Additional disruption would have been marginal. The decision also means that the new Wales and Borders franchise will not be able to introduce electric units on South Wales main line services. The prospect of electric trains serving the economic power house of Severnside connecting South Wales with Bristol and Bath has also been removed. The idea, first promoted by the Department for Transport, that there is only one service west of Cardiff (which carries less than 50% of the passengers travelling west of Cardiff) that could use electric traction should be dismissed. Railfuture Wales has identified at least six other services west of Cardiff that could use electric traction, and will continue to campaign for electrification west of Cardiff to Swansea and for all of the passenger lines in the Cardiff City region, all of which was promised by the previous government. Railfuture vice-president Rhodri Clark published a two-page news item in the *Western Mail* headed: The real costs of not electrifying the Cardiff to Swansea line.

■ ■ Present Wales and Borders franchise

On 17 July the Welsh Government Economy

and Infrastructure Secretary Ken Skates announced that five extra four-carriage electric trains will be made available to Arriva Trains Wales. The class 319s will be fitted with diesel engines to become Flex bi-mode trains with funding from the Welsh Government, plus £1 million from Arriva Trains Wales. They will be added to existing rolling stock in 2018 once electric to diesel conversion work has been completed. It is estimated that the conversion will cost at least £250,000 per unit, which would not have been required if electrification had been completed in South Wales as originally planned. The additional stock will enable the release of other trains to be made compliant with new disability regulations. There may be the possibility of increasing the capacity of some services.

■ ■ New franchise progress

The UK Government has still to transfer the required powers to the Welsh Government, thus delaying the tendering process. Transport for Wales has agreed, after pressure from Railfuture and other organisations, to publish a summary of the invitation to tender, but not the full document. This was expected in August but has now been delayed. In turn, the DfT is asking for more information. This includes the process of asset transfer from Network Rail to the Welsh Government, the ways in which the interests of communities in England will be served and how the Welsh Government will operate as the operator of last resort. The Westminster and Welsh governments have yet to agree the funding for the new franchise as a result of the curtailment of the electrification, delays to implementing the franchise and the additional cost of bi-mode trains.

■ ■ Cardiff transport integration

This could more appropriately be called disintegration following the closure of Cardiff bus station, adjacent to Cardiff Central station. There is now a delay in progressing the work, resulting from a change of plans by the developer regarding the use of the building to be constructed above the new smaller bus station. Interestingly, the new bus station is to be on the site of the former railway headquarters, Marland House, which was owned by Network Rail. The delay could result in reputational damage to the city.

■ ■ Freight traffic

Production increases at TATA's Port Talbot steel works has seen extra freight trains on the South Wales main line. However the future of Wentloog Freightliner depot near Cardiff is in doubt. When tolls are removed from the Severn Crossings, traffic could be lost to road.

■ ■ North Wales

Arriva Trains Wales again deployed one of its locomotive-hauled trains on the North Wales Coast main line on Saturdays in high summer, providing welcome additional capacity. ATW has two such trains, both of which are not normally used on weekends. There are other weekends during the year when passengers need these trains. When race events are held at Chester racecourse, the usual two-car and three-car trains along the coast become overcrowded, and some passengers are unable to board eastbound trains at stations in Flintshire and Denbighshire. This could cause difficulties for those travelling to Chester and beyond who have appointments or connections, in some cases with Advance tickets valid only on the specified trains.

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HERITAGE RAIL

By Chris Austin
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Handing over the token

I have already highlighted the need to find more people to serve as managers in the increasingly demanding heritage rail business.

In *Railwatch* 152, I mentioned the sector's ability to encourage a new generation of steam crews and engineers who can manage and maintain the magnificent machines in their care today.

You may be surprised to know that there are 831 preserved steam locomotives in the United Kingdom, although only a proportion of these is currently available for service.

On most summer Saturdays, I would estimate that there are some 85 steam locomotives working around Britain, including some on the main line, and who would have thought that would be possible when the last main line steam train ran almost 50 years ago?

Thankfully, a new generation of younger people has come forward, smart, skilled, well trained and now experienced enough to keep this fleet running.

Around the country, young apprentices are learning the skills of boilermaking, riveting, welding and using machine tools, giving them opportunities which may not be available elsewhere in their area as Britain's manufacturing base shrinks.

But the basic problem remains a concern to every heritage railway that wants to survive and prosper. The railways rely not just on those working with steam, but on a whole variety of skills and specialisms along with a steady stream of new volunteers to keep the show on the road.

Given the level of training needed for safety-critical jobs and the need to keep qualifications up to date, where are the new recruits going to come from?

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail is undertaking an inquiry into young volunteers and heritage railways to establish what is happening and what might need to be put in place to ensure a long-term future for the sector.

The inquiry sessions will continue throughout the autumn, but already some interesting facts have emerged.

◆◆◆◆ Please remember Railfuture in your will: <http://tinyurl.com/3qtdzj7>

1 All the railways giving evidence have special schemes to encourage young volunteers, the younger ones properly mentored by the older ones and supervised by adult volunteers.

2 Every one of these railways has examples of their young volunteers who have gone on to work on the national network, so heritage railways are proving to be a recruiting ground for the main line.

3 This has also been admirably supported by the National Railway Museum which has run exhibitions and events around the theme of engineering, designed to help young people, and particularly young women who are interested in a career in this area.

4 The railways have put in place proper methods of working to ensure the safety of young volunteers and to ensure their safeguarding while they are with the railway.

5 More and more regulations relating to young people are creating tensions in organisations that are principally run with limited resources by volunteers. The level of supervision required already threatens to outweigh the benefits of the input from the youngsters and the willingness of older volunteers to babysit them.

6 On top of this is the wording of an obscure Act of 1920, which, as a result of subsequent legislation widening its scope, precludes all work by those under 16 on railways (including volunteering). This has only recently come to light, although no prosecution has ever been brought under the Act, which lay dormant for years. Already this has interrupted the recruitment of volunteers and some railways are now unwilling to take volunteers under the age of 16.

The sad thing is that this is not what Parliament intended (there were no heritage railways in 1920), and the simple pleasure of helping out on a steam railway which we enjoyed as children is being denied to a new generation of youngsters. Could this be put right with a simple change in the law? Yes, but the chances of that happening over the next couple of years are small in a Parliament currently



WORKING TOGETHER: 70013 Oliver Cromwell on the ash pit at Loughborough on the Great Central Railway in August

obsessed by legislation required for Brexit. There is more evidence to come, but already we can see the importance of heritage railways, not just for the local economy, but to inspire young people to learn the fascinating range of skills required in running railways. As a postscript, another point from the evidence is how hard it is for some of us old hands to step back and hand over the

token to the younger generation. This is understandable and indeed, if it were not for those pioneers of the 1960s and 1970s, there would be no heritage railway movement to hand on. But we need to pass over real responsibility as part of the training and preparation to enable our successors to take full responsibility in the future for this amazing group of over 100 railways.

RAILFUTURE DOUBLE LOTTERY WINNERS

TWO lucky entrants won more than one prize in our recent monthly Railfuture Lottery draws.

Peter Clark picked up third and fifth prizes in the July and August draws, while Martin Fiedler took fourth and sixth prizes two months apart.

You too could win and help raise funds for Railfuture campaigning by joining the lottery, with the chance to win one of six prizes every month with a top prize of £40.

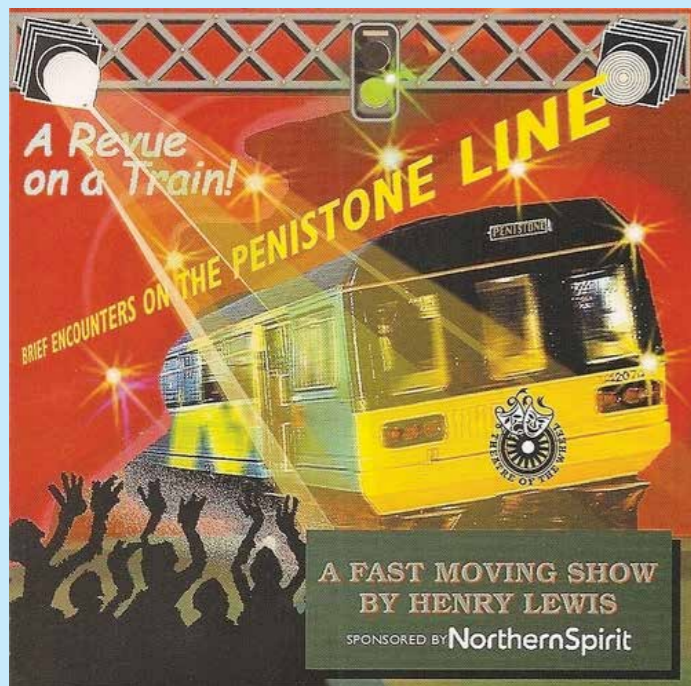
You can enter on our website using PayPal, by post to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND or by internet banking – email lot-

tery@railfuture.org.uk for more details. Each entry costs £1.00 and you can have as many entries per month as you would like – with an even better chance of winning!

Prizes are now being paid by internet banking or PayPal as well as the traditional cheque in the post method – it's entirely up to you.

Recent winners: **June** - William Walker, Terence Roger Sheppard, Alexander Macfie, P Sherwood, Edward Potter, Martin Fiedler. **July** - Steve and Sue Boulding, Philip Odell, Nigel Perkins, Sam Braithwaite, Peter Clark, Cedric Martindale. **August** - Michael Hanson, James R Pattison, Peter Clark, Martin Fiedler, Ian Sesnan, Graham David Smith.

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A memorial service was held in the "actors' church", St Mary's in Covent Garden, London for Henry Lewis, who died earlier this year, aged 70. The service included some of Henry's songs written for Brief Encounters on the Penistone Line which included The Railwayman's Song.

Writing in The Guardian, Maeve Kennedy described Henry as a happy soul who woke up humming and often sang his way through the day. He often delivered renditions of his own songs, but could also imitate a whistling kettle or the Radio 4 time pips.

Henry wrote satirical musicals about life, railways, the environment and wind farms, which half a century earlier might have made him much better known. In the late 20th

century they usually had short runs in pubs or church halls, and lost money. Each time he would express mild surprise, momentary sadness, then shake himself down and start again.

Audiences often came out humming Henry's heroic anthem of the railway builders.

Henry was educated at Radley College, Oxfordshire, where he recalled picking daisies in the outfield as his mother arrived during a crucial cricket match, and Millfield sixth form in Somerset.

He loved the countryside and was an epic walker. In 2009 he bought a cottage at Llanddarog, Carmarthenshire, where typically he promptly wrote a show, Trybl Y Twr, to raise money for the spire appeal at St Twrog's church.

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Your views

Bikes on trains

I agree with some of what Catherine Barber (*Railwatch* 152) says about bikes on trains. As a Cycling UK representative I have been involved with the "bikes on trains" issue for some years. The current situation is considerably better than it was, but it could be much better. However, some cyclists do not realise the predicament of train operators and I feel most managements nowadays want to do what they can to accommodate cycles.

However, they are stuck with rolling stock designed when predecessors were not sympathetic, and successive governments stipulating there must be as many seats as possible to achieve targets.

Managers therefore have to grapple with compromise in an extremely difficult situation. Such difficult judgement calls mean they will perhaps not always make the best decisions.

CUK is currently involved in talks with ScotRail, for instance.

I have viewed a mock-up of Abellio Greater Anglia's new rolling stock and the cycle space is modestly increased.

The slight negative is that there will be tip-up seats in the cycle space because of the pressure to provide as many seats as possible. However, there will be notices advising that seats should be given up for those with cycles, similar to notices at tip-up seats in designated wheelchair areas. I fear however it will still cause some friction.

I was prompted to respond to Ms Barber because I also regularly take a pannier-laden bike on trains. With respect, I do not think it is asking much to take panniers off in appropriate circumstances.

It could be a bit cumbersome for those cycle-camping who might have front and rear panniers, but no worse than for passengers with large luggage.

On IC125s where bikes are put in a guard's van there is usually no problem leaving panniers on the bike. To make it as easy as possible I release the carrier catches and any straps so once on board I just have to lift the panniers off the carrier.

The big step forward is on Stansted Express trains where 18 bikes will be allowed. Currently cycles are allowed only if dismantled in a box or bag as required by airlines. The increase could attract many cyclists going abroad. But cyclists on Stansted Express

may well be expected to remove panniers. I do not see that as unreasonable.

On the matter of "meat hooks", CUK want to hear from those who have experienced difficulties with them.

In conclusion, there will be no 'sea-change' in cycle carriage until a change of stance from the Government.

Finally, why are East Midlands Trains and CrossCountry so against displaying prominent signs explaining it is the cycle space so no luggage should be put there even if there are no bikes, particularly as only two bikes are allowed?

John Thompson, Dell Road
Oulton Broad, Lowestoft
Suffolk NR33 9NT
johntommo6@btinternet.com

Appeal for help

I have been researching the reopening of the Cranleigh-Guildford line but am unable to ascertain how recently there has been any discussion of this.

With the burgeoning amount of retirement housing being built in the area, the line should reopen.

It is an inordinately difficult drive for older people on the single lane, narrow, bendy and hilly routes and bus services are virtually nonexistent

Families without a car find getting to Cranleigh to visit elderly family members in assisted/retirement housing a complete nightmare and pretty much impossible.

Is there an active group interested in reviving this line?

Sara Furnas
brentfurnas@gmail.com

Interrail feedback

It is now about 15 months since Interrail introduced the facility of using the Global pass for the outward and homeward journeys between your home station in this country and your port of entry/exit as well as onward travel on the same day. This year, for instance, I travelled from my home station of Tipton, in the West Midlands, to Berlin on one day's use of the pass, with the exception of Eurostar (for which you get a discounted rate).

Railfuture's new European Passenger Group is interested in other members' experiences of using Interrail Global passes in this country. Has anyone encountered problems anywhere? Please contact me with your experiences, positive or otherwise.

Donald Payne
69 Dudley Road, Tipton DY4 8EE
donpayne@btinternet.com

Artist Lynette breathes new life into Scottish stations



The official opening of Aberdour signal box in April this year. Lynette Gray (centre) stands with Colin Whyte (left), ScotRail Alliance commercial property manager, and John Yellowlees (right), honorary ScotRail Alliance community ambassador

The ScotRail Alliance has congratulated a local artist whose work to restore part of a West Fife railway station has been nominated for a major award. Aberdour signal box, on the platform at Aberdour station, was shortlisted in the "Most enhanced station buildings and surroundings" category at the Community Rail Awards after it was restored and converted into a studio for local artist Lynette Gray. Lynette, from Kinghorn, was encouraged to visit the signal box after her success in converting disused space within Kinghorn station into a studio and gallery. Seeing the potential in the grade B listed space, which had lain empty since it fell out of use in 1981, she agreed to take it on. Renovation began in February, with the official opening in April, and was made possible through support from the ScotRail Alliance, the Stations Community Regeneration Fund and the Railway Heritage Trust. James Ledgerwood of ScotRail said: "We are absolutely delighted for Lynette. It's wonderful to see redundant buildings being given a new lease of life." The Community Rail Awards 2017 gala dinner was held at The Roundhouse Derby College on Thursday 5 October.

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

Picture: SCOTRAIL ALLIANCE

■ More than a million journeys are made on bikes to and from London rail stations every day, according to Transport for London.

■ Installation of trackwork on London's Crossrail was completed in September.

■ Lord Adonis who is a Railfuture vice-president said in August: "I am convinced we need a programme of reopening closed rail lines with high traffic/jobs/homes potential. Oxford-Cambridge is only the start."

■ More than 10,000 people have signed a petition to reopen the Matlock-Buxton line in Derbyshire.

■ Boost membership: You can help Railfuture boost its support by giving Railfuture membership to a friend or relative as a Christmas present.

■ One Railfuture member reports he always passes his *Railwatch* on to a conductor or train driver, once he has finished reading it.

■ Sudbury & Harrow Road is London's worst-served (hence least-used) station but it now has a new user group, operating under the umbrella of the Sudbury Town Residents Association. They are pressing for improved services at the station, which despite its town-centre location has just eight trains a day. stra.org.uk

■ Formed in response to Network Rail's decision to demolish Pilning station's footbridge last November, reducing it to one direction only, a new user group has been actively raising local awareness of the present restricted Saturdays-only service. The group produced an attractive leaflet to distribute door to door. As a result, usage is increasing. Further information at www.pilningstation.uk - including details of the increasingly-popular Pilning Grand Slam Challenge.

■ Further line closures are taking place on the Barking-Gospel Oak line to complete electrification works - until 22 October, and 27 November until 14 January. Electric trains are expected to start operations over the route during the first part of next year. www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk/

Railwatch welcomes articles and pictures from rail users and rail user groups

Send your material to: The Editors, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU

Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk
Please use email if possible but include your postal address



Railfuture head of infrastructure and networks group Chris Austin opens proceedings at the National Railway Museum launch of Expanding the Railways guide on 5 July, flanked by Stuart Baker of the Department for Transport (left) and Campaign for Better Transport chief executive Stephen Joseph (right)



Pictures: PAUL ABELL

One of the topics discussed at the launch of Expanding the Railways was whether the proposed new rail service into Newcastle from Ashington and Blyth should run along the main line into Newcastle Central, or be a Metro operation. This would have more intermediate stops and hence offer slower journey times, but it would give a direct link to more locations in Newcastle city centre. Looking east from the overbridge at Palmersville Metro stop, the single line from Ashington and Blyth is on the left, while a Metro train heads for the coast at Whitley Bay. The main line option supported by Railfuture and SENRUG would have a Metro interchange at Northumberland Park, the next stop towards the coast

New landmark guide to a bigger and better railway

By Paul Abell
Railfuture vice-president
paul.abell@railfuture.org.uk

Financed by the Department for Transport and produced in partnership with Railfuture and the Campaign for Better Transport, *Expanding the Railways – How to develop and deliver a proposal* is aimed at campaigners, local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, train operators and developers.

The no-nonsense chapter headings set the tone:

- Identifying a potential project
- Initial assessment
- Developing a business case
- Building support
- Funding a project
- Development and delivery

Naturally it is important to establish at a very early stage in a project whether the proposed new services and their associated infrastructure are appropriate and practicable, and this guide includes many useful check questions which promoters of schemes should ask themselves.

The mere presence of a disused trackbed is not sufficient to justify the extensive work necessary to reintroduce a train service, but the 50 years which are likely to have elapsed since the railway originally closed may well have seen developments such as new housing which would generate traffic not available in the 1960s.

The need to have the support of local authorities and at least one train operator is emphasised, as is the need for your project to

be acceptable to Network Rail in the wider context of railway operation.

Case studies will encourage campaigners, with explanations of the circumstances favouring success stories such as the reopened stations at Apperley Bridge and Kirkstall Forge in West Yorkshire, and the forthcoming Halton Curve at Runcorn.

But it is probably the more technical details which will be most useful to Railfuture members and campaigners. These include implications of Transport & Works Act Orders, and the powers granted by such an order.

The Guide to Rail Investment Process (GRIP) which railway projects must follow will probably be all too familiar to readers, but this document also explains the four-stage Network Rail investment process, and the five case model approach to decisions on investment used by the DfT.

A must for all campaigners, the 40-page document can be viewed online at www.railfuture.org.uk/display1563.

The NRM launch

Expanding the Railways was launched at a gathering of transport planners and advocates of railway reopenings in the National Railway Museum at York on 5 July.

Chaired by Railfuture head of infrastructure and networks group Chris Austin, this event took the form of a seminar in which a wide variety of speakers discussed the issues raised in the document. At a regional

level Transport for the North's head of strategy and policy Jonathan Spruce explained that TfN was looking at rail travel in the region increasing by up to 400% by 2050.

The possibilities for growth were by no means confined to the major cities. It is important to improve the connectivity of many smaller centres as well.

Nine strategic development corridors have been identified, and are detailed in the Initial TfN Integrated Rail Report, available at www.transportforthenorth.com/wp-content/uploads/TfN-Initial-Integrated-Rail-Report.pdf.

TfN is producing a business case for each corridor, but it will be necessary to move away from the tradition of producing individual benefit-cost ratios if these corridors are to get the transformational development they need.

For Network Rail, Leeds programme development manager Erica Blamire mentioned that the Network Rail route studies give recommendations for medium-term enhancements of the network, while Network Rail is happy to work with people at the development stage to explain how their plans would fit in with the whole railway network.

The present *Passenger Demand Forecasting Handbook* was roundly criticised in a general discussion, with claims that it "always" underpredicts demand meaning that new facilities such as the Borders Railway are built with inadequate facilities so you

are always playing catch-up. In particular there was a comment that the PDFH does not allow for the differing propensity of growth sectors to use rail travel (for example, this is high for financial services).

Rob Bailey of Arriva pointed out that the PDFH is only a guide. The new station at Cambridge North took into account the fact that Cambridge has many people with a high propensity to travel by rail.

In the context of reinstating a passenger service to Ashington, the South East Northumberland Rail User Group chairman Dennis Fancett complained that the Network Rail GRIP procedure was too long and too expensive.

Each stage of GRIP was tending to take around two years, so campaigners had to expect something like 10 years even to reach GRIP 5 in the design process.

There were comments that this long time scale is incompatible with soliciting developer contributions.

However it was also mentioned that the long GRIP timescale was useful for discovering problems such as out-of-date level crossings, which could be rectified as part of a project.

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