

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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Laying new tracks for Blackpool's electric future: Page 2

Picture: FREIGHTLINER

Blackpool is lucky. Electrification is at last coming to the seaside town, eight years after the decision was taken to electrify.

In the light of cancellations elsewhere, Network Rail announced in September 2017 that Blackpool electrification would go ahead.

Electric trains will be able to run to the town from the West Coast main line at Preston, with some Pendolino services from London.

While passengers in Leicester, Derby, Nottingham and Swansea are seething over the Government's decision to axe their electric hopes, work continues on the 17-mile route from Preston to Blackpool.

Sections of the line had to be closed while track layout and signalling was also being upgraded.

In January the line to Blackpool South reopened, and the line to Blackpool North was scheduled to reopen in March.

By then, more than 75% of the electrification masts had been installed.

But like many of Network Rail's electrification projects, the Blackpool scheme has been hit by a string of delays.

Hopes that an electric train timetable could be run in May 2017 proved unrealistic.

The project was in trouble as far back as 2015 when contractor Balfour Beatty "surrendered" the scheme.

The present work involves VolkerRail, working with Atkins, Murphy and Siemens.

In June last year, Virgin Trains planned to apply for an extra three trains per day to London Euston.

Blackpool North MP Paul Maynard, a former transport minister, said: "We are at the dawn of a golden age for Blackpool's rail link, following a transformation



BLACKPOOL NORTH: Track re-laying under way in November. Electrification should mean Pendolinos can call later this year

on a scale not seen since the Victorian age, and I am excited to see what the next few years delivers for passengers."

Another electrification project, the 25-mile Manchester-Preston line via Bolton and Chorley, has also hit trouble, with some gannery foundations failing in the Bolton and Chorley areas.

Despite having cancelled essential electrification projects, the Government had the press and TV going into raptures of delight

about reversing the Beeching cuts. The euphoria diverted attention away from the disastrous state of affairs on electrification by encouraging dreams about wholesale reopenings.

This cynical approach to news management may well come back to bite the politicians, however, because all over the country more and more people took them at their word and started campaigning afresh for station and line reopenings. In similar fashion, unproven technology such

as hydrogen trains was touted as a reason not to electrify!

Most experts would agree that electrification is still the best motive power for many reasons, including both reduced noise and pollution.

The best solution, acknowledged throughout the world, is electrification, but for short-term reasons the Government was prepared to ignore advice from experts that hydrogen-powered vehicles are unlikely to play a significant part in the development of a low carbon transport network, for both cost and energy efficiency reasons.

One campaigner was dismissive: "They are talking about fool's gold. Hydrogen-based technology has a long way to go, being both expensive and energy-inefficient. It is currently economically unviable."

Another said: "One problem is the lack of a hydrogen distribution network, another is the energy cost associated with its production."

"This misplaced confidence in the development of hydrogen as a power source looks like delaying important decisions to expand the electrified network."

"Perhaps if we wait a little longer, we will have machines similar to those on Star Trek for beaming us up to places!"

"Hydrail" experiments have however been carried out in Japan and China, while in Topeka, Kansas, BNSF has operated a hydrogen-powered locomotive, part-funded by the Defense Department. Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands are "interested".

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See Diesels out on page 15

See North West on page 16

results, though, are unequivocally worth the hassle. Every time we get an additional bit of railway reopened, or improve the service for passengers from a particular station, we are boosting the industry as a whole. The complaints about noise or intrusion will soon dissipate and be forgotten. The improvements we make, like the renewed station at London Bridge and the longer platforms at Waterloo, will be there for far longer. That is what makes the struggle worthwhile.

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.

New 'vision' for railway of the future

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling announced the Government's *Strategic Vision for Rail to the House of Commons* in November. Then in February Rail Minister Jo Johnson announced that diesel trains would be phased out by 2040.

Chris Austin and Paul Abell pick their way through changes which have already been announced, and some that have not.

East Coast franchise set to rejoin trains and infrastructure

Probably the most controversial proposal is the termination of the present East Coast passenger franchise three years early, in 2020, in order to establish an East Coast Partnership "as the first of the new generation of long term regional partnerships bringing together the operation of track and train under a single leader and unified brand."

This reflects an admission by the Government that splitting trains from infrastructure when the railways were privatised in the 1990s has proved unsatisfactory.

Current competitions for the East Midlands and South Eastern franchises envisage one team working between train operators and Network Rail.

GW to split?

Another controversial proposal is to extend the present First Group Great Western franchise by an uncontested direct award to 2022. This could lead to splitting the franchise into two geographical entities. One could include services north of the London-Bristol main line, with the other to the south.

The aim would also be to combine infrastructure and train operation in some way.

The Greenford and Brighton-Southampton services could be hived off to other franchises.

Thameslink to split

The Government intends to split the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise in 2021. The two previous franchises were combined with the intention that "this would help the implementation of the Thameslink upgrade programme, which is now near completion."

Passenger figures wobble: Regional traffic leads way again

The railway passenger figures published by the Office of Rail and Road covering July-September 2017 are worrying. The overall increase in passenger-kilometres was only 1.3% over the previous year (admittedly an improvement over the tiny 0.3% increase recorded for the previous three months). The greatest



SUCCESS ON A SHOESTRING: The Government kept British Rail short of money in the 1980s but it still managed to build new stations. Our picture shows two trains at Salford Crescent which opened in 1987. It cost £660,000 and was paid for jointly by BR and the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive. The station has proved such a success that it was extended in 2013 to cope with the 1.5 million passengers who use it each year. It will be even more attractive to passengers when the diesel-powered Pacer at Platform 1 is replaced. More than 100 years ago, the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway phased out non-bogie coaches on such services but, always under pressure to save money, BR reinvented the four-wheeled train design with the Pacer in the 1980s



SURVIVOR WITH A FUTURE: Endon station slumbers on the Stoke-Leek line which lost its regular passenger services in 1956. The line has been leased from Network Rail by Moorland & City Railways, and some track clearance has already been done by the volunteers of the adjacent Churnet Valley Railway. A planning application to reinstate the rail line from Leekbrook (on the preserved Churnet Valley Railway) to Cornhill was made in November by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, following a feasibility report on bringing the trains back to Leek. The cost of reinstating Leekbrook station and repairs at Cheddleton station was agreed earlier. Council leader Sybil Ralphs told The Sentinel newspaper: "The first stage is to bring the heritage railway line into Leek, then build the station at Barnfields. This will happen as I am very passionate about the railway line. Once the heritage line is in place we can look to future plans for taking the line to Stoke-on-Trent." Leek station closed to passengers in 1965

increase was recorded by the regional sector (3.5%) followed by long distance with 2.8%. However London and South East services once again showed a fall in passenger-kilometres, though the 0.8% drop was at least an improvement over the startling

3.1% drop for the previous quarter. Naturally the changes in traffic for individual operators vary considerably, a fall of no less than 9.8% for South Western Railway being attributed to the ongoing disruption caused by the engineering work around Waterloo.

In contrast, the passenger-kilometre figure for Chiltern Railways showed a remarkable annual increase of 15.9%, following the completion of its new London-Oxford route in 2016.

All credit to Chiltern Railways' enterprise in creating the new service to Oxford and being so proactive on rail development.

Railfuture branches can quote this 15.9% increase as an example of the traffic to be gained by railway operators with imagination.

1960s cuts to be reversed: Okehampton service back

In a statement we never expected to see, a Government report promises to explore opportunities to restore capacity lost under the Beeching and British Rail cuts of the 1960s and 1970s by identifying new schemes that unlock new housing or economic growth and offer good value for money. A team has been established to deliver East West Rail, and the Vision document refers to discussions on lines around Bristol, Ashington to Blyth, and a central route through Birmingham, as well as Exeter-Okehampton. This line actually survived the 1960s but lost its passenger trains in 1972.

The new Great Western franchisee will be required to develop plans to trial regular services on the route between Okehampton and Exeter.

New ORR figures were due out on 8 March and are at:

dataportal.orr.gov.uk/browse/reports/12

President's column: Two giant steps take us all forward

By Christian Wolmar

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Every bit of good news about the railways seems to be tempered with bad. For example, the huge investment in improving London Bridge and Waterloo stations required lengthy closures over the Christmas week.

Inevitably there were a few extra delays and mishaps which captured the headlines, albeit briefly, together with the quite shocking fares rises the following week. Yet the improvements to those two stations, together with much other work around the country, will transform the passenger experience for many.

London Bridge, in particular, was a ghastly complicated rabbit warren,

and though it still does have lots of weird passageways beneath the city streets, it now has a concourse and a connecting passage worthy of the 21st, rather than as previously the 19th, century. Waterloo, the busiest station on the network, has had to wait too long for its extended platforms, and work will continue for a couple of years to come.

It is the railways' fate to get more than their fair share of kickings in the media. However, we should not be distracted from our mission of helping to improve them and creating new opportunities for travel. Yes, inevitably even the modest schemes we propose have obstacles to overcome and opposition to win over. The



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■ ■ Prospectus for growth

The restoration of a direct rail link from Leicester to Coventry is included in Leicestershire County Council's *Prospectus for Growth*, which was issued in September and lists transport infrastructure projects considered necessary for economic prosperity. Leicester-Coventry will require an estimated £51 million for works at Nuneaton and is the only rail project in the prospectus. Notable for its absence in the discussion of a transport strategy for Coalville is reopening the Leicester-Burton National Forest line, which would do far more for the town than the suggested improvements to the A511. Railfuture's autumn conference in Leicester in November reinvigorated calls to reopen this line, with support from county and district councillors as well as the Leicester City Mayor.

■ ■ Links from HS2 at Toton

A direct link from the existing rail line into HS2 at Toton would improve the Leicester-Leeds rail service, according to East Midlands Councils' *HS2 Growth Strategy* which suggests that such a link could unlock more than £1.9 billion in economic benefits. While welcoming these benefits, Railfuture East Midlands considers many of the other proposals relating to Toton to be detrimental. In particular, the suggestion of routing some Nottingham-Derby services via Toton would add an estimated 14 minutes to journey times and would be useful only to a minority of passengers. Diverting Liverpool-Norwich services via Toton would not save time for anyone from east of Nottingham or west of Chesterfield. We remain convinced that East Midlands Parkway is a better location for an HS2 station because it already has fast links to the region's cities.

■ ■ Northampton and East West Rail

Northampton Borough Council has appointed deputy leader Councillor Phil Larratt as representative on the East-West Rail Consortium. The town suffers from poor connectivity, except on the London-Birmingham axis, so the council is keen to see direct services on to East West Rail. Railfuture East Midlands welcomes this development and is keen to see Bedford developed as a good interchange with the Midland main line, allowing a great improvement in the range of journey opportunities.

■ ■ Timetable changes

The £7 billion project to upgrade Thameslink and the Midland main line will cause severe disruption for some commuters. For two years from May 2018, East Midlands Trains services will not be stopping at Bedford or Luton during the morning and evening peak periods, although stops at Luton Airport Parkway will be retained, as will contra-peak calls at Bedford and Luton. There will be a half-hourly bus service between Wellingborough and Bedford providing a southward link to Bedford for commuters, with a 50% discount on season tickets for commuters needing to use this bus. Some campaigners in the area are concerned that this is a back-door way of introducing the separation of Corby services from inter-city services in the new East Midlands franchise, which would be detrimental to connectivity northwards from Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.

■ ■ Harborough rebuilding

Harborough Rail Users met the then Rail Minister Paul Maynard and made two site visits in their efforts to ensure that the rebuilding of Market Harborough station includes all the necessary facilities. Of particular concern are access to the platforms for the disabled and the need for toilets on the southbound platform. Local MP Neil O'Brien is actively supporting their case. Meanwhile, phase one of the project, the new car park, is expected to open "in early spring 2018".

■ ■ Radcliffe-on-Trent

Newly formed station adoption group, Friends of Radcliffe Station, held its first community action day in November. There are more than 20 local volunteers in the group, which is improving the station environment with the help of £500 from the local community rail partnership. Members of the group also met with a Department for Transport representative to discuss ongoing problems with the Nottingham-Grantham service. www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch [Twitter: @RailfutureEMids](https://twitter.com/RailfutureEMids)

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■ ■ Seamless public transport

What do the stations Perpignan, Pilsen, Corby and Wandlitzsee – in four different European countries – have in common? In each case, as you walk off the station there is real-time information about local buses. We need similar screens at stations such as Ipswich, Norwich and Lowestoft. This is one of the recommendations of new Railfuture East Anglia's new report *Seamless Public Transport in East Anglia*. Compiled by Trevor Garrod with input from members, the report compares multimodal ticketing and information. There is PlusBus in over 20 East Anglian towns and cities, but infrastructure needs improving so passengers can easily find a bus for onward journeys. The report recommends modest extensions of the PlusBus scheme, more train and bus combined ticketing on links to places not served by rail, and improved staff training. The report is on the East Anglia Branch website. A paper or pdf version is available from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Seamless+Public+Transport

■ ■ East Anglia footfall rises by 4%

East Anglian railway stations handled 4.4% more people during the year 2016/17, according to the Office of Rail and Road estimates published in December. The response to growth on the three western lines, operated by Great Northern/Thameslink, is to boost train frequency and run longer trains. By contrast, Greater Anglia will not improve frequency, although existing services will have longer trains from 2019. Railfuture believes growth on Ipswich-Cambridge and Cambridge-Bishops Stortford should be matched by enhancing the service to half-hourly at all stations for most of the day, especially as considerable housing and industrial development is taking place along both lines. This will require capital expenditure on more track capacity between Cambridge and Newmarket as well as between Littleport and Downham Market. The railway industry must rise to the challenge of working with Government, local authorities and local

enterprise partnerships to find funding for these urgent enhancements. The ORR reveals disappointing figures for Great Yarmouth (population 100,000) where there is a drop of 9.6% over five years. The one train an hour service to Norwich competes with up to seven buses an hour. Railfuture believes this service should be improved to run every half an hour.

■ ■ Cambridgeshire transport hubs

Many ideas to tackle the chronic traffic congestion in and around Cambridge have emerged from the Greater Cambridge Partnership, previously known as the Greater Cambridge City Deal. Most have proved unpopular. In January, the GCP published an "innovative proposal" for rural travel hubs which seems to have impressed the public. Four hubs are proposed: Oakington, Sawston/Shelford, Whittlesford and Foxton. The idea is to develop stronger communities by connecting villages to provide better access to jobs and leisure activities. Developing rail services for local users of these hubs would be a good start. Transport Secretary Chris Grayling gave a commitment to the Ely junction rail upgrade when he appeared on BBC Look East in January. Rail campaigners will be calling for the project to have cash allocated in Network Rail's control period six for work to be undertaken between 2019 and 2024.

■ ■ More track for Felixstowe line

Passengers on the Ipswich-Felixstowe line are looking forward to double track being laid between Trimley station and Grimston Lane, fulfilling promises that were made in 2004. Felixstowe Travel Watch says the work is aimed at increasing capacity for more freight trains while improving reliability of the passenger trains. Three-coach trains are expected to work the line – but not until next year.

■ ■ Flowers brighten up Melton station



Picture: Suffolk Coastal District Council

Volunteers from the community rail partnership have planted 250 shrubs at Melton station. Volunteer station adopter Aaron Taffer, who is also chair of the East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership, said: "I am looking forward to observing the garden as it evolves and changes over the seasons."

■ ■ Reopening bid wins TV coverage

A group campaigning for the reopening of the King's Lynn to Hunstanton line managed to get coverage on ITV in January. More than 3,000 people signed a reopening petition after the group was set up 12 months ago. The county council is also being urged, as a first stage, to convert the former line into a cycle and walking route, along with the line from King's Lynn to Fakenham. www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia [Twitter: @RailfutureEA](https://twitter.com/RailfutureEA)

Future threats and opportunities



IAN BROWN

When *Railwatch* was published in December, many of us were upbeat about the prospects for 2018 despite the fiasco of the mid project cancellation by government of Britain's main line electrification programme.

We noted that the industry was picking up the pieces by the use of bi-mode trains, albeit with a penalty in performance, weight and cost which will be a burden on the industry and passengers for many years to come.

Alarmingly we witnessed a further three fiascos in quick succession:

- ❑ The decline in rail journeys, particularly commuting
- ❑ The early handback of the keys by Stagecoach and Virgin on the East Coast franchise
- ❑ The collapse of Carillion

■ Decline of season ticket travel

It is pretty clear that investing in a season ticket is a big decision for many people against a background of Brexit job uncertainty, frequent strikes and a return to the old order of inflation-plus fare increases.

This trend has been around for some time, but the Office of Rail and Road figures for July-September 2017 show a year-on-year decline of 9.4%. Season ticket use is at its lowest level for seven years. Urgent action is required. Far more flexible products are needed for work travel, not just around London but throughout Britain.

Longer distance and regional journeys continue to grow, albeit now very slowly. Interestingly, those train operators who have continued to focus on passengers have seen serious growth. The best performers in this period were Chiltern Railways with an astonishing +11.4% and Hull Trains with +10.1%. Chiltern Railways benefited from the opening of the now hugely popular Oxford service.

This and more detailed analysis points to the need to continue to invest in service innovation and new, far more flexible products in ticketing allowing regular, not necessarily daily, travel.

■ The East Coast franchise: time for fundamental change

The East Coast franchise, heavily geared towards revenue growth, is a worry for the entire rail industry, and one which suggests that the franchise model is



BUILT TO LAST: An IC125 diesel train crosses the Royal Border Bridge on the East Coast main line at Berwick in May last year. The future of the franchise may be in doubt but British Rail's IC125 trains and the bridge are likely to survive long into the future

in need of overhaul. Three East Coast failures in a row seem to reveal carelessness in the process.

The strain is apparent across the network but reveals itself first on high-income routes such as East Coast.

There are other deep-rooted issues. Other train operators see income down compared to their bid projections. Yield is less, even if the number of journeys is slightly up.

The reason why many have not handed back the keys is the industry compensation process called Schedules 4 and 8. Schedule 8 is compensation for delays, mainly by Network Rail on account of failures of the infrastructure.

Schedule 4 is also compensation from Network Rail but for engineering possessions, at a time when projects and renewals are at their peak.

Network Rail performs well on East Coast so this could be seen as a problem for the operator! The cynic might say that the best financial model for operators at a time of stagnant growth is maximum delays and maximum engineering possessions, often with buses provided by the same operating company. This is not sustainable as a reputable business model and irritates passengers, politicians and rail campaigners alike. The right balance of incentives must be incorporated into future franchises.

Railfuture's stance has been that rail must grow its market share by providing more capacity and attracting more passengers and freight.

The Government will be persuaded to invest in expanding the rail business, if it addresses wider issues.

For example, Crossrail benefits the regional and national economy, as well as improving social inclusion by providing access to jobs through more efficient commuting.

Like-for-like replacement without growth is difficult to justify in business terms because the efficiencies that would normally be the basis of an investment case do not show through. The rail industry remains high cost. The only sustainable way forward is by growth twinned with efficiency, achieved by properly delivered investment.

■ Environmental change

The recognition that investment in railways is not just about usage but more about economic and social factors has been hugely beneficial to the justification of rail projects.

Electrification is more about operational efficiency and the environment, so when schemes cannot be delivered within anything like the budget they are vulnerable, as we have seen.

This may be political reality, but it cannot be portrayed as sensible, let alone smart. Pollution levels

in London are, as the Mayor tells us, at dangerous levels. The threat is to people's health which, in a time when NHS delivery is in crisis, requires a more robust solution than just trying to avoid fines from the European Union.

The solution is a tightening of emission controls and the move to electric road vehicles. Ironically we are seeing a move to electrify the roads faster than what is left of the rail electrification plan.

We need to highlight rail's environmental credentials. Building trains such as the Voyager, overpowered and overweight, puts rail on the back foot, without mentioning the latest inter-city express programme. Business case rules do not properly take the environment into account.

It is surely just as valid to improve the nation's health as it is to improve the economy, social mobility and inclusion. We must continue to push for this.

■ The driverless car

A development that appears at many inquiries, particularly into city transport schemes, is the driverless car. However, the popular assertion that this will replace public transport and reduce congestion really is a myth. If it increases car travel it will increase congestion. Internet shopping and armies of delivery vans have increased city street

Picture: BARRIE FORREST

Electric future is the best way for railways

From Page 5

congestion. These lend themselves to electric operation, just as milk floats did in the past. Theoretically this is the most likely application of driverless operation, provided the technology can knock on your door and leave the parcel with a neighbour or behind the dustbin!

Record levels of investment in rail – but is it strategic?

The Government argues that the rail industry is seeing record levels of investment. This is true but passengers do not always get the lion's share of it.

The Government's spending announcements are designed to impress us. They would be more impressive if we could see the benefits to the people who pay for rail services, both passengers and taxpayers.

As an example, let us take a look at orders for 7,000 new rail vehicles on order for delivery over the next few years, mainly electric plus the last minute switch of the inter-city express order from electric to bi-mode. It all looks good on the surface, particularly if foreign manufacturers set up factories in Britain to put them together – if not completely build them from scratch.

Try plotting all these deliveries on to a spreadsheet, while making a strategic assumption that the whole British rail network could be electrified.

Then assume retaining (not scrapping) relatively new electric trains, including all those displaced by Thameslink, Crossrail and Greater Anglia AND keeping the diesel IC125 and Voyager Fleets, PLUS the East Coast electric sets.

Amazingly, there would be enough electric trains to operate an electrified network covering the whole of Britain without any diesel units (other than those stated above) and the cascaded Meridian trains.

All the other diesel multiple units, not just the Pacers, could be scrapped.

This may seem like fantasy in strategic terms at the time when electrification schemes are being axed or cut back, such as the incremental electrification schemes in north-west England. Such a scenario may be simplistic but it shows what potential there is for a great leap forward.

It would however be difficult to convince the House of Commons public accounts committee, which has been concentrating on short-term lack of efficiency. Railfuture must nevertheless campaign vigorously, especially



SCOTLAND SHOWS THE WAY: Work to electrify the Glasgow-Edinburgh line via Falkirk Grahamston. There will soon be five electrified routes between the two cities. Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield will have to make do with diesels – and dreams

for incremental electrification. Railfuture members can think strategically even if the structure of the industry makes it difficult for insiders to be open about it.

Is there a better way?

Scotland has taken a different approach, ordering new trains in parallel with incremental electrification, although even here we have seen a mismatch on timescales with the Edinburgh to Glasgow electrification delivered ahead of the new trains.

It is very good to see new infrastructure being used to also deliver incremental service improvements such as the soon-to-be-introduced Glasgow via Cumbernauld and Falkirk Grahamston electric service to Edinburgh.

This is probably less headline grabbing than Glasgow-Edinburgh 42-minute expresses, but is of strategic importance in terms of sustaining the economy of the Central Belt of Scotland.

The same approach has been taken with the recent go-ahead for the electrification of the Shotts line. When completed this will give no less than five electrified routes with regular, quality services between Glasgow and Edinburgh. To a Railfuture member living between Manchester and Leeds/Sheffield this must seem enviable.

The Northern Power House

By contrast with Scotland, there are two rail routes between the English cities of Manchester and Leeds, as well as one between Manchester and Sheffield. Serious attempts are being made, hopefully from May 2018, to

introduce six trains an hour between Manchester and Leeds. To achieve this, off-peak intermediate journeys have been largely abandoned, while expanding freight flows such as biomass from Liverpool Docks will be diverted via inefficient round-about routes.

The Ordsall Chord in Manchester goes live in May, yet even here with this large and sensible investment, overall capacity does not materially increase without an increase in station capacity, particularly at Manchester Oxford Road and Piccadilly.

The lack of turn-back platforms at Victoria from the west is a strategic weakness in the absence of electrification to the newly built turn-back platforms at Stalybridge and Rochdale.

There is a long way to go before all the promised service improvements are delivered, particularly the Northern Connect system of faster regional services.

Less obvious, but important locally, is a series of smaller incremental service improvements, particularly at weekends with fewer resource constraints.

Our Railfuture branches in northern England have scored a series of service improvement successes. Franchise bidders want to win and stakeholder imperatives are increasingly part of the award process. This puts meaning into Railfuture campaigning and our branches are clearly rising to the occasion.

After South Western and London Midland

The new SW and LM franchises also offer a series of passenger

benefits successfully campaigned for by Railfuture branches. Extension of the CrossCity line to Bromsgrove is a highlight, as is an electric service to Rugeley via Walsall.

The next big franchise campaigning challenge is Wales and the Borders. Wales has been left behind with the current largely stagnant franchise. There is a lot to go for here, with a strong imperative to invest from the Welsh Assembly Government energised by Whitehall's decision to dump electrification of the South Wales main line beyond Cardiff.

The Welsh Valley Lines present a major opportunity and connectivity from the Cambrian and North Wales lines and within Wales is essential.

Railfuture's Welsh branch will be in there campaigning and liaising with the complex array of stakeholders and bidders.

The UK Government should feel guilty enough about its approach to investment in Welsh railways in general.

Reopenings

Campaigning for reopening of lines and stations has always been part of Railfuture's remit. Our grants to local campaigns are based on a financially sustainable approach.

The rail system is creaking at the seams, and reopenings such as the Borders line deliver high ridership and meet wider economic objectives.

Reopenings offer wider strategic objectives including more capacity, more journey opportunities and more network resilience. Railfuture branches have campaigned for years for Oxford to Cambridge to reopen citing economic and transport benefits. Now it is being built and hopefully not watered down by cutting out the "Freight north to south Spine" providing freight access from Southampton to the north via Bletchley and Bedford. Intermodal freight is still on the increase!

We are now turning our attention to the bigger picture. Even a reopening as large as Woodhead can be seen as a solution to a wider problem – in this case Trans Pennine capacity, freight and passenger. We will be looking at many such options as we raise our game with the industry and stakeholders. There has never been a better time to get involved with our Railfuture branches if you want to make a difference.

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Railfuture innovation convinces GTR

Train operator GTR amended its proposed May 2018 timetable in response to "credible" proposals from Railfuture. We were worried by GTR's intention to split the hourly Brighton-Ashford service and instead advocated an overlap of the two separate services to add capacity while maintaining connectivity. Our idea was supported and developed by all six local rail user groups, as well as being publicly endorsed by the two key local MPs. The amended timetable gives Bexhill four rather than three trains an hour and improved connection times at Ashford for HS1 services to St Pancras. The seven-day hourly Ashford-Eastbourne diesel service, overlapping with Brighton-Hastings/Ore electric services, is seen as the forerunner to through Eastbourne-London St Pancras services, first trailed in a Railfuture report five years ago, which influenced East Sussex's Rail Strategy.

STAR in the East is on the rise

Major work is now under way to double the number of trains on the STAR route (Stratford-Tottenham Hale-Angel Road) in north-east London by providing a third Lea Valley line track. The foundations for this major step forward can be found in another Railfuture report from five years ago, which also galvanised our successful campaign to reopen Lea Bridge station. Third tracking should be complete by the end of next year.

Opportunities to influence

- Railfuture's Kent division members met and shared aspirations with the three short-listed bidders for the next South Eastern franchise.
- Railfuture's Surrey division members collaborated with Wessex and other branches to respond to South Western Railway's timetable proposals for December 2018.
- Railfuture's Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire division members responded to Hertfordshire's latest Local Transport Plan.
- Railfuture's Eastern division is contributing to a new Rail Strategy for Essex.

Uckfield-Brighton, via Lewes

Brighton is in the top 20 of Britain's biggest cities and deserves better rail links. Railfuture is campaigning to reconnect Brighton with Uckfield and beyond, via Lewes. The Association of Train Operators *Connecting Communities* 2009 report suggested that investment to reinstate the Uckfield-Lewes line would be justified if 6,000 homes can be built in the area. The unreliability of the Uckfield line's diesel trains is likely to undermine the planned Thameslink timetable. For this reason – and others – Railfuture backs the proposal in last year's Chris Gibb report to electrify the 25-mile line between Hurst Green and Uckfield.

Let there be light!

The AGM of Railfuture London and South East will be held on Saturday 28 April and will feature speakers on light rail proposals for the Lower Thames crossing and for Cambridge.

www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East
Twitter: @RailfutureLSE

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



Platform to fun for a smart new generation

Most children love going by train and this group of youngsters at Drem station in East Lothian were quick to say they enjoy travelling by train. Twelve-year-old Calum Paxton, left, has been a regular rail traveller since the age of two, going into Edinburgh to visit tourist attractions, museums and places of interest. "We also like

to have an afternoon out going round the Fife Circle," he said, "or down the Borders Railway to Galashiels. Just going out on the railway is fun and we have visited lots of different places in Scotland. Our furthest day trip was to Settle on the Settle-Carlisle Railway." Siblings Cora, 6, and Cameron, 4,

agreed. Cora said: "The train is more interesting than the car." Cameron and friend Sarah, aged 6, pictured right, added: "We like to have our phones and tablets so we can play games on longer journeys." Note: Railfuture board member Allison Cosgrove is grandma to Calum, Cameron and Cora.

Scotland

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Loops 'needed' for new stations

Rail Action Group East of Scotland continues to meet with the ScotRail Alliance, to progress the opening of the long-overdue stations at East Linton and Reston. It has been suggested that the stations should have passing loops and four-tracks to provide for a local stopping service without delaying express trains.

Backing and backsliding

In his new work *Getting the Train: The History of Scotland's Railways*, author and historian David Ross expresses his support for a new St Andrews Railway and a Leven-Thornton reconnection, saying: "I think the lines making the strongest case [for reopening] at the moment are the lines to St Andrews and the line from Thornton junction to Methil and Leven in Fife... for different reasons these are both viable schemes." Mr Ross also says that there is "no doubt" that the St Andrews line should never have closed in the first place. As I am an elected local councillor (as well as Railwatch correspondent), I asked a question about the Levenmouth rail campaign at Fife Council. It transpires that the Scottish Government is back-peddalling from the GRIP 4 study apparently promised by the Transport Secretary, instead proposing yet another piece of work under the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) regime, to assess the robustness of the business case. It should be noted that there have already been two STAGs carried out to evaluate this project. Following the positive results of the Policy Review, the St Andrews Rail Link (STARLink) campaign is commissioning another piece of work from

consultant Peter Brett Associates. The pre-STAG appraisal assessment will centre on improving connectivity between St Andrews and key settlements, economic and retail destinations and the core Scottish transport network. In addition, the student consultancy Playfair has offered to help build the business case.

Pop-up stations

Green MSP Mark Russell has called for the mothballed Alloa-Kincardine-Dunfermline line to be reopened with pop-up stations, to assess demand. Consultants, headed by former Transport Scotland official David Prescott, are looking to establish as many as 20 pop-up stations across Scotland.

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/ [facebook.com/STARLinkCampaign](https://www.facebook.com/STARLinkCampaign) [twitter@STARLinkRail](https://twitter.com/STARLinkRail)
- LevenMouth Rail Campaign: www.lmrc-action.org.uk/ [facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/](https://www.facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/)
- Capital Rail Action Group: www.capitalrail.org.uk/
- Newburgh Train Station campaign: <http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/>
- Forth Rail Link: [facebook.com/forthraillink/](https://www.facebook.com/forthraillink/) [twitter@forthraillink](https://twitter.com/forthraillink)
- Thornhill Station Action Group: [facebook.com/thornhilltrainstation/](https://www.facebook.com/thornhilltrainstation/) www.thornhillstation.co.uk/
- Campaign for Borders Rail: <http://www.campaignforbordersrail.org/>

Trains not trams

The authorities say they want trams to reduce congestion because only trams will entice motorists out of their cars.

However, each new tram is about ten times the price of a new bus.

As regards the tram for Dudley town on top of Castle Hill, it wastes 49.3 kilometres of perfectly good main line railway that is all there but does not have trains or stations.

Dudley railway station is where the new hotels, the retail park and four leisure/tourist attractions are – at Castle Gate.

We should have the trains back and do without the tram stop.

An electric bus travelling along the road (not the railway) would be much more cost-effective.

A smart bus could operate between the reopened railway station and the new town centre at Castle Gate.

The railway station could be designated “low town” with the bus station and old town as “high town”.

The railway station could provide links to Kidderminster and Worcester in one direction and to Lichfield and Derby in the other.

The price to rebuild a diesel-operated line could be about £6,000 per metre, based on the Borders Railway experience in Scotland.

Our line does not need rebuilding. The 56 kilometre line between Stourbridge and Burton on Trent already exists. It just needs to be reopened to passenger trains.

The line would connect Dudley “low town” direct to London and Scotland and all stations in between. An electric bus to “high town” is far preferable to an expensive tram.

Why sever a principal, main line railway through the congested West Midlands with a tramline in two halves, a railway test track and a trail of trees, Himalayan Balsam and undergrowth, when the whole 56 kilometre line could have its trains and stations back, for less money?

*Tim Weller, Hunnington Crescent, Halesowen B63 3DJ
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Crewe benefits

The letter in *Railwatch* 154 headed “Crewe mess-up” is unfair to those involved. The Department for Transport, to its credit, took advantage in 2008 of the extra capacity from four-tracking past Lichfield to

Picture: GREATER ANGLIA



CAMBRIDGE STATION: Craftsman at work on the roundels

Cambridge is the tops for heritage

Painstaking work to restore 32 decorative college roundels on Cambridge rail station’s façade has led to a national heritage award for Greater Anglia.

The rail operator received the MTR Crossrail Award for Urban Heritage at the National Railway Heritage Awards for its work to restore the station building, meticulously repairing and painting the ornate roundels, repairing damaged brickwork and tidying up cabling and pipes.

The roundels represent the coats of arms of Cambridge University colleges and local dignitaries from when the station opened in 1845.

The £250,000 work on the Grade II listed station took a year to complete, involving research to ensure the correct colours were used and the application of 23½ carat gold leaf.

The work was carried out by CIS Services and Stonewest Heritage consultants and the specialist heritage division of Alfred Bagnall & Sons. It was funded by a grant from the Railway Heritage Trust.

introduce a new hourly service from Euston to the Trent Valley stations.

After a slow start, it attracted much new business to the railway. At some cost to London Midland, the class 350/1 trains were upgraded to run at 110mph, allowing a path via Weedon. This reduced journey times to and from London, which is a much more important destination than Northampton. A mark of its success is the overcrowding.

Running trains via Stoke restricts train length, because of signalling constraints at Stone and Kidsgrove. The DfT consulted on future route planning before the recent franchise competition and it was the DfT, not West Midlands Trains, which decided on it.

Lichfield and other Trent Valley stations will benefit from shorter

journey times via Crewe, in particular saving a full hour to Preston, Cumbria and Scotland.

As always, any change has its downsides, but an extra change at Stafford for some journeys has to be set against the benefits, including the ability to run eight coaches on all trains.

On a different topic, while I sympathise with those unable to use Chinley station as highlighted in your main story, we are still waiting for lifts at Lichfield Trent Valley, which has more than 10 times the annual footfall (1,206,000 at the latest count) of Chinley.

*David Dixon, chair, Lichfield Rail Promotion Group
daviddixon21@virginmedia.com*

Lorry platoons

The National Infrastructure Commission likes to keep us guessing does it not? One

minute it is championing the cause of East-West Rail and the next it is backing the case for “lorry platoons” on our roads to free up capacity on the rail network!

Many will remember studying the back of the Highway Code, showing the safe braking distances between vehicles at various speeds.

The governing formula was $S = (m^2/20) + m$, where m is the speed in mph and S the overall stopping distance in feet. Developing the formula for fixing the length of a “platoon” we multiply by the number of vehicles (say 50 to compare with a freight train of mixed size intermodal boxes) and allow for each lorry to be 50ft long.

At 60 mph each platoon works out to be about two miles long. Imagine 60 of these leaving Felixstowe each day!

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



Picture: ROBERT FRANCE

Ribbleshead viaduct by torchlight is a worthy winner

This picture of Ribbleshead viaduct on the Settle-Carlisle line won a highly commended award in Network Rail’s Lines in the Landscape competition. Photographer Robert France described how he achieved the impressive lighting effect with a 1500 lumen torch. “I set

about experimenting with light painting,” said Robert. “I set the camera for a six-minute exposure, delayed by three minutes to give me time to walk to the north end before the shutter opened.

“I leant through a gap in the wall and ran the torch along

the length of the viaduct for the duration of the exposure, apart from a brief break while a train crossed so as not to risk distracting the driver.”

The picture, along with others from the Landscape Photographer of the Year Awards, went on display in

January at London’s Waterloo station. After Waterloo, the winning entries went on show at selected stations, including Edinburgh, Leeds, Birmingham and Cardiff, with further venues to be added. More information: www.take-a-view.co.uk

Presumably overtaking platoons would be prohibited. One platoon travelling 2 mph faster than the one in front would take 2 hours to complete this manoeuvre.

So keeping to the inside lane it is then, but given the disproportionate damage inflicted on our roads by 44 tonne vehicles, who pays for the maintenance of the “lorry lane”, the road haulage industry or other motorists? Thought so...

How would other road users leave and join the motorway at intersections without hopping into the space between lorries?

Send your letters and emails to:

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

Another safety case waiting to be written! How too do we prevent a platooned lorry from being hijacked by a computer hacker?

Then there is the subject of suicides. A determined person wishing to leap into the space between driverless lorries in the knowledge they would not swerve to avoid them raises the question of whether we need to fence the highway as we do the railway.

I am sure the NIC has taken all this into account and will reassure us that everything will be just fine as long as no one mentions “level playing field”.

Philip Smart, Severn Road, Ipswich

City centre prospects

Surely there is still some prospect of further extensions of the Great Central Railway. From Ruddington an extension to the north of less than 1.5 miles would bring it to the Clifton branch of the Nottingham

tram network. With a suitable interchange station, access by connection to Nottingham city centre would be gained.

Some years ago I travelled to the Great Central’s Leicester North station and recall stone-throwing youths and a long trek to the city centre.

However, I did note that a one-mile southward extension of the line looked possible and it might still be. It would bring passengers close to the Abbey Park and a more reasonable walk to Leicester city centre. It is only the last mile of the old route into the city which is built over. That would need massive state intervention to restore.

*Gerard Duddridge, Exeter.
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A role for bimodes

There were criticisms of bimode trains in *Railwatch* 154.

Most sensible people support a rolling programme of rail electrification but 66% of the British rail network is not

yet electrified and the entire network cannot be electrified in a five-year period. Many people using regional non-electrified routes therefore welcome the opportunities bimodes bring.

In two years time, Stadler bimode trains will replace 1980s diesels and in East Anglia will open up new journey possibilities.

They have been designed so that, as more of the network is wired, the diesel module can be removed, and the train can become a simple electric multiple unit. Maybe the critics of bimodes are not aware of this. Some other European countries are also interested in bimode trains and the concept is not unique to Great Britain.

We should welcome the bimode trains.

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Could sun and hydrogen be real alternatives for electrified rail lines?

HYDROGEN

The Government has announced a stop-gap solution to its scrapping of electrification, in the shape of bimode trains which can run as electric trains but switch to an auxiliary diesel engine to reach non-electrified parts of the network.

But there are other options to ubiquitous diesel trains.

The Coradia iLint is the world's only hydrogen-powered train and, according to makers Alstom, can cover up to 620 miles at a time and reach a maximum speed of 87mph.

The Government has said the technology should be considered on the Great Western network between London and the West Country.

The Department for Transport has also hinted that hydrogen trains could run on branch lines that are unlikely ever to be electrified. Alstom has reportedly



HYDROGEN POWER: Alstom's Coradia iLint train for Germany

had talks with British train operators after clinching a deal to build and operate 14 hydrogen trains in Lower Saxony, Germany.

Nick Crossfield, managing director of Alstom UK & Ireland, said: "We strongly support the Government's decision to consult on bringing hydrogen trains to the

Great Western route. Hydrogen is the most sustainable and efficient way of eliminating pollution on non-electrified rail lines and Alstom's hydrogen technology is already being proven in Germany."

Trials are taking place this year, but passengers are not likely to

be allowed on the trains for at least three years and producing hydrogen is a major challenge.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling told the House of Commons in January: "I expect to see a transformation of technology on our railways over the coming years, with the introduction of different types of battery electric hybrid trains, and I see that as a priority. I want the first hydrogen trains to operate on our rail network within a short period of time."

Later he was questioned by the Commons transport committee.

He said: "I have talked to senior people in the industry who believe there will only be one generation of diesel engines on the bimodes and the second generation will be hydrogen engines."

□ Ryan McNutt, chief executive officer of America's leading fuel marketers SIGMA, told a conference in Fort Worth, Texas: "Electrification is the biggest single threat to liquid fuels."

SOLAR

In 10 years time, some trains could be solar powered, believes Alice Bell of the organisation 10:10 Climate Action. Techniques are being devised to allow electricity from solar panels to be connected to electrified train tracks.

Leo Murray of 10:10 has co-authored a new report on solar-powered trains with Nathaniel Bottrell, an electrical engineer at Imperial College.

The partners are seeking funding to develop the necessary electronics equipment. They want to run up to 10 community or commuter owned pilot projects, along selected locations in the South East of England.

"We want to bring commuters together with local communities to crowdfund investment in the first wave of these pioneering new solar projects," said Leo, director of strategy at 10:10.

Professor Tim Green of Energy Futures Lab said: "We can harness solar to make this a reality for our train network."

Lisbeth Fromling of Network Rail said: "The results of this study are encouraging and it is exciting to think that the concept could become reality."

10:10 believes solar could power 20% of the Merseyrail network in Liverpool, as well as 15% of commuter routes in Kent, Sussex and Wessex. There could be scope for solar trams in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Nottingham, London



About 20% of the power needed to run a 10-mile tram line in southern Germany is being produced from solar panels. The line runs along the Kirmitsch valley from Bad Schandau to Sebnitz, close to the Czech border. The solar panels are on the roof of the depot

and Manchester. There are already solar panels on Blackfriars station, but they provide power for the station itself.

Some trains in India have solar panels on their roofs, but only to power equipment such as lights and fans. India is also working with the United Nations development programme to install panels on 8,500 stations, and already 90% of the Delhi Metro is powered by solar via a grid connection.

Some initial ideas on powering trains came from a community

solar group in Balcombe, West Sussex, in response to anti-fracking protests in Britain in 2013.

Local residents wanted local, community-owned energy. They initially found the local grid did not have the capacity to take more solar.

Searching for a way to solve that problem, they looked at the local railway and asked an engineering professor who happened to live locally, "could we plug it there, instead?" His answer was yes, they could, but the technical challenges to get there were a bit

too much for a small-scale community group. So 10:10 teamed up with Energy Futures Lab at Imperial College London, Community Energy South, and Turbo Power Systems.

They examined how solar farms could be installed next to train tracks, on train sheds, in nearby fields and on industrial buildings, and how they could plug into the trackside substations from which trains now draw their electricity.

About one third of electrified tracks in Britain, over 3000 miles, use the third-rail DC current system. The solar system works best with batteries to store the power.

10:10 believes that solar traction power could provide around one tenth of the energy needed to power trains on these DC electrified routes, and that solar could supply electricity to rail companies at lower cost than companies now pay for electricity from the national grid.

Connection costs are low, so from a financial perspective solar railways could make sense now, even without subsidies.

Prices should also drop as the costs of solar and storage fall.

In southern England during the summer months, solar should be able to produce nearly all the electricity the trains need.

10:10 has identified 400 possible sites for solar farms in southern England and has also found 50 sites within reach of the London Underground system, including derelict land, train depot rooftops, station car parks and even floating panels on reservoirs.

It would produce enough electricity to power 6% of the entire Tube network – or 50% of the Piccadilly line.

Liverpool and Wirral Community Energy groups found 22 sites where solar could be installed, which could cover around 20% of the demand on the Liverpool commuter rail network.

In Barcelona, all large buildings are required to have solar panels, and the city is aiming for 100% renewable energy by 2050.

You can download the full report from http://files.1010global.org/documents/Riding_Sunbeams_1010.pdf

□ Solar-powered lights have been installed at Chappel and Wakes Colne station on the Sudbury-Marks Tey line, funded by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships, Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership, and Wakes Colne Parish Council.



FUTURE TRACTION: Steve Bell's If cartoon originally appeared in The Guardian in 2009 but may fit the bill in 2018 as well

New powerpack factory for Vivarail at Seaham

BATTERY

Vivarail is to open a factory at Seaham in County Durham to assemble powerpacks and wiring looms for its D-train, which is based on bodies and bogies from the former London Underground District line.

Vivarail is being supported by economic development organisation Business Durham on behalf of Durham County Council.

Three types of powerpack would be assembled at the new plant, including a battery-only system which Vivarail is developing with funding from Innovate UK. The site could expand to include

the refurbishment of train parts, including bogies. Vivarail's Adrian Shooter (who is also a Railfuture vice-president) said: "As Vivarail looked to expand and open a new site, the North



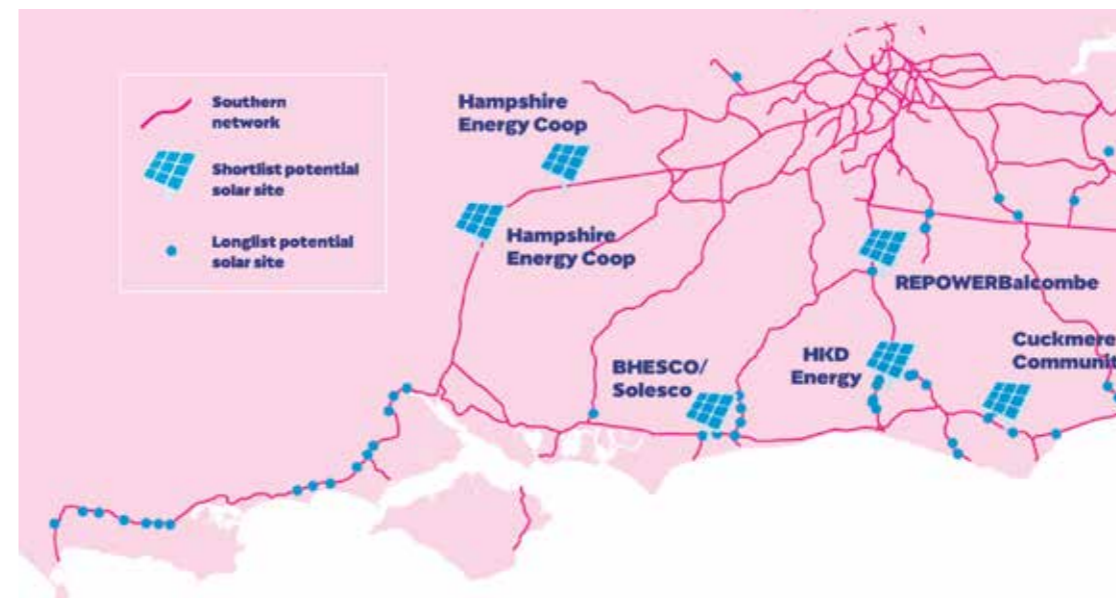
Picture: VIVARAIL

East was a very attractive location for us, most notably because of its highly skilled pool of engineering and manufacturing workers."

There are two lithium ion batteries in each of Vivarail's two-coach train, which gives it a range of 40 miles with an eight-minute charge or 50 miles with a 10-minute charge. The train's batteries are slotted into the same space as an underfloor diesel engine.

The train can be charged through the overhead line or from a third rail through an automated charging point.

On non-electrified lines, Vivarail can instal a battery bank at the recharge point which can be trickle-charged overnight.



POTENTIAL SOLAR SITES: The rail routes in Kent, Sussex and Wessex consumed 1.38TWh of traction electricity in 2015/16, at a total cost to train operators of £114 million. An audit of

land use constraints around the 540 traction substations in the Southern area found that around three quarters of these have suitable lineside opportunities for solar development

◆◆◆◆ 72 of London's 270 Tube stations are now step-free accessible

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■ ■ TransWilts success story

The progress and aspirations of TransWilts Community Rail Partnership were explained by Graham Ellis to Railfuture Severnside members at our November meeting in Bath. TransWilts has evolved over the past decade from a campaign to reverse cuts made to the Swindon-Westbury service. By 2013, the weekday frequency was quadrupled from two to eight trains each way, following Wiltshire Council's successful bid, supported by Railfuture and TransWilts, for local sustainable transport funding. The enhanced service is now incorporated in the Great Western franchise. Evidence of success was shown by the dramatic increase in journeys on the section of route unique to the TransWilts service, Chippenham-Trowbridge, from 18,000 in 2010 to 239,000 in 2015/16. This was achieved by working with GWR, Wiltshire Council and local businesses.

Protest > Partnership

Graham's advice to campaigners was "move from protest to partnership as soon as you can".

TransWilts Community Interest Company is currently involved in studies including capacity improvements via Melksham, analysis of the Swindon-Southampton corridor (a requirement of the South Western Railway franchise), and reinstatement of a fourth platform at Westbury.

JDI – rather than GRIP

Graham said he would like to see Network Rail's time-consuming GRIP (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) process "replaced by JDI (Just Do It)!"

GWR should reduce opportunities for fare avoidance because passengers unable to buy a ticket are not recorded in Office of Rail and Road station usage data.

■ ■ Positive rail message from Somerset

Somerset County Council's written answer to our question about rail reopenings at the council's full meeting in November revealed a more positive attitude to rail than in the recent past. Asked when the council would fund feasibility studies for the opening of new stations, Councillor John Woodman, cabinet member for transport, said his council is working with the rail industry and other authorities to improve Somerset rail services where possible. He said the council contributed to the first stage of assessing demand for a station at Wellington and had worked with local groups and MPs to lobby for Wellington and another station at Langport. The council plans to work with the industry to move the proposals forward.

■ ■ Clean-up at football stadium station

Bristol's Parson Street station has received a makeover, following concerns raised by Railfuture member David Wood and Severnside Community Rail Partnership about vegetation on the platforms. Network Rail finally cleared the bushes in January. Until a station is built at Ashton Gate on the Portishead line, Parson Street remains the nearest one to Bristol City football stadium, which has a capacity of 27,000. Signs to the stadium have now been provided at Parson Street. GWR stopped a number of late evening trains, including an

InterCity 125, at Parson Street on 20 December for the home game against Manchester United. We are pleased GWR and NR appreciate the station's ability to accommodate longer trains, and we also see it as a potential interchange between the Portishead line and stations to Weston-super-Mare.

■ ■ Steaming ahead

On Christmas Eve the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway completed its extension to Broadway, just across the Worcestershire border, following a £1.3 million share appeal. The station, expected to be open on 30 March 2018, is three miles from Snowhill Manor, a National Trust property in Gloucestershire. We hope many people will take the train to visit the historic house. Visitors arriving on foot receive a voucher for the café. Railfuture Severnside has asked the National Trust to reinstate details of nearest stations in its handbook. Last June GWSR reopened Hayles Abbey Halt, about ½ mile from the 13th century English Heritage site.

■ ■ Pilning station petition appeal

Pilning Station Group launched a petition in December to stop closing stations by stealth: www.pilningstation.uk
www.railfuture.org.uk/Severnside Branch
Twitter @RailfutureSSide

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■ ■ Rusty Spanner award for diesels

Passengers on the West of England line are angry at increasing delays and cancellations caused by train failures. Experts involved with Modern Railway's Golden Spanner awards found reliability of the class 158 and 159 diesel units on the Waterloo-Exeter service had fallen by up to 57%. This vindicates the view of Railfuture and our affiliated group, Salisbury to Exeter rail users, that a train replacement programme should have been written into the contract for the current South Western franchise. It is doubtful whether the new operator is even contractually obliged to carry out the upgrade of existing stock that was originally promised by the Department for Transport!

■ ■ Island matters

South Western Railway's *Developing a More Sustainable Future for the Island Line* presented a range of scenarios, including conversion to a tramway, or worse – a guided busway. In our response, we favoured an incremental approach, retaining conventional rail but taking advantage of innovative technology. If, as we are told, the third-rail electrical system is life expired, it is time to look at self-powered vehicles such as Vivarail's class 230 units. This approach has the extra benefits that it would simplify the loW Steam Railway's ambition of accessing Ryde, and lower the cost of any future extensions to Newport or Ventnor. In the meantime, we want to see a 20-minute frequency introduced instead of the current and very inconvenient 20/40-minute interval service. A stroll down Ryde pier (with luggage) is not pleasant on a cold winter's day, but that's what travellers using the Portsmouth-Ryde ferry service had to endure on strike days on the South Western Railway network when the Island Line was at a standstill. Replacement bus services are unable to access Ryde Pier and so, on previous strike days, the operator commissioned one eight-seat taxi to shuttle between Pierhead and Esplanade. There were many complaints about the long wait. In the

latest round of strikes there has been no taxi provision at all for the journey down the pier.

■ ■ Timetable consultation

The need for good connections between trains and Isle of Wight ferries was also mentioned in our response to SWR's December 2018 timetable consultation. Our main concerns are about lack of peak-hour capacity, fewer calls at Clapham Junction, tight connections at places such as Ash and Brockenhurst, and some potential areas of conflict that could affect timetable resilience. A poorer service for stations in South Dorset and elsewhere is on the cards if all the proposed changes go ahead, so we hope common sense will prevail. That said, we found much to be commended in SWR's 2018 timetable proposals. You can read our full submission at:

www.railfuture.org.uk/Consultation+responses

■ ■ Looking ahead

Top of our list of campaign priorities for 2018 is ensuring that a new station on the Fareham-Botley line is included in Fareham Borough Council's plans for a 6,000-home development at Welborne. A feasibility study by Network Rail and the council, published in February, suggested the station would be well-used.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+Branch
Twitter @RailfutureWessex

West Midlands

■ ■ Railfuture West Midlands AGM

West Midlands Trains managing director, Jan Chaudry-van der Velde, will speak at the AGM of Railfuture West Midlands on 21 April. Railfuture members met the new company representatives in December. Many of Railfuture's recommendations were included in the new West Midlands Trains franchise.

■ ■ Walsall-Wolverhampton

Our campaign to reinstate direct passenger services between Walsall and Wolverhampton appears to be bearing fruit. Three recent studies indicate there is a much better business case than previously thought, especially with new stations at Willenhall and Darlaston (James Bridge). We have agreed to assist Walsall Council officers at future consultation events.

■ ■ CrossCountry services next year

Railfuture West Midlands is ensuring that we have a good input in discussions about the new CrossCountry franchise from 2019. We have highlighted existing problems: short trains, not enough seats, poor seating configuration (not enough four-seat bays and seats not aligned to windows), expensive basic fares, and inadequate on-board refreshments.

■ ■ High Speed Two

Railfuture West Midlands representatives met with High Speed Two in January. We raised issues about connectivity between HS2 and the existing network.

■ ■ Kenilworth reopening

The planned opening of the new Kenilworth station was delayed for the fourth time in February.

■ ■ Wolverhampton tram

Work started in March on extending the Metro tram line from Wolverhampton St George's to Wolverhampton railway station.

■ ■ Railfuture West Midlands contact: colin.major@railfuture.org.uk
westmidlands@railfuture.org.uk
www.railfuture.org.uk/West Midlands Branch

Axeing Midland electrification was wrong

By Graham Nalty
graham@grahamnalty.co.uk

The cancellation of the electrification of the Midland main line from Kettering to Sheffield is extremely unpopular and has been widely criticised.

We need hard evidence for a campaign to reinstate electrification to succeed. Here it is.

The Department for Transport believes that building High Speed Two will make the electrification of the Midland main line less important because passengers will prefer to travel on HS2.

The DfT claims that passengers abstracted from the Midland main line by HS2 reduce the *benefits to cost* ratio for electrifying north of Kettering to Nottingham and Sheffield to 0.77. In short, electrification costs more than the value of the benefits.

However there are large errors in the calculations of the traffic abstracted by HS2 from the Midland main line at Derby and Nottingham.

It is the traffic flows from London to Derby and Nottingham that are critical to my evidence because what Sheffield takes to HS2 from the MML is matched by the natural annual growth at Leicester.

Figures for HS2 abstraction of 76% of Derby-London passengers and 83% of Nottingham-London passengers published in 2012 by HS2 in *Options for phase 2 of the high speed rail network* lack credibility.

Project promotions are well known for adjusting the margins of error in calculations towards their own project, but HS2 errors far exceed acceptable margins.

HS2 took the journey time from Derby and Nottingham to London based on then current timetables.

Since then Derby has been remodelled and Market Harborough is being remodelled. With fewer stops on Nottingham-London trains, both journeys could come down to 80-84 minutes from 87 minutes (Derby) and 101 minutes (Nottingham).

But it is on the proposed journey times via HS2 to Derby and Nottingham where HS2 Ltd makes really serious errors.

London to Toton

The London-Toton journey time was originally quoted by HS2 as 51 minutes, but recent documents show 52 minutes. However the most recent HS2 information shows all London-Toton trains stopping at Birmingham Interchange (38 minutes from London and 20 from Toton). Allowing one or two minutes for each station stop, the correct

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



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

LOOKING GOOD: Work under way in 2015 to upgrade and electrify the Midland main line from Bedford to Sheffield in a long overdue £1.6 billion investment programme. Bridges were raised to allow for the overhead wires and piling work started in May that year to erect the overhead line equipment between Bedford and Kettering. Two years later, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling swung the axe. Now the electrification will go only as far as Kettering and Corby

London-Toton time should now be 59-60 minutes.

Toton interchange time

Analysing HS2 figures, it seems that HS2 Ltd has calculated a standard interchange time of five minutes for interchange at all HS2 stations.

Current HS2 plans for Toton station have HS2 trains on different platform islands to connecting services, so passengers will have to walk up or down stairs twice.

Interchange in 10 minutes is highly dubious and five minutes impossible. This is the cause of very serious errors in HS2 calculations on the likelihood of "extraction".

Looking at the real railway, the most appropriate comparison might be with passengers between London and Bradford changing trains at Leeds. Checking figures on two separate years, I found interchange times ranging from 14 minutes to 23 minutes. East Midlands councils have suggested the Toton platforms should be rearranged so HS2 trains and connecting services are on the separate faces of an island platform, avoiding the delay from changing levels twice.

This sounds simple but is complex in practice. It would see trains facing in opposite directions and would require many additional tracks to operate.

While it could theoretically save about four or five minutes on London journeys, implementation would be extremely costly. The only way to achieve the journey times that HS2 advertises

would be to run HS2 trains into Toton and then backwards on classic lines to Nottingham or Derby.

In the case of a 400 metre train splitting, the interchange time would reduce to about six to seven minutes, or five to six minutes for a 200 metre train.

Of course it would be far more sensible to run HS2 trains from London into Derby and Nottingham stations.

Toton to Derby or Nottingham

No passenger trains serve Toton at present, but the journey times from Nottingham to Toton are likely to be similar to current times to Long Eaton and the Derby times close to current times to Attenborough.

An examination of the current timetable, with some interpolation, suggests Toton-Nottingham would be 12 to 18 minutes while Toton-Derby would be 17 to 23 minutes. The variation is the difference between non-stop and stopping trains.

As most people who might drive to Nottingham before HS2 might drive directly to Toton, the only real benefit would be seen by people at intermediate stations. This would make non-stop trains less commercially attractive for the operator. So how long will it take between London and Nottingham/Derby via HS2?

London to Nottingham

Fastest possible option: London-Toton 59 minutes, interchange 14 minutes, connecting service 12 minutes. Total 85 minutes.

Slowest option: London-Toton 60 minutes, interchange 23 minutes,

connecting service 18 minutes. Total 101 minutes.

London to Derby

Fastest possible option: London-Toton 59 minutes, interchange 14 minutes, connecting service 17 minutes. Total 90 minutes.

Slowest option: London-Toton 60 minutes, interchange 23 minutes, connecting service 23 minutes. Total 106 minutes.

In reality, the journey times will lie between the limits of these figures, but will not be very fast compared to the current Midland main line services.

HS2 predicts journey times of London-Nottingham in 68 minutes and to Derby in 75 minutes.

From this HS2 suggests that 76% of Derby passengers and 83% of Nottingham passengers will transfer to HS2.

On this basis the DfT has calculated an unrealistically low and highly inaccurate estimate of the numbers of passengers who will benefit from Midland main line electrification so as to justify cancellation of electrification north of Kettering.

Additionally, HS2 Ltd has always suggested that fares on HS2 will be the same as on the classic lines, but that is highly unlikely and there will be many people who will probably choose the Midland main line in preference to HS2 to save money.

These figures show the cancellation of electrification is based on gross inaccuracies in work carried out by HS2. We should demand that the electrification north of Kettering is re-examined with reliable information.

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Agreement for Science Vale station

Local councils have come to an agreement on the need for a new station west of Didcot on the Great Western main line to Swindon. Now the hunt is on to find a site near the former Wantage Road station which could help Science Vale, one of the most successful science clusters in Britain, to develop and prosper. Railfuture Thames Valley committee members have had positive meetings with Matthew Barber, leader of the Vale of White Horse District Council, with Oxfordshire county councillor Yvonne Constance, the cabinet member for environment and transport, and Adrian Saunders, the county officer for rail. Sited near Grove, the proposed station could be called Wantage Science Vale Parkway, as there are several scientific sites nearby, including Harwell Campus, Culham Science Centre and Milton Park. The county has identified three possible sites for the new station and has commissioned a study from SLC Rail to assess which is best. Railfuture is pleased that the need for a new station is recognised, to meet the demands from planned housing developments and to relieve the pressure on the A417. Network Rail maintains that there is insufficient capacity to stop trains at Grove without slowing other services. Railfuture believes the four-track section between Wantage Road and Challow provides enough flexibility to accommodate additional services to the new station.

Thames Valley electrics

The Government's decision to defer electrification of Didcot-Oxford has caused inconvenience to many passengers. Electric trains go only as far as Didcot and terminate there, with cross-platform interchange to diesel Turbo shuttles serving Appleford, Culham and Radley. The passengers most inconvenienced by the new timetable are those travelling to Oxford from stations between Tilehurst and Chelsey, and people returning from London on stopping trains with cheap tickets not accepted on fast services.

Some of these problems were explained to Railfuture Thames Valley members in November by Great Western's regional development manager Tom Pierpoint.

Some peak-hour local trains, operated by diesels, run through to Oxford, and the Oxford-Banbury stopping trains are integrated with the Didcot-Oxford stopping services. Many passengers from Radley, Culham and Appleford are already accustomed to changing at Didcot on to express trains to London. On the Thames Valley branches, half-hourly services will be some compensation for the loss of through trains in peak hours from Bourne End and Henley to London.

Mr Pierpoint told us that a temporary modular station building is to be installed at Hanborough where land for a 400-vehicle car park has also been purchased for the future development and expansion of the station. Proposals for reopening the line between Honeybourne and Stratford cannot proceed without local authority support, and Warwickshire Council is not interested. He believed that a shuttle service from Long Marston to Honeybourne might be possible with contributions from the developers of the planned new town. On the North Downs Line the promised service of three trains per hour has been deferred because of Network Rail's concerns about five level crossings and capacity constraints on the Redhill-Gatwick line.

Railfuture at Oxford Green Fair

Railfuture Thames Valley put on a successful show, as in previous years, at Oxford Green Fair in the Town Hall on 2 December. Our new banner, displaying a map of railway lines and proposed reopenings in our area, had its first public outing. It provided a talking point for lively discussion, and we had many interesting conversations with visitors. We enrolled four new members and sold five copies of Railfuture's book *Britain's Growing Railway*.

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Getting a better GRIP on development

Plans to build a new station at Horden/Peterlee are progressing, with Durham County Council and Network Rail signing a "development services agreement". This should lead to stage four in the Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) procedure and a planning application will follow in the summer. The station is expected to open in 2020.

Despite our report in *Railwatch* 154 on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne reopening process, Northumberland County Council has not yet commissioned a GRIP 3 study. The council has however instructed Network Rail to carry out a GRIP 2.5 study into a Newcastle-Ashington service.

Newcastle's unhappy New Year

Considerable disruption to normal passenger services arose from planned track renewal at West Junction during the first two weekends of January. As no trains ran between Newcastle Central and the MetroCentre, Tyne Valley line users found conditions difficult. TransPennine terminated trains at York and CrossCountry terminated trains at Darlington.

Virgin varied between early termination and diversion via the Coast route through Eaglescliffe, Hartlepool and Sunderland for Anglo-Scottish services. The idea of stopping these weekend diversions at any of those stations, as alternatives to East Coast main line stops, sadly does not seem to have crossed their minds. To add to the confusion, rail fares nationally rose significantly on January 3.

Reprieve for NEXUS Metro renewals

Railfuture welcomed the Government funding needed by Tyne and Wear to replace Metro trains. Even though the grant will not be enough by itself, there is a general feeling that the rest of the money can be found in time. Tynesiders can breathe again. If faster trains cut journey times along the "joint" Sunderland-Pelaw section, rail users from further south will benefit as well.

Hitachi, Heighington and pink bicycles

Thanks to an initiative by the Bishop Line community rail partnership, employees at Hitachi's Newton Aycliffe factory will, from May, be able to use the train to reach the factory (which is actually nearer to Heighington station) in time for the start of their day-time shift at 07.00. The first train along the Bishop Auckland line from Darlington currently arrives around 07.00, too late for the start of the shift. Those going to work by train will be able to unlock pink bicycles at Heighington station to ride to the factory. The colour is designed to minimise casual theft.

Community rail on a big scale

There are plans to unite several north-east rail services into one community rail partnership. The 27-mile Darlington-Saltburn line, the 35-mile Sunderland-Middlesbrough (Coast) line, and even that linking Middlesbrough with Whitby (the Esk Valley line), could become a single CRP. A public meeting, addressed by Ian Davis of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships, was held in Hartlepool to discuss how the CRP would operate. Also there was Marie Addison of Northern Rail, a company keen to provide funding for a united CRP serving 39 stations and nearly a million people, most of them centred on Middlesbrough and Stockton boroughs.

More CrossCountry links needed

Refranchising CrossCountry should provide opportunities to make better connections, argues rail user group Coastliners. Through trains from the Durham Coast stations of Sunderland, Hartlepool and Stockton should be introduced to Sheffield, Birmingham and further south by rerouting some existing services to run along the coast line instead of via Darlington. Coastliners also wants to see completely new Connect services, for instance Sunderland direct to York, Leeds and Sheffield. Coastliners is planning to put these ideas both to the Department for Transport and to Transport for the North which is expected to take an increasingly important role in franchising. Public consultation is expected to take place in the summer with an invitation to tender in October.

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Devon and Cornwall

Anger over Dawlish delay

Four years after the rail line at Dawlish was washed away, the Peninsula Rail Task Force says it is frustrated at the lack of response to its *Closing The Gap*, setting out priorities for the region's railway. PRTF chairman Councillor Geoff Brown told DevonLive in January: "The Government gave us £35million to reinstate the line but what have they done since then? Absolutely nothing."

Okehampton go-ahead at last

The Government ordered Great Western Railway in January to prepare to run regular scheduled trains from Okehampton to Exeter. Dr Michael Ireland of the OkeRail Forum said: "After 10 years working tirelessly undertaking research on demand for this service, I am pleased to learn that the Government has agreed to introduce a regular train service." One option being considered is a new parkway station.

Exeter's new £40m train depot

A new £40 million train maintenance depot is to be built at Exeter, following a deal between Great Western Railway, Network Rail and the Department for Transport. The depot should be completed by the middle of next year.

Plymouth venue for April AGM

The AGM of Railfuture Devon and Cornwall will be held on Saturday 28 April 2018 at 13.30-16.15 at the Unitarian Church, Notte Street, Plymouth PL1 2HG.

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THE CAMPAIGN FOR RAIL FREIGHT

Opportunity: Go-ahead for freight depot

By Lee Davies

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Railfuture has long campaigned for more rail freight terminals. Access to urban areas is difficult as land and planning permissions have become more difficult to obtain.

It is encouraging therefore that a new rail freight terminal is to be built at Cricklewood, London, after Barnet council approved the plan in February.

It will be built on existing rail land, at the south end of the Midland main line, and well-placed next to the M1 motorway and the North Circular Road.

The depot will supply material for a £4.5 billion scheme to build 8,000 homes near the Brent Cross shopping centre. The Campaign for Better Transport argued that, without the rail depot, the home-building project would rely on lorries to deliver construction materials causing congestion, pollution and safety problems.

The planning application was made jointly by DB Cargo and the local council.

Each train into the new Cricklewood terminal will prevent up to 85 lorries from using London's roads.

"This planning consent sets a crucial precedent which demonstrates that local authorities should support local rail freight terminals based on the wider national and sub-regional socio-economic benefits of rail freight, as long as there are adequate mitigation measures to handle local impacts," said Philippa Edmunds, CBT freight on rail manager.

"Cricklewood rail lands represent one of the few remaining suitable sites with good rail and road connections where aggregates can be brought into the capital for use in construction projects. The terminal is compliant with national, regional and local spatial planning and transport policy."

Thirty miles north of Cricklewood there are plans for another



IPSWICH: Class 66 diesel freight locos provide haulage on many non-electrified lines

Challenge: Government orders diesels out by 2040

A big challenge to rail freight is the Government decision announced by Rail Minister Jo Johnson to replace all diesel trains by 2040. Mr Johnson said: "We are committed to ending sales of petrol and diesel cars by 2040. If we can achieve that, then why cannot the railway aspire to a similar objective? Rail may be less carbon intensive than road transport. That is why modal shift is so important – getting freight and passenger vehicles off the roads on to greener forms of transport. But that does not absolve the rail industry from cleaning up its own act."

Railfuture's freight group welcomes Mr Johnson's commitment to rail freight and hopes he will support the electrification of major freight routes to support his view. Felixstowe to Birmingham via Ely and Peterborough and the Midland main line must be at the top of any list. The Rail Freight

five-hectare rail freight interchange at Sundon, close to the M1 motorway. The rail depot would be stage one of a plan by Central Bedfordshire Council which also includes a new road, warehousing and homes.

The council is in talks with the Department for Transport and Network Rail. Consultation is also under way on two proposed rail freight depots near the West Coast main line junction for Northampton near Road. Roxhill Developments is promoting Northampton Gateway, while Ashfield Land is planning a terminal called Rail Central. Both sites are near the M1 motorway.

In Wolverhampton, work started in November on a new £6 million DB Cargo depot which will open later this year.

New depots hold the prospect of more rail freight, but a proposed increase in access charges could nullify the benefit. Network Rail's proposals prompted protests from GB Railfreight and the

Group's Maggie Simpson said: "Rail freight is acknowledged for its superior environmental performance and the Rail Minister is right to challenge the industry on how that can be further improved. Yet while battery and hydrogen may show promise for lightweight passenger trains, their application for heavy duty freight is at best unproven, and setting an arbitrary deadline of 2040 could well therefore be counterproductive, damaging the case for investment in our sector."

Shadow Secretary of State for Transport Andy McDonald said rail freight was critical for Britain but was still not getting the full Government support it deserved. He said: "Rail freight plays a vital role in lowering carbon emissions as it produces 76% less carbon dioxide than the equivalent road journey. A gallon of diesel will carry a ton of freight 246 miles by rail as opposed to 88 miles by road."

Rail Freight Group to the Office for Road and Rail. The higher prices will apply to coal and biomass and could mean more freight goes by road.

The Rail Freight Group's Maggie Simpson told MPs on the Commons transport committee in February that delayed enhancements to the network could also hamper the growth of rail freight.

Europe

The European Rail Freight Association is urging the European Union to increase "access costs" for polluting modes of transport, while making rail freight cheaper. ERA points out that trains pay 100% of track costs while lorries cover only 20% of their costs.

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Concessionary travel scheme

The future of the concessionary travel scheme which allows pensioners and others to travel free on buses is being considered by the Welsh Government. In some areas, the pass allows free or reduced price travel by train, and Railfuture Wales is concerned about lack of capacity where free travel is available.

Active Travel Consultation

Railfuture Wales has responded to the Active Travel consultation by the Welsh Government's economy, infrastructure and skills committee. We are worried by the failure to promote cycling and walking to railway stations. We have asked for rail stations to be included on integrated network maps being produced by local authorities. The Active Travel (Wales) Act (2013) requires local authorities to promote cycling and walking for journeys to school, work and shops or to access services such as health or leisure centres. The aim is to improve health and reduce the impact of traffic.

Connecting communities in Wales

Railfuture Wales supports the Community Transport Association, which has been awarded £1.1 million to deliver the *Connecting Communities in Wales* project for the Welsh Government. The aim is to establish Transport Innovation Networks and identify transport gaps in rural communities.

Franchise needs to offer more

Railfuture Wales reiterated its support for electrification to Swansea at a consultation meeting organised by the Department for Transport in Cardiff to discuss the Great Western franchise awards in 2018 and 2020. We called for better services throughout South Wales. We also support better through services from Swansea to Bristol and Bath, maybe by starting the Portsmouth Harbour service from Swansea, rather than at Cardiff. We also want to see improved connections with services from Swansea, including those on the Heart of Wales line and west of Carmarthen. People at the meeting called for an increase in services to Carmarthen, with these services using the Swansea District line and serving new stations on this line. A half-hourly service is needed from Cardiff to Paddington on Saturdays, as are later return journeys to Swansea on Saturday evenings. Members also called for more services to stop at Severn Tunnel Junction, including some peak services to and from Paddington.

Relief from engineering closures

For the first time in many years, no engineering work took place in Wales over the Christmas holiday. Arriva Trains Wales and CrossCountry services ran as timetabled during this period. However this was not the case with GWR services.

GWR services in South Wales

Railfuture Wales expressed its concern over the reliability and performance of services in South Wales. Many GWR services were cancelled on either side of the Christmas holiday with little or no publicity at stations. On Christmas Eve GWR halved its service out of Swansea. The introduction of new Hitachi class 800 trains since the New Year has led to trains with insufficient capacity and short-notice cancellations, being far higher than normal, with only one day of the week commencing



An artist's impression of the south side of Cardiff Central station. See below

8 January seeing the full service operated between Swansea and Paddington. The Severn Tunnel Action Group has expressed its concern about short trains, overcrowding and cancellations.

Cardiff station set for £180m revamp

Work starts soon on a new bus station at Cardiff Central railway station which could form part of a £180 million scheme called "Metro Central", an integrated transport hub. Cardiff Capital Region has agreed to allocate £40 million to the project. However, emeritus professor of transport at the University of South Wales, Stuart Cole, has warned that the current plans could preclude construction of an additional track for trains departing towards Newport and London. He also called for pedestrian facilities to be improved urgently.

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Train boost that may hit commuters

Plans to boost capacity between Leeds and Manchester by adding an extra daily train from May could be at the expense of four stations where services would be reduced. The stations currently have an annual footfall of nearly one and a half million between them. Railfuture affiliate Stalybridge and Huddersfield Rail User Group is campaigning to ameliorate these changes. SHRUG believes that flexing the timetable by less than five minutes of the four express trains between York and Liverpool, and York and Manchester Airport, would end skip-stopping and restore two trains per hour to the four stations. SHRUG and other rail users met Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham to express their concerns and SHRUG's Mark Ashmore was encouraged by the mayor's response. SHRUG also suggests extending some Stalybridge services beyond Victoria which would help workers in the dockyard area of Spinningfields. SHRUG also suggests modifying train arrival times at Piccadilly to help passengers starting work on the hour. Further meetings are planned with Rail North director Gary Bogan and First TransPennine.

Carillion crisis may delay electrification

Electrification of the Manchester-Preston line via Bolton, one of the key parts of the Great North Rail Project (Network Rail's plans

for electrification, plus track and signalling upgrades) are likely to be further delayed as a result of the collapse of Carillion, the main contractor on the scheme. The work was already delayed because poor ground conditions, caused by unmapped mine workings, slowed installation of overhead masts. Negotiations were under way in February, involving the Official Receiver, to draw up new contracts. The delayed cascade of diesel trains following the introduction of electric trains will also delay improvements to commuter services to Manchester. Bolton North East MP Sir David Crausby and Councillor David Chadwick, Bolton Council's Cabinet member for Transport, have raised concerns.

Mid Cheshire and airport rail links

Following hard work by Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association and others, the Department for Transport is to examine the case for reopening the Mid Cheshire rail link (the current freight-only line from Sandbach to Northwich) with business leaders. A working group is set to be formed to include the local enterprise partnership for Cheshire and Warrington, together with officials from the DfT. The initiative came at the request of Paul Maynard, (rail minister until the January government reshuffle) after lobbying from Tatton MP Esther McVey who is also urging the DfT to build a western link from Manchester which would provide faster connections between Northwich, Knutsford and Manchester Airport. MCRUA will be working hard to ensure the group has access to all the studies it has on reintroducing services from Knutsford and Northwich through Gadbrook Park, Middlewich and Sandbach to Crewe, as well as resurrecting the proposals from the early 1990s to connect the airport railway station to the Mid Cheshire line near Moberley, as originally envisaged when the airport station was built.

Halton Curve work under way

Work was under way in February to upgrade the Halton Curve near Frodsham to clear the way for an hourly Chester-Liverpool service.

Maghull North set to open

The new £13 million Maghull North station near the former Ashworth Hospital on the Liverpool-Ormskirk branch of Merseyrail's Northern line is expected to open in May with a train in each direction every 15 minutes at peak times
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Picture: CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION

An ambitious strategy for our local railways

Last November the Department for Transport launched a consultation on the future direction for community rail.

Together with my small team, I wrote the original strategy back in 2004 for the Strategic Rail Authority and it has stood the test of time, surviving the abolition of the SRA, a change of government, three general elections and no fewer than nine ministers!

In that time, the concept has changed and developed, and more is now expected of partnerships and of train operators in delivering the benefits of local rail management.

The consultation is right in wanting to move this to the next stage and to see how far local railways can deliver, not just in transport terms, but also in terms of:

- Connecting people to places and opportunities
- Supporting local and regional economies
- Supporting communities, diversity and inclusion
- Suggesting innovative ways to improve the way the railway works.

From the Railfuture viewpoint, this is good news. Not only does the department recognise the increasing value of local railways in transport terms, but also, as we have said for many years, in terms of delivering a wide range of ancillary benefits that help to meet government objectives on economic growth, sustainability, diversity, accessibility and connectivity. Indeed, what is not to like about local lines?

This all helps to underpin the place of local lines in the network and protects them

Skipton-Colne reopening hopes

Just a few days after Transport Secretary Chris Grayling visited Colne, Lancashire, he announced in February that the Government will fund a feasibility study into the reopening of Skipton-Colne for passenger services and freight. Andy Shackleton of the Skipton Colne Rail Action Partnership said: "This is the day we have all been working towards for the best part of far too long. I am thrilled." Andy Koss, Drax Power chief executive, said: "Reopening the Skipton to Colne route to rail freight as well as passenger travel would have a significant impact for business across the North of England, slashing travel times and increasing productivity in the process. It will have a direct impact on improving our supply chain at Drax, allowing freight trains to travel



ERIDGE IN 2015: A simple connection at Eridge allows passengers to transfer from the national network at Uckfield to the steam train for Tunbridge Wells West. The Department for Transport is consulting about how to provide more links with heritage railways

against suggestions of cutback when times are hard in the years to come. It also provides a valuable conduit for innovative ideas, many of which may come from Railfuture members and branches, which can be fed through partnerships to enable lines to perform even better.

Another first is the recognition that heritage railways might form part of the solution. "We believe there is also an opportunity for greater collaboration with Britain's heritage rail sector, which could include opportunities to work with independently owned heritage railways to provide new journey options," in the words of the consultation paper.

This may involve through running, and the North

COMMUNITY RAIL

By Chris Austin

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Picture: CHRIS AUSTIN

Yorkshire Moors, the Swanage and the North Norfolk railways have given us an idea of what can be achieved here.

It may require good connections with the national network, such as those that exist at Alton, Aberystwyth or Aviemore. Great Western Railway has shown what can be done with through ticketing to heritage railways on their patch, while Vintage Trains at Tyseley proposes to become a new main line train operating company, providing steam-hauled excursions using vintage carriages on main line services from Birmingham.

The real change, however, would be for services off the national network to be reconnected via a heritage railway, where there is a business case to do

so, with financial support from the Government through the franchise agreement of a lead train operator.

What a change from 50 years ago, when the pressure from government was to contract and reduce costs. Even a decade ago, we would not have believed that such proposals would have been considered, let alone encouraged in a Government document.

Now it is up to us to rise to the challenge and work up projects that can take forward the new opportunities revealed.

Railfuture has responded to the consultation which closed at the end of January, and I will report later in the year on the new policy that emerges.

still a long way to go in terms of planning and identifying funding. He said having TfN would "hopefully build a consensus around which Whitehall will feel obliged to act".

Cleethorpes and Grimsby direct plan

Grand Central Railway is expected to put in an application to run a direct service from Cleethorpes and Grimsby to London from 2020.

MP calls for Minster line reopening

Julian Sturdy, MP for York Outer, has called on the Government to reopen the York-Beverley line which ran through Stamford Bridge and Pocklington.

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Yorkshire

much more quickly to the power station in North Yorkshire – reducing journey times from the Port of Liverpool to less than three hours, a journey which can take up to nine hours at the moment."

£70 billion plan but where's the cash?

Transport for the North unveiled a £70 billion plan in January to improve road and rail connections. TfN said a new line between Liverpool and Manchester Piccadilly could cut journey times from 50 to 28 minutes, while a new line from Leeds to Manchester, via Bradford, would bring travel time down from 49 to 30 minutes. Jonathan Bray, director of the Urban Transport Group, said there was

Railfuture European passenger group

By Ian Brown

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Following a motion to the 2017 Railfuture AGM, a process was put in place to recruit members to a new European passenger group.

This was in the context of the need for good governance to ensure that the remit, activity and membership of the group is relevant and directly contributes to the objectives of Railfuture, and is seen as of value to Railfuture members.

A formal procedure took place to recruit members to the group, following advertising in *Railwatch*. The group reports to and takes direction from Railfuture's passenger group, which is chaired by Allison Cosgrove with her experience as a branch chair and a Railfuture board member.

The composition of the group is a chair, a member to liaise with train operators and Eurostar, a member to liaise with the European Passenger Federation, and co-opted members and a secretary to the group. The terms of reference require one member of the group to be a board member.

■ Membership and roles

Chairman: Ian Brown CBE, Railfuture vice-president, policy adviser to the Railfuture board, and international railway consultant.

Train operator liaison and Eurostar: Jerry Alderson, Railfuture board member who travels frequently by Eurostar on business.

European Passenger Federation liaison: Dennis Fancett, who is chair of South East Northumberland Rail Users Group.

Secretary: Trevor Jones, former member of Railfuture's international group.



PROTEST: Swiss Railways painted one of its locomotives in response to the Rastatt tunnel collapse. The tag line reads 'No national barriers: one language, less regulation, one highway!'

■ Other members

Chris Irwin, Railfuture vice-president, chairman of Travelwatch West of England and a respected specialist in European Transport legislation.

Simon Hope, former member of Railfuture's international group.

The composition of the new group provides continuity from the former international group and is designed to target activity to support the passenger group and Railfuture branches.

■ The role of the group

The key areas of interest for the group are to respond to consultation documents and gather rail best practice examples across Europe to strengthen our campaigning arguments.

In addition the group has strengthened membership designed to campaign for improvements to rail services between Britain and mainland Europe, including intermodal journeys such as rail-air links.

■ Go and Compare

A value-for-money way of strengthening our arguments in our campaigning in Britain is to

be able to quote best practice, by gathering information when travelling overseas for business or on holidays, not funded by Railfuture. A series of *Go and Compare* articles is on the Railfuture website. All Railfuture members are encouraged to submit *Go and Compare* comparisons via EPG members.

■ Eurostar

Eurostar is waking from a long slumber with a range of new developments. We intend to strengthen our direct representation on many issues that concern Railfuture members about booking and using Eurostar and its onward connections.

■ European Passengers Federation

Railfuture is a member of the European Passengers Federation. Discussions have taken place in London with the federations's management board to improve our interface with it so that membership represents value for money to Railfuture members. Similarly the federation and partner organisations have requested that our input to the federation should be well-informed, contributing to their deliberations as there is a lot of interest in the British rail scene.

At the EPF AGM, a new president was appointed – Michel Quidort from a similar French organisation. M Quidort has indicated a strong willingness to work with Railfuture. We have nominated Dennis Fancett to represent Railfuture. EPF very much welcomes the changes we have made in establishing our EPG.

■ Chairman's summary

The group is starting to work well, and the objective is to ensure that our input is relevant and respected by Railfuture members and by industry partners. We will review experience with the group at the year end with a view to recommending whether the group should continue. In the longer term, we aim to attract a more diverse membership to the group.

European rail network crisis

The European railway is slowly recovering from a tunnel collapse which threw services into chaos for months on "Europe's busiest railway" and highlighted the lack of alternative routes for international freight flows.

German, French and Swiss railways implemented an emergency plan but half the traffic was lost, with thousands of tonnes of freight diverted to canals and to already overcrowded roads.

The cause of the chaos was a collapse in August at Rastatt, Germany, on the Karlsruhe-Basel double-track main line.

The collapse halted the 200 freight trains and 150 passenger trains a day which use the Rhine Valley route, including the 80 trains a day from Swiss national railways and 20 trains a day from Swiss-based BLS Cargo. Disruption continued for six weeks and was described as the biggest rail logistics crisis ever experienced in Europe.

Worst hit was European Rail Corridor One from Rotterdam (Netherlands) to Genova (Italy), which includes both the Lotschberg and Gotthard base tunnels under the Swiss Alps.

Up to this point, this had been a resounding success for European rail with vast tonnages being transferred from road to rail, aided by the Swiss government's Alpen Initiative which restricts heavy lorries.

But the collapse meant international freight trains had to be diverted, some via Alsace (France), some via Austria. In Germany, the railway called on standby diesel locomotives to divert the trains on to non-electrified alternative routes. Train weights and lengths were however restricted.

Tony Berkeley of the Rail Freight Group said: "I do not yet know how many customers have abandoned rail for good, but who can blame them."

Lord Berkeley is calling for the use of a single language on all international routes, a single European infrastructure manager with subsidiaries in each state, and a European rail regulator with teeth.

Euro rail bulletin

A bulletin of European Rail Travel is being produced by Trevor Garrod. The winter issue included an article on the campaign to save night trains. It is available from Trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk

www.railfuture.org.uk

Your views

Reopen Woodhead!

Britain's *Growing Railway* is a decent addition to the list of Railfuture publications and could be the source for many heated discussions about omissions.

Probably the most glaring exclusion has got to be the Woodhead route. How does abandonment of a line that linked two of the largest cities in Britain equate to our mission statement: "The number one advocate for rail users"?

Woodhead was important to the Railway Development Society in 1980 when it published *Woodhead is Threatened*. How can Railfuture now ignore it?

Woodhead is an asset of national and regional strategic value, capable of narrowing the North-South divide and being a vital component in the delivery



Picture: ADIDAS

These Adidas trainers are designed not just for walking or running but for travelling by public transport. The German company produced 500 pairs which have 2018 Berlin season tickets incorporated into them. The Berlin transport authority BVG cooperated to make the trainers valid on the metro (U-bahn), trams (S-bahn) and buses throughout the German capital. They are not valid on DB trains. People queued to take advantage of the special offer price of £60. A normal annual season ticket costs £676. The trainers sold out quickly. Berlin stations do not have ticket gates but ticket checks are carried out by inspectors.

of Northern Powerhouse Rail. A future target of 30 minutes for Manchester-Sheffield connectivity has been set. It is unlikely that the Hope Valley route can achieve this. The Woodhead route through the Longdendale Valley is however

geared to high speed and electrification, and is a better option than the seven-mile road tunnel proposed by Transport for the North which would increase road traffic by 600%.

A restored Woodhead line could reduce road traffic on the M1, M62, A57 and A628 and be an economic driver to regenerate the neglected Upper Don Valley. Reinstatement is vital for northern England.

Britain's *Growing Railway* also covers tram-train, a concept surrounded by spin and speculation as well as raising questions about tram-train routes being available as diversionary and freight routes. Is not tram-train a case of the tail wagging the dog? Be careful what you wish for. Proceed with caution. Railfuture members want to safeguard rail infrastructure, not sacrifice it.

Andrew Oldfield, Long Lane, Worrall, Sheffield S35 0AF

Pay and subsidies

I must reply to criticism of me in *Railwatch* 154. I cannot see any justification for all pensioners getting free public transport regardless of how wealthy they are. Low-earning workers should not be subsidising better-off pensioners travelling for nothing.

As for buggies, fare-paying passengers sometimes have to stand while buggies and prams take up much-needed space without providing any extra revenue. Perhaps the answer is to limit the amount of luggage a passenger can take free of charge, excluding of course wheelchairs.

Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby DN31 2JP, timmickleburgh2015@gmail.com

Political points

Claims in *Railwatch* 153 that the rail industry has benefited under the Conservatives more than under Labour are out of touch

with reality. The Tories gave us a botched privatisation resulting in ever-increasing fares above the rate of inflation, overcrowding, cancellations at short notice, frequent delays and stalling over the electrification process.

Tories good for the railways? I don't think so. That is not to say the previous Labour administration performed much better. Indeed it did not. Jeremy Corbyn is talking fine words regarding re-nationalisation and bringing our railways back up to standard for the travelling public and freight. His government would need to be put to the test.

David Bailey, North Lodge Close, Dawlish, Devon EX7 9QD, davidpbailey77@hotmail.com

Parking charges

At the end of last June, I went by train from Loughborough to Matlock Bath. The internet indicated that car parking charges at the station were £12 so I parked at the Beehive multi-storey in town for £6.

I contacted East Midlands Trains to ask why their prices were twice that in town and why they charged for 24 hours when a majority of people parked for less. Elsewhere one pays for the time used. I would be interested to know if any of your readers have an answer to the 24 hour parking question. Parking charges at most stations are horrendous.

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

Send your material to: The Editor, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU
Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk
Please use email if possible but include your postal address

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This photograph of Barmouth bridge was the winner in Network Rail's Lines in the Landscape award. It shows the 08.52 from Barmouth to Shrewsbury crossing the Afon Mawddach.

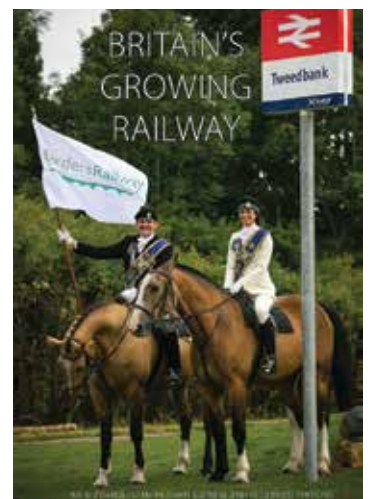
Photographer Jon Martin said: "I found this high viewpoint one evening. The scene needed some early morning light, so I returned the next day and waited for the first train to cross the bridge after sunrise. The unusual perspective helps to highlight the contrast between the straight lines of the bridge and the natural curves formed in the sand."

The 150-year-old single-track 700-metre-long Barmouth bridge has a pedestrian and cyclist

facility which was threatened with closure in 2013 but won a reprieve in 2016. Network Rail is now planning a £20 million upgrade of the bridge in the period 2019-24.

The picture, along with others from the Landscape Photographer of the Year awards, went on display in January at London's Waterloo station.

After Waterloo, the winning entries went on show at selected stations, including Edinburgh, Leeds, Birmingham and Cardiff, with further venues to be added. More information: www.take-a-view.co.uk



More and more people are waking up to how important a rail line and a station are to their economic and social wellbeing. Increasing numbers are campaigning for their own area. Railfuture's latest book lists and gives details of all new and reopened lines and stations since 1960 and shows what can be achieved. You can buy the book online for £9.95 including postage at: www.railfuture.org.uk/shop/

Network Rail will put more projects on hold

Network Rail plans to concentrate on maintenance rather than big projects in its next five-year spending plan.

In the control period 2019-24 the amount of money set aside for new schemes is down by 33%.

Chief executive Mark Carne told the BBC: "We have discovered the cost of electrification of the network is very expensive. It is

very difficult to do because we have so little time to intervene and work on the network at night. So it has cost more to do that."

Mr Carne, who is retiring later this year after four years with Network Rail, said the new funding period would be "more focused on the day-to-day operations". He added: "The last five

years has been about huge projects, like Thameslink, Crossrail, Great Western electrification and Edinburgh-Glasgow electrification. The next control period is slightly different."

Over the entire Control Period Six, Network Rail plans to spend £47 billion.

About £18 billion will go into operation and maintenance, with another £18 billion spent on renewing and replacing old infrastructure.

New projects will have to make do with £10 billion, with most of that "likely to go on improving the line between Manchester and Leeds".

Mr Carne, 58, a former Shell oil executive, was paid more than £800,000 a year.

Railfuture's Rail User Group Awards

Make sure your rail user group is recognised and rewarded for its good work in Railfuture's Rail User Group Awards. There are categories for campaigns, newsletters, websites and new groups. You have until the end of August to get your entry in. The results will be announced at Railfuture's Reading conference on Saturday 10 November. Check out the dedicated webpage: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/RUG+awards>

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