

railwatch

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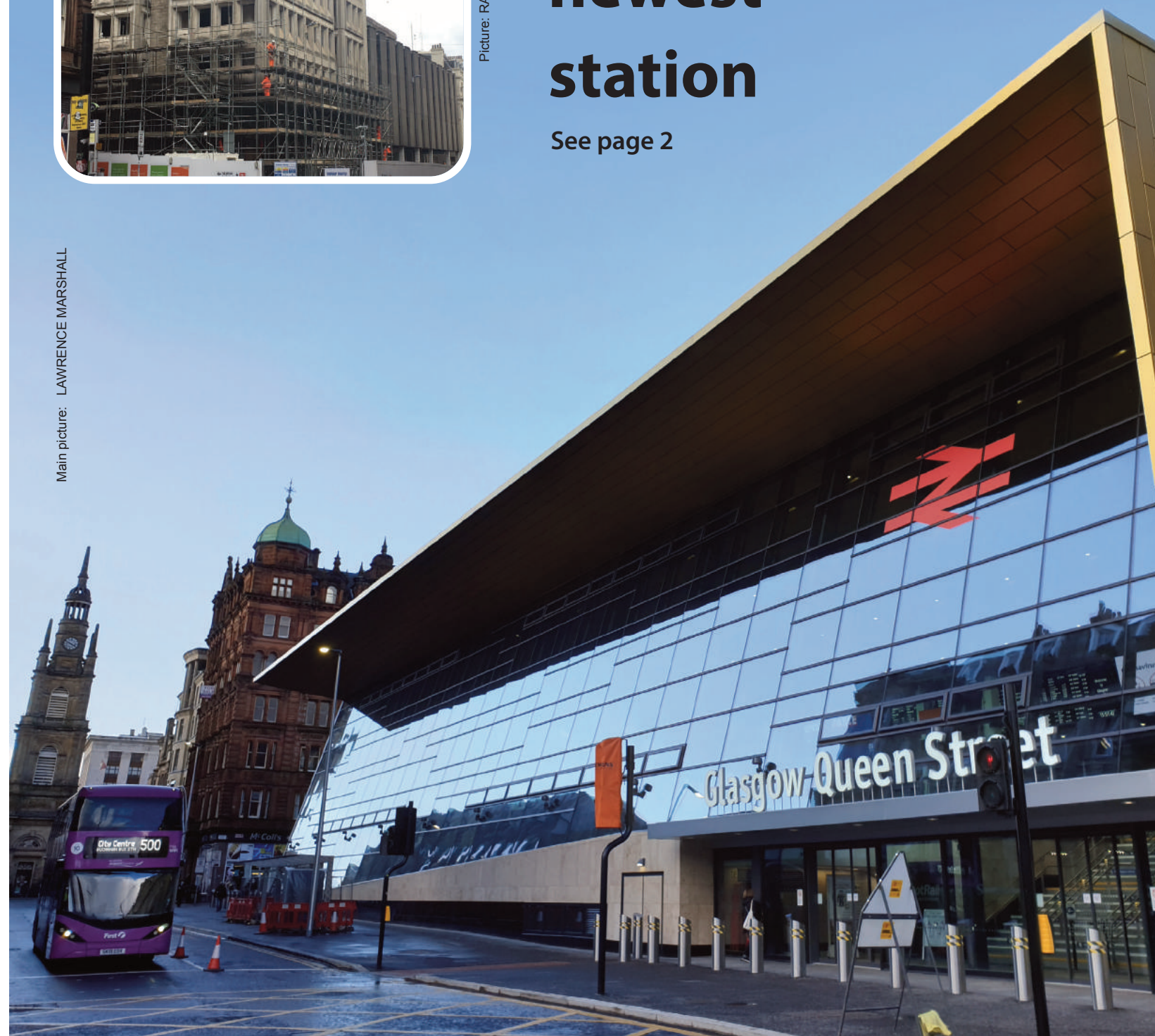


Picture: RAIL TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

Glasgow and its 'newest' station

See page 2

TRANSFORMED:
Main picture below
shows the new
frontage of Glasgow
Queen Street.
Left: The unimpressive
buildings which were
demolished in 2017 to
allow for an expanded
station



Main picture: LAWRENCE MARSHALL

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Glasgow's shiny new station

Glasgow Queen Street station plays a key role in Scotland's rail network. Trains from London arrive at Glasgow Central, but Queen Street serves most destinations to the north and east.

Both termini also boast through low level platforms serving the greater Strathclyde area. However it was difficult to run long trains from Queen Street because it is in a confined space between the road alongside George Square and the railway tunnel to the north.

Beeching cuts exacerbated the situation when adjacent Buchanan Street station – which had served Stirling, Perth, Inverness, Dundee and Aberdeen – was demolished and services were switched to Queen Street. With major recent work, including extensive electrification promoted by the Scottish Government, electric trains from Queen Street now run to Edinburgh (10 times an hour), Stirling and the city's northern suburbs, while revamped diesel trains operate to Dundee, Perth, Aberdeen, Inverness, Oban and Fort William. Queen Street is 138 years old but the platforms have now been lengthened to accommodate eight-car trains, the concourse enlarged in size and new fully accessible entrances created. The £120 million three-year Queen Street project started in 2017. The station can now be seen clearly from George Square, no longer hidden behind buildings.

The big problem remaining for Glasgow is the lack of a north-south link across the River Clyde. Railfuture has long been campaigning for a Crossrail Glasgow, using a former passenger line (now used only for freight) and with a new station at Glasgow Cross.

The cost-effective idea won major support in 2005 from the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, but progress has stalled as Transport Scotland considers more grandiose and expensive plans.



HALF WAY THERE: Glasgow Queen Street station in 2019 with a ScotRail InterCity train. These refurbished inter-city trains have space for more cycles and replace Turbostar trains on services to Aberdeen and Inverness. The Queen Street platforms can also accommodate the Hitachi-built eight-car electric class 385 trains to Edinburgh

PAGE ONE PICTURE



EDINBURGH: Railfuture vice-president Stewart Stevenson, MSP for Banffshire & Buchan Coast, on his way to board a train at Waverley station in mid November

Covid-19 and those tell-tale train numbers



Railfuture Vice President Paul Abell looks at some of the most recent statistics measuring the impact of the pandemic on rail travel

First I must admit that the inevitable delay between my writing these words in mid-October and readers seeing them on the publication of *Railwatch* has led me to the conclusion that present circumstances are so changeable that any attempt at prophecy on my part would be rather rash.

However there are implications for Railfuture campaigns from what happened to passenger travel earlier this year.

The Office of Rail and Road's publication timescales bring their own delays, but the official ORR passenger statistics for the three months of April, May and June (2020-21 Q1 in the jargon) were released on 8 October.

Considerable publicity was given to the fact that main line passenger journeys (London Underground being excluded from these figures) for the three months this year totalled 35 million, being a mere 8.1% of the 439 million recorded for the same quarter in 2019.

Anyone with friends in the Treasury will not need telling that the fall in passenger revenue for Q1 was even greater, the £184 million this year being only 6.9% of 2019's £2.7 billion (a shortfall of £2.5 billion).

Big variations

Returning to the number of passenger journeys, there was first a variation in how well (if that is the word) each sector was holding up in the three months. The 28 million journeys in the London and South East sector were 9.1% of the previous year's figure, Long Distance was 6.4% (2.4 million journeys) and Regional was 5.5% (5.4 million journeys).

However (as shown in the accompanying table) the percentages for individual operators vary much more than this, even allowing for the slight bias introduced by the transfer of Paddington-Reading stopping services from Great Western Railway to Transport for London Rail in December 2019.

Despite a reduced timetable being operated, the 8.1% of passengers had plenty of trains to choose from, passenger train kilometres in 2020 being



RUSH HOUR: Plenty of room to spare as a few passengers pass through the former Eurostar platforms at London's Waterloo station at 18.00 on 26 October 2020

PASSENGER JOURNEYS BY TRAIN OPERATOR

Quarter 1 2020-21 (April, May, June) compared to same quarter 2019-20

	Q1 2020 (millions)	% of Q1 2019
TfL Rail	2.13	16.1%
c2c	1.89	15.7%
London Overground	6.06	13.3%
Govia Thameslink	7.49	8.5%
Southeastern	3.77	8.4%
London North Eastern	0.44	7.7%
Greater Anglia	1.65	7.7%
East Midlands	0.45	6.9%
Merseyrail	0.76	6.9%
South Western	3.50	6.7%
Avanti West Coast	0.64	6.6%
TransPennine Express	0.47	6.3%
CrossCountry	0.63	6.2%
Northern Trains	1.50	5.7%
West Midlands Trains	1.01	5.2%
Chiltern	0.37	5.1%
Great Western	1.27	5.0%
TfW Rail	0.37	4.5%
ScotRail	1.01	4.3%

recorded as 60.4% of the distance run in 2019. The acquisition of the Paddington-Reading services meant that TfL Rail actually recorded an increase of 25.5% in train kilometres.

London Underground

The TfL quarterly performance report records 26 million passengers on London Underground for the same Q1 period, 8.2% of the 2019 figure. LU passenger income (£84 million) was 13.2% of the 2019 figure.

Passengers leaving rail again

Unfortunately the most recent Department for Transport statistics for transport use during the pandemic show a falling percentage for rail use compared with last year, a peak of 43% in early September fading away to

32-34% in early October. The National Rail percentage hardly varies at weekends, but the London Underground figure has reached a dual plateau – just over 40% at weekends, but around 34% during the week.

The percentage quoted for cars is currently in the mid-80s (based on the equivalent day in the first week of February 2020), but sometimes jumps to around 100 at weekends.

London buses have just about reached 60%, with the published percentage for bus passengers outside London being slightly lower. However this figure for buses outside London is hardly reflected in the sparsely populated vehicles we see locally, but then the percentage usage is taking the equivalent day in the third week of January

2020 as a base, and "has been adjusted to compare against typical usage on bank holidays". Perhaps there are some very full buses somewhere else, or buses running empty on bank holidays!

Freight picture a little brighter

Unfortunately the amount of rail freight traffic in Q1 was also affected by the pandemic, though not nearly as much as passenger numbers.

The ORR *Freight Rail Usage and Performance* report for the quarter records a total of 3.16 billion net tonne kilometres, 26% down on the 2019 figure.

Coal (0.07 billion net tonne kilometres in the quarter) represents only a tiny proportion of rail freight nowadays, but the two most important commodities both showed significant falls.

Domestic intermodal (containers) dipped 22.0% to 1.33 billion net tonne kilometres, while construction fell no less than 37.5% to 0.76 billion net tonne kilometres, a figure which naturally reflected the pauses and uncertainties affecting many projects during lockdown.

Implications

I hope these figures will enable readers to set the local circumstances of their own campaigns in the context of circumstances nationally.

While it is certainly controversial in some quarters, the construction of HS2 is a clear indication that the Government remains convinced of the benefits of rail travel, a fact which cannot be repeated too often to the advantage of Railfuture campaigns.

Working together to a common goal

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Christian Wolmar

Over the past few weeks, I have spent a lot of time talking to former British Rail staff for my forthcoming book for Penguin on how it became the most efficient railway in Europe.

The extent to which they think that BR had the right structure may vary, but there is a consistent thread to their stories. They all talk about how the railway was a family, how at bad times people pulled together to try to ensure that difficulties were overcome.

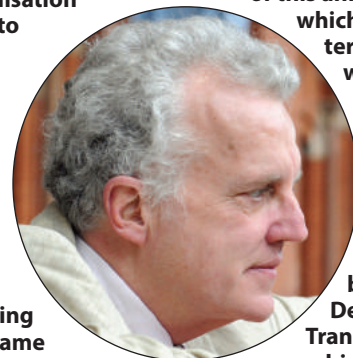
Of course it was not always one big happy family. There were industrial disputes, though not as many as conventional wisdom suggests, and there was, at least until the early 1980s, a drinking culture that would be completely unacceptable today.

There were undoubtedly differences between engineers and operational people, and indeed the structure was not as integrated as generally thought

until the implementation of OfQ (Organising for Quality) in the early 1990s.

However, time and again, my interviewees referred to the collegiate and supportive atmosphere in which different parts of the organisation worked together to provide a better service. The main problem with the organisation was that for so long its focus was on costs, and not on quality. Heroic reductions in spending were made, while keeping pretty much the same level of service. It was not really until the final decade or so, with the division into five sectors – three passenger and two freight – that managers worked within a conventional profit and loss account. Underlying this emphasis on

costs was the budget for the railway, which was set annually for each financial year. Worse, at times British Rail was not told how much money would be available until the financial year had actually started. Getting rid of this annualised structure, which prevented long-term planning and was incredibly wasteful as managers were well aware that anything left in the kitty at the end of the year would be clawed back by the Department of Transport, was the biggest benefit of privatisation. But it came at a heavy price – the loss of the integrated structure and the co-operative working which ultimately was, as we know now, a far more efficient and cheaper way of working. We are now in



Railfuture president: Christian Wolmar

integrated structure and the co-operative working which ultimately was, as we know now, a far more efficient and cheaper way of working. We are now in

limbo land with a structure for the railways that is a patched-up temporary fix.

There is widespread recognition that we need a new body that will provide oversight and strategy for the railway, but there is still a blind acceptance of competition and private sector involvement as necessary components of the new structure. It is a shame that those drawing up this new structure do not realise the importance of what is lost by this emphasis – the co-operation and mutual support that comes from working together towards a common goal.

My new book *Cathedrals of Steam*, the story of the London terminus stations, is out now. Special offer for *Railwatch* readers: If you want a signed copy for £18 plus £3 post and packing, please email Christian.wolmar@gmail.com And if any ex-BR staff want to tell me about their experiences, or express their views, I would be delighted to hear from them.



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

CAMBRIDGE SOUTH: Visualisation of proposed station from the east

paul.hollinghurst@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ **Cambridge South takes shape**

Railfuture East Anglia was invited to a Network Rail presentation about the planned Cambridge South station, as the second public consultation got under way. The station will serve Addenbrooke's Hospital and the biomedical campus and is planned to attract at least 1.8 million passengers a year. Railfuture believes that figure will be exceeded because the station will serve five specialist hospitals and a large range of research institutes. There is also a sixth form college nearby and a large number of homes easily accessible by pedestrians and cyclists. Transport experts believe the footfall could rapidly climb to five or even eight million. The planned entrances on both sides of the line, linked by a footbridge and lifts, will be inadequate, so Railfuture is calling for a concourse spanning the tracks with a covered walkway to the biomedical site.

We welcome the good lift facilities, a high-quality "changing places" toilet and canopies along the complete length of the platforms. There will be four platforms but, to minimise land take, an island platform in the centre is proposed with platforms on either side, initially on loops. Railfuture believes there should be two island platforms to minimise inconvenience to passengers when there are platform changes. Care, however, is being taken to provide good quality walking and cycling access while not encouraging car use.

■ ■ **Rail option for Sizewell C**

Railfuture East Anglia has followed and contributed to a series of consultations about the Sizewell C nuclear power station and in particular how the railway can support the construction phase. We previously expressed our disappointment that the "rail led" strategy for bringing materials to the construction site had been all but abandoned in favour of road transport. Railfuture has written to the planning inspector to register our objection and will have the opportunity of presenting our case next year.

Railfuture is not challenging the application on the grounds of generation need and expects the

application to be approved. We are however suggesting that two conditions be attached. EDF should be required to revisit its strategy for bringing materials to the construction site to make better use of rail and to enter into further negotiation with Network Rail to achieve this outcome.

In addition EDF should be required to fund a full business case for improvements to the East Suffolk railway line as detailed in our submission, comprising a more ambitious upgrading of the East Suffolk line. There should be more than just a passing loop but a greater length of double track to exploit the benefits of the recent upgrading of the passenger train fleet, as well as increasing the frequency of services on the busier section of the line south of Saxmundham. This would leave a lasting legacy of community benefit to the residents of East Suffolk.

■ ■ **Consultation crucial at Ely**

Network Rail opened a round of public consultation in September on its emerging plans to address the problem of congestion at Ely, a vital junction. Further rounds of consultation will be undertaken next year at various stages of the project development. Consultation of this nature is necessary. We hope the project is of sufficient scope to require works beyond the current railway boundary, so Network Rail will need a Transport and Works Act Order or Development Consent Order. As this first phase contains no specific proposals, Railfuture responded by setting out the outcomes we wish to see delivered. Ely will need to cater for multiple services every hour to and from Birmingham, Cambridge, Ipswich, King's Lynn, London, Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford, Peterborough, Stansted and Wisbech as well as increasing flows of freight from Felixstowe. We are calling for the works to have sufficient capacity for the future and not just for the current service pattern.

www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/anglia/ely-area-capacity-enhancement-scheme/

■ ■ www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia
Twitter: @RailfutureEA

anthony.kay@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ **Weedon station campaign backed by schoolboy**

A campaign is under way to reopen a station at Weedon, west of Northampton on the West Coast main line fast lines. As well as serving Weedon itself, it could act as a parkway station for Daventry and, being close to the A5/A45 junction, it is better placed for this than Long Buckby. The original Weedon station closed in 1958. One of the campaigners is 14-year-old Harry Burr. There is a petition on the campaign website: weedonstation.site

■ ■ **Barrow Hill line could be given new lease of life**

North East Derbyshire MP Lee Rowley held online meetings in September with people in Killamarsh, Eckington, Staveley and New Whittington, the four locations proposed for new stations on the Barrow Hill line between Chesterfield and Sheffield. The line is maintained to passenger standards for use as a diversionary line but has no regular passenger service. The proposal was successful in round 1 of the Government's *Restoring Your Railway* initiative, and would help to regenerate some deprived communities.

■ ■ **Greater Nottingham metro could be part of strategy**

Railfuture East Midlands responded to the consultation on the Greater Nottingham strategic plan. This plan was proposed by the planning authorities around the city and the city authority itself and covered future housing, commercial and industrial development over the next 20 years. Our response covered comments only on infrastructure development requirements, in particular recommending that more "cross Nottingham" commuter rail services be considered on existing lines to work alongside existing and proposed new tram services in order to develop an effective public transport metro system.

■ ■ **Tributes to inspiring campaigner Geoff**

Ivanhoe line campaigners pledged to continue their battle to reopen the line from Leicester to Burton upon Trent following news that chair Geoff Bushell – the inspiration and driving force behind the campaign – had died in early November. Geoff was praised for his gentle powers of persuasion. Work continues on the business case for reopening the line and a research project to quantify environmental benefits has been arranged with Derby University. The Campaign to Reopen the Ivanhoe Line is working closely with Network Rail and East Midlands Railway on costs and technical requirements. Meetings are held with the Department for Transport team every four weeks and things are progressing well. East Midlands Chamber of Commerce has declared its support for reopening.



Geoff Bushell

Restoring Your Railway part 2

It is pleasing to see bids for three schemes in the East Midlands in Round 2 of the Restoring Your Railway programme:

- To increase stopping services at Radcliffe-on-Trent and Bottesford stations on the Poacher line between Grantham and Nottingham
- To increase services from Melton Mowbray to Nottingham and Leicester, via Syston and Loughborough
- To reconnect Ashfield communities using Nottinghamshire's Maid Marian line

The first two aim to improve services on existing routes. The Maid Marian line could provide an effective link from Mansfield to the future HS2 interchange at Toton with some reopened stations along the route. Railfuture supports these proposals and we await the outcome of the bids.

■ ■ **Planning ahead for branch meetings**

With the current uncertainty about Covid restrictions, members in the region are advised to keep checking the Railfuture East Midlands web page (see below) for information about meetings. It is hoped to hold an informal pre-Christmas railway conversation in December, an open branch meeting in January or February, and the AGM is provisionally scheduled for 24 April 2021 and will include the business of the cancelled 2020 AGM.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch
Twitter: @RailfutureEMids

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

One battle won, the fight goes on



The reopening of the former Waverley rail route from Edinburgh to Galashiels and on to Tweedbank in 2015 was a tremendous success, but the campaign goes on to reconnect the line through to Hawick and Carlisle. Here Simon Walton introduces a new video charting both success and challenge.

After half a decade of success, the Campaign for Borders Rail could be forgiven for writing a love letter to the railway they so vigorously lobbied to have built.

Instead, the long-established pressure group promoting the benefits of modern train services for communities across the Borderlands and beyond has let loose an independent producer, Stuart Cameron, and allowed him free rein to film something much more, that shines a light into the eyes of the campaign, and seriously challenges it to answer the question: What now? It is a pointed question posed in the brand new documentary and the most eagerly unwrapped part of the package. Immediately there is controversy. David Parker, convener of Scottish Borders Council, breaks ranks and says reaching Hawick and Carlisle will take more than the lone voice of the campaign.



Stuart Cameron

That is a view thoroughly contradicted, not least by the councillor's own elected colleagues on the Scottish Borders Council, the local authority through which most of the extended line would pass, which says it is actively behind the extension, and on record as putting its voice to the lobby too. Tellingly though, the contributions from England make a new case for extension. John Stevenson, MP for Carlisle, argues that the railway should be extended north from his city to meet the line from Scotland. There is business-backed support from both sides of the Anglo-Scottish border. Alex Hynes of ScotRail readily defends the shortcomings of the installed railway, and puts forward his interest in seeing the line extended. Even HS2 says it must go ahead, and freight operators put their case too. From the ugly to the beautiful, the documentary element of the DVD set is engrossing, as engrossing in fact, as TV presenter Rob Bell (now campaign patron) found the entire Borders during his filming. "There is a real sense of pride in the Borders about their region, a real urge to be active and to do things well," he says. "Although times can be challenging, I sense there is a real optimism for the



PATRON: Channel 5's Rob Bell

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



4 DVD 5th Anniversary Edition

THE BORDERS RAILWAY FIVE YEARS ON

A brand new documentary charting the journey so far to re-connect the Waverley Route to Hawick and Carlisle.

The completely revisited and remixed 34-part six series of "Borders Railway From Start To Finish."

Exclusive real-time cab ride from Tweedbank to Edinburgh.



future, that you cannot help but be swept along by." Rob featured the line in his *Walking Britain's Lost Railways* series on Channel 5.

However Rob is not the star of the show. If anyone, that is Stuart Farrell, the driver of the very first Borders Railway service. The final disc is Stuart's eye view. The never-before-seen real-time drivers' eye view of the complete run from Tweedbank to Edinburgh Waverley, followed up by a London to Brighton style four-minute express rollercoaster

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SHAWFAIR: It now claims to be the best connected new town in Scotland – thanks to the opening of the Borders Railway

ride back again. You can put that on and just re-live the run whether you are in Abbotsford or Australia.

The campaign wanted to put on a huge public celebration to re-invigorate enthusiasm for this generational – and regenerative – project.

What they have done is produce something even more lasting.

The Borders Railway Five Years On is a four-disc DVD box set, available from www.campaignforbordersrail.org and from selected retail outlets.

The set can be ordered online or by mail at £29.99 plus postage and packing of £3. Campaign members' price is £24.99.

Borders News In Brief

Covid-19

The Covid-19 restrictions meant that the fifth anniversary of the Borders Railway on 9 September was muted but campaigners recalled that the line is carrying twice as many passengers as was predicted.

Electrification

The existing Borders Railway is earmarked for electrification in the Scottish Government's *Rail Services Decarbonisation Action Plan* published in July 2020. No dates are fixed yet.

Improvements

Network Rail has plans to improve Portobello Junction, where the Borders Railway joins the East Coast main line. There are also plans to build a second platform at Brunstane and double two miles of track from Portobello Junction, through Brunstane to Niddrie South.

Freight potential

A rebuilt Borders Railway all the way from Carlisle to Edinburgh could be used as a freight alternative, says Jim Steer of the High Speed Rail Group.

Covid-19 was no problem on my trip to the Isle of Arran

By Jane Ann Liston
who travelled by rail, ferry and bus
from her home in St Andrews to
Blackwaterfoot on the Isle of Arran
on 9 September 2020

When going to Arran I usually buy a combined train and ferry ticket for convenience. However, due to Covid-19, ferry numbers are limited and even foot passengers must book.

My hotel had kindly booked me on the 13.50 ferry from Ardrossan, meaning I would have to reach the port in good time, not just to catch the boat but also to collect the tickets at the terminal before boarding. To be safe, therefore, I decided to aim for the 12.18 train from Glasgow Central to Ardrossan Harbour.

Normally the 09.22 LNER from Leuchars (six miles from St Andrews) would have been my first train, having the advantage of being relatively fast and qualifying for an off-peak ticket. However, because of the derailment at Carmont, Aberdeen-King's Cross services were starting from Edinburgh. Therefore, I took a taxi just after 08.00 to Leuchars (allowing extra time because of roadworks), negotiated the long, ramped access bridge with all my essential holiday luggage – Brompton folding bike, front pannier, back-pack and golf-bag – and caught the 08.42, which also required a more expensive ticket. The train was quiet, and I had no difficulty keeping well away from other passengers.

The train arrived at Waverley at 09.59, in good time for the 10.21 semi-fast service via Shotts due to arrive at Glasgow Central at 11.42. This train was conveniently waiting at the next platform and I even had time to buy my newspapers at the nearby W H Smith.

Above all, I wanted to avoid changing at Haymarket for the earlier train but with all my luggage I did not fancy an eight-minute change from platform 1 to 4 at Haymarket for the 10.01. Nor did I want to change stations in Glasgow. However I reckoned that as the 10.21 would arrive at Central half an hour before the "boat train", I would be able to take time changing trains, and might even have time to grab a coffee, there being no refreshments on any of the trains.

I boarded the 10.21 Glasgow Central train, conveniently just beside the train I had just left. Again I had no difficulty keeping well away from other passengers. Then there was an

But there were some others:

- No rail link to St Andrews
- Carmont landslip
- Waverley's missing guard
- A cancelled train
- Edinburgh-Glasgow flood
- Glasgow Low Level arrival
- No Glasgow Crossrail
- Mask-refusenik children
- No refreshments

ominous announcement that the train's departure was delayed because they were waiting for a crew member. I was not too worried as I had enough wriggle room, though the coffee might have to be foregone. Unfortunately, then came another announcement. Because of the non-appearance of a guard, the train was cancelled. Passengers were advised to transfer to a train for Queen Street Low Level (starting from Waverley) because of flood damage to the main Edinburgh to Glasgow line.

This I could have done without. I would still arrive in Glasgow at 11.42, but at Queen Street and the low-level station to boot. The prospect of having to cycle with all my accoutrements from Queen Street to Central was bad enough, but if I missed the 12.18, to have the slightest chance of getting the boat I would have to take the Largs train.

That would leave just 10 minutes to get off at Ardrossan South Beach, pedal along to the terminal and collect my tickets, to be on board the requisite 10 minutes before sailing.

The problem with multi-leg journeys is that if just one leg fails there is a knock-on effect on all further stages

A friendly ScotRail man assured me I would make it. So, on to the train to Glasgow Queen Street LL for a scenic journey of over an hour via Bathgate and Airdrie. Again, plenty of spare room.

I do not usually unfold the Brompton before getting off but this time I did, clipped the pannier to the front, got the back-pack and golf-bag on to my back and was standing at the door, finger poised over the door button before we stopped at the low-level platform at Queen Street. Off the train, I then moved very smartly to the lift up to the main concourse, which looked very different from my last visit, out the exit and, after pushing the bike along the



one-way street, mounted the bike and pedalled. I arrived at Central just after 12.00, having done the third of a mile journey in just over five minutes, according to my GPS. I moved swiftly to the platform where the Ardrossan Harbour train was waiting, with only a slight pause needed to show my ticket at the barrier, the first such check on the journey.

Those who see no need for Crossrail because of the "short" distance between the Glasgow stations usually fail to take into account the size of the concourses, especially the distance from the main entrance at Central up to platforms 11-15

Maybe next time I should cycle round the corner up to the side entrance for less of a hike!

The 12.18 slid out of the station and so on to Ardrossan. Again plenty of room. I think I was the only passenger in the front carriage, and now I could relax as we sped to the coast.

At Stevenston secondary school pupils were waiting for the train. Four girls and one boy got on and stood at the end of my carriage. None wore a face covering. As I was starting to get my things together, I suggested that the youngsters should wear them. "OK," said one girl who then did nothing about it.

A railman sitting up at the front of the coach told me the pupils never wear face coverings. The offenders got off at Ardrossan South Beach. Later that day I reported the incident to North Ayrshire Council, who were not amused. However, throughout the journey I was not aware of any other refuseniks.

That was the end of the rail component of the journey. I got off at Ardrossan so-called Harbour at 13.04, made my laden way to the ferry terminal to collect my ticket, then went outside to stand at the front of

the queue ready to board the MV Isle of Arran for the 13.50. I stayed on deck in the sunshine for most of the crossing, which was very enjoyable but, again, no refreshments were available.

After disembarking – and thank you to the nice CalMac Ferries man who provided "passenger assistance" by grabbing my Brompton and pannier and positively racing along the lengthy passenger access system with them to the lift – I caught the next bus to Blackwaterfoot. This was my first bus ride since lockdown. I think there might have been one other passenger.

"The island is busy," said the driver, "but people are not taking the bus."

Nine days later

The return journey on Friday 18 September was slightly different. After arriving off the 16.39 from Ardrossan Harbour at Glasgow Central at 17.23, I took the 17.40 for the seven-minute journey to Partick and there caught the 18.02 train due at Haymarket at 19.22 via Airdrie and Bathgate, thus avoiding having to change at the two main Glasgow stations. The change of trains at Haymarket was easy, from platform 3 to platform 2, just a few paces on the level so I was in good time for the 19.39 train arriving Leuchars 20.29 and another taxi home. What I did notice, though, was that these trains were busier, though still well below capacity, than on the outward journey. Perhaps this was because of the time of day.

There was still no problem keeping a safe distance from other passengers.

Verdict

As far as Covid-19 was concerned, I had no worries at all. ScotRail did a remarkable job running services given that the Carmont landslip and Edinburgh-Glasgow flood damage had disrupted services. There were fewer passengers – which made the journey more pleasant – though clearly that is untenable financially long term.

The main difficulty was the domino effect of one train being cancelled creating potential problems with connections

Normally that is not critical because ferry tickets are flexible, but at the moment because of the greatly reduced capacity one has to book a particular crossing and in case of mishap there is no guarantee of getting on the next one. However there seems no reason to avoid rail transport on health grounds.

Rail – the key to a healthy environment

By Stephen Watkins
co-chair of the Transport and Health Science Group

Railways are much safer than the alternatives, and because they are more effective than buses in achieving modal shift, rail development has an important role to play in developing a healthy transport system.

Unfortunately transport infrastructure planning tends to overestimate the effect of roads in reducing congestion (which is often only temporary), and underestimates the effect of rail services on congestion.

Using London as an example, Dr Martin Mogridge has shown that the speed of road traffic is influenced more by the quality of the rail system than by anything happening on the roads.

Transport planners also underestimate network and feeder effects and have often underestimated the potential usage of new rail services.

The utility of a network is approximately proportional to the square of its size. THSG believes that most of the rail development schemes supported by Railfuture would warrant funding if these scientific analytical errors were corrected.

THSG also advocates consideration of schemes not yet fully supported by Railfuture but which we hope Railfuture might want to promote. We believe there should be active promotion of the rail-cycle combination as a distinct transport mode, an alternative to the car, rather than it being seen as for just a minority group of rail users.

Thought should be given to having cycle vans on all trains, as Cal Train does in California, and also cycle hire at stations, with some stations promoted as cycle railheads or as interchanges with cycle routes.

THSG believes there is scope for rolling motorways (lorries on trains) and we have advocated a rolling motorway over Woodhead (with trains



DISASTROUS PLANNING POLICIES: This new incinerator near Stewartby is next to the Midland main line and near the Bedford-Bletchley line but it is not rail-connected. More than 500,000 tonnes of household waste will be transported to the Covanta plant and campaigners said that involved 600 lorry movements a day from an area within a 60-mile radius. Former train driver Bill Davies commented drily: "This is Bedfordshire so the only rail upgrade is to a level crossing on the Bedford-Bletchley line – to allow the stream of HGVs to gain access to the new plant." Bedford Borough Council objected but the

Government's "Environment Agency" gave it the go-ahead in 2018. Nicola Ryan-Raine, who campaigned against the plant said: "For every tonne of waste burned typically more than one tonne of carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere." That is without the pollution from the lorries. The Stewartby incinerator is just one of 50 planned by the Government because of its failure to achieve higher rates of recycling. If every incinerator is served only by road, that is a significant blow to rail and a significant increase in pollution and danger. Could that mean 30,000 extra lorry movements a day? That is a shocking prospect.

conveying both passengers and road vehicles in a high-frequency service) as an alternative to the proposed road scheme.

THSG believes high speed long distance sleeper services must play a part in controlling the climate impact of aviation.

A 10-hour train trip with eight hours asleep and two hours spent on dinner and breakfast is an entirely civilised way to travel, and with 200mph trains it

could compete with planes over distances of up to 2,000 miles (more with even faster trains).

THSG believes the same technology that makes it possible to run a standard gauge train at 200mph also makes it possible to run and Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway gauge train at 50mph so we think high speed miniature railways parallel to cycle tracks could be constructed over abandoned rural lines.

An eye should be kept on opportunities opened up by the development of the hyperloop and we have published a discussion document on this. We do not yet know whether the hyperloop will prove feasible but we could view it as being in the same state of uncertainty that the steam locomotive was in 1825.

Dr Stephen Watkins is a member of Railfuture but is representing the views of THSG here.

THSG: Who we are

- Many Railwatch readers will have a broader interest in sustainable transport and may be interested in finding out more about our wider work from our website (details below). The Transport and Health Science Group (THSG) is an independent group of global public health and transport practitioners and researchers. The Transport and Health Science Group is one of two major organisations internationally concerned with the relationships between transport and health. In the UK the group is the main such organisation and also acts as UK agent for the other (the North America-based International Professional Association for Transport and Health). THSG also administers the Transport Special Interest Group of the Faculty of Public Health of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK.
- www.transportandhealth.org.uk

THSG: What we want

- We believe that a healthy transport policy will minimise transport use by having more local facilities and making more use of cyberspace. It will use walking and cycling for short journeys, and the rail-cycle combination for longer journeys, with the bulk of freight transport being by rail, electric delivery vehicles and a new generation of modern electrically assisted sailing ships. Ultimately, we see only a limited role for the private car, for example in sparsely populated areas. We also see only a limited role for aviation – for flights across oceans and polar ice caps and for islands too far from the mainland to rely on ferries, and for local travel in very remote areas such as Alaska or Antarctica. These approaches to transport policy will reduce climate change, for which transport is the largest contributor in the UK, and yield even more health co-benefits.

◆◆◆◆ Increase Railfuture's lobbying power: Recruit a new member

Keep high standards

Railfuture vice-president Paul Abell captured my thoughts exactly in his article on attracting passengers back to rail in *Railwatch* 165. He raised both the discomfort of face coverings and the quality of the product on offer. His last sentence in particular is spot on: "Make travelling by train something to be enjoyed!"

Just like the old British Rail INTERCITY advert (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fdKMMUnljw>), where they convert a plane interior into a mark 3 coach, we need to make the legroom bigger, put some proper tables in and make the windows bigger.

As Paul's article mentioned, we also need to avoid toilet queues and the fitting of seats that are markedly less comfortable than the ones in our cars. We need to have a good product and, once face masks and social distancing are no longer required, market the hell out of it.

I hope that, in the contractual upheaval of nationalising the Wales & Borders franchise, Transport for Wales can substantially reduce the number of class 197 diesel trains ordered and retain the current fleet of 158s and 175s. The class 197's specification fails on all the points raised above. Production of the full fleet, likely to last until the 2050s, would also jeopardise rail decarbonisation since the class 197s are diesel-only units.

*Thomas J. Wheeler
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HS2 anger

I was very angry to see the headline in *Railwatch* 165: "Prime Minister gives HS2 the seal of approval". Post Covid, HS2 is no longer viable or sustainable, as fewer people are travelling. Commuters are a lost breed. I hope Chancellor Rishi Sunak pulls the plug on HS2 immediately.

Cyril Cowland, Lapwing Way, Four Marks, Alton, Hampshire GU34 5FD

HS2 new age of rail

The "no turning back now on HS2" message in *Railwatch* 165 is music to my ears, and it is also true about all existing railways as well.

If it was not for HS2, railways in general would have been sidelined as they were in the past in favour of road transport, which is no longer the case in this day and age.

I have always been saying as far back as I can remember that the railways in the end will win the war on climate change and protecting the countryside. I cannot understand why Railfuture president Christian Wolmar is so against HS2. Being a railway, he

should be in favour of it. I do not agree with Chris Page when he says some railway lines may have to close, as Christian Wolmar has also been saying. They are thinking as if we were in the Beeching era. The thinking and backwardness in those far-off days was totally out of date. This is the 21st century – and it belongs to the railway.

James Knight, Glebefield, Basildon, Essex SS14 2LD

Against HS2

At first glance it may appear rather odd for a rail enthusiast to oppose a rail project. However, there is much more to this than meets the eye.

Will HS2 result in fewer car journeys to the Midlands and North from the South East? Will HS2 encourage fewer domestic flights? The answer is probably no.

The most serious issue regarding the construction of HS2, though, is the destruction of ancient woodland, home to a variety of native fauna and flora.

*David Bailey, North Lodge Close, Dawlish, Devon EX7 9QD
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Hydrogen hype

I share the concerns of campaigners over hydrogen-powered road and rail vehicles. The preoccupation with hydrogen probably goes back to Jeremy Rifkin's 2002 book *The Hydrogen Economy* which argued that a hydrogen future is technically feasible.

However, it is an inherently wasteful process to use electricity to create hydrogen for fuel cells, and it probably costs four times as much as using the electricity directly to power rail or road vehicles. The main constraint is the availability of platinum.

Some critics have even concluded: "H is for hot air."

When I was studying environmental economics about 15 years ago, the chemistry department was consulted about the practicality of using hydrogen for powering transport. They advised that it was very dangerous. There have of course been a few buses running around London with hydrogen cylinders on the roof for quite some time with no ill effects.

The country which has made the most advances using hydrogen is Iceland but it is stored in bottle cylinders, and not as a liquid from petrol pumps, as originally intended.

The official warning (in HAZCHEM Guide 115) stipulates: "If a tank, rail car or tank truck is involved in a fire, ISOLATE for 1600 metres



Picture: CRRC

Beijing to Moscow without changing trains

A 400 kilometre per hour train that can be used on international journeys requiring a change of gauge was unveiled in October, three years after China pledged to develop it. The train's most obvious potential is for traversing standard-gauge China and broad-gauge Russia, as well as Mongolia and Kazakhstan. The train, built by the Chinese railway corporation in Changchun, has been designed to cope with desert temperatures of 50C and Siberian-style winters down to -50C. Spain's gauge-changing trains are limited to 250 kph and Japanese experimental trains did not get beyond the prototype stage. The Changchun-based project has cost 34.7 billion yuan so far, and is supported by a research grant from the Chinese government.

(about a mile) in all directions. Also consider initial evacuation for 1600 meters in all directions." Even if for a simple large spill these distances can be halved, it is obvious that there are serious potential dangers.

Defending its use, hydrogen manufacturers say that hydrogen vents upwards. But of course in an accident, buses and railcars can turn over, so even if the source is on the roof, it could still consume the passengers.

Name and address supplied

Wrapper change

What a pity the recycling information about the film wrapper of *Railwatch* was printed as the final item on the last page. Had it been in the big empty space on the address sheet I could have saved the wrapper to use as a liner for my kitchen food-waste caddy. Instead, it is now in landfill.

*Elisabeth Jordan
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Editor's note: We thought this was a good idea and will put the note about recycling on the address sheet.

Lost causes

With investment money now short as the result of the epidemic and rail travel said to be more infectious than the private car it would be nice to see some of the wildly expensive sacred cows of reinstatement no longer regurgitated, speaking of the Exeter-Plymouth closed route via

Okehampton. May I suggest that if there is a serious case for big railway investment in the West of England (although the industrial North has a much stronger claim), campaigners concentrate on the recently floated improvements to the Salisbury to Exeter line.

Re-doubling is reasonably straightforward and inexpensive as it does not require land-take and induce haggling delays.

Over long stretches on the Chiltern, North Cotswold and Swindon-Gloucester lines, double track has been reinstated. The London South Western main line could be similarly improved and with it the present service and popular south Devon metro. Any blockage on the Bristol-Exeter line would be less of an obstacle than now with a higher capacity alternative route available.

So thinking caps on boys and girls; where best should we spend the money? Definitely not between Meldon Quarry and Bere Alston I suggest. Pipe dreams to one side please until these difficult days subside.

*David Bosomworth
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Third option

In all the discussion about routes west of Exeter to Plymouth, it seems to have been forgotten that there was a third option – the former Great Western route from the outskirts of Plymouth (near

Plympton) to Yelverton and Tavistock.

A short section at the Plymouth end of the route still exists and is operated by a private steam railway, the Plym Valley Railway, with much of the route taken up by a cycle route from Plymouth to Tavistock. Using the Plym Valley route, it may be possible to reopen a line from Plymouth through Tavistock to link up to the former line to Okehampton.

J Evered, Goylands Close, Howey, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5RB

Mask deterrent

I agree with James Knight (*Railwatch* 165) that having to wear face masks is a deterrent to attracting rail passengers in these difficult Covid times.

Surely with the height of seating being what it is, social distancing could be maintained without the need for these obnoxious intrusions into personal liberty? Table usage could be limited to those within a personal group, while the rest of us would sit safely not facing another passenger. With car drivers able to go about their business as normal, it is clear that public transport is once again placed at another disadvantage after the earlier warnings to avoid using buses and trains if you could.

Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby DN31 2JP

Relaunch rail

When we go on holiday we always travel by train, so it's very sad not to be doing this for the first time. It is partly a matter of service uncertainty (GWR says you might have to use a bus, and you might be refused entry to any service) and far fewer trains (last arrival in Tenby is 17.45), plus four changes of up to an hour, two in Covid-19 hot-spots (Cardiff and Newport), plus wearing a mask for nearly seven hours... just too much.

So we will fill up the tank on our little old diesel car (we now share it with my brother for emergency use, having gone electric ourselves) and drive straight through all the unpleasantness. No face masks, no enforced stops in high-risk areas, and no over-authoritarian staff cracking whips at innocent travellers.

Right from the start I thought it was pretty counter-productive for the authorities (rail and governmental) to promote and support rail with one hand while telling us not to use services with



Picture: RATP

Round we go with the Grand Paris Express

A 13-year initiative to improve orbital rail services in Paris is at last coming to fruition. The Grand Paris Express project aims to provide a service every two to three minutes on fully accessible trains and should ease travel to the Paris Olympic Games in 2024. The new orbital and driverless trains will link three international airports, create four new ring routes and relieve the overcrowded central sections of the Metro. There will be 68 new stations and 200 kilometres of new track, some on extensions of existing lines, with a completion date of 2030.

The original plan for an elevated railway was ditched in favour of 90% of the new lines being in tunnels, but the aim remains to improve links between the Paris suburbs. The project is expected to cost €28 billion and is jointly financed by the French Government and the local authorities with special taxes, subsidies and loans.

the other. It is not the cleverest policy but things are certainly running on time here, without tiresome passengers getting in the way of ops!

The train operators have absolutely no incentive to look for passengers with the current system, and I think we either have to grasp the nettle and set up direct government operations, or get things back on a commercial footing in some way. I care not, but DO IT QUICKLY.

The time has come to prepare to get things running to world-class standards again, and relaunch rail with a bang, hopefully as this wave of virus clears and (even more hopefully) the first inoculations become possible, maybe in the lead-up to Christmas!

I firmly believe that all will be well, but the industry really does need to get a grip as soon as possible. We are spending a fortune on ferrying fresh-air about.

*David Henshaw, Manor Road, Dorchester DT1 2AX
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Impossible journey

In principle, I agree with the comments made in "Road to a climate change disaster" in *Railwatch* but the matter is not as simple as made out. For years,

there has been an explosion of house building, over-population in many districts and the destruction of much natural habitat.

In Coalville, Leicestershire, we are seeing around 5,000 new properties, on top of many estates that have appeared in the past decade, and demand shows no sign of easing.

This latest development will put 10,000 extra cars on to existing roads. With insufficient local employment, people travel (in normal times) to Leicester, Nottingham, Derby, Birmingham and the smaller places in-between.

All, apart from Leicester, are difficult if not impossible to reach by public transport. The Ivanhoe line, which would be highly beneficial, shows no signs of reopening.

Two members of my nearby family could not travel the 17-mile journey to work by public transport. It does not exist. Public transport cannot cope with small numbers of people criss-crossing many different suburban and rural areas.

Walking or cycling to such places is often out of the question, even in fine weather. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps might well say we should drive less but does he, or his colleagues, cycle or walk? Both modes of travel become less enticing in adverse weather. London is unique and excellently supplied with public transport,

compared to elsewhere. Perhaps Mr Shapps should visit the provinces and see the difference.

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Welland alternative

Welland Valley Rail Partnership's plan to connect Stamford to Corby is an admirable aim (*Railwatch* 165) but the proposed route is not realistic.

Go further west and take a chord along a short contour north-west of Wing (south of Manton Junction) and there is only a very short piece of new railway required.

Admittedly it adds about seven kilometres in distance. Perhaps the Welland Valley group could be asked why they are not proposing this simpler solution.

*Peter Honnibal
Woodbine Cottage, Dunsby, Bourne.*

■ ■ See WVRP on centre pages

Rail question

You report in *Railwatch* 165 the Transport Secretary as saying "Peterlee is the biggest community not served by a station that has a railway line running right the way through..." I wonder whether he has been misinformed. With a population of about 200,000, does this dubious honour not belong to Gateshead?

*Nigel Warner, Wydon Park, Hexham, Northumberland NE46 2DA
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Picture: BRISTOL LIVE

PORTISHEAD: Impression of the future station. An examination began in October into the application for a development consent order for MetroWest Phase 1, which includes reopening of the Portishead line. An order is required before construction works can begin because the scheme is classed as a nationally important infrastructure project. The examination is expected to take around six months

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■ ■ **MP backs reopening**

Stroud MP Siobhan Baillie, who came to the Railfuture Sevenside meeting in Stonehouse last year, spoke in favour of reopening the town's Bristol Road station in interviews with BBC Points West and BBC Radio Gloucestershire on 16 October, mentioning the need for more direct rail communication between the Stroud area and Bristol. Stroud District Council recently voted in favour of the reopening but both it and Ms Baillie are aware that Gloucestershire County Council, as the transport authority, needs to come on side.

■ ■ **Gloucester step-free subway**

Great Western Railway has announced plans to enhance Gloucester station with a step-free subway to the hospital, improved pedestrian access to the city centre and provision for buses to enter the station forecourt. At present, interchange between trains and buses usually involves crossing a busy dual carriageway. The plans are intended to complement the Kings Quarter redevelopment.

■ ■ **Cheltenham improvement**

Work is ongoing to improve the frontage of Cheltenham station by segregating pedestrians and taxis. A larger bus interchange and a new stepped entrance from Queens Road have been built.

■ ■ **Trains comeback**

The emergency timetables introduced at the start of the pandemic reduced Great Western's two-hourly Gloucester/Cheltenham to Worcester/Great Malvern service to peak hours only, with passengers at other times advised to travel by CrossCountry Trains via Worcestershire Parkway, where waits for a connection were at least as long as the time taken by a direct train between Gloucester and Worcester.

Railfuture is pleased that GWR has listened to our concerns and reinstated most of the direct services from 16 September. This was of particular benefit to Ashchurch for Tewkesbury station, which had very few trains during the emergency timetable period.

■ ■ **Mass transit vision**

Bristol mayor Marvin Rees has reiterated his vision of a £4 billion mass transit system for the city, much of which would be underground. It was mentioned in the West of England draft joint local transport plan but Railfuture Sevenside remains sceptical. Railfuture suspects the grandiose underground scheme would be a distraction from expanding surface rail transport and that costs would escalate considerably. Railfuture's Bruce Williamson is concerned about the lack of consultation with stakeholders and fears the project might well be de-scoped into a rubber-tyred system.

■ ■ **Recruitment leaflet**

In September Railfuture Sevenside produced a recruiting leaflet for the entire South West Region, with assistance from Wessex and Devon & Cornwall branches. The leaflet includes a map showing the existing rail network with potential reopenings highlighted. The cover photo was supplied by Railfuture member John Stretton who is an author and professional photographer.

www.railfuture.org.uk/SevensideBranch
Twitter @RailfutureSSide



tony.smale@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ **Pipeline improvements**

An extra £17 million was announced in October by the Department for Transport to complete freight infrastructure upgrades in the Southampton area. Longer sidings have been installed to cope with 775 metre intermodal trains (up from 520 metres). Now there will be track, points and signalling upgrades to clear the way for the longer trains. This is good news, but congestion further up the line, particularly in the Basingstoke area, must be addressed. Upgrades needed on the Salisbury-Exeter line are subject to the "pipeline" process, also known as continuous modular strategic planning. In October Railfuture learnt that the project had been endorsed by the programme board, which is run jointly by the DfT and Network Rail, and should form part of the national pipeline of approved schemes. Campaigners are hoping that the full list of upgrades, including platform capacity, service improvements and line redoubling, will be included in the formal "decision to initiate". Nearly all MPs along the route are supportive, with two in particular seeking to secure Treasury funding for the next stage in the process.

■ ■ **Station makeovers**

Funding is in place for extensive remodelling of Weymouth station forecourt. In the official consultation on the two-year plan, local campaigners called for better security, buses to call nearby and an improved walking route to shops and seafront. Eighty miles along the coast at Portsmouth, £2.5 million is to

be spent on both Portsmouth Harbour and Portsmouth & Southsea stations.

■ ■ **The Key to Touch use**

In *Railwatch* 165, we reported a problem for regular travellers in that Southern's smartcard was not valid for stations on South Western Railway's network, and vice versa. Southern's "Key" smartcard can now be used for journeys to and from SWR stations. We trust that SWR will follow suit by making their Touch smartcard valid for stations beyond their network. The most convenient way to travel between stations on the mainland and the Isle of Wight involves crossing the Solent on the WightLink catamaran, but travellers have noted that ticket machines on the mainland have only been offering options using Hovertravel services from Southsea to Ryde, a journey that normally takes much longer. Railfuture has called for this technical glitch to be corrected.

■ ■ **Timetable changes**

Coming down the line are alterations to services that Railfuture believes simply will not work. Southern proposes running an additional train each hour into one of the two already-busy terminating platforms at Portsmouth and Southsea instead of continuing to the Harbour station, where there are four platforms and a vital interchange with ferry services. Railfuture also sees problems with the very short turn-round times at Ryde Pierhead when the new 30-minute train frequency is introduced on the Isle of Wight from May 2021.

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

Join one of Railfuture's groups

Railfuture groups develop policy on national and company-wide issues. The Governance Group has two vacancies, and members who are interested in joining the group are invited to apply to the chair of the group. The terms of reference of the group are at www.railfuture.org.uk/display2199

The process for selection is available on the Railfuture website.

Governance may perhaps not be thought the most exciting subject, but you will be helping to perform a vital task in keeping Railfuture on the right side of the law and ensuring we operate transparently, ethically and fairly. If you have a working knowledge of best practice in governance, or useful practical experience in these matters, with an eye for detail, this could be the place for you.

If you are interested, please send a CV with your contact details to stewart.palmer@railfuture.org.uk before 31 December 2020.

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

By electric car to the railway station

Many rail travellers face a choice when they are travelling to their chosen rail station. Those who are able to cycle or walk are causing the least environmental damage, but many need to go by car.

The Government is now keen to persuade car drivers to go electric but there is little first-hand information about.

Electric cars are not the mainstream choice yet, but they are heading that way, as the reality of climate change begins to impinge on everyday life.

Sales are increasing fast, with 2.2 million electric vehicles sold across the world in 2019. More than 7 million are in use. Most governments around the world have accepted the need to



change, and legislation to restrict internal combustion engine cars and encourage electrics has happened – or is

on the way. In Britain, 2030 is now the probable date for the last petrol or diesel car to be sold, although millions are expected to remain on the road.

Electric cars are becoming less expensive and batteries are improving – and they are quiet.

Fourteen people who have already bought electric cars give their verdicts and personal experiences in a new 49-page PDF book by Peter Henshaw called *I Bought One!*

So if you are considering switching to an electric car, this electronic book – published in September 2020 – is a good way to find out what they are like to drive, how they are charged and what difficulties can be expected. The book includes

cars from a Citroen C-Zero to a Tesla Model S, and also includes several motorcycles and scooters.

It has facts and figures and mythbuster, Q&A and terminology sections.

Electric cars are currently more expensive to buy but cheaper to own in the long run.

One Renault Zoe owner quoted in the book was asked: "So has it been worth it?"

The answer: "Undoubtedly, yes."

We Bought One!

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£2.99 from www.atob.org.uk

A warm welcome for new directors

Board Election 2021
By **Stewart Palmer**
Governance Director

Railfuture's company articles allow any member to stand for election as a director. Please put yourself forward if you think you have the skills and personal qualities that can help Railfuture be even more successful than it is already. For the 2021 election, applicants will be required to submit their nomination papers in the usual way by 1 February.

The opportunity to hold a structured discussion will be provided from 1-28 February, after the closing date for nominations, and will be available to potential new directors who have not had the opportunity previously to attend a discussion on the role of a company director.

Following the discussion, an individual may of course decide to withdraw their application, before ballot papers are printed in March.

It is important to remember there is no compulsion to attend such a discussion, but company directors do have onerous and specific legal responsibilities and it is important that any potential board members understand these.

Detailed instructions regarding the discussions will be issued to appropriate candidates once nominations have closed.

Given the continuing uncertainty about the impact of Covid 19 restrictions, it may well be that the discussions will take place by video link rather than face to face.

The returning officer may, in order to make voters aware of this, put a footnote on any candidate's election statement if they decide not to avail themselves of this opportunity.

More information can be found on the elections page of the Railfuture website.

◆◆◆◆ Please remember Railfuture in your will: www.railfuture.org.uk/legacies

Campaigning through consultations

A powerful for campaigners is the opportunity to have our say when an official consultation is launched. It also allows Railfuture to make contact with the decision makers, who can then be kept informed about Railfuture campaigns.

To improve railway infrastructure, sources of investment have to be identified – and won on the basis of how they fit in with policy priorities.

Railfuture contributed to Eastleigh Borough Council's consideration of a proposed runway extension at Southampton Airport, and the National Infrastructure Commission's interim report on its rail needs assessment for the Midlands and North, as well as commenting on the Department for Transport decarbonisation plan.

Railfuture East Midlands branch addressed the growth options in the Greater Nottingham strategic plan, while Railfuture London and South East branch dealt with Network Rail's Croydon area remodelling scheme.

After an intervention by Railfuture, Southeastern is considering upgrading Swanscombe rail station in response to plans for a £5 billion theme park on 535 acres nearby. Railfuture contributed ideas to the Treasury in its consultation on future spending. Railfuture backed plans to provide a rail option for a 2,200 home new garden

village at Salt Cross, Eynsham, 50 years after the rail line through Eynsham and Witney closed. A new rail line to serve Eynsham, Witney and RAF Brize Norton is one possibility, and shadow chancellor Anneliese Dodds (MP for Oxford East) supports restoring the freight-only Cowley branch for passengers, using the Ideas Fund. Together the two projects could become part of a metro-style service around Oxford.

This is part of the vast area covered by England's Economic Heartland, a new transport body which is considering its strategy – with input from Railfuture.

Surrey County Council is also preparing its future rail strategy.

Railfuture submitted a paper responding to the Government's *Planning for the Future* white paper, produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Railfuture also responded to Network Rail's Ely area scheme, the Kent Rail Strategy 2021 and the Government agency Homes England plan for 10,000 new homes between Horsham and Crawley in West Sussex.

You can read Railfuture's submissions in the campaigns/consultation responses section on the Railfuture website which also includes a *Restoring Your Railway* page.

Twitter: @RailfutureNetws and @RailfutureFret

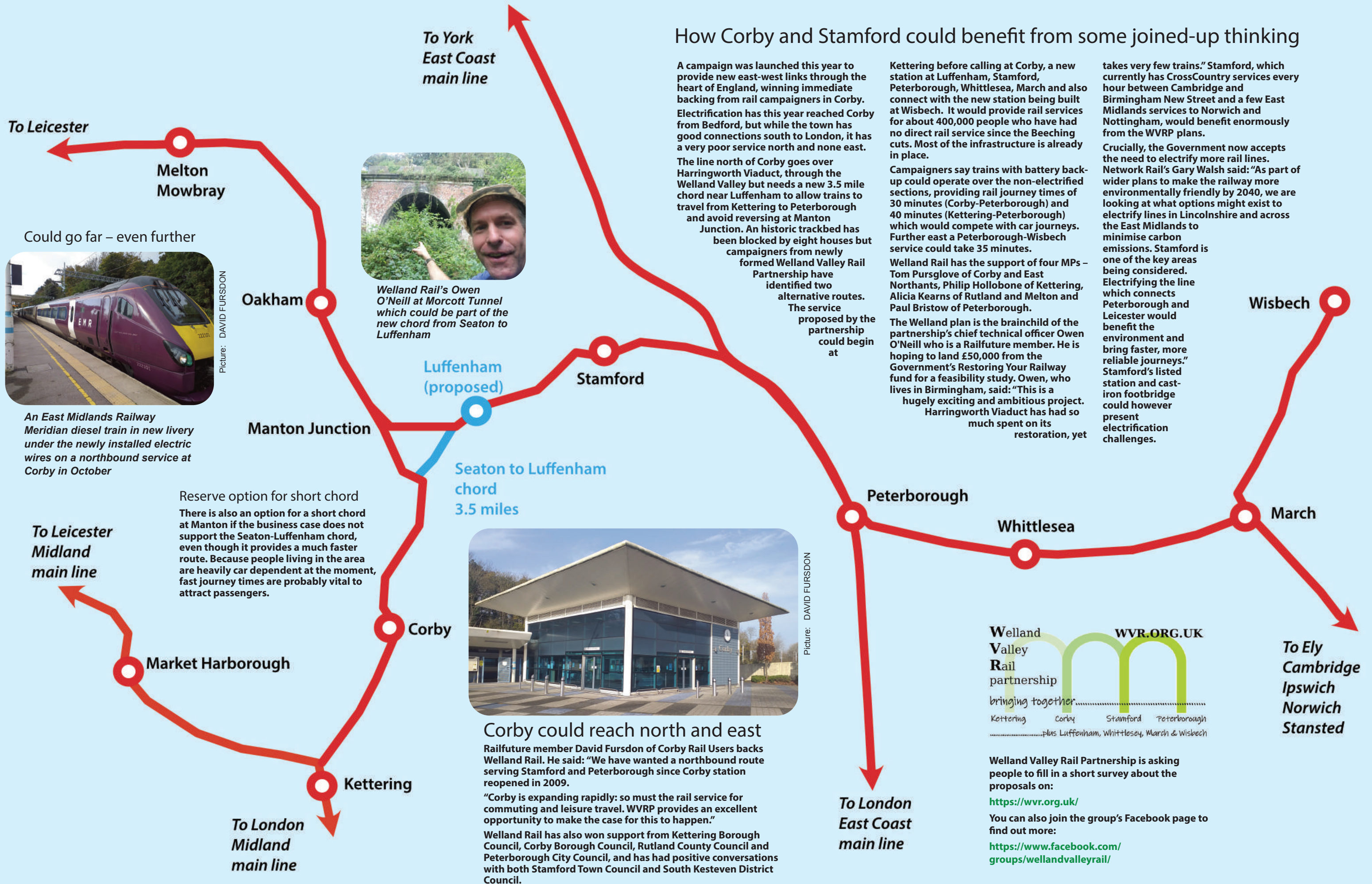


Railfuture Christmas present ideas

Tote bag (left) for £3.50, rail track cufflinks (top right) for £12 and lapel pin badge (bottom right) for £2. Prices include post and packing. You can order and pay here: www.railfuture.org.uk/shop



The little blue link that could unlock rail services across middle and eastern England



Could go far – even further



Picture: DAVID FURSDON

An East Midlands Railway Meridian diesel train in new livery under the newly installed electric wires on a northbound service at Corby in October



Welland Rail's Owen O'Neill at Morcott Tunnel which could be part of the new chord from Seaton to Luffenham



Picture: DAVID FURSDON

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■ ■ **Railfuture response to Oxfordshire plan**

Railfuture Thames Valley welcomes the commitment to rail in Oxfordshire County Council's local transport and connectivity plan, but is concerned about the lack of urgency, and indeed the absence of any timetable for implementation. If we want to cut carbon emissions, modal shift from road to rail must be accelerated. Reduction of private car use and a change from fossil fuels to electric power are vital. Investment priorities include Didcot-Oxford electrification, Oxford station rebuilding, the Cowley branch, Hanborough, and new stations at Grove/Wantage and Begbroke.

The proposal for a new station at Begbroke is a revival of previous plans for a new Kidlington station near Roundham crossing, which has been considered by the county council several times since the 1980s and rejected on the grounds of insufficient land available for car parking and approach roads. Because the railway line skirts the western edge of Kidlington, the catchment for a new station would have been only on one side. Development at Begbroke would open up the catchment on the western side of the line. Railfuture is strongly of the view that development should be centred on public transport hubs and new stations which should be in place before the houses are built.

■ ■ **Funding needed for Bourne End work**

Track relaying between Bourne End and Marlow is proceeding, but Bourne End remains a problem. Although remodelling of the junction layout has been approved, there is apparently a problem with funding, partly resulting from local government reorganisation. Buckinghamshire County Council was never very interested in Bourne End to High Wycombe reopening, and the new unitary authority has yet to take it into consideration.

■ ■ **English heartland transport strategy**

Railfuture Thames Valley contributed, along with other branches, to Railfuture's response to the draft transport strategy being drawn up by England's Economic Heartland, an alliance of councils including Swindon, Cambridge, Northampton and Hertfordshire. We stressed that the number-one priority should be the completion of East West Rail to the original specification, with full electrification and sufficient capacity for freight traffic. We are glad that the East West Rail board recognises that it would be more cost-effective for the infrastructure for electrification to be built now, but we are alarmed by rumours that the Aylesbury connection may be dropped. East West Rail should not be considered as ending at Oxford, but services should be extended to Swindon and Bristol at the west end, and some Milton Keynes services should be extended to Northampton.

■ ■ **Short-term solution to A40 congestion**

Road engineers mistakenly think the solution to traffic jams is more roads. Oxfordshire County Council has authorised the dualling of the A40 between Witney and Eynsham at a cost of £102 million. With extra traffic from new housing developments at Carterton, Witney and Eynsham (Salt Cross Garden Village), Railfuture believes rail-borne transport should be prioritised. This is another example of new developments being planned in the country without consideration of public transport services.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Thames Valley Branch
Twitter @RailfutureTV



Picture: STADLER

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2022: The new Stadler trains in Tynemouth station (visualisation)

peter.walker@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ **Stadler takes over Metro trains**

Train maker Stadler took over responsibility for the Metro fleet in October. A satellite depot at Howdon-on-Tyne has been created, and will be used while South Gosforth depot is being rebuilt to house and maintain the new Stadler trains when they are delivered from 2022-24.

■ ■ **Bore holes spell Ashington progress**

Ashington, Blyth and Tyne is now being called the Northumberland Line. Under either name, it now seems likely that passenger trains could be running in three years time. In October bore holes were being drilled at Ashington and 80 other sites to see if any former mine workings below might affect reopening the line for passenger trains. A public consultation on the project started on 16 November and will close at the end of December. Details of the consultation are available at <https://bit.ly/2lnY9VR>

■ ■ **Tyne Valley ambition**

Blaydon station is being "refreshed" with murals on brick walls bordering both platforms to celebrate the station's long history. It dates back to 1835 when the Newcastle-Carlisle line was built. Tyne Valley community rail partnership (TVCRP) also saw major work at Haltwhistle get under way in October. An ambitious project will revive the waiting rooms and other buildings at the station, following delays because of Covid-19. Work should be completed early next year. Office space will be created in the refurbished station buildings and information provided about nearby Hadrian's Wall.

■ ■ **Metro extensions under examination**

Nexus is considering using funds from the Government's Beeching reversal fund to extend the Metro network into Cobalt Business Park in north Tyneside, to serve Silverlink Shopping Park. This would involve adding a branch from just east of Northumberland Park towards Percy Main, and a junction with the southern arm of the North Tyneside loop line between Whitley Bay, North Shields and central Newcastle. It is also possible that the somewhat forlorn section from Sunderland westwards to South Hylton will be extended towards Pelaw via Washington and Leamside.

Twitter: @railfuture

■ ■ **Blair successor fights for rail**

The Tory MP who represents Tony Blair's former Sedgefield constituency is battling to get Ferryhill station reopened, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson is said to have given his personal backing to the project. Paul Howell MP, who has had talks with Railfuture North East, said: "A station brings economic growth and all the good things that go with it." Ferryhill is on the East Coast main line between Darlington and Durham, but the initial aim would be for Ferryhill to be served by a passenger service to Teesside via Stillington and/or on a reopened Leamside line which has the added benefit of providing a relief line for the East Coast. Ferryhill has a population of 11,000, and 45,000 people live within a four-mile radius. Railfuture is campaigning for the mothballed line from Ferryhill to Pelaw to be reopened, and for a station for Ferryhill to be built where Middleham road bridge crosses the existing four track line. More information at <https://railfuture.org.uk/Ferryhill+Station>

■ ■ **Hartlepool platform**

Hartlepool's dormant second platform could be renovated for passenger use, following Tees Valley Combined Authority's sponsoring of a Network Rail study (Governance for Railway Investment Projects stages 1 to 3). The study should be completed in March.

The platform on the town side of the station currently serving trains in both directions is adequate for present service levels. The other platform is now close to a cinema, hotel, new housing and a marina, none of which existed when the platform was abandoned 20 years ago. The curve on both platforms makes getting on trains awkward so perhaps the GRIP studies may come up with a remedy allowing step-free access. It is good to see TVCA and other bodies looking forward to more trains, including longer-distance expresses, serving Hartlepool.

■ ■ **Restrictions on rail travel**

The renewed national Covid-19 lockdown is expected to lead to reduced train travel, even though rail services are safe if social distancing rules are observed. Even taking Covid into account, other forms of transport probably present greater risks. The huge environmental advantages of rail transport should not be forgotten, even when its use is being discouraged by both local and national government.

www.railfuture.org.uk/North East Branch
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Join Railfuture at www.railfuture.org.uk/join

How we can tackle the rail freight famine in mid Wales

Lorries thunder across mid Wales night and day, making life difficult for car drivers and awful for pedestrians and cyclists.

However the rail line from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth and Pwllheli, which was built to carry freight, now carries absolutely no freight. Elsewhere, rail freight survives, but in Wales – as in Britain as a whole – wagonload traffic was lost in 1991, with parcels going in 1999. There are however

opportunities, as Angus Eickhoff points out in a 14-page discussion paper *Railfreight Strategy for Mid Wales*.

Bulk freight and wagonload traffic may not return, but one option could be using the soon-to-be-redundant class 158 diesel passenger trains (equipped with ETCS signalling equipment) to be converted for parcels. With the exception of Tesco in Newtown, supermarkets along the rail route

cannot easily be supplied by rail without a last leg by road, but Aberystwyth is 130 miles from Birmingham so rail has an inbuilt advantage over road for long-distance trips. Every effort should be made to preserve land for future rail use, particularly the former oil terminal at Aberystwyth. You can read Angus's paper on the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association's website at: <https://bit.ly/36svUgN>

UK wins from Tesco boost to rail freight

By Lee Davies

Tesco is switching more freight from road to rail as a way of cutting its carbon emissions. The supermarket is aiming to halve emissions for each case of goods delivered by the end of the year.

Tesco plans to run its new rail freight service from Daventry to South Wales six days a week, using swap-body containers, with lorries to complete some journeys.

Tesco's main rail freight distribution centre is at DIRFT – the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal.

Each Tesco freight train takes 40 lorries off the road, reducing congestion and cutting emissions by an estimated 60%. Some freight trains are the equivalent of 76 lorries. Lorries produce 63 grammes of carbon dioxide for every tonne of freight transported per kilometre, compared to rail's 26 grammes.

Stobart Rail Freight operates the trains for Tesco and wants businesses in South Wales to use rail – at reduced rate – on the return trip from Tesco.

Tesco aims to be carbon neutral by 2050 and uses a barge to transport wine along the Manchester Ship Canal from Liverpool.

It was named the top UK retailer for carbon reporting for the fourth year in a row by the Carbon Disclosure Project. Carbon reporting is now compulsory for British businesses with a turnover of £36 million or more.

The Daventry terminal, which also handles goods for Sainsbury's, Asda and the Co-op, is currently being expanded with the aim of tripling capacity.

Rail minister Chris Heaton-Harris visited the terminal in October to announce a grant of £5 million for the Tesco traffic. Tesco is buying 500 extra containers for its rail services and has lengthened its Teesside-Daventry service. It also operates daily trains to London Purfleet, Cardiff Wentloog, and Glasgow Mossend, with one



Picture: RALPH BARKER

ROAD TO RAIL: Tesco containers crossing the River Clyde near Crawford, Lanarkshire

train going as far as Inverness. "Tesco is the biggest retail user of rail in the UK and it's the most efficient way of moving our goods quickly, so the benefits are practical for our business and for the environment," said Andrew Woolfenden, Tesco's UK distribution director.

Tesco is also using a new express rail freight service with refrigerated containers for fruit and vegetables, operated by Transfesa, from Valencia in Spain to Barking, London. The new service began in September and uses axle-changing technology to cope with the switch from Spanish broad gauge to standard gauge. It may also use the high speed line through Kent.

■ ■ **Concrete bonus for rail freight**

Kent's Isle of Grain is the destination for concrete tunnel linings for the £4.9 billion Thames Tideway Sewer scheme.

The linings are being transported from Tallington (near Peterborough) after sidings were brought back into use.

Spoil from the sewer scheme is being taken by rail as landfill to Barrington chalk pits in Cambridgeshire. The county council has given planning permission for rail use until 2034 with the proviso that quiet, modern locomotives are used.

The recently built Cambridge North Freight Terminal handles several thousand tonnes of mainly aggregate each week. China clay slurry is being transported from Aberdeen to paper mills at King's Lynn, Norfolk. Trains take the cargo to Spalding, Lincolnshire, but lorries are used for the 28-mile "final mile" because no siding is available at King's Lynn. This serves as a warning about the mistaken disposal of operational

railway land. Railfuture branches are asked to notify Railfuture's freight group about planning applications that could mean the loss of actual or potential freight facilities. Rail freight facilities are rare – and are valuable community assets.

■ ■ **Magna rail freight plan**

Reopening a Rugby-Leicester railway route could boost rail freight from East Anglia to a proposed regional rail freight terminal at Magna Park, near Lutterworth, and also provide a link from Magna Park to the existing Daventry terminal. The reopening would give Magna Park good rail access to the rail network in every direction.

It would also help to create a more efficiently linked network of strategic railfreight interchanges in the Midlands, which might help to decarbonise the Amazon delivery model.

Mega-lorries threaten rail freight and road safety

Mega-lorries could be cleared for use on British roads, with the flimsy excuse that they reduce overall emissions by reducing the number of lorries on the road!

The ridiculous argument and the plan for "supersize" lorries was revealed by The Times in November, without a warning that every time lorry weights and lengths increase, rail freight suffers. Despite a vast majority of the public wanting a

switch of freight from road to rail, the Government continues to enable hauliers to use enormous vehicles that threaten pedestrians and cyclists.

In America, lorries are limited to 36 tonnes for interstate journeys but the Department for Transport's "consultation" on the plan to increase lorry weights by four tonnes to 48 tonnes and extending semi-trailer lengths by two metres closes in January: <https://bit.ly/2Ug1F70>

◆◆◆◆ Increase Railfuture's lobbying power: Recruit a new member



BARMOUTH BRIDGE: With the mountain top of Cadair Idris under a cloudy sky

Picture: RAILWATCH
julian.langston@railfuturewales.org.uk

■ ■ Covid-19 forces control switch

The Transport for Wales rail service is to be brought under Welsh Government control in February, following the collapse of passenger numbers caused by Covid-19. There will be a partnership between TfW, who will provide day-to-day service provision, and Keolis Amey which is being retained to complete electrification of the core Cardiff Valley routes (required under the franchise award to be completed by 2024) and to provide expertise on integrated ticketing.

"In Wales we continue a partnership approach between TfW and Keolis Amey as we work together to protect services for the Welsh public, safeguard jobs and secure the important Metro projects we have been working so hard on over the last few years," said Ken Skates, the minister for economy and transport. TfW chief executive James Price said one aim of the new arrangement is to "reduce the profit we pay to the private sector massively over time, and make sure that when the revenue comes back, it comes back in to the taxpayer".

■ ■ Ambitious vision for the future

The Welsh Government has published a vision for the long-term development of the rail network, with many of the proposals in alignment with Railfuture's own development plan. Railfuture advocates rebuilding the line from Llangefni to the North Wales main line at Gaerwen, and from Bangor to Caernarfon. The Welsh Government goes further, extending from Llangefni to Amlwch and from Caernarfon to Porthmadog with half-hourly services on both lines, integrating with other services. In South Wales, a tram-train route linking Newport with Caerphilly is proposed, along with similar links in and around Cardiff. A local half-hourly service between Newport and Abergavenny would call at a reopened station in Caerleon.

The Swansea District Line is mooted for a regular service, although Railfuture would like to see three new stations on the line, including a park and ride near the M4. The vision also includes substantial electrification.

Some schemes, however, are notable by their absence, such as any improvements on the Heart of Wales line. Railfuture wants a two-hourly service, hourly south of Llandeilo, instead of the current four trains per day basic service. Rural routes are important for connectivity, as well as stimulating the local

economy. For Llandudno-Blaenau Ffestiniog, Railfuture's development plan calls for one train every two hours. Railfuture believes some of the TfW journey time reduction aspirations would be difficult to achieve. Railfuture believes Cardiff-Swansea in 30 minutes would require a substantial new line and would miss out at least one intermediate station. Railfuture Wales agrees that journeys between Wales' two main cities should not take an hour but 45 minutes is achievable with comparatively minor works. A Chester-Holyhead journey time of 60 minutes is also probably over-optimistic. Railfuture commends the Welsh Government for its vision and is making detailed comments. Maps showing more information can be seen at: <https://bit.ly/3pHMBxt> and <https://bit.ly/3fdCl62> Railfuture's *Development Plan for the Railways of Wales*: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display702>

■ ■ Heart of Wales line double trouble

The Craven Arms to Llandrindod Wells section of the Heart of Wales line reopened in early November, after Network Rail completed a huge repair project following storm damage in August. Trains are running from Shrewsbury to Llandrindod, but rail replacement buses will run from Llandrindod to Swansea until the new year while work continues to repair the line near Llangennech – the site of an August freight derailment, oil spill and fire. Bill Kelly, head of Network Rail Wales, briefed Railfuture on the extensive works to stabilise track and embankments and improve drainage where landslips had occurred. CCTV is being installed to monitor water levels remotely.

■ ■ Building better bridges

Several bridges on the Welsh rail network are being upgraded to keep them fit for purpose for decades to come. The biggest project is the half-mile-long Barmouth Bridge, where £25 million is being spent to replace steel spans and decaying timbers. Railfuture hopes that when the work is complete in about three years' time, the speed limit can be raised from the current 20 mph to 40 mph. Barmouth Bridge will close for six months over the next three years. Network Rail is also to refurbish and strengthen the bridge near Pontarddulais where the B4296 road crosses the Swansea District Line. Both of these projects entail substantial closures, but Railfuture believes the inconvenience caused is more than outweighed by the improved resilience.

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www.railfuturewales.org.uk

www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthWestBranch
Twitter @RailfutureNWest

Picture: RAILWATCH
arthur.thomson@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Trans-Pennine hope

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris has praised the campaign to reopen the trans-Pennine Skipton-Colne route as one of the most effective action groups. His officials have told the Skipton and East Lancs Rail Action Partnership that work is being undertaken to get the project to the "Decision to Develop" stage, following feasibility studies commissioned by former transport secretary Chris Grayling. The proposal could pave the way for a two trains per hour Leeds-Colne service (taking 50 minutes) with a new station at Earby, five miles north of Colne. The service could later be extended beyond Colne to Nelson, Burnley and Accrington. Chris Heaton-Harris has said: "The Government is keen to reach an early conclusion on what role a reinstated line could play in improving passenger and freight connections across the Pennines."

■ ■ Best-kept station contest

The results of the Cheshire Best Kept Station Awards contest, which focuses on volunteers, were announced on 24 November. You can find the results on social media at #cbks2020

■ ■ BackTrack contest

Following a 25% increase in railway trespass in the early Covid-19 lockdown, Community Rail Lancashire's education development officer Karen Bennett led a campaign to raise awareness of the dangers among 11-18 year olds. Jointly with community rail colleagues, she organised a competition to encourage young people to be creative in safety. From June to September, they made films, wrote songs, produced storyboards, or wrote scripts. One of the prizes was for the biggest impact on social media to encourage entrants to share their work. This was won by Staged Kaos, a community interest company based in Liverpool 8 which produces educational workshops with a focus on black history, female empowerment and social issues. Prize sponsorship came from train operators and community rail partnerships. Winning entries can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFmnmDO8DA>

The winning entries will be used by community rail officers when they visit schools and youth groups to talk about rail safety and #StayOffTheTracks

Karen said: "Young people are far more likely to take notice of a video or song created by their peers."



WIN: Staged Kaos from Liverpool

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

Progress on Merseyside, Greater Anglia and Tyne & Wear Metro

In the Merseytravel area, station platforms have been modified to achieve level boarding by matching up to the technology on the new class 777 Stadler trains.

The new trains have an automatic "sliding step" which comes out when the train doors open and retracts when the doors close.

The wide-gangwayed trains are also designed so a wheelchair can pass through the length of a train, a level of accessibility that will also benefit elderly passengers, travellers with prams and buggies, and cyclists. Door sensors detect obstructions, while coloured

lights on the doors inform passengers when it is safe to board and alight.

Extensive work has been needed at many of the stations to ensure the platform height is kept within a very tight tolerance for level boarding. Similar work is under way on the Tyne & Wear Metro where new Stadler trains will operate from 2024.

Merseytravel chair Liam Robinson said: "We are really proud with the benchmarks that we are setting here on Merseyside. In my view, in the fullness of time, these will get rolled out across the rest of the heavy rail network in this country."



GAP GONE: The Merseytravel train with retractable boarding ramp safely bridges the space between train and platform

After 25 years, Ian demands action on accessibility

This year is the 25th anniversary of the Disability Discrimination Act, but rail campaigners question what progress has been made to make trains and buses accessible.

In the Greater Anglia area, new Stadler trains are being introduced with retractable sliding steps which provide level boarding.

But that leaves many trains and stations with awkward steps.

Ian Cook, who lives in Flitwick, Bedfordshire, wants progress faster than "in the fullness of time" and has launched a campaign for "step-free access at all stations and on all trains".

He said: "We still need to ask for help to get on and off trains, and far too many stations are not accessible. Often I have to take a taxi or a car to get to the nearest accessible station, sometimes 25 miles away. Some trains are equipped with level boarding but new trains are still being ordered without retractable



New-style ramps were needed for LNER's Azuma trains. The ramps are stored on the platform and staff are required to help wheelchair users

Picture: gemturner.com

ramps in 2020. Please, please, talk to grass roots disabled people who are still having problems with public transport.

'All political parties have ignored this for over 50 years'

Ian welcomes the new Stadler trains with sliding steps'.

But he is unhappy with the new Hitachi Azumas on LNER and similar trains operating on the Great Western.

On curved platforms (like York and Newcastle Central) there is a gap, the trains do not have retractable sliding ramps and so portable ramps (stored on stations) have to be used.

Ian said: "So assisted travel still needs to be booked and these are new trains. This does not only relate to LNER, but across the whole network. Train operators and the Department for Transport need to up their game."

He added: "All platforms need to be standardised and all trains should have retractable sliding steps. This will cost both the train operators and Network

Rail a lot of money, but it needs to be done. The time for talking is over, it is now time for action."

Ian has won support from Rachel Hopkins, MP for Luton South, but although he who helped win *Access for All* funding for Flitwick station, he has not been consulted by his local council.

He said: "Central Bedfordshire Council does not even have a rail strategy plan. I am worried they are drawing up plans for the station before consulting us."

In 2020, it is estimated that 100 million European Union citizens with disabilities and millions of other passengers with reduced mobility cannot travel by train when they want to.

In Britain there are a million requests every year for passenger assistance on the railways, according to the Office for Rail and Road.

Research shows that people with a mobility difficulty each made 10 rail trips on average, compared to 26 for the general population.

Paul Tattam, of Chinley and Buxworth Transport Group, said central government should plan for public transport after Covid-19 to be seen

as a public good similar to the NHS. Central government should prioritise funding to make all public transport 100% accessible to all users. All stations should have step-free access and all vehicles and carriages should be fully accessible.

Yannis Vardakastanis of the European Disability Forum said: "We want passengers with disabilities to be able to



GREATER ANGLIA EQUALITY TRAINER SARAH RENNIE:

Greater Anglia is one of the first operators to implement accessibility courses, ahead of new rules that come in next year requiring all train operators to undertake such training. The sessions are all delivered by disabled trainers. LNER has also carried out accessibility training

Picture: GREATER ANGLIA

'turn up and go' and catch a train when they want to, just like everybody else."

The West of England Combined Authority is spending £100,000 on a feasibility study to improve facilities at 27 rail stations.

"Wonderful news for the 27 stations across the West of England," said Ian, "although it does not get over the lack of level boarding on to the train from the platform, but none the less it is welcome news."

Decarbonisation: Let's campaign for it!

By Stephen Waring

Who has heard of TDNS? You should have. It is a revolutionary document, more significant even than British Rail's Modernisation Plan, as far back as 1955.

If the Government allows Network Rail to implement it, TDNS will transform Britain's railway with a widescale electrification programme.

TDNS spelt out is the Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy, which appeared online in September, and which amounts to a plan for rail to play its full part in tackling the climate emergency. A true moonshot project that must be achieved.

Ambitious programme

Just about all the "Northern Sparks" routes prioritised by the 2015 task force are included.

Most are recommended for full electrification, with a few multiple options still to be decided.

TDNS calls for at least 10,800 single track kilometres of our present 15,500 km of non-electrified tracks to be electrified, according to Railfuture's vice-president Roger Ford writing in *Modern Railways*. That is a 70% increase.

I believe TDNS also makes the case for default wiring for new lines extending from already electric routes such as Skipton-Colne and East West Rail.

TDNS recommends urgent development of battery and hydrogen trains, to develop standards and embed good practice for use on lines that cannot be electrified.

Quite right, but let's get on with electrification!

Battery option

Hitachi is marketing battery power as a way to bridge gaps in the wiring. A nice little video shows diesel engines coming out of bimodes and batteries going in. That makes sense.

Scotland is already ahead of course. The Scottish report compares traction energy supplies. Their figures equate to energy efficiencies of 83% for electric, 71% for battery while hydrogen could be as low as 30%.

Yes, that is 70% of energy wasted in making hydrogen from electricity (albeit renewable), distributing the gas, and then getting electricity back through fuel cells. Hydrogen will improve but will always lag in the efficiency race. At an online Great Northern Conference in

October, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps enthused about the Tees Valley "hydrogen hub".

It is not just about train trials but "buses, trucks and ships". TDNS would mostly electrify this area, with hydrogen just an interim solution.

Answering a question calling for a rolling programme of electrification and highlighting the much lower efficiency of hydrogen, Mr Shapps admitted that producing hydrogen needs "a lot of power". That's the efficiency issue.

I think, and hope, he understands about green hydrogen, as opposed to dirty hydrogen made from carbon-based fuels.

Freight traffic can also tip the balance towards pure electric traction.

There are pathway options

TDNS says net-zero carbon by 2050 would mean 355 track kilometres of annual wiring, but

this is only about three times what Scotland alone is proposing.

Let us campaign for the highest ambition, and the earliest start, so lessons learnt in recent schemes are carried forward.

The Rail Industry Association has already demonstrated that wiring costs can be cut by 33% to 50% with a rolling programme.

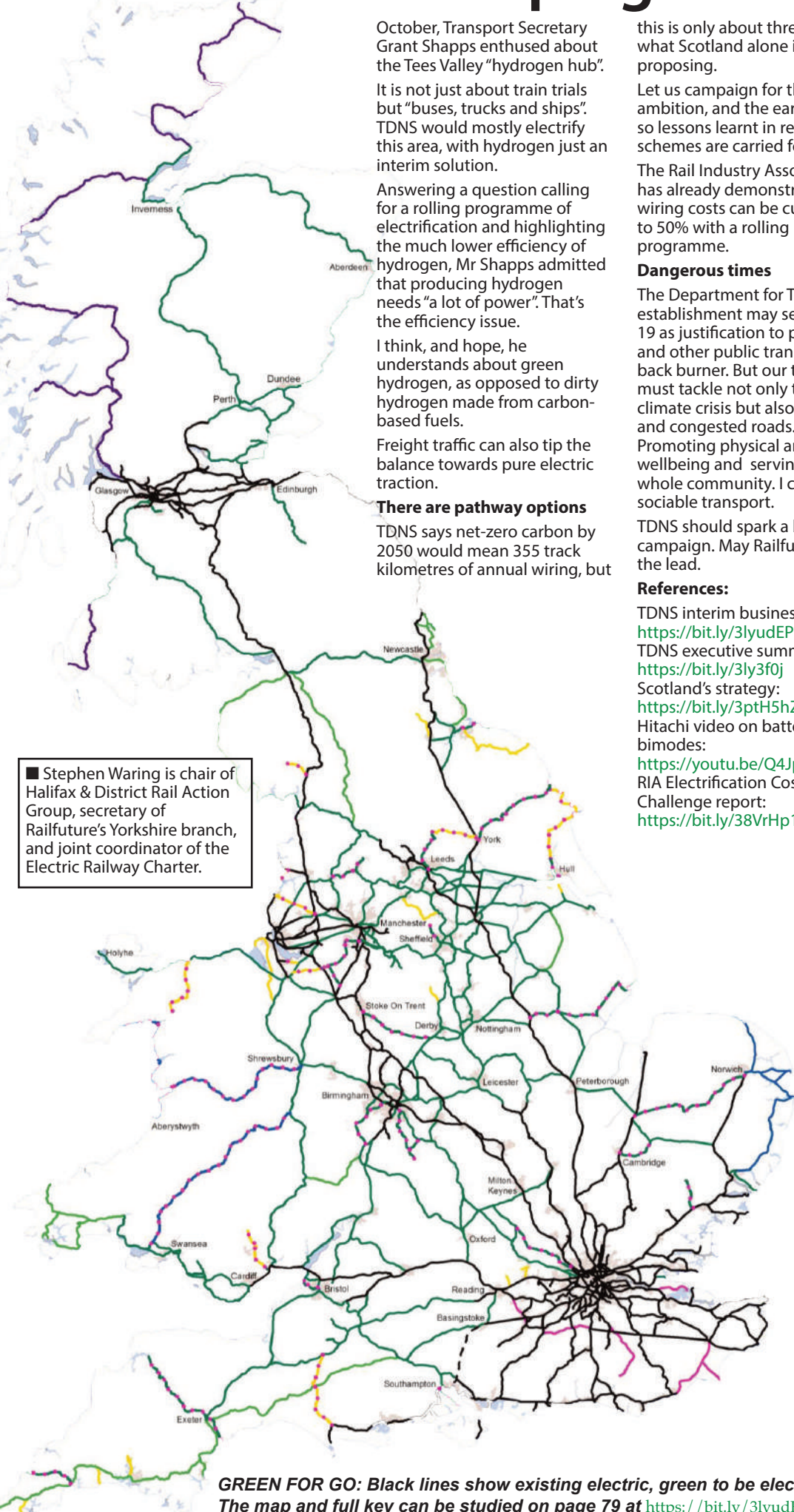
Dangerous times

The Department for Transport establishment may see Covid-19 as justification to put rail and other public transport on a back burner. But our transport must tackle not only the climate crisis but also toxic air and congested roads. Promoting physical and mental wellbeing and serving the whole community. I call it sociable transport.

TDNS should spark a big campaign. May Railfuture take the lead.

References:

TDNS interim business case: <https://bit.ly/3lyudEP>
 TDNS executive summary: <https://bit.ly/3ly3f0j>
 Scotland's strategy: <https://bit.ly/3ptH5hZ>
 Hitachi video on battery bimodes: <https://youtu.be/Q4JpoR0mJlS>
 RIA Electrification Cost Challenge report: <https://bit.ly/38VrHp1>



■ Stephen Waring is chair of Halifax & District Rail Action Group, secretary of Railfuture's Yorkshire branch, and joint coordinator of the Electric Railway Charter.

GREEN FOR GO: Black lines show existing electric, green to be electrified
 The map and full key can be studied on page 79 at <https://bit.ly/3lyudEP>

Map: NETWORK RAIL

Alba

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■ ■ Is this really the way to make progress?

Progress Rail is a long-established producer of specialist rail parts for points and crossings, and recently moved to take over a former computer factory near Linlithgow to make specialist castings and computer-controlled parts. It holds over a thousand physical pattern moulds as well as computerised virtual patterns. Rail operators hope to use standard parts for new track but existing trackwork often needs individually made parts. Network Rail, however, has reportedly given five-year contracts to foreign manufacturers, putting Progress Rail at risk. This is a tragedy for the workforce but is probably also a serious strategic error.

■ ■ Rail Action Group East of Scotland

Rail Action Group East of Scotland reports that progress is being made with the new stations at East Linton and Reston, which are now out to consultation. To accommodate the new stations, a revised East Coast main line timetable is being developed. Transport Scotland is talking to cross-border operators who may serve Reston station. <https://bit.ly/3kxKl8h> gives you a virtual tour of the proposed station at East Linton with links to documents and the planning application. <https://bit.ly/36FEMQI> gives information on the Reston station project.

■ ■ Levenmouth trackwork under way

Removal of vegetation on the Levenmouth trackbed has begun, and onsite equipment installed to enable geological and ground investigations, an encouraging step towards Levenmouth being put back on the rail network. People will be able to travel by rail to work and for leisure, which will boost the local economy. It will also provide better access to employment and education opportunities and expanded social and leisure options for people all across the area. For the public consultation, four site

options have been selected for each of Leven and Cameron Bridge station sites, now awaiting input and final decisions. It is hoped that momentum can be maintained so that the next stage, known as GRIP, is not delayed further.

■ ■ Longannet powers to a rail future

Spanish company TALGO is set to build a train manufacturing plant at Longannet, Fife, with the creation of 1,000 jobs, though the timescale for building the site will depend upon securing a tender and the client's timescale. TALGO is currently on the shortlist to provide trains for the H52 railway project, a contract worth £2.7 billion. It is one of a number of projects around the world that TALGO is currently pursuing.

Once a bid has been accepted, work will begin on the Longannet train plant on the site of what was Scotland's largest thermal power station.

The Scottish Government has outlined its intentions for a rail research hub at Longannet, which will build on the country's existing strengths and plans towards decarbonisation.

A spokesperson said: "We intend to establish an international rail cluster in Scotland to unlock supply chain opportunities from this action plan." It is hoped this exciting project will link the West Fife villages into the Fife Circle, the East Coast main line and, in the other direction, through to Alloa, Stirling and Glasgow.

■ ■ St Andrews reopening step forward

The St Andrews *Case for Change*, produced by consultants Stantec was accepted in October by Transport Scotland. The report notes the particular pressures on St Andrews, emphasising that it is no ordinary town. 35 options are identified, 10 of which relate to public transport and include conventional trains as well as tram trains. These options will be assessed during the next stage of the STAG, the Initial Options Appraisal, which is now under

Scotland

way and is expected to be completed by the end of December. While the *Case for Change* was carried out before Covid-19, the effects of the pandemic will shape the next stage. Like many popular destinations, St Andrews has experienced an influx of visitors, mostly by private car, and in addition a key bridge on the main arterial road into the town has had to undergo repairs, not yet completed, which severely disrupted traffic in and out of the town. These occurrences only served to underline the vulnerability of one of Scotland's key attractions to disruption, it being only accessible by road.

The full report can be found on the Rail Reports page on the StARLink website: <http://www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/page8/page8.html>

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 Beattock Station Action Group: www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/
 St Andrews Rail Link campaign (StARLink): www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/
[facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign](https://www.facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign)
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 Newburgh Train Station campaign: <http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/>
 Forth Rail Link (*Dunfermline-Kinross-Alloa*): www.forthraillink.com
[facebook.com/forthraillink/](https://www.facebook.com/forthraillink/)
 Thornhill Station Action Group: chrisandmimi@supanet.com
 Bonnybride Railway Campaign: <http://bonnybridgerailway.scot>
www.facebook.com/bonnybridgerailway

Atlas can be smarter than a phone in your hand

BOOK REVIEW by Richard Lysons

The Rail Atlas Great Britain And Ireland is known in the rail world as "the Bible" and the publishers proudly describe it as "the most accurate, reliable and up to date guide to the current railway network in the British Isles".

It distinguishes between single lines, multi-track lines, preserved lines, freight terminals, stations, lines under construction, proposed lines and depots.

Stuart K. Baker aimed his first *Rail Atlas* in 1977 at both the professional and enthusiast. There have since been 14 editions and 10 reprints.

This 15th edition was published in spring 2020 and has already been reprinted.

My well-thumbed copy of an earlier edition has accompanied me on umpteen rail journeys, particularly when I was researching community rail tourism projects. The hardback atlas is slightly smaller than A4, easily fits in a small rucksack or shoulder bag and is robust for

repeated use. This 15th edition's publication was delayed because of Stuart Baker's illness. It is sad to report that Stuart Baker died in early November.

Baker acknowledged the contribution of editor Joe Brown for this edition and Brown also thanks a host of helpers, not least the *Branch Line News* team. Joe Brown credits the 5th edition with "piquing" his interest in mapping railways. Baker and Brown made an excellent team.

It has been interesting to see the reaction of fellow passengers to the sight of the *Rail Atlas* open in front of me on train journeys.

Most assume that I can quote engine numbers and such like. Not guilty, your honour! But I do like to know where my train is going and the features along the line.

On one occasion, when I was travelling between Manchester and Liverpool, a nervous young woman asked me if our train would stop at Runcorn East. I

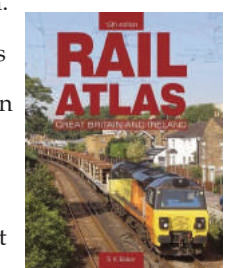
explained that it would not and suggested she changed trains at Newton-le-Willows. Like nearly every other passenger, her eyes were firmly focused on her smartphone. She appeared to regard the fractured information on her phone as definitive.

Eventually, after I showed her the relevant pages of the *Rail Atlas*, she realised her mistake.

A map can equal a thousand words. Like many *Railwatch* readers and Railfuture members, I have found the Covid-19 lockdown frustrating, so this new edition of the

Rail Atlas has been for armchair reading and planning, rather than a travel companion. The Greater London area now has its own section of two dozen pages with detailed maps.

As joint co-ordinator of the Electric Railway Charter campaign to electrify the Calder Valley lines, the double page



electrification map continues to be fascinating. One cannot help noticing that south-east England and central Scotland still have most of the electric services.

Let us hope that in the next edition of the atlas some of the red non-electrified lines will have changed colour. As always, corrections and additions for future editions are welcomed.

The atlas is an ideal Christmas gift and reminds us of the joys and potential of rail travel.

I encourage you to purchase the atlas and other books through the new uk.bookshop.org website, which helps our much-loved independent bookshops.

I cannot wait to take this essential book on a long train journey again!

Rail Atlas Great Britain and Ireland. 15th Edition (hardback). S.K. Baker. Edited by Joe Brown. Crecy Publishing 2020 ISBN 978-0-86093-681-7 £20

■ Richard Lysons is chair of the Friends of Littleborough Stations

Chocolate and cheese – fuel for the future?

Railfuture chair Chris Page and vice-president Paul Abell report on an interesting development

This new light rail vehicle could be dismissed as just one small step forward.

But it quietly impressed when it was shown off, and could have big implications over the next 10 years.

The Bristol biomethane ultra light railcar is remarkable for its ultra quiet operation, even on starting.

The vehicle may be familiar to rail campaigners as the Parry People Mover which operated on the Bristol harbour lines in 1998-2000.

Now it is powered by a Ford MSG425 four-cylinder 2.5 litre engine converted to run on biomethane.

The demonstration took place in July before a group of invited guests, including the two of us, at Quinton Rail Technology Centre at Long Marston, five miles south of Stratford-upon-Avon.

The biomethane used at Long Marston came from a mixture of chocolate waste and cheese waste. This widely available source of energy is otherwise lost into the atmosphere.

An advantage of biomethane is that it avoids the harmful particulates typically emitted by internal combustion engines using traditional fuels.

Moves are afoot to conduct biomethane-powered public trials on one of the lines around Ironbridge. The present test vehicle is mounted on a single bogie, but production vehicles are planned to be mounted on two of these bogies.

The project is supported by UK Research and Innovation, a non-departmental research arm of the government, as well as the Department for Transport.

The ultra light vehicle is also backed by manufacturers, the Institute for Design and Economic Acceleration at Birmingham City University, and the Centre for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Technology at Dudley College of Technology.

Practicalities

The biomethane is produced using an anaerobic digester, which typically delivers a product containing around 70% methane. This is refined to give a fuel which is 98% methane. However the biogas from the anaerobic digester also typically



LIGHT FANTASTIC: Fuelled by biomethane, the ultra light railcar in action at Long Marston



FILL IT UP: Christopher Maltin, director of Biomethane Ltd, refuelling the ultra light rail vehicle

contains around 30% carbon dioxide, together with a small amount of water vapour and hydrogen sulphide, which at present is unfortunately vented to the atmosphere.

Although carbon dioxide is produced both from the process and from the engine, biomethane is green to the extent that the carbon dioxide has previously been captured from the atmosphere. In addition, if the waste that produced the biomethane had been allowed to decompose naturally, both

carbon dioxide and the even more aggressive greenhouse gas – methane – would have been released into the atmosphere.

The Committee for Climate Change, an independent statutory body advising the government, is in favour of biomethane, though with an emphasis on using it in applications such as industrial process heating, and a recommendation that its use for surface transport should be phased out in the 2030s, to make way for widespread adoption of

electric and hydrogen-fuelled vehicles. Given the life span of railway rolling stock, this has negative implications, but otherwise biomethane looks an attractive option, even if mainly as a retrofit to existing diesel traction.

The fuel for the Long Marston demonstration was delivered by a trailer of biomethane cylinders, but for more extensive operations it would seem more practical to follow the example of Nottingham buses and Waitrose trucks and use compressed natural gas from the national grid, with an equivalent amount of biomethane being fed into the national grid at the anaerobic digester.

Comparisons with the other new fuels being promoted at present are tricky but, unlike hydrogen, where the hopes of cheap overnight production seem to be disappearing with the need to recharge a flood of electric road vehicles, biomethane is available now in quantity, is easily transported, and could be brought into use as a replacement for diesel quickly and cheaply.

Concerns about hydrogen are reinforced in a recent study of climate-neutral traction technology by Germany's Association for Electrical, Electronic and Information Technologies.

This concludes that hydrogen traction is significantly more expensive than battery power to buy, operate and maintain. Hence biomethane could be the way forward for low-intensity rail routes that are too long for batteries.

Toyota backs hybrid train

The Japanese car and bus company Toyota is co-operating with East Japan Railway and train builder Hitachi to develop technology using batteries and hydrogen fuel cells powerful enough for a two-coach train. The hybrid advanced vehicle will have a top speed of 60 mph.

Pictures: PAUL ABELL

Yorkshire

Sheffield stations

Local MPs have applied to the Government's *Reverse Beeching* fund to reopen local stations between Dore & Totley and Sheffield, with a possible station at Totley Brook, as well as to install turning facilities at Dore & Totley.

Electrification needed

Sheffield station taxi rank is the second worst place in England for nitrogen dioxide pollution levels, according to Friends of the Earth in July 2020. This is yet another justification for urgent electrification of the Midland main line.

Staff shortages

Railfuture members and rail user group representatives met Northern Trains for an online session in early November. Staff shortages because of Covid-19 have caused problems at ticket offices and signalling centres. Delays in drivers' route learning could delay the introduction of upgraded York-Scarborough services next year. The problem of autumn leaves has reduced this year, following the demise of the unloved Pacer trains.

Goole-Leeds plea

Railfuture Yorkshire had a letter published in the *Yorkshire Post* calling for better train services from Goole to Leeds and calling for a new service via Pontefract, a route which has been neglected

for 40 years, probably because it passes through different local authority areas.

Competition from buses

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris visited Hull Paragon station in September to open a new cycle hub, where e-bikes can be charged. The month before, East Yorkshire Buses launched new double-deck vehicles designed to carry bikes on its X46 York-Beverley-Hull route. See picture below.

Accelerated roads?

Rail campaigners are concerned that the Government's newly created "strategic" Northern Transport Acceleration Council may prioritise road travel, rather than local rail services and rail electrification.

Open access plea for aid

Rail union RMT has called for Government support for essential services run by open-access operators Grand Central and Hull Trains, which announced a complete closure of services for the November Covid-19 lockdown. Railfuture Yorkshire chair Nina Smith has asked her MP, Craig Whittaker, to intervene on this issue.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch
Twitter: @RailfutureYorks



BIKES ON BUSES: East Yorkshire Buses launched its new X46 double-deck vehicles to an admiring audience in Hull in August

Rail champion Greta dismisses Trump

People who have Asperger's syndrome and autism are crucial in campaigning against climate change, said rail champion Greta Thunberg. "We are not stuck in this social game of avoiding important issues," she told *The Observer*. "We dare to ask questions." Greta is dismissive of her critics – President Trump, Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro and Russia's Vladimir Putin. "They have no arguments left," she said. "This is a crisis completely based on scientific consensus but they try to focus on something else." The documentary film *I Am Greta* was released in cinemas in October. It can be watched on a variety of online hubs at <https://www.iamgreta.film/>

◆◆◆◆ Recruit a new member for Railfuture

West Midlands



IMPRESSION: The planned Wolverhampton interchange

colin.major@railfuture.org.uk

Executive discussions

Railfuture developed its excellent relationship with West Midlands Rail Executive in an October meeting with its executive director, the head of rail development, the business development manager and the franchise delivery manager who oversees train operator West Midlands Trains. We discussed Covid-19, future timetabling, *Restoring Your Railways* bids, the HS2 integrated rail plan, updates on new stations including Midlands Rail Hub and the infrastructure needed to deliver this. WMRE is reviewing its rail investment strategy and Railfuture is being consulted..

Railfuture open meeting

Railfuture West Midlands held an online meeting for members in October, where the attendees reported their Covid-19 train travelling experiences and gave suggestions for future campaigns. Member Owen O'Neill gave a stimulating presentation comparing his ideas for rail development in the next 20 years with those of the West Midlands Mayor's 2040 Vision for rail and tram.

Hydrogen power

The first UK main line running of a hydrogen train – the Porterbrook HydroFLEX – took place on the Cotswold line in Worcestershire. We also have the Birmingham Hydrogen Hub at Tyseley Energy Park, which is opposite the Tyseley railway depot. The park has a megawatt electrolyser producing hydrogen gas, powered by two "energy from waste" units, with sufficient gas to supply Birmingham hydrogen buses and to refuel two three-car trains. There are plans for a much larger electrolyser capable of providing power for more than 25 trains via a 250 metre pipeline to the railway depot.

Wolverhampton station

Having completed phase one of the train, tram and bus interchange at Wolverhampton, phase two is under way with completion expected early next year. The

interchange project has been shortlisted for construction project of the year and for the sustainability award at the Insider's West Midlands Property Awards 2020.

Walsall link campaign

Railfuture's long-running campaign to restore passenger services on the electrified route from Walsall to Wolverhampton is bearing fruit in a Black Country area with badly congested roads. Planning consent was given for two new railway stations at Darlaston and Willenhall, and an invitation to tender was issued for building the stations with a view to appointing a contractor in the spring. When they open in 2023, the stations will offer the people of Darlaston and Willenhall vastly improved connections to Wolverhampton and Walsall, as well as to Birmingham New Street.

Railway jobs on offer

West Midlands Combined Authority is funding training for unemployed people to learn rail track maintenance skills. Initially 16 people are aiming for City & Guilds Level 2 qualification in track maintenance, after which they will be guaranteed a job interview with a local employer and the prospect of building a career in a sector facing significant skills shortages.

Coventry bay platform

Railfuture is protesting that in the rebuilding of Coventry station, work on the bay platform (which would provide improved services to Nuneaton and Leicester) was omitted. In response to Railfuture, Coventry's director of highways and transportation said: "We decided that to ensure visitors coming to our city in 2021/2 do not arrive at a building site, we would de-couple the bay platform from the rest of the project – with the delivery of the bay platform to take place after City of Culture." Railfuture is working with Network Rail to find low-cost options for the bay platform and with the Department for Transport to ensure sufficient funding.

www.railfuture.org.uk/WestMidlandsBranch

railwatch December 2020 21

Picture: HILSON MORAN

roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ South East future rail

Transport for the South East is one of seven "sub national" bodies created to devise transport strategies not limited by existing local authority areas. In theory that is good for rail planning so Railfuture welcomed the opportunity to take part in TfSE area forums. Railfuture's aim is to ensure rail infrastructure upgrades form part of TfSE's 2024 strategic investment plan.

■ ■ Our better railway

Network Rail has included four schemes – Croydon area remodelling, Euston station regeneration, Uckfield line electrification and Ash Vale Access for All – as demonstrator projects aiming to cut delivery times and costs.

■ ■ Planning ahead

Railfuture is working on a "Prospectus of Thameslink-Southern-Great Northern, post-GTR" and a "Prospectus for the Sussex Coastways".

■ ■ Updates from LSE

London and South East branch members can subscribe free to our monthly e-newsletter *inter-railse*. It usefully fills the gap between issues of the quarterly eight-page *raise*, sent to branch members with each *Railwatch*. Both newsletters can be viewed or downloaded from the branch website page, below.

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

The inter-city 'train' from Bedford



BUSTITUTION: Passengers at Bedford travel to Wellingborough

By John Henderson

The town of Bedford has become a crucial rail development centre, with electrification northwards to Corby nearly complete and East West Rail coming soon. Improvements in the Thameslink service have stimulated large housing developments and Bedford Commuters' Association has been at the forefront of passenger campaigns. However BCA is unhappy about changes to inter-city services by East Midlands Trains on the upgraded Midland main line and is lobbying for Bedford's inter-city services to be fully restored. In 2009 BCA succeeded in restoring key peak-time stops at Bedford with the help of MPs. Bus replacement services are currently operating north from Bedford on the Midland main line to Wellingborough while upgrade work

continues. The service to Corby from London will be doubled when a new timetable is introduced in May, with electric class 360 trains drafted in from East Anglia. But, at present, the May 2021 timetable means there will be no direct inter-city services between Bedford and Derby, Nottingham and Sheffield. If so, it will be the first time in 150 years that Bedford will not have inter-city services. Journeys north will require changes at Kettering, involving stairs or lifts, and long connecting waits. BCA believes the changed travelling patterns caused by Covid-19 mean stopping at Bedford. BCA is working with MPs, other rail user groups and Railfuture to make sure that Bedford and other towns receive the full advantage of the newly upgraded main line.

Railwatch reviewer Richard's new 'baby'

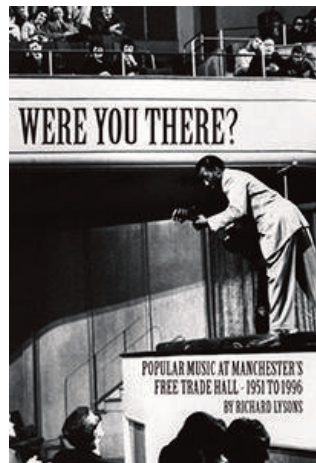
Railwatch book reviewer Richard Lysons' first book was published in November.

Were You There? Popular Music At Manchester's Free Trade Hall 1951-1996 is a high-quality hardback that is a fascinating and reliable reference book as well as an accessible and entertaining read.

Richard writes for *Rochdale Style* magazine and was chief researcher for the highly acclaimed *Discover Amazing Women by Rail* booklet.

This is the first time that a complete history of popular music concerts at the Free Trade Hall has ever been written. The information is unavailable elsewhere.

Richard said: "My book is ideal



for these dark and wet lockdown days and nights, as well as an imaginative Christmas present for any pop, rock, folk, blues, jazz, world music or Manchester music fan.

"The book features exclusive photographs by Brian Smith who attended the historic American Folk Blues Festival gigs in the 1960s."

The author, who is joint co-ordinator of the Electric Railway Charter campaign to electrify the Calder Valley lines, is praised by the world's leading rock music biographer, Clinton Heylin, for his meticulous research.

Were You There? is available for £20 (post free) directly from the publishers, Empire Publications: www.empire-uk.com/FTH Richard encourages *Railwatch* readers to resist any temptation to buy "via a wide South American river", although *Were You There?* will also be available later as a Kindle e-book.



Picture: TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS

REASSURANCE: Overnight cleaning on board a TransPennine Express train. TPE recruited 57 extra cleaning staff in October as part of a £1.7 million boost to its 'robust' train and station cleaning programme. Toilet attendants were also being recruited for Huddersfield, Hull and Manchester Airport stations

Chair's column by Chris Page

Diet for a fitter railway

The Railfuture webinar in October was incredibly successful, attracting three times the attendance of the national conference last year. While this opens an opportunity for Railfuture to engage with more people and be financially sustainable, ironically it also illustrates the problem now facing the railways – the people who took part did not travel to the meeting by train. The webinar explored the theme of attracting passengers back to rail. If you missed it, you can watch the recording by following the link on the Railfuture website. At the start of the webinar, over 60% felt safe travelling by train, and by the end over 80% said they felt safe.

Our branches and groups day meeting of active members was also held virtually, covering our five key campaign topics: Attracting passengers back to rail, fares and ticketing, electrification, industry structure and Restoring Your Railway. For our position on each of these topics, see www.railfuture.org.uk/campaigns.

At the webinar 70% felt that the rail industry and the Government should do more to attract passengers back to rail, but since then the number of Covid-19 cases has increased exponentially. Now is not the right time to call for incentives to travel, so our campaign will focus on the evidence that it is safe to use the railways and how the rail companies are encouraging social distancing and keeping trains and stations clean.

CrossCountry Trains is the operator where fare anomalies are greatest, so the three-year contract it has just been given sets the target timescale for the Government to sort out fare anomalies

by introducing single-leg pricing as proposed by the Rail Delivery Group. Covid-19 has given a boost to rail's new competitor – technology, which enables people to work from home effectively. Clearly many people cannot work from home, and post Covid-19 even those who can may not want to work from home all the time. Nevertheless this new competitor will have a major impact on rail revenue, to which the rail industry and the Government

must adapt, responding to new customer needs. Government must take the lead, accepting that carnet tickets or flexible seasons are necessary to encourage commuters back, otherwise the drop in revenue will be even greater than feared.

The rail industry needs to go on a diet. Rail development costs too much, while passengers (and taxpayers who do not use trains) believe fares are too expensive, even though they do not cover operating costs. The industry must be reshaped after Covid-19 to achieve the best possible balance of cost and revenue, which will come from improved efficiency, not from chopping bits off the network. Whatever new industry structure the Government creates must provide the necessary incentives to achieve that balance.

Those at the branches and groups day voted to focus on modal shift of passengers and freight as our key campaign objective, seeing rebuilding the economy as the argument most likely to win support for rail investment in a rolling programme of electrification to reduce both operating cost and carbon emissions, and restoring rail lines which will enable housing development and reconnect people to work, education and a social life.



In Brief

Amtrak Joe

Rail campaigners in the USA welcomed the presidential election of Joe Biden, a commuter who is know railways need long-term investment in railways to combat climate change and congestion and has said: "American needs trains."

Bookshops close

Ian Allan has now closed all its bookshops. At one time Ian Allan had shops in London, Cardiff, Birmingham and Manchester. The last one to close was the shop in London, close to Waterloo station, which shut up shop in September. Many Railfuture members will mourn the passing of the shops but it also means we now have no outlets where *Railwatch* can be sold to members of the public. So Railfuture members are asked to find possible outlets for *Railwatch*, perhaps cafes or community venues. We can offer good rates

which allow the outlets to make money. We want as many members of the general public as possible to see Railfuture's news and views.

Please contact *Railwatch* editor Ray King at 020 8985 8548, editor@railwatch.org.uk or write to 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU. We can follow up your tips.

Lincolnshire member Graham Lilley is providing 50 copies of *Railwatch* for passengers at Sleaford station as an experiment after reaching an agreement with rail staff. Maybe you can persuade your local station to do something similar.

2021 AGM

Railfuture is committed to a 2021 annual general meeting. It will be held as late as possible to maximise the chances of a physical meeting. The provisional date is 10 July at a venue in the Birmingham area. The meeting will be held virtually if Covid-19 restrictions are in force.

Regional rail

Developing a regional rail network in South America is now a priority for the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. Founding countries (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica) have been joined by Panama, Dominican Republic and Belize, aided by Mexico, Taiwan, Argentina, Colombia, Spain and Cuba.

HS2 trees

More than 100 saplings have been grafted from an ancient pear tree which was felled in October to make way for HS2 at Cubbington, near Leamington Spa. So far 40 of the saplings have been planted in the area around Cubbington, in vicarages and school playgrounds.

Railfuture webinar

The Railfuture webinar held in October is available to watch online at <https://bit.ly/3kRg58R>

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railfuture

campaigning for a bigger, better railway

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Email: renewals@railfuture.org.uk

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THE BEAUTY OF TRAIN TRAVEL IN SCOTLAND: The 10.10 train from Mallaig to Fort William and Glasgow Queen Street, a pair of class 156 diesel multiple units passing Loch Eilt on 15 October. The A830 is on the far side of the loch

Flawed algorithms emasculate rail

By Peter Bryson

Over the past two decades, all of the studies for reopening the 12-mile-long Skipton to Colne line have underestimated its obvious real potential for generating considerable amounts of new passenger traffic.

Thus, like the Scottish Borders campaign, the Skipton and East Lancs Rail Action Partnership has been confronting a classic case of "The computer says no" (*Railwatch* 165).

Those traditional modelling techniques, for example the Department for Transport's passenger demand forecasting handbook, webtag and benefit-cost ratio techniques, were simply not able to handle our truly transformational transport opportunity.

To break this stalemate, SELRAP recently commissioned its own study, by world-class engineering consultancy Arup. Arup was asked to provide more accurate forecasts of passenger numbers who could and would use our "missing link". This new Arup study conclusively

demonstrates that the predicted passenger numbers will be far higher than the earlier forecasts, admittedly with a wider than originally expected range of numbers.

Thus, the Arup study strongly correlates with the results which Dr Marcus Young obtained during his own, different, study of the reopened Borders Railway (also *Railwatch* 165).

I will confess that we have all found that park and ride numbers at an all-new railhead are a particularly difficult situation to model.

Furthermore, and frankly very worryingly, the SELRAP campaign has only now realised that these traditional modelling techniques, especially the Department for Transport's two key algorithms of webtag and BCR (benefit to cost ratio), are inherently biased towards pumping ever more transport investment into the already wealthy regions of Britain.

It is a vicious circle. The algorithms automatically assume that poor people will never, ever

want to travel by train, so a non-existent existing service means nobody can travel by train.

But, without having access to good employment opportunities, the residents will remain forever poor. The end result is that these antiquated algorithms simply refuse to invest in better rail transport in very large towns with lots of poor people.

Therefore, the antiquated computer not only always says no, it continues to revalidate all of its previous mistakes.

Accordingly, SELRAP believes that the repeated use of these traditional transport modelling techniques has left the UK's poorest regions, especially the big highly marginalised towns Up North – the so-called Red Wall of East Lancashire – to become ever more isolated and thus increasingly poor.

Therefore, for this Government to deliver on its manifesto promises to Level Up the UK, it must urgently address the inherent and severe bias within these now-outdated forecasting

algorithms. We believe that the railway industry must now start using modern, and thus more accurate, forecasting techniques.

SELRAP's Arup report can be downloaded from the website www.selrap.org.uk

■ Peter Bryson is chair of the Skipton and East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership

Pass it on

The best way to recycle *Railwatch* is to pass it on to a friend who may be interested in railways and tempted to join Railfuture.

Eco-friendly

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