

Local action



East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
A.Kay@lboro.ac.uk

Punctuality

The train operators in the region are still struggling to consistently maintain pre-Hatfield levels of punctuality. June was a bad month. For the four weeks to 23 June, Midland Mainline only managed a 78.2% punctuality record, although it says this should improve now its HSTs have been given new or reconditioned engines. Central Trains managed over 91% punctuality in its East Midlands and Lincolnshire service group, but their other sectors performed less satisfactorily.

Market Harborough

Market Harborough has an active rail users group which has established a good relationship with senior management at Midland Mainline. The MHRUG is particularly concerned about reliability, which was discussed at a meeting in July; further meetings are planned. Railfuture East Midlands has long considered that Market Harborough should be a priority for infrastructure improvements on the Midland main line, in particular because of its tight curve. The problems of a short (five-coach) platform were to a great extent alleviated when Turbostars were introduced.

No information

The recently opened Luton Airport Parkway has an hourly MML service and a frequent Thameslink service. However, information on the rail services is very well concealed in the airport terminal. Easyjet, one of the major users of the airport, get two cheers: they vigorously promote the Thameslink service to London and Gatwick, but their publicity doesn't even acknowledge the existence of the MML services; don't they want customers from the East Midlands? A Supersaver from Loughborough to Luton Airport Parkway costs £22, exactly the same as a return ticket on the Heathrow Express, despite being five times the distance – so if MML are providing such a good deal, why aren't they marketing it?

MML improvements

Midland Mainline is seeking £60million worth of infrastructure improvements, but is concerned about Railtrack's ability to deliver. It is also in the process of deciding on the next generation of 125mph diesel units to run on the improved track.

Become a Friend of the Railway Children



GIVE THEM A FUTURE



A charity has been set up in Britain to help some of the estimated 150 million homeless children around the world. The Railway Children targets its help on those runaways and abandoned youngsters who live in or around railway stations. Its Action Stations newsletter gives updates on how it is helping, pointing out that £1 feeds a child in India for a week while £100 provides a year's medical supplies for 15 young girls in a Calcutta night shelter. The charity says that young people arriving at London rail stations have an average of 20 minutes before they are approached by an "undesirable", while in India, children as young as six beg or act as porters to support themselves. If you would like to help children to have a better future, you can send a donation to The Railway Children, Charity Registration No 1058991, Breedon House, Edleston Road, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 7EA. You can also make a regular Gift Aid commitment which allows The Railway Children to reclaim tax on donations.

CTRL works

Weekend journeys from the East Midlands to London will be affected by the Channel Tunnel fast link works at St Pancras over the next few years. Timetable changes will start with the 2001-2 winter timetable, with MML trains terminating at Luton on 29-30 September 2001 and 20-21 October 2001.

Corby hope

A feasibility study into the possibility of reviving a regular passenger service over Harringworth Viaduct is under way. The service could link London to Nottingham via a reopened station at Corby. Regular service over the viaduct stopped in the Beeching era but the line has remained open for freight and as a diversionary route. The rail plan was supported by Labour MP Phil Hope who predicted that the Government would open the way to Corby regaining a rail service.

Correction

In the June Railwatch it was stated that Central Trains is not currently recruiting staff, and that there would be consequent deterioration in CT's services. This information was accepted in good faith by the East Midlands branch but has turned out to be wrong. Regarding CT's recruitment policy, managing director Andy Cooper has informed us that "in the last 21 months only one post has been challenged; in every other case recruitment has been sanctioned". The branch would like to apologise to CT for our error.

Lincolnshire

By Phil Mason
fastrack@cottesmorepress.
fsbusiness.co.uk

The August meeting of the Lincolnshire branch discussed the decision by the Government to offer GNER only a two-year extension to its franchise instead of a 20-year deal.

The initial reaction of many members was absolute disbelief and disappointment.

The Government must come clean and explain its intentions. It has let down both GNER and Virgin, GNER employees and customers. Such behaviour in re-negotiating the franchise appears to have been conducted with total disregard to commercial ethics.

All the spin on increased investment in our railway would appear to have had no substance. Even more disgusting is using Hatfield as one of the



excuses for not offering a long franchise. The Hatfield accident happened nine months ago and maintenance of the present track has little to do with a 20-year franchise with a new or extensively upgraded route.

Is there a hidden agenda to renationalise? By starving investment and running the system down, using the train operators and Railtrack as the scapegoats, the only way to "save" the system would be for the Government to step in with a rescue package – a kind of post-war scenario.

It will be interesting to see GNER's proposals for new trains and a better service for customers over an extra two years. They've hardly time to order and commission new trains. The Class 91 electrics are being re-engineered along with the IC125 power cars, and there are plans to refurbish the Mk IV coaches, yet if GNER fails to win a longer term franchise after 2005, it will only feel the benefit for three years or so, even though they've had all the problems of operating a service with a reduced fleet while modification work is carried out. The only apparent option for new trains is to hire more of the unused regional Eurostars which languish at North Pole depot.

I have recently seen a copy of Sea Containers (GNER parent company) house newspaper, and reading about the huge scale of their global operation, one has to wonder how long it will be before the group loses patience with the UK Government and pulls out altogether.

The Government has handed Railfuture a campaign on a plate. Mr Byers has exposed himself to criticism and must explain his decision. Would a starting point be a standard letter with membership details to all local newspapers on the GNER route? A short time ago, it looked as though the situation was becoming stable with more investment coming on stream and opportunities to encourage people to get out of their cars and use the new trains.

We seem to be back at square one with nothing to entice prospective rail users.

Midlands

Steam

The steam-hauled Shakespeare Express is running again this summer between Birmingham, Henley and Stratford, every Sunday until 30 September. Details from Vintage Trains on

0121 707 4696 which runs steam excursions to other places.

Through trains

Chiltern Railways now run through trains from London Marylebone to Stourbridge Junction. There are four weekday trains and the day return fare of £24 is available on the 08.24 from Stourbridge.

£10 return

Chiltern also offer a cheap return ticket, anywhere on its network (for instance Marylebone to Birmingham) after 10.00 for only £10 for over-55-year-olds.

Flyover

West Coast Railtrack plans to bring back into use the flyover at Nuneaton to allow Leicester-Birmingham trains to use Nuneaton station without delaying main line trains. A new dive-under is also to be built. The plans are subject to a public inquiry.

Warwick Parkway

Both Central Trains and Thames Trains continue to ignore the new station at Warwick Parkway which is only served by Chiltern Railways at present. If all the operators used the station it would be much more useful. If the rail industry was not fragmented, train services at this station would develop naturally, serving the needs of all potential passengers – long distance and local, car drivers and non-motorists. Only when the train companies cooperate can Warwick Parkway begin to function fully.

Consultants Halcrow say the station has achieved a modal shift from cars to trains of up to 15%. The study was funded by the Highways Agency and Warwickshire County Council four weeks after the station opened last year. The station had reduced overall car use by diverting London-bound travellers to use rail but it had also generated some local car traffic. Halcrow is working with Social Research Associates at other parkway sites to assess their effectiveness. A pilot study was undertaken at Bristol Parkway and others will cover Birmingham International, Haddenham and Thame Parkway and Tiverton Parkway.

Freight potential

Plans to reopen the Rugby-Southam line could remove thousands of lorries from local roads and, according to Rugby MP Andy King, could be the beginning of the end of 45 years of misery for local people. A revised planning application is being submitted this autumn by Rugby Cement.

Metro expansion

Proposed extensions to the Midland Metro were discussed at a meeting in May attended by several Railfuture representatives and about 80 other people. The meeting decided that the best options for extensions were:

1. From Five Ways to Quinton, continuing to either Halesowen, Langley Green or Bartley Green.
2. From the present terminus at St George's through Wolverhampton city centre to New Cross Hospital, Wednesfield and Walsall.
3. Birmingham city centre to Birmingham International Airport via Coventry Road.

Scotland

By David Hansen

david@spidacom.co.uk

News on the railways in Scotland is patchy. Freight is growing steadily, but there is little good news on the passenger front.

Freight grants are the key to levelling the playing field slightly.

The former Scottish Office refused to pay any of these grants, presumably as they

might undermine their huge road building programme.

To their credit the Scottish Executive have been steadily paying out these grants. For this they deserve congratulations.

On the passenger front the Scottish Executive deserve little congratulation. They have failed to open one centimetre of real passenger railway so far, or provide any new services. They are keen on building a funicular railway up a hill though, apparently the only rail project with real backing from the Scottish Executive.

Roads rule ok!

The centrepiece of the Scottish Executive's transport aspirations is an elevated motorway through churches, factories and houses in a deprived part of Glasgow, the M74 extension. The M5 and M6 in Birmingham or the A40(M) in London are comparable, but it appears that the Scottish Executive is caught in a time warp in proposing such an outdated "solution" and has learnt nothing. The M74 is not the only large scale road scheme by any means.

On passenger railways the Executive has asked for yet another study of the Borders

**50% OFF
ETA MEMBERSHIP**

AA, RAC or ETA?

The environmental choice.

Call 0800 212 810 Today

Quoting reference number 12701003

Established ten years ago as an ethical alternative to the AA and RAC, the ETA offers a wide range of insurance services to its members at extremely competitive prices. The ETA actively campaigns for a sustainable transport system for Britain and also co-ordinates ETA Green Transport Week and National Car Free Day.

www.eta.co.uk

The motoring organisation that won't cost the Earth

Local action



railway, which would cost less than three kilometres of the M74. They did not ask for similar studies of the M74 and such studies as there are, like the Scottish "Enterprise" one, were exposed as bogus a long time ago.

The Larkhall scheme appeared to be a pawn in the M74 campaign. The Executive is currently considering, urgently we are told, a business case for Larkhall. I have yet to hear of a business case being examined for a new road, another example of the non-level playing field.

Edinburgh Crossrail is being progressed slowly, Stirling-Alloa appears to be stuck. The lack of progress on passenger railways is notable and in marked contrast to the well-oiled road building machine. Fine words on transport do not get railway services operating; that requires people who can make things happen.

One of the biggest laughs are multi-modal studies. The insincerity of the Scottish Executive on these is best illustrated by the fact that they have proceeded with many large scale road schemes without such studies. Even where there is a study this is officially called a study on the road concerned, not the area. An Edinburgh-Glasgow study might inspire confidence that the study was going to examine options properly. The M8 study inspires no such confidence.

Good news

The railways in Scotland are to be congratulated on the speed at which they are installing TPWS. On the ECML the track equipment commences north of Berwick and runs along the ECML through Fife, with a few

gaps. A recent trip to Doncaster showed just how patchy TPWS is south of the border. The Edinburgh & Glasgow line has also been fitted and train fitting is progressing. TPWS is not perfect, but it is better than waiting many years for the European Train Control System to be developed and fitted. Well done.

South West

By Gerard Duddridge
G.A.Duddridge@exeter.ac.uk

Westcountry businesses wake up to rail needs

After years of campaigning for road improvements, the recent disruption to rail services in Cornwall and Devon, together with cuts to First Great Western's London services has led to a business leaders' backlash.

The Devon and Cornwall Business Council has written to John Prescott asking him to explain why the Government has pledged significant funds for economic and social regeneration projects in the region but has given improved rail services a low priority. In June, the council delivered First Great Western with a three-month ultimatum to improve reliability or they will not back First Group's bid for a two year extension to their franchise. Matthew Taylor MP has also been reported in the press as boycotting First Great Western's services until they improve.

To be fair to First Great Western, many of their problems are caused by continued speed restrictions imposed by Railtrack, included a five mph limit on one section between Liskeard and Bodmin Parkway which required a 24-hour line-



One small step towards integrated public transport. A bus stop in Taunton, Somerset, which recognises that many bus users want to get to the railway station. Other towns and cities should follow Taunton's example.

side vigil by maintenance staff. There are 55 speed restrictions within the Great Western Zone, but the aim is to remove these by March 2002.

However, there have been some well reported failures from their locomotive hauled fleet, including one of almost an hour in Whiteball tunnel awaiting assistance.

Virgin Trains have also suffered unreliability with their HST power cars failing and locomotive hauled trains running with up to two coaches shorter than usual, leading to overcrowding.

Devon and Cornwall Business Council is asking for improvements to allow higher speeds between Reading and Exeter, extending Heathrow Express to Reading to provide better connections, and the building of an alternative line avoiding Dawlish, aims which already form part of our own rail strategy for the region.

Ivybridge commuters lose evening peak service

As well as reductions in West Cornwall's evening commuter service (*Railwatch 88*), Ivybridge has had its 17.59 from Plymouth retimed to depart at 16.52. The next service leaves Plymouth at 18.28, and is not particularly attractive to the many office workers who need a service between 17.30 and 18.00. Wales and West said the change is because First Great Western

now run a train from Penzance at this time and they have retimed their service to run earlier in order to provide an evenly spaced service. First Great Western cannot stop trains at Ivybridge because the platform is not long enough.

Barnstaple western bypass public inquiry

Railfuture South West and others were left unaware that the Barnstaple western bypass public inquiry was scheduled to start on Tuesday 19 June.

We made our formal objection to the planning application on 21 May 1999 (see *Railwatch 81*), but in the meantime the county granted itself planning permission. A local press article gave us 20-hours notice and it mentioned that Devon County Council's consultants Maunsell Rail were withdrawing their recommendation that the road should be built to allow the Bideford line to reopen.

We attended briefly on the first day and the inquiry inspector Robin Shercliff agreed to read written evidence from us. We sent a letter on 27 June and a detailed report on 19 July. For the Bideford line we have requested that the road is built with the necessary clearance beneath.

If the bridges are not provided now the future cost should be met from council/central government funding, and not that of the developer of the rail route. We have renewed our objection to the proposed pedestrian underpass to Barnstaple station and asked for a line of route to be protected for the Braunton and Ilfracombe line.

Bus-rail links

First Great Western has taken a step forward by producing a map to illustrate their bus-rail links but overall, bus links are deteriorating in Devon.

At the beginning of the summer, five daily buses from Ivybridge railway station to Ermington, Modbury and Bigbury-on-Sea were completely withdrawn, including the one which would have connected with the new London Waterloo service.

The Totnes to Buckfastleigh bus no longer continues to Ashburton, except once a day for schools. A number of buses no longer start from Exeter St Davids station and in North Devon the direct Barnstaple to Westward Ho! service is reduced to hourly.

The cuts were made without warning including the last 19.20 Exeter to Okehampton which remained advertised in the

For sale

Railfuture envelope re-use labels. Pad of 100 £2.95

On Track for the 21st Century. A development plan for the railways of South Wales. Limited print. With A3 fold-out map. Bilingual. £3.50

Station Improvement project report. By Railfuture North East. Shows how a little co-operation and communication can improve everything about travelling by train. Limited print. £3

T-shirts promoting East London Line with motif UP AND RUNNING with a map of line on the back. Available in large or extra large only. Grey with orange and blue lettering. £4.50 each including a free souvenir introduction leaflet

All prices include postage.

Orders and enquiries to Phil Morris (Railfuture Sales), 113b Pembroke Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3EU. Fax 0117 973 4274

Email queries: rdsbooksales@lineone.net

■ Railfuture Sales can supply any Ian Allan or Midland Publishing title, delivered to your door post free. Buy from Railfuture and help Railfuture funds.



National Railway timetable and from National Railway Enquiries.

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright

Thames Trains

Thames Trains managing director Terry Worrall spoke at our branch meeting in June. He provided an update on the franchise and was keen to hear members' views. A visit to Reading depot was offered. Future meetings could involve Virgin Trains and Railfreight.

150 celebrations

Bicester Town saw celebrations in May of the 150th anniversary of the line going through to Oxford. Thames Trains agreed to provide a special fare while Railfuture and the Oxford-Buckingham Rail Action Committee organised publicity and a talk at Islip. The prospect of services to Milton Keynes was welcomed but awaits a decision from the Strategic Rail Authority.

We intend to visit Bicester Military Depot in July for an update on Ministry of Defence freight operation.

50mph top speed

The Bedford-Bletchley line is to be upgraded at a cost of £1.5million but only for 50mph running, from the present 40mph. The Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users Association is not "over excited" at the prospect and points out that even when the line was threatened with closure it was being operated at 60mph.

"This really is not good enough," said chairman Richard Crane. "Passengers and local residents are soon to be subjected to a great deal of upheaval as the work is carried out for very little improvement to the rail service provided."

Line speed should be at least 60mph and preferably 75mph to make a line fit for the 20th century let alone the 21st.

Yet for months, trains approaching Bletchley have been subjected to a 5mph "temporary" speed limit!

To many people, the neglect of lines like this is a scandal. Government officials and politicians should hang their heads in shame for allowing such a situation to develop and then preventing any hope of improvement by claiming the return on such investment is not sufficient. Those responsible should stick their noses up the exhaust pipes of their officially provided cars to realise how important it is that proper investment is



Rail riders, from left to right: Andy Hoines, Robert Hardie, Phil Strong, Graham Moats of the Mid Norfolk Railway, Robert Scully, Clara Zilahi and Phyll Hardie

The early July heatwave broke just as Railfuture members took to their bikes for the annual sponsored cycle ride, writes Clara Zilahi.

But we braved the wet weather to cycle varying distances, mostly 40 to 50 miles. We met at Dereham Station, now providing an excellent buffet, staffed by volunteers.

Since our previous ride to this destination in 1995 the Mid Norfolk Railway has progressed to running weekend trains along the whole Dereham-Wymondham section.

Truly a success, for a railway reopened by hard volunteer labour. After a look round the restored station, some took a ride on the Mid Norfolk to Wymondham Abbey. It was a great way to avoid the rain! The railway has achieved a great deal and it is impressive that it is now able to run a public service.

At the time of writing we don't know the exact amount raised but the total is expected to be between £350 and £400. Most of this is to be shared between the Rail Defence Fund and the Mid-Norfolk Railway Development Trust.

made in our railway network. To make matters worse, Railtrack is likely to meet resistance to any planned installation of half-barrier level crossings on the line and has yet to explain its proposals to local people. If proper investment in such automatic equipment and proper signalling had been made 40 years ago, rail would have been in a better position now to mitigate the awful environment problems we face from an over-reliance on roads. The tradition of politicians being led by the nose by the road lobby is a long-established one in Britain.

West Coast

Disruption for the West Coast main line upgrade is causing concern as well as the loss of paths for Silverlink fast trains and the Gatwick service north of Watford.

Wolverton

Railfuture is maintaining contact with the Wolverton Rail

Users Group which plans a meeting in September to discuss prospects for a new station.

Cash appeal

Rail Partnership funding for the Oxford-Bletchley service was still held up at the SRA in mid July. Railfuture and OBRAC will make representations in a bid to re-start the project.

East-West

Winslow Town Council hosted a meeting on East-West Rail. A new station site has been identified and a local developer is offering support. Buckinghamshire County Council has funds allocated to assist. The capacity audience was enthusiastic.

Wessex

By John Franklin

South Hants rapid transport

We welcome the Government announcement of funding for the light rail system between

Fareham, Gosport and Portsmouth. We have actively supported this proposed light rail system and we made a submission in support of the scheme at the public inquiry held in spring 1999. It is being dealt with under a Transport and Works Act order, and work could begin in two years time with trains entering service in 2006.

Virgin Cross Country

We have raised concerns over the proposed Virgin timetable for 2003 which involves the loss of through services between the Wessex area and the north east, including services previously protected under the public sector requirement. We welcome a revision of these proposals to address shortcomings. There should now be hourly services between Poole and Edinburgh, alternating between the West Coast (via Manchester) and the East Coast (via Wakefield).

Salisbury

We have objected to the planning application for redevelopment of Salisbury East Yard for residential and other uses. We are concerned there is not adequate provision for future expansion of rail freight.

South West Trains

For years we have called for the introduction of a Southampton-Chandlers Ford service and the doubling of the frequency of the Portsmouth-Southampton stopping service. We are pleased the commitments from Stagecoach for the SWT franchise include these improvements. Over the long term Stagecoach has agreed to consider other enhancements for which we have been pressing. These are subject to feasibility studies and include the restoration of passenger services to Hythe and linking with the Swanage Railway.

Wessex rail franchise

The branch has been in contact with franchise bidders and the Strategic Rail Authority to let them know our aspirations and suggestions for improvements we would like to see in the new franchise. Branch representatives held a meeting in April with one of the new bidders. We hope to see infrastructure improvements between Salisbury and Exeter and the introduction of at least an hourly service between Waterloo and Exeter.

Summer improvements

The expansion of through journey opportunities between the Waterloo-Exeter line and stations west of Exeter was one of our detailed aims for the Wessex

Local action



rail franchise and we are pleased to see that daily through services between Plymouth and the Waterloo-Exeter line have been introduced ahead of the new franchise. We hope the initiative will be a success and can be expanded by the franchise bids. We have been seeking for many years a later last train from Southampton to Winchester to enable more people to use the train for evenings out in Southampton. This has been included in the summer timetable. The branch also welcomes the new service to be introduced by Wales & the West between Swindon and Southampton via Melksham.

Isle of Wight

We are concerned at the uncertainty over the future of the Island Line because of life-expired stock and infrastructure and have offered support to the campaign to develop the railway.

Alternative

We will be taking part in the Alternative Transport Day at Winchester on 22 September.

Yorkshire

By Peter Davies
peter@bh-cc.co.uk

Leeds First Scheme

The scheme for improvement works at Leeds station has, once again, been extended for a further period and the work will not now be completed until May 2002.

A further extension to the scheme involves the closure of the former Midland Main Line entry to Leeds station. Services from Pontefract, Goole and Sheffield via Castleford will terminate at Leeds (Whitehall) with a shuttle bus operation to Leeds station.

Grand Central Railway

A new and interesting proposal has been put forward by the Grand Central Railway company to operate Trans-Pennine services from the North East to a

newly refurbished station at Salford Central making use of redundant High Speed Trains.

The proposal is that the service will operate from Leeds via Wakefield Kirkgate and the Calder Valley to Rochdale and Salford Central. Wakefield Kirkgate is to receive a complete refurbishment, and the idea behind the scheme is to cater for business travellers and encourage them to leave their cars at home.

Baildon

Concern has been expressed that poor connections exist at Guiseley and Shipley for passengers wishing to travel to Leeds.

Class 333 units

Services on the Airedale and Wharfedale lines are now operating with Class 333 trains for most of the day. Only four of the ageing class 308 units remain in service.

Branch meeting

The next branch meeting will be held at Saltaire Methodist Church on Saturday 15 September 2001 commencing at 14.00.

East Anglia

Anglia Railways has been granted £10,000 from Norfolk County Council to provide extra trains on summer services from Norwich to Sheringham, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. This is long overdue and will probably do little to ease the chaos on summer Saturdays at Norwich where holidaymakers are subjected to confusion and overcrowding, when they change trains to get to the coast. Instead of getting clear instructions about their trains and visible members of staff giving advice, the anxious passengers are confronted by police officers who are presumably there to prevent trouble arising from the overcrowding. As usual the onboard staff are as helpful as they can be but they are let down by lack

of organisation and lack of response to demand. Providing trains with limited space for services to the coast on sunny summer days is guaranteed to create problems. The difficulties facing holidaymakers burdened with luggage, children and cycles must be severely depressing demand. Many will choose to make the journey by car, rather than jockeying for a seat on an overcrowded train.

Kent

By John Pitcher
john.pitcher@ic24.net

The stumbling block to providing bus timetable information at rail stations is the apparent inability of bus companies to guarantee up-to-date information, Connex commercial manager Gill Wood told Railfuture members at a meeting in Ashford on 19 May.

Members said many people were critical of the lack of bus-train integration, particularly the absence of bus timetables. Ms Wood said Connex was working with bus companies and with Kent County Council to try to improve things.

More bus shelters at stations were being provided and Connex had even offered to produce bus timetables. The unreliability of the bus information was why bus timings were not provided in rail timetables even though there were through ticketing schemes from Headcorn to Tenterden and Staplehurst to Cranbrook. She said if passengers arrived, only to find the bus was no longer running, Connex would be in trouble.

Railfuture member Peter Collingborn said that the SRA had written to him that under the franchise agreement the train operator was required to display at stations the location of other public transport facilities where appropriate.

Ian McDonald said that information was usually displayed in booking halls giving phone

numbers of both taxi and bus companies and the location of taxi ranks and bus stops. But clarification was needed from the SRA as to whether that was adequate or whether timetables should be provided too.

A leaflet highlighting the advantages of creating a "new" main line to the Sussex coast by reopening Uckfield-Lewes and providing a new link at Tunbridge Wells has been produced with Railfuture help by the Wealden Line Campaign. If you would like a copy please contact the campaign at PO Box 645, Uckfield, Sussex TN22 5BZ Or you can visit its website at: http://members.tripod.co.uk/Wealden_Line

NEWS IN BRIEF

Direct Link North

John Pincham of Direct Link North reports that his address was quoted wrongly in *Railwatch* 88. His home address where he can be contacted is 35 Lodge Close, Stoke D'Abernon, Surrey KT11 2SG. The website is at <http://www.directlinknorth.com>

Blackpool trams

A scheme to transform the Blackpool and Fleetwood Tramway into a modern light rail system has been announced by Blackpool Borough and Lancashire County Councils.

The revamp of the tramway which opened in 1885 would cost £230million and involve an extension to Lytham St Anne's and an on-street branch to serve Blackpool North station.

A new inland route would also be built to link Blackpool and Fleetwood via Poulton, Thornton and Burn Naze, involving track sharing with heavy rail between Blackpool and Poulton.

Rails for the poor

Transport policies should be evaluated to assess their impact on social exclusion says a report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Most low-income motorists believe that public transport would never become a viable alternative, researchers from Westminster University reported.

Even those who do not own a car aspire to do so believing it was cheaper than to use public transport. *Transport, the environment and social exclusion* is available from York Publishing Services, 64 Hallfield Road, Laverthorpe, York YO31 7ZQ. Price: £14.95



The new 28-page Easy Rail Travel Fares booklet is still available at the introductory price of £3 including post and packing.
Orders and enquiries to Phil Morris (Railfuture Sales),
113b Pembroke Road, Clifton, Bristol
BS8 3EU.
Fax 0117 973 4274
Email queries:
rdsbooksales@lineone.net

Brief Encounters on the Penistone Line CD includes 12 songs and is available for £9 including post and packing. The songs were first performed live on a Huddersfield-Sheffield train.

