



London

By Richard Pout
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Rugby-Brighton Go-Via South Central's decision to pull out of the Brighton-Rugby service has brought strong reactions from regular users. Kate Nicholas, who moved to Milton Keynes on the strength of the new service, has set up the Rugby-Brighton Rail Action group. A Go-Via representative at a recent West Brompton rail users meeting argued this service was not part of the original Connex franchise requirement, so Go-Via can walk away, now only making a commitment for a Watford-Gatwick service. This will only run from Watford to Clapham during summer morning peaks because of Go-Via's shortage of stock, a legacy from the Connex regime. You can contact Kate at Haymarket Publications, 174 Hammersmith Road, London W6 7JP or email kate.nicholas@haynet.com.

West Brompton West Brompton rail users have scored another success, lobbying for West London line Sunday services, which start in June. This builds on their success convincing London Underground that the District Line platforms should also open on Sundays, for the growing traffic to Earls Court and tourist hotels. West Brompton RUG is at 55 Eardley Crescent, London SW5 9QT.

Gospel Oak-Barking The users group met Silverlink in March, calling for better information at stations and a more frequent and later evening service; an initial Rail Passenger partnership bid was declined. The hourly evening service and early finish at 21.50 from Gospel Oak is unacceptable in a busy urban area. Another RPP bid is being proposed.

Crossrail consultation Mayor Ken Livingstone wants higher Government priority to promote regeneration in East London, Docklands and the Thames Gateway. Railfuture has long supported "classic" Crossrail, from Slough to Shenfield. We endorse the Whitechapel station proposal, and the Canary Wharf link is a welcome move towards a heavy rail Thames crossing in the Woolwich area to reach the North Kent Line, Dartford and Gravesend. To the West, Heathrow and electrification to Slough and Reading are essential ingredients.

Thames Gateway In the longer term the Government-led Thames Strategic Executive is suggesting a new down-river rail tunnel, not a road bridge, that could form a large loop taking freight from the proposed Shellhaven Container Port near Canvey Island, and passenger trains from the Tilbury line across the river to Gravesend and then back to London. These options

The Tarka Line Rail Ale Trail Exeter to Barnstaple Railway




Wessex Trains

This 16-page booklet is aimed at promoting use of the line from Exeter to Barnstaple. It identifies 16 real ale pubs easily accessible from stations on the Tarka line. Visitors can get a stamp on the leaflet by presenting their train ticket at the pubs. Depending on the number of stamps, a range of souvenirs, including stickers, badges and shirts, is available free.

If you would like a copy of the leaflet, send a stamped addressed envelope to the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership, Faculty of Science, University of Plymouth, Drake Circus, Plymouth PL4 8AA. The partnership produced the booklet with financial help from the Countryside Agency. It is also backed by local councils, Tarka Trail Cycle Hire, North Devon Rail Users, Wessex Trains and the university. A line guide and timetable is available from stations and tourist offices.

make lobbying complex and regeneration arguments to exclude Crossrail's Shenfield line, put forward by former consultant and now SRA director of planning Jim Steer, have not been endorsed. Heavy peak suburban flows meant Crossrail without Shenfield would leave severe congestion on three sections of the Underground. Canary Wharf to Dartford offers the greatest regional benefits, therefore we should argue for a Jubilee Line extension to the Royal Docks and Barking Reach, first set out in the London Rail Study (Barren Report 1974) and later Central and East London Rail Studies.

Crossrail 2 Originally the Chelsea-Hackney Line, this now proposes links with the South Western lines, Richmond, Kingston and Hounslow, to various alternative routings in north-east London. Railfuture supports plans to serve Clapham Junction and SWT inner suburban area to relieve the Waterloo approaches. Heathrow Airport via Feltham and Staines should also be evaluated. Surprisingly, Finsbury Park, a restored Northern Heights line to Highgate and over the Northern Line to Barnet is another option, but the abandoned trackbed is now designated "metropolitan open green space". Railfuture feels the Northern Heights should be a later East London line extension from Finsbury Park to East Finchley, another element of our Outer Circle Orbirail network.

Orbirail Progress is slow, the SRA suggests Orbirail is "difficult". Railfuture London strongly disagrees. It is one of the simplest upgrades to the existing railway, and the SRA is making things more complicated. We urge an early start to upgrading signalling capacity to provide 3-4 minute headways, restoring four tracks from Dalston to Camden Road and other simple infrastructure improvements to make operation more flexible to accommodate both passenger and freight trains, particularly on the West London Line. Contact Richard Pout on 020 8348 5064 for more information. London Branch wants your (brief) views on these schemes. Send an SAE for our Orbirail briefing or just write c/o the Railfuture Office at Colourworks. Mark your envelope London Crossrail & Orbirail Plans.

Lea Bridge and Hall Farm Chord This 1998 Draw Fund campaign, led by Katy Andrews, is slowly winning the argument. Steady pressure through the Lea Valley Transport Partnership has generated a £50,000 grant from Transport for London for a full feasibility and development study. The consultant reported to sponsors, the London borough of Waltham Forest, in March with designs for a new sta-



tion and a double track chord, costing £18million, including contingencies. Railtrack and the SRA are still uncommitted, even though there is an urgent need to divert some Lea Valley and extra Chingford line trains to Stratford.

Luton-Dunstable Luton Borough Council has been duly criticised by the Advertising Standards Authority for publishing misleading information about the proposed £90million Translink Busway. Luton has consistently misled, bullied and cajoled to get this sadly misguided busway project, following a none-too-convincing report favouring the busway from consultants Steer Davies Gleave. At one multi-modal study meeting Luton sent seven representatives when only two were invited! Opposition continues from the local Friends of the Earth group, ADAPT, Railfuture and many others, including a W S Atkins report commissioned by the Department of Transport which suggests the scheme is not value for money. Rail is cheaper! If Chris Green once thought reopening to Dunstable was a good idea, we think it is too. For details contact ADAPT at 72 Lowther Road, Dunstable, Beds LU6 3LQ or lesliefreitag@hotmail.com.

Thames Valley
By Chris Wright
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Bristol-Oxford cuts Thames Trains and Great Western Train are cutting back the Oxford-Bristol services. It is hardly surprising that they have not fulfilled their full potential as rail services need to be reliable and punctual. These services have suffered from many cancellations. Marketing has also been poor. The affair also highlights the failure of the privatised railway to train enough drivers (and indeed other staff such as signal engineers). If 30 passengers are not enough to justify a service, we can expect hundreds of trains to be axed. Indeed Dr Beeching mark two may be on the way.

Thames and Great Western would do better to extend the service to Milton Keynes and perhaps Northampton with a catchment area of over a million people. Likewise, a new station at Grove-Wantage Road would increase usage.

The Strategic Rail Authority, rather than meekly agreeing to the cuts, should use its strategic authority to support the Government's aim to remove cars from the roads. The SRA should develop the service not cut it. Railfuture plans to raise the matter with the SRA.

De-mothballings? There was much interest in March when the line between Claydon Junction and Swanbourne was cleared of over

nine years of undergrowth which had seen trees and bushes growing in the trackbed. A thorough job was undertaken with the whole trackbed being cleared including the formation where the second track was prior to singling in the mid-1980s. By Easter, clearance work had reached the former Swanbourne sidings area where, surprisingly, the whole site was cleared of vegetation for the first time in over 30 years. Watch this space!

Railtrack, however, claims that this work was "standard vegetation clearance to prevent further deterioration of an out of use rail line. We are just maintaining things at a level so in the future it could well be reopened but that is just an aspiration." Railfuture had earlier written to MPs, the press and the SRA pointing out that this route was meant to be mothballed and had been allowed to deteriorate. The SRA 10 Year Plan records the route could reopen to freight within two to three years. Railtrack zonal director Dick Fearn, who is speaking at Railfuture's next meeting in Oxford on Saturday 6 July at 14.00, is hopeful that this will be progressed, which would help the East-West rail link case for passenger trains.

Bedford-Bletchley latest The Bedford-Bletchley Rail Users Association annual general meeting in March heard an update on the East-West rail link and the latest on the upgrade of the line. This route is now one of the most reliable in the country with 97% of all scheduled trains running and 95% on time.

The long-standing five-mph speed limit into Bletchley station has been removed and track relaying at Kempston Hardwick, Aspley Guise and Woburn Sands has been undertaken.

New signalling is being installed based at Ridgmont, with crossings and platform modifications at Aspley Guise, Lidlington and Stewartby also planned.

It is hoped to finish the work by early next year. The Class 150 diesel trains have also been upgraded and further modifications should see additional reliability improvements.

Cotswold line halts These continue to be a concern, with the timetable changes causing inconvenience to users. The price of platform extensions has rocketed from £60,000 to £650,000.

West Coast main line Weekend closures for modernisation have attracted criticism and highlight the lack of a diversionary route via Aylesbury into Marylebone.

East-West consortium Discussions continue with the Strategic Rail Authority, over a new Rail Passenger Partnership bid

for an Oxford-Bedford service in conjunction with the rail freight grant to reopen the line.

Virgin Trains Public relations man Dennis Lovett gave an upbeat talk at the last branch meeting on the new trains and service which will serve Milton Keynes on the West Coast main line and Oxford and Banbury on CrossCountry services. Reading Depot was the venue for our latest visit in April when we were given an excellent tour of the depot and explanation of what is required in keeping the Turbos running.

Chiltern Railways Outlining their plans for their new franchise at Aylesbury Vale Council in April, Chiltern Railways were non-committal about providing a service north of Aylesbury to Milton Keynes. They await guidance from the Strategic Rail Authority whose financial support would be required. This is disappointing, with Aylesbury planning to expand to a population of 70,000. A station at Aylesbury North in conjunction with the new housing seems to have more potential.

Calvert Shanks Waste Solutions (formerly Shanks and McEwan) is seeking to install a second siding at

Calvert which is designed to increase flexibility and throughput at the site. A £1.5million freight grant was recently gained from the Strategic Rail Authority to ensure that 85,000 lorry loads annually are kept off the roads between Bristol and Calvert. Railfuture welcomes the moves.

Yorkshire
By Peter Davies
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Annual Meeting The annual general meeting of the Yorkshire Branch was held at the Union Bank Restaurant, Huddersfield, on Saturday 16 March. The guest speaker was Jonathan Tyler of Passenger Transport Networks and he gave an excellent thought provoking speech.

Leeds First scheme The final stage of the delayed Leeds First Scheme is now under way. Leeds (Whitehall) temporary station has now been closed and dismantled. Six tracks now occupy the western approach to the station, and the roof is now being replaced. The station is now much airier and work should have been completed by 1 June.

Arriva Continuing industrial action by TSSA and RMT staff continues to disrupt services in the Yorkshire

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area with some lines not having any services at all on the days when strike action is taking place.

Adopt a station scheme The scheme is performing well, and Arriva Trains Northern are very satisfied with the input they are receiving from volunteers.

Strategic plan for Yorkshire The final stage of work on this report is now about to begin. Copies will be sent to neighbouring branches, and to local rail user groups.

New electric trains The additional vehicles for the three car electric multiple units are now being delivered and entering service. This is good news for commuters. However, it is understood that there are difficulties in obtaining much needed diesel multiple units to relieve overcrowding at peak periods.

North East

By Peter Wood
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Meetings The work of the British Transport Police was the subject of a talk by Detective Chief Inspector Daniel Snee at the February meeting held in Durham. Bill Scott, assistant project director for Sunderland Direct (the extension of the Tyne and Wear Metro to Sunderland and South Hylton) was guest speaker at the annual general meeting held at the University of Northumbria, Newcastle, in April.

Sunderland Direct After weeks of trial running, Metro services began commercial operation between Tyneside and Wearside on Sunday 31 March, Six Metros an hour (four in the evenings and on Sundays) now supplement two Arriva services between Sunderland and Newcastle, effectively doubling the frequency between the two north-east cities. Dual signalling control of the Sunderland-Pelaw line by both heavy and light rail appears to be working well. Some "finishing off" work was still required and the Park Lane (bus interchange) station opening was delayed until late April. But Nexus has expressed itself more than satisfied with passenger numbers (helped by the opening of the additional stations in Sunderland and South Tyneside). Her Majesty the Queen opened the Metro extension officially on 7 May.

Train operating companies Arriva Trains Northern continue to keep in close contact with branch members. There was a good turnout at ATN's stakeholder meeting in Newcastle at the end of February. Both Arriva and First Group/Keohis have kept us in touch with their bids for the TransPennine franchise

Northern Franchise We are collaborating with other branches and

I would use the train if . . .

I would use the train but . . .

I use the train, but . . .

Let us know your views

The franchise for the line will soon be renewed. TVRUG want to ensure a better deal for passengers. Send your wish list to the Chairman Malcolm Chainey at

**The Old Station Master's House,
Stocksfield, NE43 7NQ
or e-mail
malcolm.chainey@virgin.net**

Do you want an improved rail service on the Tyne Valley Line between Newcastle and Carlisle?
YES, YES, YES, YES, YES, YES

Then join the TVRUG for just £5 per year. Send your cheque, payable to

Tyne Valley Rail Users' Group to
**Peter Johnson,
29 Abbey View, Hexham,
NE46 1EQ.**



Users of the line between Newcastle and Carlisle are doing their best to ensure that passengers' interests are taken into account in the re-franchising process. The Tyne Valley rail users group, formed in 2000, produced this leaflet and are putting their arguments to local councils, train operator and the Strategic Rail

user groups – together with the Rail Passengers Council for north-east England to ensure a common response to both the SRA and franchise bidders covering our hopes for the new franchise.

Survey Led by Geoff Longstaff, the views of branch members have recently been sought about the direction the branch should take in the coming months and the contribution members would like to make. There was a good response from members to the questionnaire, the results of which will set our agenda for the next 12 months.

Scotland

By David Hansen
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Political changes. The Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning, Wendy Alexander, resigned in May. This was shortly after publishing a transport "delivery" plan. Despite the many words in the document the figures clearly show that the plan is about delivering new roads. This is part of the out-of-control road building programme in Scotland. Major developments in sustainable transport remain as elusive as ever. There are many words, but no new rail schemes have actually escaped from the clutches of innumerable consultant studies, which road schemes are not subjected to. The Civil Service has a whole cupboard full of road schemes, but no rail schemes, to quote someone from the rail industry.

Airport links Wendy Alexander did few good things for railways, as she was not around for very long. However, she did speak of rail links to Glasgow and Edinburgh airports, of which there is an excellent example at Prestwick. It appears that having £250million spent on one road is not good enough for party politicians in Glasgow, who are arguing strongly that the rail link to Glasgow airport should be built first.

Beaulieu station is open, at last, after some last-minute panics by the people who oversee safety. Like a number of other stations, trains longer than the platform call, without leaving hordes of dead passengers. Congratulations to those who managed to get a sensible approach adopted. There is no such thing as a safe railway, life always has risks. Two more new stations, Brunstane and Newcraighall, should have opened by the time you read this. The Edinburgh Crossrail scheme will extend local trains through the city. Congratulations to the City of Edinburgh Council for persevering with this scheme despite the obstacles put in its way by former Tory Prime Minister John Major's structure for the railways.

New CrossCountry services



Shortly Cinderella will be going to the ball, as new trains are introduced to a new timetable on inter-country services from Scotland to South West and Southern England. The trains are already running in the existing timetable and seem to be well received, except for the negligible luggage space.

Railway development? At Christmas, Railfuture Scotland presented Wendy Alexander with a toy train as a present. We asked that she reciprocate by presenting Scotland with some real trains. So far this has not been done. Some very important projects such as the Borders link remain mired in yet more studies. Other equally important projects, like electrification of the Glasgow-Edinburgh-Aberdeen triangle, are not even being studied. The institutional bias against sustainable transport has not been changed by the current Government. It is time that it was.

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
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AGM The guest speaker at the branch annual general meeting on 9 March was Peter Garrood, projects director of Midland Mainline (a speaker from Central trains had also been booked but was prevented from coming at the last minute). Among recent and imminent improvements on MML described by Mr Garrood were: The big new departures board at Leicester station, together with new information boards on the platforms; the luxurious new first-class departure lounge at Leicester station; seven nine-car and 16 four-car "Meridian" trains (similar to Voyagers), due to replace the Turbostars for the summer 2004 timetable – the Turbostars will be cascaded to other National Express Group train operators; £17million to be spent on refurbishment of high-speed trains; additional high-speed trains to be leased, to permit more through running to Leeds.

On the negative side, work on the Channel Tunnel fast link terminal at St Pancras is causing disruption to MML services, and will ultimately leave MML with just four platforms. There is no immediate prospect of rail services to Corby, with various options all being considered unattractive on either economic or operational grounds. There are problems with the proposed East Midlands Parkway due to the site's proximity to Ratcliffe power station.

Stay off the track The Leicester Mercury has been running a "Stay off the Track" campaign for several months to highlight the dangers of trespassing on railway lines and to urge everyone, especially youngsters, to keep off. As part of the



The voluntary Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users Association was able to re-launch the popular leisure line leaflet which aims to boost leisure travel on the Marston Vale rail line, thanks to financial assistance from the Bedfordshire Rural Transport Partnership.

The picture shows Stephen Sleight from the partnership handing over a cheque for £796 to association chairman Richard Crane. This is the second grant received from the fund and it has enabled 5,000 updated copies of the colour leaflet to be produced.

The leaflet details places of interest, walks and transport links from each of the stations along the Marston Vale Rail Line between Bedford and Bletchley.

Organisations of individuals who would like copies of the leaflet for information, or distribution, are invited to contact Mr Crane, at 23 Hatfield Crescent, Bedford MK41 9RA. Telephone 01234 351771. E-mail: DickL.Crane@aol.com

Events connected with the association and with the Marston Vale Rail Line are displayed on the Association's website <http://www.bbrua.org.uk>

campaign, Railtrack has been offering a £2,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of trespassers or vandals. Meanwhile, Central Trains have announced that vandalism cost them £2million last year.

National Forest line A meeting was held in Coalville on 27 March to present the consultants' report on the proposed reopening of the line from Leicester to Burton-on-Trent. While many local authorities and other organisations support the scheme, Leicestershire County Council continues to insist that it is not financially viable. However, the grants that are available for both capital and running costs could halve the estimated annual deficit of £2.2million and the consultants are now working to put a figure on the less tangible benefits such as social inclusion in a former coalfield area.

M1 Multi-Modal Study The final recommendations of the multi-modal study covering the M1 corridor from Leicester to Chesterfield were published in March. It claims that two-thirds of the £1.8billion cost of implementing the recommendations would go on public transport improvements and policy interventions. However, there is also considerable emphasis on

motorway widening. With the study's emphasis on low-cost, easily deliverable improvements, the rail proposals are hardly visionary. Nevertheless, there are some useful suggestions. Within the East Midlands branch area, it is recommended:

- To open a new station at Blaby, to operate as a Leicester South park-and-ride
- Redevelop Syston station to perform a similar role to Blaby for Leicester North
- Restore the fourth track between Leicester and Syston Junction to improve capacity, as well as line speed improvements in Leicestershire to cut 10 minutes off Midland MainLine timings
- Build an LRT system for Leicester, running from East Goscote to Blaby (but no station on the Leicester-Peterborough line at East Goscote!)
- Reopen the Castle Donington line to passenger traffic to provide a fast route from Birmingham to Nottingham, as well as a new station at Castle Donington with a bus link to East Midlands Airport.

However, the proposals to restore rail access from Melton Mowbray and from the Great Central Railway to Nottingham have been dropped. There are also some useful general

recommendations, such as integrated public transport ticketing (if the Swiss can do it with their plethora of transport operators, why can't we?) and a body similar to a passenger transport executive to coordinate public transport in the East Midlands. Now the round of consultations has started again, with a multi-modal study for transport links between the East Midlands and West Midlands. Can we hope that this will help to get some action on the National Forest Line?

Wales ■ Cymru

By Julian Langston
and Peter Clark

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A railcard for Wales and the Borders The three Wales branches have been working together to produce this report which outlines the case for a railcard based on the eventual Wales & Borders franchise territory. The timing of the launch, in early May, was chosen deliberately, as the much-delayed commencement of the franchise bidding process was anticipated then, and we wish to influence all the parties involved in this, viz the bidders themselves, the SRA, and the Welsh Assembly. We would like provision of the railcard to be included in the new franchise agreement, which represents an ideal opportunity as the number of TOCs serving Wales will then be reduced, making introduction of a railcard less complicated. The railcard's route validity would be the same as that of the existing very successful Wales Flexi-Pass tickets, aimed mainly at tourists rather than residents, and would include the Borders route from Newport via Hereford, Shrewsbury, Crewe and Chester – so people in these parts of England would also benefit. The report shows that Wales, much of whose territory is classed as Objective One, loses out in comparison with many other areas in the cost of train travel, because those other areas either enjoy lower fares (for example Merseyside) or have railcards (Cornwall and the Scottish Highlands). The report reviews current rail fares in Wales, shows how a railcard would work, examines precedents in the UK, and outlines possible funding mechanisms. It is then shown that many people and organisations – not least the TOCs themselves – would benefit from greater use of rail, which the railcard would help to achieve for almost no investment. Many of these arguments of course are part of the case for a UK-wide railcard, which Railfuture and other bodies are pressing for, but a Wales & Borders railcard would be much less complex to introduce and ought to be achievable in a shorter time. A successful introduction could help pave the way for a UK



card. Copies of the report can be obtained by sending an A5 sae to RDS at 84 North Street, Abergavenny NP7 7ED. It can be viewed on our website at www.chartist.demon.co.uk/rds/w/rdindex.htm

South West

By Gerard Duddridge

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and Stuart Walker

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Re-franchising Railfuture South West has come out against the idea of a separate Wessex franchise. We believe the number of operators in our area should be reduced from the present five to two.

We set out our ideas at a consultation meeting in Truro on 29 April organised by the Rail Passengers Council.

Our preferred option is for the Cornish branch lines and the few Wessex Devon and Cornwall main line services to be merged with the existing Great Western Paddington-Penzance/Paignton service in a single franchise.

The North Devon Line and the Exmouth branch would be transferred to the South West Trains franchise making this the main operator of services through Exeter Central and allowing through services from Barnstaple to Waterloo to be developed.

The Wales and Borders Cardiff-Paignton-Penzance service could be transferred to the Virgin Trains CrossCountry franchise.

A new joint venture (as opposed to competing) service involving the South West Trains franchise and the new Greater Western franchise should develop through services from Penzance and Plymouth to Southampton and Brighton.

Our aim is to reduce the number of operators to ensure better co-ordination of timetable planning and quicker decisions when things go wrong.

Some at the meeting expressed concern about the lack of competition in our proposals. We pointed out that services in the region are very infrequent and that rail has the smallest share of the total travel market.

The real competitor is the private car and competition between train operators is an unnecessary distraction from this main aim. This view was supported by the train operators at the meeting who said their special offers were aimed at car users rather than poaching from other train operators.

First Group supported the merger of Wessex with the Great Western Franchise and South West Trains did not wish to lose the Waterloo-Exeter service from its franchise.



Another initiative to make stations more user-friendly has been launched by ScotRail.

It is installing cash machines at many of its 335 stations – and has signed a contract with the company TRM for supply and maintenance of the equipment.

Linked to the Alliance & Leicester banking network, the first TRM cash machine was installed in Perth (above) and will be followed by a further 50 or more stations during the year.

TRM is the only cash machine provider with its own maintenance team in Britain, and its partnership with Alliance & Leicester gave ScotRail the benefit of cash machines carrying a recognised bank name.

“This is an excellent example of a transport operator adding value to its business by offering new customer services,” says TRM managing director Peter Townsley. “Easy availability of cash – safely and indoors throughout the stations’ opening hours – will be of huge interest to ScotRail’s 61 million travellers a year.”

Only National Express, the current temporary operator of Wessex, wanted the franchise to go ahead as planned. They maintained that merging with Great Western would mean less focus on the branch lines with funding concentrated on the London routes.

However, prior to the takeover by National Express, Prism withdrew some branch line services in order to introduce competing services to the North and London.

We believe competition between the two operators for the London market from Exeter and Plymouth is more likely to mean reductions in branch line services than if there is a single network protected by an improved Passenger Service Requirement.

Sunday services Rail Partnership Funding is providing year-round Sunday services from Truro to Falmouth from May. The Looe branch line will also see Sunday

services throughout the summer until the end of September instead of just Spring Bank Holiday Sunday and during August. Year-round Sunday services to Gunnislake are already in operation, but unfortunately there are no plans to provide a year round Sunday service on the internationally famous St Ives Branch Line, or to Newquay.

SWARMMS The South West area multi-modal study (SWARMMS) reported at the beginning of May. It includes a range of proposed road, rail and bus improvements for long distance journeys.

These will be discussed by the regional assemblies which will make recommendations to ministers in July.

There are a significant number of proposed rail improvements but few new ideas.

Double track is proposed for the existing single line sections on the

Salisbury to Exeter line and on the Cornish main line between Bургullov and Probus. The signal spacing on the Exeter to Plymouth line would be improved for higher capacity and the Falmouth branch would see track and signalling improvements.

New stations would be confined to Clyst Hayes, east of Exeter (for the planned East Devon new settlement adjacent to the Salisbury line), Trerulefoot park and ride near St Germans (between Plymouth and Liskeard) and Tavistock on a reopened railway from the Plymouth direction at Bere Alston.

Improved train frequencies are proposed on main lines and branch lines.

Disappointing is the exclusion of the Exeter to Plymouth via Okehampton railway reopening.

It is difficult to envisage how the Halcrow consultants think all the proposed trains can possibly run via the congested Exeter to Newton Abbot line.

It can only be presumed that enhancement of local train services between Exeter and Torbay will be sacrificed.

Instead a series of coach services is proposed to operate every hour from Exeter to Bude, Exeter to Truro via Okehampton and Launceston, Plymouth to Barnstaple via Okehampton and Tiverton Parkway to Plymouth via Tiverton and Tavistock.

By not reopening the Okehampton line the reliability of services will be lost, as the Exeter to Plymouth line always seems to be in trouble.

This is not just to do with the vulnerable coastal section at Dawlish, but the maintenance requirements of the extensively curved route beyond Newton Abbot through Totnes and Ivybridge.

Winter Sunday closures are common for engineering work, but this year has seen the line closed from Saturday evening and all day Sunday during May.

Barnstaple to Bideford The Inspector for the Barnstaple western bypass public inquiry has reported to the Secretary of State who has now recommended that the road scheme goes ahead (See *Railwatch* 89).

The decision of the Secretary of State is detailed in a letter to Devon County Council of 17 April.

On a positive note he has noted that the preservation of the Barnstaple to Bideford rail line route is of great concern locally and section 25 of his letter says that: “The Secretary of State is satisfied that the council has made provision for the preservation of the Barnstaple to Bideford rail line route and the Ilfracombe line to Braunton.



"Regrettably, although the road embankments will cross the trackbed at sufficient height they will not be pierced as it is not thought that railway reopening will be viable within the next 10 years."

The consultants Maunsell Rail, who reported to Devon County Council, made this recommendation and this has carried forward to the documents, which went to the Secretary of State.

Railfuture has never been happy about the Maunsell Rail report as it evaluated the Bideford to Barnstaple line as a separate railway operation, instead of part of a fast direct link to Exeter and London Waterloo.

No wonder that the Maunsell report was not favourable.

Without any form of consultation South West Water has constructed a sewage pipeline beneath the Bideford to Barnstaple line trackbed.

This is the Taw-Torridge project and from Yelland the pipeline joins the Bideford trackbed on the north side of Instow and now runs beneath it for more than a mile as far as Westleigh.

Railtrack sources have told us that a pipeline would be OK if it was to the side of the ballasted formation,

buried at least two metres deep and additionally cased. However, this has not been done and it has been laid no deeper than one metre and with just polythene sheathing.

Railfuture learnt about the scheme just before Christmas, when it was really too late to do anything about it.

In a reply to a letter of ours South West Water also confirm that they would object to the railway reopening.

The presence of the pipeline does not stop us from campaigning for the reopening, but it will increase the cost of restoring the railway to Bideford and make it less likely to happen in the foreseeable future.

If any Railfuture members are as aggrieved as we are they can write to: The Chief Executive, South West Water, Peninsula House, Rydon Lane, Exeter, Devon EX2 7HR

East Anglia

By Nick Dibben

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SRA starts greater Anglia franchise The branch has been putting together a list of ideas that it expects the future Greater Anglian Franchise to take forward. Our list includes new rolling stock for the London to Norwich service, addi-

tional services on the rural branches, increased staffing and improvements to stations. Our views are generally shared with local authorities and rail user groups. One possible area of contention is who should run the stations. Stations such as Ely, Thetford and Cambridge would have multiple operators. Some consider that all stations in the region should be run by the new franchise operator to give a regional focus. The branch is not totally convinced by this, and believes that the existing arrangement is best whereby the operator that has the most passengers at a station should run it. The SRA hopes to issue a specification to bidders this summer with the winner announced in the summer of 2003.

Suffolk passenger rail plans The county council has issued a passenger rail strategy for the next 10 years. The strategy aims to build on the improvements achieved in the past few years. The aim is to have an hourly service on all rural routes within five years and an increase to half-hourly by 2010. This is welcome news and a far cry from the closure threats to these routes a few years back. Modest improvements to station facilities are included. Although the report does not consider dedicated rail-bus links to be

viable, schemes to divert existing buses via stations will be considered. New stations serving development are supported at Morton Hall near Bury St Edmunds and Great Cornard near Sudbury. New stations on the Great Eastern main line around Ipswich are not considered practical due to train pathing issues.

Rail/bus/cycle/taxi guide Anglia Railways has issued a booklet giving details of cycle facilities, taxi firms and bus links to all of its stations. Although the booklet has been warmly welcomed in the region, it has highlighted the difficulties of building an integrated public transport system with an unregulated bus industry. Within weeks of publication, the booklet was out of date as a number of bus services changed times and some services had new operators!

Branch reports

If there is no branch report for your area, why don't you volunteer to write one for the next issue? Contact your branch secretary.

Lottery winners

March winners: R C Vincent, King's Lynn £64, S J Vatcher, Teddington £40, B Quinn, Stroud £24, S McCandlish, Newton Abbot £16, J D Smith, Bexhill £8,

Annual general meeting resolutions

The following motions were considered by Railfuture's annual general meeting in Nottingham:

Train lateness statistics and penalties

Mr H T Jones moved, and Mrs L Irvine seconded.

"The RDS urges Railtrack, train operators and the government to take connections into account in computing train lateness statistics and penalties. An operator should not be penalised for delaying a train a reasonable time to keep an advertised connection."

The motion was carried unanimously.

Pan-European rail users lobby organisation.

Mr A MacFarlane moved, and Mr M Crowhurst seconded:

"The Society welcomes the progress made towards establishing a pan-European rail users' lobby organisation. The provisional name for the body is the European Rail Passengers' Conference. There is a great benefit in like-minded organisations from across Europe working together to secure real

improvements in such areas as cross-border travel and the marketing of international rail services. This AGM supports Railfuture's membership of this organisation and we look forward to playing an active role in its development."

The motion was carried unanimously.

Train frequency and speed

Mr D Martins moved, and Ms C Zilahi seconded:

"That because overall journey times are important in determining whether to travel by train, it is as important to campaign for increased frequency as for increased speed as this may be likely to achieve an improvement in overall journey times."

Due to varying opinions as to the appropriateness of the wording and the exact aim of this motion, it was agreed unanimously not to take a vote at this time but to refer the matter to the National Executive and the Passenger Committee for further consideration.

The expenditure of the society

Mr D Croot moved, and Ms C Zilahi seconded:

"The National Executive be

instructed to ensure that;

1. During the year 2002, the expenditure of the Society be restricted so as not to exceed its income.

2. On 31.12.2002, there shall be calculated the then total of:

(a) any borrowings and debts of the Society,

(b) any amount whereof the capital of the legacy received by the Society may have been used for income purposes and the result of such calculations be reported to members.

3. During the years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006, the expenditure of the Society be restricted to ensure that there be a surplus of income over expenditure equal to at least 25% of the total calculated as above."

The motion was discussed and subsequently withdrawn by its proposer.

Status of the Railway Development Society

Mr R Fennell, Chairman of the Constitution Sub-Committee, moved on behalf of the National Executive:

"This Annual General Meeting accepts the report on the Status

of the Railway Development Society and instructs the National Executive to consult with Branches on their future role under the new structure and then to proceed with the formation of a Company Limited by Guarantee."

The motion was carried unanimously. The national chairman, Peter Lawrence said this could take two/three years to implement and, in any case, a full ballot of the membership would be necessary once all the facts had been ascertained.

Emergency motion: Travel cards

Mr J Pitcher moved, and Mr K Dyall seconded:

"This meeting strongly condemns the proposed change of conditions to the Network Card and urges the Government to press the Train Operating Companies to withdraw those proposed changes. Furthermore, we urge the introduction of a Nationwide Travel Card, allowing 33% reduction to off-peak travel."

The motion was carried by a clear show of hands and the matter would be referred to the National Executive and Passenger Committee for further action.