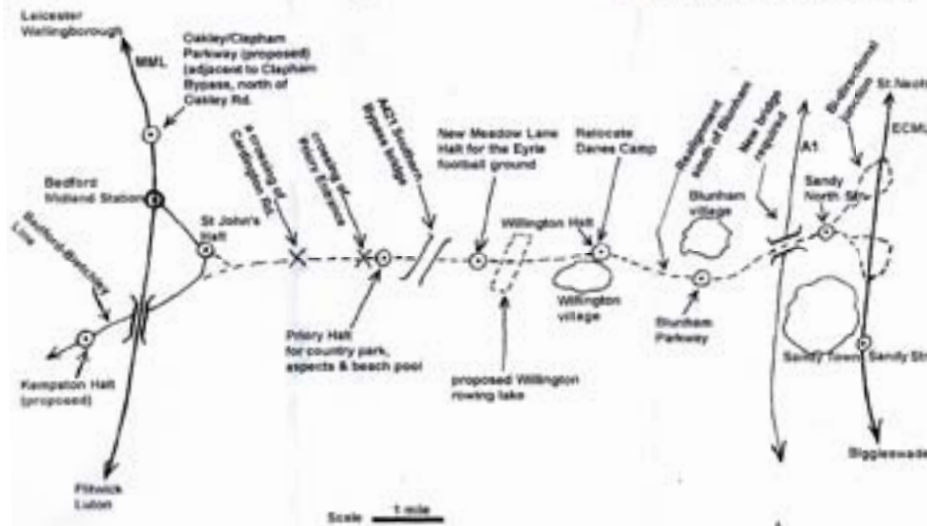


Developers put their oar in

Bedford-Sandy as BRTA would like to see it-minus the rowing lake!



The Bedford to Sandy section, left, would unlock a long-distance rail link, above

One of the most crucial rail projects in Britain is still waiting for government support. Back in the 1980s British Rail was about to start running trains on part of the route.

Then preparations for privatisation and privatisation itself intervened.

When Labour came to power in 1997, we told them that we would view the East-West link as a litmus test for any rail regime they introduced. They have tinkered with the privatised railway and created not-for-profit Network Rail but still the East-West rail link (map right)

has not been created even though most of the route already exists as existing rail lines or as mothballed track. Now there is renewed hope that Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, who drove through the Channel Tunnel rail link, may give the East-West link the push it needs. He is trying to create "sustainable communities" along the route but so far there is no hard-and-fast commitment to the link.

But just when there is renewed hope for the East-West link, along comes a plan to build a rowing lake

across old trackbed between Bedford and Sandy at Willington (map above left). Not surprisingly rail campaigners are doing their best to highlight the problems the rowing lake will cause. But they need lots of support to show the local politicians that any rowing lake plan must not damage the prospects for the East-West rail link.

The Bedfordshire Railway & Transport Association is asking all Rail-future members to back them by filling in the petition form below. If you can get friends and colleagues

to support your individual protest, please do so. If you do not want to damage your *Railwatch*, you can photocopy the page and send in the photocopy or you can write to Richard Pill at 24c St Michael's Road, Bedford, MK40 2LT and ask him to send you a paper copy. Please include an SAE.

For more information about the BRTA see their website at http://www.brta.org.uk/html/news_item_14.html and for more information about the East-West rail link, please see www.eastwestrail.org

Willington Rowing Lake Petition

I/We the undersigned do hereby object to the proposed rowing lake west of Willington, in particular the proposed design which seeks to breach a 96-120 metre section of the former Bedford-Sandy railway trackbed.

I/We further support the proposition that priority be given to the reopening of this line, which will require retention of the complete trackbed and adequate space for realignment thereof.

NAME	ADDRESS	SIGNATURE	DATE
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We call upon the local authorities, the Strategic Rail Authority, local MPs, national and regional government bodies to work together to effect the reinstatement of this valuable rail link as soon as possible and to prevent measures which would make its reopening more difficult or costly.

This petition was initiated by the Bedfordshire Railway & Transport Association.

BRTA is working for a better public transport system in Bedfordshire and surrounding districts, including North Bucks, Northants and Cambs. For more information go to www.brta.org.uk or write to chairman Richard Pill at the address at the foot of this page. Membership costs £12.

To join BRTA, send a cheque to BRTA, 115 Kimble Drive, Bedford MK41 9SZ or email membership@brta.org.uk

Please send completed petitions to BRTA at 24c St Michael's Road, Bedford, MK40 2LT