

Local action



Lincolnshire

By Brian Hastings
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Railfreight revival

A new scrap metal flow out of Lincoln saw the first freight out of the city for 20 years. The first consignment from EMR Ltd on 4 December was believed to be crushed cars and was bound for Edge Hill, Liverpool. The train which now usually runs two days a week, started from Great Northern Terrace sidings, part of the Lincoln-Boston line which closed in 1963. In February stone aggregate trains also began running to the same sidings, with the stone coming by rail from the Derbyshire Peak District for transfer to RAF Waddington by lorry.

Railfuture Lincolnshire congratulates the railfreight industry on its innovation and ability to spot new business opportunities in a county where few freight sidings have survived. The county does however see crude oil travelling by rail from the oilfield at Welton (from the BP sidings near Langworth level crossing) to Immingham, imported steel from Boston Dock to the West Midlands, and major rail traffic from Immingham-Killingholme and Scunthorpe in northern Lincolnshire.

Fast tickets

Railfuture is pleased to see a new fast ticket machine installed at Lincoln station in an attempt to shorten ticket queues. This is the fulfilment of a promise made to Railfuture Lincolnshire by Tony Brown, Central Trains' network director east. Part of the problem however is caused by customers having to make general inquiries at the ticket window when the adjacent travel centre is closed.

Station improvements

A package of improvements at Scunthorpe station has been prompted by requests from North Lincolnshire Council to First Group. Toilets were repaired, a self-service ticket machine provided, and new connecting bus information posters put up.

Error sign

Contractors who put up new signs for First Group at Barnetby station somehow managed to create platforms 1, 3 – and two platform 2s. Immediate replacement signs were promised.

Overcrowding

Railfuture's long complaints about overcrowding on trains to the seaside resort of Skegness appear to be having some effect. Derbyshire County Council officials have joined Central Trains in promoting two loco-hauled trains on peak Saturdays in the summer. Trials were carried out from Derby to Skegness and back on 30 March and 14 May with a seven-coach train and class 31 locomotives front and back, hired from FM Rail. Introduction of the operation is now deferred



The sight of lorries hitting rail bridges is sadly all too familiar. But this motorised disaster on wheels was ironic to say the least. When passers-by read the information on the back of the lorry stuck fast at Enfield Chase station in London in May, they found it was carrying old railway sleepers.

In the same month, a local newspaper reported how a van had got wedged under a railway bridge in Ely, Cambridgeshire, blocking road traffic in the area for more than one hour.

Reporter Sarah Gowler described how the van driver had "become a victim of the bridge".

The bridge over the A142 was described as one of the most battered bridges in Britain, despite Network Rail and the county council having spent more than £500,000 on having high-visibility signs and an infra-red detection system fitted to warn drivers. The bridge has also been strengthened to help reduce the amount of damage if it is hit by a road vehicle.

A spokesman for the county council said: "There are still some drivers who apparently forget what vehicle they are driving and either don't see the warning signs or ignore them.

"However we are pleased that fewer vehicles are colliding with the bridge



since we installed the interactive signs."

Network Rail says that the bridge was hit 143 times in the past 10 years, making it the third most-hit bridge in Britain.

The county council now wants the Government to spend £15million on building a new bypass as a way of easing the "problems caused by the low bridge and its neighbouring level crossing"

But Government funding has been refused and the council must now consider a system which would divert larger vehicles away from the bridge. It might help if drivers started looking where they were going and obeying the law.

Former Railfuture chairman Steve Wilkinson – who was an international long-distance lorry driver, asks: "Do the councils and Network Rail claim against the drivers' insurance and do the police take action for driving without due care and attention?"

Pictures: Colin Hills

to next year allegedly because of "logistical problems".

Air rail link

Railfuture is calling for improvements to the train service which serves the new Robin Hood airport – six miles from Doncaster – which opened in April. A dedicated airport station on the line to Lincoln and Peterborough has been promised for the long term but currently there are only five trains in each direction between Doncaster and Lincoln. Improvements could come when Central Trains routes are split between new franchisees and Northern Rail takes over this route. One possible solution is a rail shuttle between Doncaster and the airport. The developers, South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive and Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council all support the plan for a station but the Strategic Rail Authority has managed to create an obstacle with its "criteria for new stations". In the meantime, buses from Doncaster West Street provide a service, which involves a long walk from the rail station.

South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive director general Roy Wicks said: "The position regarding rail access to the airport is unfortunately not as simple as first seems, especially given the Government's policy of seeking to reduce rail costs rather than add to them."

Scotland

By Mike Harrison

www.RailFutureScotland.org.uk

Who wants what?

I spent two days on a stall as part of Edinburgh's *In Town Without My Car* display in September. I was wearing several hats, as a cycle campaigner as well as a public transport advocate. Many people wanted to talk about rail and some provided me with their wish-lists.

The most common request was that there should be more space for luggage, including cycles. The next was the relatively high cost for a family to take the train. This tied in with complaints about the complex fare structure. So many ticket types, so many special offers, special rates for just about every group of people except the one they belonged to. Few people raised questions about punctuality or conditions on the trains, or time taken for journeys. I wonder if these comments are from people who use trains occasionally or those who simply use these complaints as an excuse for not using trains. Certainly their lists are different to mine. Mine would have: a sub four-hour journey time to London, a sleeper on Saturday night, faster and cheaper journeys to places other than London, for example between Edinburgh and Birmingham.

Warming up for action

After serious seasonal weather problems affecting all operators in



Scotland during the winter, First Scotrail is now making good progress in meeting the promises in its franchise bid. One benefit to customers is in increased openness, and this combined with a strong drive from senior staff is proving beneficial.

Right on the line

There is satisfaction that GNER has held the East Coast franchise, and general approval for the plans it has for maintenance and development of the service.

Lively get-together

Railfuture Scotland had a lively spring open meeting which preceded the annual general meeting, with Dr Iain Docherty from Glasgow University School of Business Management, a transport adviser to several national and civic bodies, making a deliberately provocative presentation. His main thesis was the random and often irrational way in which transport policies and strategies are promoted and implemented. Discussion could have continued for a long time. Following the AGM, Railfuture's national chairman Mike Crowhurst spoke to the meeting about the current position of Railfuture. We welcomed his visit north of the border.

Thames

By Chris Wright
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Main line improvements

Milton Keynes Partnership, the organisation responsible for the future growth of Milton Keynes and headed by Sir Bob Reid the ex-BR chairman, has secured agreement with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (subject to further appraisal) to fund a new platform at Central Milton Keynes and for platform 1 to become a loop. Funding for a new station building at Wolverton is also included.

Hopes for new station

Aylesbury North/Parkway may also benefit from funding, after further appraisal, from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Chiltern Railways funding the detailed study with £15k from Bucks County and Aylesbury Vale District Council. Both results are due by the autumn and are supported by the branch.

Links to West

The branch submitted representations to the Strategic Rail Authority on the Great Western Rail utilisation study. The Rail Passengers Council support for the Bristol-Oxford service is to be reviewed as part of East West Rail was secured. We were amazed that the SRA failed to short-list the GNER /Laing Rail bid for the franchise!

Indirect action

Oxford-Bicester Rail User Group is campaigning for a path from Bicester Village to the station to be com-

pleted but there are crazy delays over about three feet of path. This is certainly not integrated transport! The group also hopes to see a revised timetable in June but has made little progress on evening services.

East-West rail

The proposed East West rail link has seen a further study funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister into the transport options for the corridor. Atkins Rail and Roger Tym are undertaking the work which is due to report by the summer. Meanwhile, the X5 coach service has improved its frequency to half hourly for much of the day but still takes nearly four hours. Rail could take about half the time. 350,000 passengers a year now use the service which has grown by 8% a year which clearly suggests that there is a large potential market already for rail which would attract even more with a better service.

Meanwhile we are joining with others to seek protection for part of the Bedford-Sandy trackbed threatened by mineral extraction and a rowing lake at Willington.

East Anglia

By Nick Dibben
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Election action

In the run-up to the general election, the branch produced an East Anglia railway update leaflet that was sent to candidates. The leaflet highlighted the improvements to rail services in recent years such as more freight and the new Cambridge-Norwich services. It also set out our concerns for the future especially the need for additional capacity and an East-West rail link to serve additional housing and growth at Stansted Airport and the ports. Branch secretary Nick Dibben was invited to speak about railway issues and ask questions at a candidates meeting in Huntingdon.

Cast.Iron, the group campaigning to re-open the Cambridge to St Ives line also produced and delivered leaflets along the route asking people not to vote for councillors that had supported the guided busway scheme.

Busway inquiry costs £2.2m!

Branch members used the new Freedom of Information Act to ask Cambridgeshire County Council how much it had spent on the guided busway inquiry. Although initially claiming that the answer would cost hundreds of pounds to prepare, the council eventually provided the answer free of charge. The total cost is around £2.2million and includes £1.7million for the legal and technical advice. The Queen's Counsel leading the case for the county council and his team were paid £338,250.

Where are the trains?

The branch has written to Central

Trains complaining about the substitution of trains by buses during engineering work. In one recent example, buses replaced trains on the entire route between Cambridge and Stansted Airport although the engineering work was only taking place around Nuneaton. The branch suggested that it would have been possible to run a service between Stansted and at least Peterborough or Leicester to the benefit of many local users. Central Trains responded positively by promising to consider this in future.

The need for extra capacity

The East of England Regional Assembly has complained to the Department for Transport about the lack of proposals and suitable funding in the SRA's regional funding assessment to cater for the expected 478,000 additional homes in the region. These comments echo the response made by the branch on the draft East of England Plan earlier this year. The expected impact on rail services is set out in a report produced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on growth in the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough corridor. This indicates an additional 27,000 commuters into London by 2021

including 4,437 from Cambridge, 2,119 from Peterborough and 5,496 from Broxbourne. The report notes that implementation of the Crossrail and Thameslink 2000 projects and longer trains should provide enough seats.

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
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Transport users forum

East Midlands Railfuture accepted an invitation from the Rail Passengers Council Midlands to join the steering group launch meeting of the East Midlands Passenger Transport Users Forum held in Nottingham on 26 April. This group will be similar to those set up in other regions to represent passengers and specifically to bring together their interests within Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Rutland, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire. The first public meeting may be held in June, probably in Nottingham, but the date and venue have to be confirmed.

Loughborough station car park

We have been actively campaigning since 1999 to improve Loughbor-



Ref: 1220-1006



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ough station and increase the number of car park spaces. We thought we had a breakthrough when at a meeting in November 2003 with Nick Brown (then Central Trains managing director), and following the franchise extension, funding was sourced for the work to go ahead. This would have meant that the car park at the East Midlands' fourth busiest station would not be full by 8am every weekday morning. Currently there are about 140 parking spaces and yet 90 Midland Mainline trains (only Leicester has more!) and 56 Central Trains services call each day. The funding is still there and will be until early 2006 but after 15 months of contact Central Trains cannot seem to get agreement on a purchase price with EWS which holds a 100-plus year lease on the land from Network Rail. What adds insult to injury is the area of land required for the car park extension is only a very small part of the now disused sidings land that is nearly big enough for a small airport!

More investment is also urgently needed at Loughborough for step free access to platforms 2 and 3, provision of disabled toilets, platform height and length improvements and a first class bus-taxi-passenger interchange.

Meanwhile, after many delays, consultations over the "Loughborough Eastern Gateway" project to redevelop a large area of derelict ex-rail land in front of the station are set to begin towards the end of May.

Market Harborough car park

Further down the line Midland Mainline has plans to increase the size of the Market Harborough station car park by 50%. Chaotic parking by commuters in nearby streets has led the fire service to warn that they may not be able to respond to calls sufficiently fast as they crawl past badly parked cars.

Harringworth viaduct

A special train was planned for 26 June to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the first passenger train over the longest railway viaduct in the UK. Harringworth viaduct, on what is now the freight-only line between Kettering and Manton Junction, will soon be into phase 2 of a £1.5million repair project.

London & South East

By Laurence Fryer
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AGM

The branch held a well-attended annual general meeting at the Calthorpe Arms in central London on 15 April. Lively discussion followed chairman Keith Dyall's annual report.

C2C

We, along with a number of rail user groups, oppose the introduction of onboard TV with intrusive largely advertising-led content aimed at captive passengers. The invasion of TV from our homes into



This was the scene at Oxford station 18 years ago when the Oxford-Bicester service was opened with high hopes that it would be the first stage of creating an East-West rail link. It seemed a simple matter to reopen the mothballed line from Bicester to Bletchley. Sadly we are still waiting for the scheme to be implemented.

The potential of the link has been recognised and a properly costed scheme has been drawn up to re-connect Oxford with Milton Keynes, Bedford, Cambridge and Ipswich.

In 1987 Briths Rail proposed a Peterborough-Swindon service to start in 1990 at a cost of £4million. At various times it has almost appeared that the scheme would be implemented just as a whole series of multi-million pound road schemes were implemented along the route.

But rail privatisation intervened, followed by the Labour government's inability to implement simple schemes like this to develop the rail network as a way of tackling the horrendous environmental implications of relying on road and air transport.

How can a Government "committed" to sustainable transport not grasp such a golden opportunity to reinstate trains between Bedford, Oxford and Aylesbury for £250million? The future however looks even worse. The Strategic Rail Authority is specifying only one train a day each way for the next franchise. The Oxon and Bucks Rail Action Committee which has been campaigning for rail services between Milton Keynes, Oxford and Aylesbury warns that the line is now in danger of closing.

the outside world has led Canadian magazine *Adbusters* to mention the TV-B-Gone remote control device. This device has one purpose: To remotely switch off intrusive television wherever it rears its ugly head. This article appeared in the *Telegraph* on 21 April and subsequently one of their correspondents gleefully reported how he shut down a noisy TV in a pub thus breaking the transfixion it had over a young drinker to allow his mind to wake up and start living again.

SWT

We broadly approve of the changes made to the timetable although timings have lengthened; reliability appears to have improved.

Cricklewood development plan

The London borough of Barnet has reported on its plans for the development of the freight depot and we have a number of reservations.

Ultimately, we believe the plan will be implemented, but not without our making clear our concerns.

Integrated Kent franchise

We have submitted a response to the franchise proposals, and met with First Group, one potential franchisee. We raised the issue of service reductions and premium fares among others.

Chiltern

Following lobbying by Railfuture and user groups, limited all day stopping has been introduced at Sudbury. We are now focusing on proposals to provide an interchange similar to that at West Hampstead, allowing access to the Piccadilly line.

Silverlink Gospel Oak-Barking

The latest user group newsletter contains welcome news of another round of improvements. First, from

13 June the half hourly service continues further into the evening. Reminding us that to make omelettes you have to crack some eggs. News of major engineering work will result in service suspension on the south Tottenham-Barking section from 6-21 August. Further pressure is being brought for action on information screen failures and new cleaning contractors.

Further information: www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk

Yorkshire

By Peter Davies
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Annual meeting and luncheon

The annual general meeting and luncheon was held in Huddersfield on 19 March and the speaker was Mr Stanley Hall, a professional railway man of many years standing. Mr Hall has accepted the invitation to become a vice-president of Railfuture.

Huddersfield Greenway

Former rail corridors are to be turned into recreational routes by Kirklees Metropolitan Council between Dewsbury and Huddersfield including the spectacular Bradley viaduct which will carry walkers and cyclists across the river and canal from Dalton Bank to Leeds Road.

A proposal has been put forward to make use of the former Kirkburton branch for a stretch of four miles between Kirkheaton and Kirkburton to be turned into a route for cyclists and walkers. It is a great pity that both these routes cannot be used by rail again.

Ben Rhydding

Network Rail is undertaking substantial remedial work to the embankment carrying the Leeds-Ilkley line to avoid the re-imposition of temporary speed restrictions, which have been as low as 20 mph.

Hull

The renovation of three sections of the barrel roof of Paragon station is in this year's Network Rail budget, along with work to the concourse roof, and minor platform repairs. Elsewhere in the city, contractors have demolished the goods shed which was the last evidence of the former Hull and Barnsley station closed in 1955. The site will be redeveloped as an extension to a college, but the ornate wrought iron railway gates will be re-erected as a memorial.

Leeds

The application by Wetherspoons for 24-hour opening has been withdrawn.

West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive

Views have been sought from rail user groups as to their aspirations for Rail Plan 6 which is in preparation.

Northern franchise

On 13 December the Northern Rail

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event either at the station or on the train possibly with free pasties. Wessex Trains intended offering a 50% discount in ticket prices on the day. Similar events were planned for other branch lines.

North Devon Line news

The North Devon Line Rail Users Group reports that long welded rail with steel sleepers has been installed around Morchard Road, Umberleigh and Chapelton during the recent blockade. The Pill Girder bridge between Chapelton and Barnstaple has also been refurbished. One small advantage of the new Barnstaple western bypass is that buses to Appledore, Westward Ho! and Bideford could be diverted past Barnstaple station entrance on a new buses only road link. However the large roundabout to the north of the station will make reopening the Bideford line more expensive to achieve.

Threat to Bere Alston-Tavistock

The Heritage Lottery Fund is putting £2.7million into restoring the historic mining area in the Tamar Valley line. This should be good news, as it could bring many more visitors to the area who might use the Gunnislake line. The bad news is that the Bere Alston to Tavistock line has been specifically highlighted in a BBC interview (12 May 2005), as part of the project to build a 60km network of trails and footpaths. Railfuture wishes to see this route re-opened as part of the second main line route between Exeter and Plymouth.

Exeter to Barnstaple line

From 12 June summer timetable change, all trains call at Umberleigh and many more at Morchard Road. This is good news as both have potential for development as local park and ride stations, especially Umberleigh which could serve South Molton and Great Torrington. Yeoford regains its north-bound morning trains to Barnstaple. Improvements to the working of Eggesford level crossing have helped provide the extra necessary minutes for this, within the very tightly timed section of single track between Cowley Bridge Junction, Exeter and Eggesford. The only morning train at 09.49 from Newton Cyres to Exeter runs at the more convenient commuting time of 08.01. Overall the service is hourly, for some parts of the day, but gaps will remain until the loop at Eggesford is extended or moved towards Lapford. When this is done the extra trains should be used to serve Lapford as this station continues to be the main loser in the new summer timetable.

Bus-rail links

From 29 May timetable change, most Monday-Saturday buses from Combe Martin and Ilfracombe to Barnstaple (First service 30) run half hourly to and from Barnstaple railway station. A number of changes have and are taking place on the

First X9, X10 and X11 buses that serve Exeter St Davids station and run to Okehampton, Bude, Launceston and beyond. During the day, most intermediate stops between Exeter and Okehampton have been removed from the X9 Bude service. The X10 service has been largely abandoned west of Launceston, with those services that do remain being diverted to Bude either direct or via Camelford.

In East Devon the Honiton to Sidmouth bus-rail link now runs hourly, as an extension of Exeter-Sidmouth. Last bus for Sidmouth is at 18.48 and from Honiton 19.40.

Exeter to Salisbury and Waterloo

Since last December's timetable change, Yeovil Junction to Salisbury and Waterloo has been operated hourly. Unfortunately this was only achieved by lengthening journey times, with time wasted in the stationless loops at Chard Junction and Tisbury. Devon County Council has employed a consultant to study the requirements to extend this timetable, so as to run hourly throughout from Exeter and also to serve the proposed new town near Broadclyst and run an additional hourly shuttle between Exeter and Axminster. Implications of the proposals east of Yeovil Junction seem not to have been examined.

The answer given by the consultant is a new three-mile loop east of Axminster and another three-mile loop at Whimple. It works by transferring the time spent at Chard Junction to the new Broadclyst area station. However, overall journey times are no better, as the problem of the Tisbury loop remains unresolved. The proposed timetable would make it difficult to serve Chard Junction as a reopened station in the future. Furthermore, there is no capacity to divert First Great Western trains between Exeter and Castle Cary as is so often needed at weekends. The consultant's solution leaves the long 17-mile section from Yeovil Junction to Chard Junction as it is, and then places loops at an average seven miles apart on the remaining single line to Pinhoe, Exeter. Of course an additional passing place could be placed between Yeovil Junction and Crewkerne, but to link in with the consultant's Axminster to Exeter shuttle, it would mean doubling through Crewkerne Tunnel and converting the level crossings to either side (Crewkerne and Hewish Automatic Half Barrier crossings), for double track working.

Railfuture Devon and Cornwall believes there are simpler and more effective solutions, so long as the full route can be considered, and minor alterations allowed to the timetable between Salisbury and Worting Junction, near Basingstoke. By allowing for two trains each way from the outset, it is possible to plan a series of phased developments.

Our work to date suggests that an initial three miles of extended

double track west of Yeovil Junction is sufficient to allow an hourly service to run each way between Exeter and Salisbury. Trains would call at selected stations to Honiton and then all existing ones to Salisbury. This timetable would be especially valuable for Sundays as there would be capacity to divert First Great Western trains between Exeter and Castle Cary as well.

The diversion would add around 20 minutes to the Exeter to Paddington journey, be hourly and leave the hourly South West Trains service undisturbed.

During the week the two trains per hour from Exeter could also be run to Yeovil Junction and extended through to Salisbury and Waterloo. To improve reliability the Honiton loop would be extended to either side of the station and at a later date the Chard Junction and Tisbury loops extended to give Axminster and Tisbury two trains per hour and one train per hour at Wilton. To give flexibility to serve the planned new town near Broadclyst, a final development would be a loop about three miles long to the west of Whimple.

South Wales

De Cymru

By Guy Hardy

Members of the committee met SWITCH, the South West group of local authorities who have formed a consortium to formulate transport policy.

SWITCH are to publish a policy document in mid summer for consultation by stakeholders and the purpose of the meeting was to discuss proposals in our Development Plan (On Track for the 21st Century) which the Wales branches published last autumn.

We will of course be contributing to the consultation. At copy date for this issue we awaited the final proposals by Arriva Trains Wales for their regular interval timetable to be introduced in December - we hope it will be good - the inconvenience from poor connections along the South Wales corridor which passengers are experiencing this summer due to ATW and First Great Western failing to align their timetables cannot be overstated.

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Time for action

Railfuture relies on volunteers and members for campaigning.

We try to make the case for rail at every opportunity but each member can play a part. Here are five ideas for you:

1. If your local MP is new to Parliament (following the general election in May), write to him or her, reminding them of the importance of rail to you and everyone. Remind them that rail is the backbone of Britain's public transport network and needs their support to make it more effective. Remind them that there are stations and lines that need reopening and name the ones in your area. Remind them that walk-on fares are far too high. The address to write to is The House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. Make sure you spell the MP's name correctly and be polite. They are always glad to hear from individual constituents but they get too many complaints. Try to be positive. We do not want to antagonise potential allies.

If you receive a letter from your MP, forward it to David Harby, 6 Carral Close, Lincoln LN5 9BD and he can send your MP a free Railwatch or add your MP to those MPs who receive every issue of Railwatch free.

2. Recruit one new member to Railfuture.

3. Write a letter to your local paper extolling your local rail service and suggest a suitable day out by rail for the paper's readers.

4. Buy a railcard, rail vouchers - also known as compensation vouchers - or Railfuture membership as a present for a friend or relative.

5. Put up a rail timetable on your work, school or even home noticeboard.



Franchise was launched at Leeds station by managing director Heidi Mottram. Guests were provided with croissants and coffee, and they then joined a newly repainted class 156 Sprinter in the mauve livery of the Northern franchise. The train conveyed the party via Bradford and the Calder Valley to Manchester where a similar ceremony was also held.

There is little hope of any new investment in the franchise which is scheduled to last for eight and three quarter years, the final two years being dependent on performance. The aim is to reduce delays and cancellations by 15% over the period of the franchise.

Community Rail Partnerships

In late November the Strategic Rail Authority announced the publication of its report regarding Community Rail Partnerships, and in West Yorkshire, the route between Huddersfield and Barnsley was selected. The report emphasises the need for the train operators to work with the Penistone Line Partnership, and local groups. However, it is understood that rail user groups have no input into the scheme which is disappointing considering the amount of work they do.

The fear is that if the schemes do not work the routes which have been selected for a Community Rail Partnership may come under threat of closure, and the scheme may be seen as a way of closure by stealth.

Grand Central Railway

The Grand Central Railway has announced a new rail service to London in addition to the proposals for a York to Chester service via the Calder Valley. The new service will operate from Bradford Interchange via Halifax, Brighouse, Wakefield (Kirkgate) and Doncaster to London King's Cross, and it is understood there will also be a service from Sunderland via the Durham Coast to London King's Cross.

The service from Bradford Interchange will be locomotive hauled and provide restaurant and buffet car facilities, with the opportunity of purchasing low fares in advance from each of the calling points on the route. No subsidy will be paid. The proposals are subject to approval by the Rail Regulator.

Low Moor

Design for a new station at Low Moor is now well advanced, although no work has commenced on site. The station would provide a much-needed park-and-ride facility for commuters to Bradford and Leeds and reduce traffic congestion in Bradford during peak times.

Huddersfield

A new computerised customer information service is to be provided together with new computer screens, improved lighting, and security at a cost of £660,000.

Doncaster

There is a need for a through direct



Platform zero to join the network

Chris Green, chairman of Virgin Trains, said he expects the newly built extra platform at Stockport to be finally connected to the rest of the rail network when the station is closed for engineering works at Christmas. The platform was added during rebuilding works of the station in 2003 and was built on the east side of the station taking part of the alignment of former freight bypass loops.

The refurbishment took place at a cost of some £3.5million to provide a new main entrance and booking hall, a taxi rank and dropping-off point. As yet the new platform, while having some of the track laid, has not yet been connected to the rail system.

Use of the new platform is likely to be by trains to Buxton and possibly those on the Hope Valley line to Sheffield and beyond. By helping to free other platforms, this is expected to help reduce congestion at Stockport, especially on the expanded half-hourly Virgin services to London Euston and Birmingham.

*Report and picture by Trevor Bishop (Railfuture North West)
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service from West and North Yorkshire, and via the Great Northern and Great Eastern route to the new airport at Finningley which commenced operation in March.

Editors' note: We apologise to Yorkshire branch for omitting its report from Railwatch 103.

Devon & Cornwall

By Stuart Walker
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Prime Minister supports doubling of Exeter-Salisbury Line

In answer to a question asked by the *Western Morning News* published on 28 April during the election campaign, Tony Blair said the following: "We do want to see improvements on the Exeter to Waterloo line including dualling of sections of the track but dualling the whole line would not be cost effective."

Now re-elected to Government can we expect Mr Blair to tell Mr Darling to carry out the work? All it would take is a couple of additional double-track extensions to create an hourly service from Exeter to

Waterloo and even have capacity to operate a local shuttle from Axminster to Exeter. With proposals for new residential development and a freight terminal in East Devon the scheme is desperately needed.

St Ives timetable improved

Following concerns expressed by Railfuture and the Friends of St Ives Branch Line, Wessex Trains has agreed to amend the summer timetable from 13 June by introducing services from St Erth at 17.55 and 18.55 with balancing return workings.

This fills the 80-minute gap between 18.11 and 19.30 that was created by the March timetable change restoring the evening commuter service.

The service will then be the most frequent it has ever been. Meanwhile, the Friends of St Ives Branch Line have been planting out tubs attached to new benches at Carbis Bay station and hope to do the same at St Ives station itself.

Unique bus replacements during Looe and Exmouth engineering

The recent bus replacements of trains during engineering work at Looe and Exmouth included a new

arrangement with bus operators Western Greyhound and Stagecoach Devon. Drivers of the buses charged fares and issued bus tickets for passengers boarding without a rail ticket.

Passengers making main line connections could then use the bus ticket as part-payment towards their rail ticket at Liskeard-Exeter. This is an arrangement Railfuture wished to encourage for normal bus feeder services, but so far operators seem reluctant to work together on this.

Stagecoach ran a special rail replacement service to Exmouth but also allowed their normal service buses to accept rail tickets. Western Greyhound's existing service was used to replace the Looe trains, with extra buses in the evening. The only downside with the Looe arrangement was that main line connections were not as good as the train timetable.

Rover tickets revamp

Railfuture understands that Wessex Trains is replacing its existing rail rovers with a new set of tickets from 12 June. The separate Devon and Cornwall Rovers will be merged into a single Rail Rover with three, seven or eight in 15-day versions extending as far east as Taunton. There will also be a one-day unlimited travel ticket for Cornwall priced at around £14. Separate one-day unlimited travel rangers are also planned for each of the Cornish branch lines, which will also be available from local shops and from platform machines on the St Ives Branch.

It is hoped that the Freedom of the South West Railrover will be extended from Romsey to Southampton, Bournemouth and Weymouth with the 8 in 15-day version increased from £61 to £95. The difference will be that there will be no restriction on use before 09.00 which may make the ticket attractive to long-distance commuters as well as those holidaying in the region. It is also rumoured that a first class version may become available. With the cheapest turn-up-and-go fare between Penzance and Bristol now costing £51, the £95 Rover giving eight-in-15-days travel offers excellent value for money.

Join Friends of the Looe Valley

A Friends of the Looe Valley Line has been formed. As well as staffing the summer ticket kiosk at Looe, they hope to provide a refreshment kiosk as well. Looking further ahead the Friends would like to landscape the overgrown area between the track and the river at Looe station in partnership with Looe in Bloom. Anyone who wishes to join can contact the group at Tren creek, Looe PL13 2JR or email sheridan.hughes@tiscali.co.uk

Community Rail Day

A sculpture was unveiled at St Ives station on 14 May and the Friends were planning to offer a musical