



East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
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Branch merger

The new East Midlands Branch, to be formed by the merger of Railfuture's East Midlands and North Midlands branches, will be formally constituted at an AGM to be held in early 2006. Meanwhile, the interim chairman of the merged branch is Roger Skilton.

Depot tour

A small group of branch members toured the Thameslink depot in Bedford in August. The spacious, clean and well-lit depot was a great contrast to the old steam shed remembered by some members. We were left with an impression of a dedicated, professional workforce ensuring the safety and reliability of our railways.

National Forest Line

There is still no prospect in the foreseeable future of the line from Leicester to Burton-on-Trent via Coalville being reopened to passengers. However, FM Rail are planning to move their Derby depot to Coalville where there is more space, which will at least ensure that there is more traffic on this rather moribund line.

Station car parks

The branch recently surveyed 14 station car parks in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. The findings included a wide range of car parking charges, all but three of the car parks were full very early in the day, security measures were patchy and inconsistent and interchange to buses was often difficult.

Loughborough station

The branch has received some useful support for its campaign to bring Loughborough station out of the 19th century. Charnwood Borough Council is promoting an "Eastern Gateway Scheme" for regeneration of the surrounding area, and has now recommended that "the potential for improvements of the station itself and its facilities... be pursued with the relevant railway authorities". The branch is in discussions with the council about possible sources of funding, but the train operating companies have shown little interest so far.

East Anglia

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Passenger feedback

The branch had a stall at Great Yarmouth station during the Norwich Railfest, organised by the Association of Community Railway Partnerships. We were able to hand out many leaflets and talk to rail passengers about their experience of rail. Many passengers had noted that train cleaning had improved, although there were concerns about



TASTY OFFER: David Edwards, left, Neuadd Arms proprietor Lindsay Ketteringham, and hotel cook Moyna Lydon

Picture: ATW

Ticket to ride – and eat

For a flat fare of £5 return, people can travel from any station between Swansea and Shrewsbury to Britain's smallest town – Llanwrtyd Wells – where they can enjoy a free bowl of home-made soup and a roll at the Neuadd Arms Hotel when they show their rail ticket.

Local train operator Arriva Trains Wales launched the "soup and a stroll" ticket offer in partnership with the Heart of Wales Line Forum.

"A scenic train trip along the Heart of Wales Line to the picturesque town of Llanwrtyd is an ideal day out," said Gillian Bell, head of marketing for Arriva Trains Wales.

"We hope even more customers will take advantage of this great value offer this autumn and enjoy a stroll and a warming home-made meal in Britain's smallest town."

David Edwards, community rail officer for the forum said: "The 121-mile line takes passengers through some spectacular scenery and towns such as Llanwrtyd."

The offer is valid until 31 December (excluding Christmas Day and Boxing Day) and is available with rail tickets purchased from any Arriva Trains Wales staffed station or conductor. Further information about Llanwrtyd is available from the Tourist Information Centre by calling 01591 610666, or at www.heart-of-wales.co.uk.

overcrowding and connections. These comments have been passed on to ONE Railway along with our congratulations on the attitude of the station staff over the weekend in coping with the extra passengers and keeping the station clean.

Central Trains break up

Norwich MP Charles Clark has contacted the branch over plans to break up Central Trains with the possible loss of through Norwich to Liverpool services. Responding, Railfuture president Peter Lawrence, noted that we should be expanding regional rail links to East Anglia to cope with the new housing planned rather than cutting services. A meeting with the MP is being set up for the new year to discuss this issue.

Talking to developers

Branch chairman Peter Wakefield has met with Cemex, the owners of

the Barrington Cement works near Cambridge about the company's plans to expand production up to 1million tonnes of cement each year. The plans include upgrading the rail connection to the Cambridge-Royston line. Although coal is delivered to the site by rail, the branch is urging Cemex to consider using rail for some of the cement and other raw materials.

Rail to the races

Elsewhere in the region, the owners of Snetterton Racing circuit are considering a new station to serve the refurbished track and other on site development. If a station is provided, it would make the circuit the only one in England with convenient rail access. Other circuits are usually some way from the nearest station, and experience severe traffic congestion on race days. The owners have offered to show the branch around the site

and discuss the practicalities of a new station or upgrading the existing, but lightly used, Eccles Road station.

Wheelchair access

There are reports that disabled people in wheelchairs may soon be able to use the staff-only lift at Colchester station.

A Railfuture passenger reported that at least on one occasion, a train was diverted to a different platform to accommodate a wheelchair user.

Scotland

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By Mike Harrison
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The autumn open meeting of the Scottish Branch was to have had a talk from and discussion with James King, formerly chair of the Rail Passengers Committee for Scotland, about the new arrangements. However, illness intervened, and at short notice John Yellowlees, First ScotRail external relations manager, gave us an overview of year one of the First ScotRail franchise. Some of us have heard presentations recently based on the same core material from other members of First ScotRail staff, but they have been directed to a more general audience. What John Yellowlees had to say came under close scrutiny and more detailed questioning from the audience of Railfuture members. With his in-depth knowledge of ScotRail, he was able to answer most of these, and for those he couldn't answer on the day, he went away, did the research, and has come back to the committee with answers.

In the Scottish Parliament there used to be a cross-party group on cycling and one on railways. These have now merged into a cross-party group on sustainable transport. Many of the MSPs were members of both of the two old groups. Gordon Dewar was the speaker at the September meeting, where he gave a review of First ScotRail's first year. All those who questioned him paid tribute to things which ScotRail had achieved, some of them major successes, but many were small things which are noted by the passengers and appreciated. With the help of Network Rail staff he fielded a variety of questions as to how ScotRail intended to continue to improve the service. There does seem to be a new degree of co-operation between those who run the trains and those who manage the track, as well as between government and the rail people.

First ScotRail has appointed a consultant to hold four local initial meetings with cycle users of the railways (in Aberdeen, Glasgow, Inverness and Edinburgh), and these will be followed up by a meeting with national cycling bodies. Three have already taken place (by mid-November), and the Edinburgh one is expected to be held before



Christmas. The Association of Train Operators announced on 8 November that First ScotRail was winner of the customer service category in the National Cycle Rail Awards for 2005. It was nominated by Spokes (the Lothians Cycle Campaign) for their steady improvement in service to cycle users. Additional space is being provided on class 170s, most stations have cycle parking (and that is to be extended to all), CCTV covers most cycle parks at stations, the Cycle Rescue scheme of the Environmental Transport Association is provided at no extra charge for people with valid travel tickets.

However, neither ScotRail nor other operators have solved the problem that luggage-carrying requirements vary according to route and day of the week. What suits a Glasgow-Edinburgh shuttle in December is not appropriate for Inverness-Thurso in July; what suits the weekday 05.50 GNER on a Wednesday morning to King's Cross does not suit the 13.40 Bournemouth-Edinburgh Virgin train on a Sunday afternoon.

Nothing less than instantly removable seats would completely solve the problem, but users do feel that often the right choice has not been made. These days people try to travel with large amounts of luggage.

The Scottish Executive is backing so many rail schemes, it has appointed a consultancy company to manage the programme over the next five to seven years.

The list of projects includes Edinburgh airport rail link, Waverley station redevelopment (phase one), Larkhall-Milngavie rail line, Airdrie-Bathgate rail link, Borders Railway, Edinburgh Trams Network, Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine rail link, Haymarket Interchange redevelopment, Glasgow airport rail link.

The consultancy chosen is Cyril Sweett which has links with Drees & Sommer which has experience of working in German rail.

Chairman Francis Ives said: "Our combined role is to help manage the interfaces both between the projects and with other construction works at all stages and the many different stakeholders. Additionally we'll provide regular reports and feedback to the Scottish Executive of the progress and performance of the projects and of the overall programme."

London & South East

By Laurence Fryer
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Mayor plans ahead

A £10billion plan to expand London's rail network over the next 20 years has been drawn up by Mayor Ken Livingstone.

It includes new trains, longer platforms, and action on 30 bottlenecks like Clapham Junction by building flyovers to replace flat junctions.

The Mayor wants to extend his

control over National Rail services in London.

In many ways the train operating companies have failed London, most spectacularly by refusing to include Oyster card readers at stations. The expansion plan will be formally launched next year.

Overcrowding

Railfuture is receiving complaints regarding reduced seating capacity on the new trains at present being introduced on South Eastern. Few, if any, seats being available after trains have left their starting station. People are paying good money to travel and do not wish to stand for quite long journeys.

Pennypinching

We understand that the Department for Transport and Network Rail are looking at having new trains for Thameslink 2000 and these are proposed to have wider doors and fewer seats. Bearing in mind that Thameslink journeys take up to an hour, it is unreasonable to ask people to stand for up to an hour or more.

Pennypinching looks like causing trouble at St Pancras Thameslink station when it eventually opens. Trains will have to wait at the station for longer than necessary because the planners ignored the advice of rail operators. As a result, there is only one northbound departure platform for all Midland and Great Northern departures. The same is happening with southbound departures at Blackfriars.

There will be only one departure platform for 12 different routes! It is asking for trouble. With so many different routes coming into the Thameslink core from the south, regulating northbound trains in the correct order and to time on a regular basis will be a next to impossible job.

Even with the present four-minute recovery time it is not always enough over the few routes that we now have. With just two platforms and trains at two and a half minute intervals, recovery time is not possible. With four through platforms at Blackfriars, dwell times would be reduced and a recovery time could be inserted into the timetable. If not, the operators will have to look to the DfT for compensation to pay out to passengers.

New signalling in the central section should allow for trains every 2.5 minutes. It is believed the successful bidder for Thameslink will have to make regular payments to put towards the cost of fitting out the new St Pancras Thameslink station.

Interchange improvement

Laing Rail plans to develop a proper interchange at West Hampstead which will incorporate new platforms on the Chiltern lines but not the Metropolitan as London Underground apparently does not want them. The interchange will have new booking offices at each end of

the complex and lifts to platforms. The road would be widened to help bus movement as well as other traffic. The project would be funded by development on Network Rail-owned land. Laing is planning to complete the project in time for the Olympics in 2012.

Fares leap in Kent

For five years, fares will rise by 3% more than inflation in Kent to help pay for the new integrated Kent franchise which was awarded on 30 November to GoVia.

The franchise starts on 1 April and faces many challenges, including running the new Hitachi high-speed domestic trains into London St Pancras from 2008 and the Javelin trains to serve the 2012 Olympic Games. The Government subsidy will be £585million over eight years while GoVia which already runs Southern will put in £76million.

South West strategy

Network Rail unveiled a series of options for meeting growing demand on lines into London's Waterloo station in its South West main line route utilisation strategy.

Twenty-seven options that could

cater for greater passenger and freight demand along these lines have been presented for consultation. This section of the network is forecast to see a 20% increase in passengers and 15-20% increase in freight over the next 10 years.

Consultation on the options will take place over the next two months after which a final version of the RUS will be submitted to the Office of Rail Regulation and the Department for Transport.

The Department for Transport and other third parties will decide which proposals will be funded and delivered.

"We look forward to hearing the views of a wide range of interested parties - not only from the rail industry, but also from local authorities and regional development agencies," said John Armitt, chief executive. "Their input is crucial in helping to identify the best ways to accommodate growth on this key rail artery."

Stratford-North Woolwich

Railfuture has objected to the discontinuation of North London Line trains from Stratford to North

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ROADSIDE RESCUE



Woolwich and the plan to convert Stratford-Canning Town to Docklands Light Railway operation. It will provide more frequent local services but lose the link from Docklands to the rest of north London. It would also make life difficult for cyclists as DLR bans bikes on trains.

Railfuture will also seek a commitment that Stratford's new North London Line platforms are linked to the Lea Valley Line so trains can continue to Lea Bridge, Walthamstow and Chingford.

North London upgrades

Railfuture's long-standing campaign to promote the outer circle rail network may be bearing fruit. Transport for London's managing director Ian Brown has said that TfL will introduce metro-style services on the North London Line if it takes over the franchising responsibilities for the line. Railfuture has also suggested a through service from Clapham Junction to Barking.

Although Silverlink was recently granted a franchise extension until late 2007 as part of the Central Trains area reorganisation, talks are still ongoing between the DfT and Transport for London about TfL taking over the role of franchise managers for Silverlink Metro. This would make it the first group of National Rail lines to come under the management control of Transport for London and the Mayor, which could be very good news especially as TfL have ambitious plans for the routes, including increasing the frequency of the service on the Barking-Gospel Oak line and hiring newer trains.

North West

By Trevor Bishop

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Signalling improvements

From the December timetable change until March, the line between Cheadle Hulme and Crewe will be closed seven days a week and most services replaced by buses with some diversions. This closure is to accommodate the re-signalling of the line, which will result in the closure of Wilmslow and Sandbach signal boxes with control passing to the recently established Manchester South signal box.

Most local Crewe-Piccadilly and Alderley Edge-Piccadilly services will be replaced by buses as far as Stockport, though some will be diverted and run non-stop to Macclesfield and turn back there. Virgin services that run to and from Manchester via Wilmslow and Crewe are either terminated at Crewe or diverted via Macclesfield and Stoke. The blockade between Crewe and Cheadle Hulme is expected to run from 12 December until 24 March.

Diesels under the wires

On the same timetable change, there is also a slightly worrying



GO-GREEN WINNERS: Ely station manager Dave Funnell shows off the new cycle shelters to East Cambridgeshire councillors Jeremy and Sheila Friend-Smith Picture: ONE Railway

One step ahead

Ely station in Cambridgeshire was named joint winner of the best station award in the national cycle-rail awards.

Jonathan Denby, head of corporate affairs for ONE Railway, received the award in a ceremony at Paddington from Transport Minister Derek Twigg.

ONE has provided extra cycle parking at Ely through two partnership initiatives, with East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council and with the Strategic Rail Authority and Department for Transport.

There are now over 200 cycling spaces in place at Ely with at least 80 in covered shelters, with additional CCTV coverage.

The joint project was aimed at promoting a healthy, greener lifestyle, encouraging more people to leave the car at home and get on their bikes, connecting with public transport for longer journeys.

ONE has established a positive track record for its service for cyclists.

Commenting on this year's award for Ely, Mr Denby said: "ONE will continue to welcome cyclists and enhance the quality of service it offers to them – at stations, on trains and in providing helpful information and assistance."

The other joint winner was Brighton London Road.

development of the 06.00 London to Liverpool Pendolino service being "replaced" by a Northampton-Liverpool Desiro, though how one service that starts farther down the line can be a replacement is difficult to see. It's not clear why Virgin are doing this, or if poor passenger numbers is the reason, but if so, replacement by a Desiro, starting short, is hardly likely to encourage passenger numbers.

There's better news for Lancaster Virgin travellers though as they will have a better evening service, with the extension of the 17.45 Euston-Preston, to Lancaster.

Station adoption

The local user group on the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester line, says that three local stations on the line have now got a group of peo-

ple interested in station adoption: Littleborough, Castleton and Mills Hill. User group Storm aims to give help and advice when requested, and a committee member has attended meetings of two groups. As Storm predicted, the autumn leaf-fall timetable proved a nightmare for passengers – both Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive and Northern Rail have received a stack of complaints. The group has consistently argued that there are other ways to deal with the low-adhesion problem than simply cancelling half of the trains. A "leaf buster" train with a high-pressure water cannon could blast the gunge off the track, as happens over the Calder Valley line.

Community Rail Awards

Lancaster City Council received

first prize for Best New Use for Station Buildings for Carnforth Station Visitor Centre in the first annual Association of Community Rail Partnerships community rail awards. The award ceremony was held in Norwich during a gala dinner as part of the Community Rail Festival, held over the weekend of 23-25 September. A North West rail user group also received two prizes in the awards. The North Cheshire Rail User Group received second prize in the community art scheme for the now famous Frodsham station art project, and it also received third prize in the best station garden category for Helsby Station.

Maindee loop hardship

The recently published report by the Rail Passengers Council concludes that withdrawal of direct services between Manchester-Crewe and Bristol Temple Meads-Penzance that use the Maindee loop near Newport, will cause hardship. Using a survey they commissioned which was conducted in August, the RPC disputed Arriva Trains Wales figures as to the number of passengers inconvenienced by the closure proposal, noting that it also contradicted ATW's own comments elsewhere, given that these services are marked in the timetable as "reservation compulsory" or "reservation recommended" implying that it is known that the services are well used. It also noted that the ATW figures were from January and would not be representative as a whole.

The RPC notes further that a commercial decision by ATW to re-deploy stock serving stations between south west and north west England appears to have been portrayed as the withdrawal of passenger services over a section of track in Wales. They say that these factors could be interpreted as an attempt to play down the impact on passengers and to minimise attention to the closure notice.

The RPC is not so strong however on the potential fare increases caused by the closure, given that the alternatives would involve a change of train in either Birmingham New Street or Newport with, it is thought, fares set by Virgin on the first route and ATW on the second. The route via Birmingham would inevitably be more expensive given that in its passenger survey, the RPC noted that the majority of passengers (82%) booked "on the day" tickets, usually with some form of Saver or Supersaver. Virgin no longer recognises Supersavers. Those that have to travel via Birmingham will no doubt face higher costs, though the RPC said the current evidence meant they were not able to confirm or deny this.

Station shops

Rail users have welcomed plans by Merseyrail to introduce combined shop and booking offices at four station buildings. The Ormskirk,



Preston and Southport Travellers Association believes it will drastically improve the ambience at stations and help to make a rail station "compete" with modern petrol stations.

The association is also backing Merseyrail proposals to extend electrification, and suggest going farther – as far as Preston via Burscough. The latest draft of Lancashire's Local Transport Plan includes a clear statement in support of a Southport to Preston rail service via Burscough, and the extension of the Merseyrail electric network beyond Ormskirk, initially to Burscough.

OPSTA is however having to protest that it is not being considered a stakeholder in the review of the Northern Rail franchise which could lead to cuts in services.

Association chairman Roger Bell said: "It needs to be made clear whether any rail user groups will have any say or input into the consultation process. This is a very important issue."

Lincolnshire

By Brian Hastings
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Rail's new era

Railfuture is backing two community rail partnerships created in the county in June. We have supported the two rail user groups in the past and wish them every success in the new era. The Barton Line partnership was launched at Barton-upon-Humber. Friends of the Barton Line have already produced a 12-page survey on the railway entitled *Bolstering the Barton Line* which will be used as a basis for making improvements to the service.

Later the Grantham-Skegness partnership was celebrated at Skegness with a parade and an exhibition. The 56-mile route has been given the tag the Poacher Line. Entertainment was provided by an "Isaac Newton" from Grantham, a "Roman senator" from Ancaster, a town crier from Sleaford, millers from Hackington and "Pilgrim fathers" from Boston.

Junction speed-up

Railfuture campaigning for more rail capacity paid off in October with the opening of a new chord at Allington Junction which will prevent Grantham-Skegness trains delaying GNER services on the East Coast main line. More Nottingham-Skegness trains will also now be able to call at Grantham. Railfuture's Brian Hastings and David Harby went to the opening ceremony which was attended by Network Rail chairman John Armit and rail minister Derek Twigg.

Direct action

Railfuture volunteers have the opportunity to become more involved with their local railway now that Central Trains has launched its



RED AND WHITE UNITE: MPs David Curry, left, and Gordon Prentice shake hands over the border between the red-rose county Lancashire and white-rose North Yorkshire, watched by county and local councillors and SELRAP members

Picture: Roy StPierre

Red, white and blue day

Two MPs, Gordon Prentice who represents the Lancashire constituency of Pendle and David Curry who represents the Yorkshire constituency of Skipton and Ripon, shook hands over the border in November to show their support for a rail reopening plan which would link the two counties.

The MPs also walked along the trackbed of the Colne-Skipton line which the South East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership wants to reinstate as a trans-Pennine route – a part of the national network – linking the Aire Valley and Yorkshire to East Lancashire, Manchester, Preston and beyond.

The 11.5 mile line between Skipton and Colne is the missing link in what would otherwise be the lowest level trans-Pennine rail route between the Humber and West Coast ports, between Preston (on the West Coast main line) and Leeds.

It is an alternative to the heavily graded and trafficked Huddersfield and Calder Valley trans-Pennine routes, and also avoids the already congested lines in Manchester. Although under increasing threat, the

trackbed is essentially intact and the railway could be restored at a relatively low cost. Any further incursion would destroy a resource of national value and would be contrary to government policies.

The line connects the socially deprived and depressed areas of north-east Lancashire (Nelson, Burnley, Colne) to the more prosperous West Yorkshire area, and provides an alternative to road transport for people visiting Skipton and the Aire Valley from Lancashire. Car ownership is low in East Lancashire, which leads to social exclusion.

In just four years, SELRAP has turned public opinion on its head. From open hostility and ridicule, there is now wide acceptance of its potential for huge and positive economic and social benefits, not only on the corridor itself but far beyond.

Andy Shackleton of SELRAP said: "Staggering as it may sound from where you are standing, the fact remains that more passengers are now choosing to travel by rail than at any time since nationalisation. And, as if to prove a point, in the 10 years

(plus) since privatisation, patronage has increased by almost 40% to a point where in excess of a billion passengers are carried on the system annually. And because of closures, the system is roughly half the size it was at nationalisation. As a result, many lines are creaking under the strain of traffic, none more so than transPennine routes, including the Calder valley and Standedge routes.

"Beyond doubt, there is now widespread demand and support at all levels for reinstatement of the Skipton-Colne line as a sustainable local and strategic route. Public opinion has now shifted forward to 'can do'. That said, the question on the minds of many is 'When?'

"The Skipton-Colne railway reinstated will make a valuable contribution to the local, regional and national economy."

For more information about SELRAP, see <http://www.selrap.org.uk>

To join SELRAP, contact membership secretary Derek Jennings on 01282 690411 or email membership@selrap.org.uk



"adopt a station" scheme. Many members in the north of the county are already taking part in Northern Rail's similar scheme.

First at fault

Railfuture is protesting over changes in the December timetable which mean the last train from Lincoln to Sleaford is at 19.41. Railfuture also protested over regrettable and inexcusable changes last year to early morning trains affecting Althorpe, Crowle, Thorne and Hatfield, but the company involved there – First Group TransPennine – has failed to respond to calls for improvements.

Slowdown

The problem of temporary speed restrictions between Doncaster and Cleethorpes was raised by Railfuture at a meeting with Peter Dearman, Network Rail's London North Eastern zone's infrastructure maintenance manager.

NR says it is difficult to maintain the line because of the large numbers of heavy coal, petrol and steel trains, but is doing everything it can.

Expansion plans

Railfuture is pleased to see increased maintenance work on the Brigg line prior to its reopening for six-day operations. Brigg Town Council has responded to complaints from some residents about the increased number of trains with the message that the council supports greater use of rail for the movement of freight.

Thames

By Chris Wright
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Christmas trains

Oxford and Bicester Rail Users Group, which Railfuture has grant aided, has kept up the pressure to secure the services in the line. An improved timetable has been secured for December.

Bicester Village is funding a Christmas Shopper Sunday service and improving access to the village. A bid for a 25-store extension is linked to rail improvements. OBRUG is pressing for the rail enhancement funds initially provided to be released for further improvements.

£8million needed

Laing Rail provided the speaker for the last branch meeting and we were encouraged by the progress made. We pressed the case for further enhancements, including East West Rail. The funding bid for Aylesbury Parkway-North which is being pursued as part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's growth plans for the area was submitted on time and has been refined.

It is thought the track upgrade, signalling and station is estimated at £8million. The bid is supported by local councils and is a long-held branch ambition. The result is awaited.



KEEP IT SIMPLE: Fujitsu's new STAR ticketing system has been installed on Merseyrail stations

Picture: Fujitsu

STAR shines on Merseyside

Merseyrail has become the first British train operator to implement a new ticketing system to replace the British Rail All Purpose Ticket Issuing System installed in the 1980s.

The new STAR system from Fujitsu has been installed at all of Merseyrail's 64 stations, replacing the APTIS machines.

The installation of the STAR systems was completed in only three months, making Merseyrail the first UK train operating company to pass on the benefits of the STAR system to its passengers. Journey planning will be provided via the central Rail Journey Information Service which Fujitsu operates for the rail industry as a whole.

Lee Berry, retail projects manager for Merseyrail, said: "This new system will make life simple for our passengers and for our staff. It will be easy and quick to buy tickets and make seat reservation, for any journey in the UK.

"We will be able to provide a much better service including journey information for any ticket bought. The times of having to look things up in paper manuals are finally over."

Richard Dickson, account director for Fujitsu Services, said: "STAR is the premier rail retailing system for the 21st century.

"Merseyrail is the third train operating company to choose STAR, but the first to complete roll out. This is another major milestone in the STAR programme."

South West Trains is also in the process of installing STAR ticket machines in 150 stations. SWT says one of the reasons APTIS had to go was its inability to support chip and pin cards. STAR which is also being introduced by South Eastern Trains, is said to be effective in reducing administrative paperwork.

Tunnel collapse

The collapse of the tunnel for the new Tesco store at Gerrards Cross disrupted rail services. User groups were kept informed and passengers compensated. We consider Chiltern Railways generally performed well in the circumstances and were pleased that work at Beaconsfield

to raise line speed was brought forward.

East-West

East-West Rail remains a big part of our work, in association with the Oxford to Bletchley Rail Action Committee. Further work for the ODPM has been completed and

sources of private funding are to be identified as the DfT and ODPM are not expected to fund the whole project. Of course we know who will fund the roads! It is expected details of the latest report will be available by the end of the year.

Milton Keynes

The bid for ODPM funds for Milton Keynes Central extra capacity seems to make progress and includes capacity for the East-West rail link. A decision is expected by the end of 2005 with the work undertaken in 2007.

South Wales

By Guy Hardy
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West Wales Direct

This is the title of a new report published by the branch to advocate regular use of the Swansea District Line (Briton Ferry to Llanelli) by passenger trains. We believe that this would offer faster through services from west Wales to Cardiff and beyond, and also cater more effectively for the significant population in the northern part of Swansea than do the present services.

Such measures are necessary, we believe, if rail is to compete more effectively with road for east-west journeys. We envisage a three-phase approach, with new stations and services at each stage. Infrastructure changes needed are also covered. Many services, including those on the Heart of Wales line and on all the routes in west Wales, would benefit from the developments which are proposed, but we emphasise that there is no question of diverting any existing services away from the present Swansea station. *West Wales Direct* is an A4 spiral-bound report with coloured illustrations and diagrammatic map. Members can obtain it at the cost price of £3 (free post) from Railfuture South Wales (to whom cheques should be made payable), 84 North Street, Abergavenny NP7 7ED. Price to non-members is £5.

Yorkshire

By Peter Davies
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Trans-Pennine Express

At a presentation in Manchester, Mr Vernon Barker, managing director of First TransPennine Express, set out the achievements of the franchise in its first one and a half years of operation.

Rail services have seen a massive growth. In 2004-5 growth in revenue was 11% compared with 2003-2004, with a 6.9% increase in journeys and a 4.6% increase in passenger miles.

A new waiting room is to be provided at Scarborough with buffet facilities, and Huddersfield is to receive new toilets, a waiting room and a buffet. The new class 185 Siemens



Desiro diesel multiple units are to be known as the Pennine class and are to be introduced in phases for passenger use between March and September 2006.

Dewsbury

The station will be one of 14 buildings in the town to be fitted with a blue plaque as part of a historic town trail.

Leeds

First Group has acquired a six-acre site in the city, fuelling fears in north-east Scotland that it is considering relocating its headquarters from Aberdeen, where there is strong local opposition to its expansion plans.

Doncaster

The new public transport interchange which incorporates a new bus station, shopping centre and multi-storey car park, is rapidly taking shape north of the station. It occupies the site of the former Gresley House railway headquarters office, demolished last year.

North East

By Peter Kenyon

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Tyne and Wear Metro

After the publication of *Railwatch* 105, BBC TV Look North Newcastle included an item, illustrated by DfT internal memos obtained by the BBC, which showed that civil servants had repeatedly poured cold water on the aspirations of Nexus to construct street tramways to link into the Metro system.

In the light of the subsequent decision to pull the rug from under the Leeds scheme this is not surprising. Yet increasing traffic problems in Newcastle make gridlock or road charging only a matter of time.

Heritage restored

A copy of the annual report of the Railway Heritage Trust for 2004-05 came my way recently. Ironically this is probably the most encouraging document produced annually about the railway system.

In the North East, work on the forecourt at Berwick-upon-Tweed station has been undertaken in association with Northumberland County Council at a cost of £1million and will provide improved access and a public transport interchange.

At Newcastle Central improved lighting has been provided in and around the portico, and the old parcels area has been re-glazed and improved.

In Darlington station the access ramp from the subway has been improved, at Haltwhistle the Alston Arches have been restored as an historic monument and at Stanhope station on the preserved line funding has been provided for repairs to the footbridge.

This valuable work carried out to the highest standards is repli-

Growing the Railways a Manifesto to move us forward

Endorsed by ACORP, AMICUS, The Council for National Parks, CTC, Friends of the Earth, Greater Manchester Centre Voluntary Organisation, Help the Aged, The National Council of Women of Great Britain, PTEG, Railfuture, The Railway Forum, The Ramblers, RICS, RMT, Scope, SERA, Stagecoach Group, TCPA, TSSA, TUC, Women's Design Service



We need the railways

Britain's railways are now more important than at any period in the last 50 years. Rail underpins the prosperity and quality of life of most Britons, even those who don't use it every day. But parts of the network are already at capacity and desperately need expanding; other parts will soon reach capacity as demand for rail use continues to rise. In the next year the Government's new Rail Group will produce a strategy for the railways. This Manifesto is intended to influence the contents of that

strategy, ensuring that capacity on the railways expands to meet existing and new demand, without necessarily requiring extra public funding.

Passenger journeys on Britain's railways last year exceeded one billion, the highest since 1959, and train operators estimate that demand for rail travel will grow by 66 per cent over the next 20 years. Freight moved in 2004-05 was 20.66 billion net tonne kilometres, a level of traffic that has not been seen on the rail network for over 20 years.

Rail-freight also keeps the lights on for us in terms of electric power generation. Plus, some 85 per cent of aggregates used for construction in London go by rail and, nationally, a fifth of all building materials are delivered by rail.

Yet, despite the obvious demand for rail travel and the solutions it can bring to transport problems, there are no major plans to expand railways; indeed closures and cuts are on the agenda. Meanwhile, the Government has announced plans to expand air and road transport capacity instead.

The way forward

Railfuture joined a broad-based alliance of groups in October to call for expansion of the railways. Transport 2000 published a four-page leaflet and launched the campaign on 17 October.

The CBI's Lucinda Turner said: "Delay in implementing strategic investment for growth will damage British competitiveness. We need to plan for expansion now."

David Hall of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors said: "It is sad to see the loss of railway rights of way. Closed rail lines should be kept open for walkers and cyclists until they need to be reopened. It is nonsense to expand roads and not rail."

Bob Crow of the RMT said: "Global warming is directly related to the private car and short-hauled air travel. We want a clear, commonsense policy. Ask the travelling public. You don't need expert consultants."

"The only way forward is to build more rail lines. This government has been wasting time now for eight years. The time has come to stand up to the road lobby and make a commitment to developing rail, and a good start would be an immediate moratorium on all railway closures."

Philip Pearson of the Trades Union Congress said: "We must devise a way to give a price to the environmental contribution of various modes of transport. Rail would do well. Transport emissions are not included in the Kyoto agreement. They should be included at the follow-up meeting in Montreal in December."

More at www.transport2000.org.uk. The Growing the Railways leaflet can be downloaded as a pdf document.

Railfuture's ideas for expansion are in a paper by Mike Crowhurst which can be downloaded at <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=Railfuture%20Members>

cated in the 40 or so other schemes throughout the British Isles and contrasts with the confident cavalier attitude of the railway pioneers who in 1850 almost totally demolished the medieval castle at Berwick to construct the original station!

Rail services under threat

Martin Murphy, chairman of Railfuture North East, has compiled and issued on behalf of the branch a meticulous survey of the perceived threats to rail services in the region, with an examination of the criteria and evidence used by the various bodies concerned, reviews and suggestions for action. This has already been taken up by the Tyne Valley Users' Group and incorporated in the group's *A Call To Action*.

GNER

The branch held a cordial meeting with Wayne Keyte, York-based operations manager which produced some interesting insights relating to the new franchise.

The company is investing directly in improving the electric power supplies, overhead wiring and new electrification in the Leeds area, an unusual commitment for a franchise holder in the present separation of powers in the rail system.

It is considered that revenue from the Leeds area will justify the capital investment. Feeder coach services are planned for Teesside, without consideration of their effect on the revenue of Northern Rail This is a quite proper commercial attitude for GNER, which is an efficient company caring for its staff and passengers, but is also a measure of the hopelessly disjointed rail operations we now enjoy.

Development of newly designed stock to replace the diesel 125s will depend on the specifications for the renewal of the Great Western franchise. The planned parkway station in County Durham has disappeared from the plans. Members queried the wisdom of this in view of the increasing traffic problems in cities. If road-access charging is introduced in Newcastle, business passengers will desert the railway and stay in their cars. They cannot be expected to pay for road access, station parking and fares.

Railfuture lottery winners

September: R White, Mrs M Skilton, A P Koolman. October: A W Robson, Mrs E R Holland, M T Savage. November: David Bentley, Richard Stow, A R Bull.

Join the winners. Send a cheque for £12 for a one-year subscription to the Railfuture monthly lottery to Railfuture Lottery, 13 Arnhill Road, Gretton, Corby, Northants NN17 3DN.

Deadly roads

No passengers were killed on the railways in Britain in 2003 while 3,508 people were killed on the roads.