

Focus on Railfuture action

LOCAL ACTION

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

The network development committee of Railfuture is concerned with future enhancements to the rail infrastructure.

This includes new railway lines and stations, extra track capacity and electrification.

Although much of the day to day campaigning on particular projects is carried out by the branches, the committee is there to look at the wider picture.

It tries to identify best practice in getting schemes developed and to offer advice and support to branches and other campaign groups.

Financial help is also available. The committee reviews grant applications from various groups to help with campaign work. Recent awards have been given to the

Skipton East Lancashire Railway Action Partnership to help fund a study on re-opening the Skipton to Colne route and for a meeting to discuss a new station at Littleworth in Lincolnshire.

The network development committee meets three times a year with additional meetings arranged as required to discuss particular issues. The committee is involved in a revision of the *A-Z of Rail Reopenings* (the last edition was 10 years ago), a paper on electrification and liaison with Greengauge 21 over the development of a network of high speed rail routes.

These issues will be covered in future editions of *Railwatch*. For more info please contact chairman Jerry Alderson (email: jerry.alderon@virgin.net) or secretary Nick Dibben (nick.dibben@btinternet.com)

INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPE

The international and EU committee monitors and presses for improved rail links between the United Kingdom and the European continent, write members Ronald Schwarz and Peter Walker.

It has close links with like-minded bodies abroad and in particular with the European Passengers' Federation whose chairman Trevor Garrod is a member of the committee.

Our main concern at the moment is the new Eurostar timetable, with stops at Ashford International being virtually eliminated and passengers being forced to use Ebbsfleet which has no public transport access. We have campaigned far and wide for stops at Ashford to be restored and will continue to do so.

We produced the questionnaire circulated with *Railwatch* 114. There is

some better news on Continental bookings.

From November last telephone bookings (and from January also internet bookings) to major Continental destinations can be made from important stations on the East Coast, Midland and West Coast main lines with the cheapest tickets being add-on fares to the basic £59 Eurostar return.

Members will be checking with other UK rail operators about similar through fares from their services to Eurostar. We have also produced a very detailed report on cross-country services between one European country and another.

There are vast discrepancies here, the worst situation is the difficulty in getting a train from Ashford to Calais. We believe there is a need for a regular service here.

FREIGHT

One of the big issues recently for the freight committee has been the threat of "super" trucks being brought on to British roads. Despite the whole idea being obviously ridiculous and against public wishes, "feasibility" studies have been commissioned. In Germany, these monsters have even been allowed on the roads for trials as the photograph in *Railwatch* 114 showed.

The freight committee is looking for new panel members with an interest or knowledge of rail freight, planning, multi-modal studies, road transport, shipping and ports. Please contact Gary Tinsey. Email: gary_tinsey@hotmail.com or tel: 01268 781820.

Win with the Railfuture lottery

Elisabeth Jordan has stood down as Lottery Organiser after several years. Railfuture would like to take the opportunity to thank her for the sterling work she has done in maintaining this vital fundraiser.

Lloyd Butler has stepped into her shoes and all correspondence should now be sent to: Railfuture Lottery Organiser, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND. email: lottery@railfuture.org.uk. Due to an upsurge in subscrip-

tions, the number of prizes has been increased to six per month.

The recent winners are: November 2007: D A Stocks; D Peters; Eric Smith; Michael Humphrey and A Savage. December 2007: Mrs E R Holland; John Austin; Gerald Chandler; Walter Richardson; B G Meadows and David Riley. January 2008: John Ward; Michael Breslin; Felix Schmid; J Pitcher; Roger Goring and Philip Bisatt.

North East

By Peter Kenyon
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Branch news

A well attended annual general meeting held in Newcastle on 17 January saw the re-election of the existing officers and committee led by chairman Martin Murphy. A productive discussion was held on increasing the effectiveness of the branch and the participation of members. A lively address by Alex Nelson, station master of Chester-le-Track, led the audience through the tangles of the fares and ticketing system of Britain's railways, including the financial saving gained by booking sequential tickets for a journey.

Consultation and lobbying

The branch was represented at a recent seminar on the Government's Sustainable Transport Strategy hosted by the Department for Transport and Government Office North East, and intends to maintain involvement in these important consultations which will influence the future of railways in the region.

New operators are now running trains on the East Coast main line and CrossCountry services. The branch and users' groups are keen to reactivate their links to the train operators. The development of the joint East Coast timetable from Doncaster to Edinburgh is of critical importance. We look forward to the publication of the East Coast Mainline Route Utilisation Strategy in February. The franchise contract stipulations are likely to produce tensions in discussions aimed at achieving the advantages of an even interval timetable on this important section of the main line, another result of the fragmented railway we endure in this country.

Coastliners

Coastliners, the users' group dedicated to improving services on routes north of Stockton and Middlesbrough, have been in talks with the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit about the desirability of extending Northern's Blackpool-York services along the main line to Northallerton and then via Stockton and Sunderland to Newcastle. The group has also taken part in discussions with the Tees Valley Regeneration Unit about the development of a Tees Valley Metro, a 15-minute interval train service with improved rolling stock between most of Teesside's population centres on radically refurbished tracks. This would complement existing long-distance trains on these lines.

Grand Central

The long awaited Grand Central Sunderland-King's Cross service began in December with a limited timetable. The company hopes to run four trains in each direction before the end of the year. Travel by Metro from Newcastle to Sunderland to link with the Grand Central service could provide a way of avoiding bus travel when the main line from Newcastle to Darlington is closed for engineering work. The next branch meeting in Sunderland Civic Centre in March will be addressed by Tom Cliff, managing director of Grand Central Railway. www.grandcentralrail.co.uk

Engineering disruption

Reports about the mismanagement of track possessions over the Christmas and New Year period were yet another example of the fragmented railway. Imagine the blistering exchanges between the traffic management and engineering departments if this had happened in LMS and LNER days! The branch will continue to lobby the train operators and Network Rail both directly and through the regional political framework to minimise the disruption caused by necessary engineering work.

