

Welcome to new trains, stations and services

The railway was given a series of major boosts early this year.

East Midlands Parkway and Corby stations were opened and Stone station in Staffordshire reopened after a five-year closure.

Aylesbury Vale station opened in December.

There was even a short extension to the railway network as London's Docklands Light Railway opened its service under the River Thames to Woolwich Arsenal.

There were also reports that the Government has devised a new, "more permissive formula" to support rail reopenings.

The new rules, however, will not be introduced until 2014.

In Scotland, work on reopening the Waverley line from Edinburgh is being brought forward, on the 40th anniversary of its closure, with construction starting next year.

Use of the reinstated 13-mile rail link between Stirling, Alloa and Kincardine has been double that predicted by the experts.

As the consultants and experts seem to get their predictions so wrong, perhaps it is time for Railfuture to prepare a paper to show how successful Maesteg, Robin Hood, Ebbw Vale and Bathgate – and others – have been.

Such a study could aid campaigners, like those fighting to get Uckfield-Lewes and the East-West rail link reopened.

Despite signs of progress on the railways, there are worries too.

The Office of Rail Regulation has set a limit of £28.5billion spending by Network Rail over the next five years despite Network Rail requesting £31.1billion.

As *Railwatch* readers know, the Scots are leading the way.

They are about to start electrification of main line routes around and between Glasgow and Edinburgh, with more than half a mile of overhead line equipment to be installed every week for the next seven years – more than 200 miles of electrification in all.

In England there is lots of talk but no money for electrification in Network Rail's budget before 2014.

Politicians rarely look further ahead than the next election while investment in rail involves a commitment for 30 to 40 years.



Trains return to Stone: The first train, the 11.09 southbound, which was welcomed by the town band and a crowd who also enjoyed the stalls outside the station Pictures: Jon Heal and Aidan Croft

Town applauds the return of its trains

By Peter Cousins

The first London Midland trains to call at Stone for five years were greeted in December by a crowd of over 100 local residents and the town band,

Some members of the North Staffs Rail Promotion Group arrived on the 11.07 and others departed on the first through train to London, the 12.08.

There were food and drink stalls lining the station approach road and specially made souvenirs on sale inside the Grade II listed station which is now leased to the Town Council. The town band played to greet each train.

To many people's surprise the station name boards (which had been Regional Railways style) have been replaced with the new London Midland style of white lettering on a black background.

The BBC was filming as the trains began to run again.

Campaigners welcomed the service and said it was a platform on which to lobby for even better services for the town. They urged residents to help them by making use of the hourly London Midland train. Richard Stevens, from the



North Staffordshire Rail Promotion Group, said: "We have been wanting this train for five years and we now have a direct service to London Euston." He said 25 trains a day would stop at the station. He added: "It is very significant for the town and puts Stone back on to the rail network map. We have got the service now and we have got to build on that."

Stone MP Bill Cash said: "It is of vital importance. I have been campaigning for five years and it is a tremendous moment because this will bring Stone into the arteries of

the West Midlands and also provide a national link to London. It is an important moment for Stone."

He said bringing the trains back to Barlaston station is next on his agenda.

Stone mayor Mark Green said: "We are hoping that people will support the service because we need that support to progress to the next stage and help the businesses of Stone." Campaigners are already looking to get the station included as a stop for Birmingham-Manchester trains.

senger services in 1966 so we are delighted it is being reopened.

"This limited service is due to lack of rolling stock and we will continue to press East Midlands Trains to do all they can to put on more trains to offer a better timetable at the earliest possible date." These are the first direct trains

between the capital and several towns for 43 years. Campaigners hope it will lead to a service northwards from Corby in the not-too-distant future to offer greater journey opportunities for Corby, Oakham and Melton. Rutland and Leicestershire local media have given extensive coverage to this "good story"

Corby back on track after being axed 43 years ago

Trains started running on 23 February to Corby, Northants, after months of delay because of a shortage of trains.

David Fursdon of Railfuture East Midlands branch said: "We welcome this new service although it is only one train each way at the moment. This route was axed to regular pas-



Power for the people: A diesel-powered InterCity 125 train at the new East Midlands Parkway station with coal-fired Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station in the background and, inset, the bus service to the nearby airport Main picture: Brian Morrison Others: EMT

100 trains a day but not one electric

East Midlands Parkway station was opened in January by Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon.

It is the Midlands' "newest and greenest" station but both Friends of the Earth and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England objected to its construction.

The four-platform £25million station will however now give hundreds of thousands of people easier and better access to the train.

It is served by over 100 East Midlands Trains services per day, with trains to and from London every 15-20 minutes at peak times.

The journey time to London is around one hour and 30 minutes. The aim is to get

people off the M1 motorway and on to trains. It has an 850-space car park.

Ideally, the trains running through this "green" station should all be electric.

The Midland main line is long overdue for electrification.

But even the station is 10 years overdue. It was first promised by Midland mainline when it won a franchise extension.

Media reports were generally favourable, although BBC East Midlands' approach was typically in line with the current "doom and gloom" as they posed the question: "who will actually want to use this station that has cost millions to build?" Hopefully the first day the nearby M1 is

jammed up, they may be in for a surprise.

Stagecoach's Brian Shooter plans to use megabus services from the north to fill up the off-peak trains to London.

Terry Holt, the chairman of Railfuture East Midlands was the first name to be mentioned in the opening speech by Dyan Crowther, Network Rail's route director.

She said: "Terry was the one who had the original idea for the station many years ago."

She added: "It will tempt motorists from the nearby M1 to use a greener form of travel and aims to reduce congestion in city centres."

It will offer a park-and-ride option for Leicester, Derby and Nottingham.



Opening day: Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon, centre, with from left, Steve Brown of the East Midlands Development Agency, Brian Souter of Stagecoach, Dyan Crowther of Network Rail and Tim Shoveller of East Midlands Trains. Below: Station exterior

