

A historic step forward?

National Express East Anglia's corporate affairs director Jonathan Denby, and Paul Barnfield (West Anglia route director) were expected to attend a meeting in October aimed at reinvigorating the Chingford Line Users Association and the campaign to reopen the Hall Farm Curve in east London.

There has been progress, at last, towards reinstatement of the curve from Chingford and Walthamstow to Stratford and the reopening of Lea Bridge station. A renewal of effort by campaigners and councillors in Waltham Forest is helping to move the scheme forward to control period 5 (2014 to 2019) in the Greater London Authority and Network Rail programmes.

In a recent Transport for London assessment, the Chingford/Walthamstow to Stratford scheme showed a good benefit-to-cost ratio for a four-car train operation. Mayor of London Boris Johnson has indicated he would welcome further submissions justifying the scheme and Waltham Forest Council is funding the necessary business case for the scheme.

Though no longer in time for the Olympics, the scheme will be part of the Government's legacy from the Games, as journey times by bus from Chingford or Walthamstow to Stratford are hopelessly long.

The Stratford City development – which includes shops and offices near the station – will create many job opportunities for Waltham Forest residents but at present public transport access to the site is poor.

The Chingford to Stratford rail service would also have the

potential to transfer a large number of trips from car to rail. Roger Gillham of CLUA commented: "Our thanks go to our Assembly member Jennette Arnold for regularly questioning the Mayor and his officers on our concerns."

But he added: "It is with great sadness that I have to report that CLUA's chair, and our great friend and mentor, Ivor Chapman, died last month.

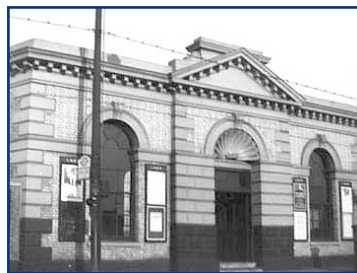
"I am sure you would wish to extend your condolences to Pat Chapman, who has always campaigned with us, and will I am sure wish us to continue our fight for the Hall Farm curve and Lea Bridge station reopenings with great determination. Pat has said she would like to continue campaigning with us.

"I have just been re-reading Ivor's letters about the terrible state of the Chingford line, and the urgency of re-linking us to Stratford, sent in 1998 and 1999 on behalf of Waltham Forest Transport Action Group, to Waltham Forest Council and Neil Gerrard MP, and they remind me strongly of Ivor's determination and the twinkle in his eye."

Waltham Forest Council is engaging a professional lobbying organisation to promote the scheme to both government and regional organisations as well as to a wider audience.

To assist in the process, a high quality glossy document will be prepared to set out the merits of the scheme.

If you would like to help in the Chingford Line Users' Association campaign, please contact Roger Gillham on 0845 456 4977 or email Peter Woodrow at pwoodrow941@btinternet.com.



Lea Bridge station in the 1940s, left, and in 2008, right

You can count on these figures

The chairman of Railfuture-affiliated Marylebone Travellers' Association, Reg Whittome, joined Railfuture's London and South East branch vice chairman Roger Blake for passenger counts at Chiltern Railways' two Zone 4 stations.

The data from Sudbury Hill Harrow and Sudbury & Harrow Road may be of interest in the Thames Valley area as well as in London.

Chiltern's business development director was also keen to see it.

With increasingly widespread concern about the veracity of official station usage figures as published

on the Office of Rail Regulation website, real hand-counted figures from direct observation are of immense value to the rail industry.

They also provide an absolutely essential evidence base if campaigners' demands for timetable changes are to be taken seriously by that same industry.

The figures? Roundly 140 passengers using the nine trains in both peaks at Brent's Sudbury & Harrow Road, 220 using the 17 peak trains at Sudbury Hill Harrow with a further 30 for the 12 trains in its inter-peak.

Sevenside

By Nigel Bray

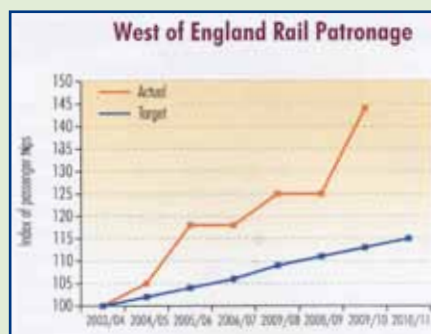
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Let's go further on rail reopenings-

The branch has welcomed the Association of Train Operators' report, *Connecting Communities: Expanding Access to the Rail Network*, which examined the case for reopening lines and stations to serve 35 settlements in England with populations of 15,000 or more. All three proposals in the branch area (Norton Radstock, Portishead and Thornbury) involve towns currently on mothballed or closed extremities of freight-only lines.

Some points we had previously made to ATOC appear to have been taken on board, for instance our view that reopenings could be justified on the basis of economic regeneration, as at Norton Radstock, a former mining area.

Likewise ATOC supports further evaluation of Portishead reopening because of rising population and worsening road congestion. We have asked ATOC to revise its criteria for station reopenings so that strong contenders below the 15,000 threshold can be considered. Our suggested qualifications



West of England Partnership planners underestimated the popularity of rail travel in their joint local travel plan

the last-mentioned category is Wellington, with a population estimated at 13,000 and whose case for reopening is strengthened by the Firepool project near to Taunton station.

Railfuture attacks bias in favour of road building

The branch has also responded to the House of Commons select committee inquiry into transport in the South West. We believe the demand for public transport in the region will grow because of its popularity as a retirement area. Tourism is vital to the regional economy but it is widely accepted that unlimited growth of road traffic will undermine the attractive environment which motivates people to visit or move to the region.

We drew attention to the draft South West Regional Spatial Strategy which favoured limiting road traffic growth, and was also of the view that transport networks needed to recover quickly from disruption.

Taken together, these two policies suggested a need for more capacity in the region's rail network. We argued that if the railways are to take pressure off overloaded roads, action is needed to reverse shortsighted removal of infrastructure in previous decades which has been overtaken by the increased demand for rail transport. In particular, Kemble-Swindon redoubling and four-tracking between Dr Day's Junction (Bristol) and Filton Abbey Wood are required.

The inquiry asked whether the region was doing enough to promote environmentally friendly transport. We pointed out that very little enhancement of the rail system in the South West had taken place in recent years. No new stations had opened since 1997 and services on the Melksham line had been slashed in 2006 despite a 35% rise in passengers since 2002.

We censured the bias in favour of road schemes in the Regional Funding Advice and suggested that the priorities for improvement should include expansion of Bristol's suburban rail network, selective station reopenings on main lines, electrification and strategic freight depots. We emphasised that the Government must keep its promise to deliver additional trains to the Bristol area. Our full response will be posted at www.railfuture-sw.co.uk