



railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

No 150

£2

December 2016

**'This is a peak-time service.
Off-peak tickets are not
available on this train'**

SEE PAGE 2

Our page one picture shows a virtually empty coach on the 08.30 inter-city service from London Liverpool Street to Norwich on 21 October 2016.

A similar level of passenger loadings is common on this service and although more people boarded the train at Stratford, Chelmsford, Colchester, Manningtree, Ipswich, Stowmarket and Diss, at no stage was the train “ram packed” or even particularly busy.

Before the train left, the conductor announced that it was a peak time service.

One of the passengers in the carriage had the return half of a ticket which the conductor told him “was not valid”.

The passenger accepted what the conductor told him, paid the peak-time single fare demanded, but commented: “It doesn’t exactly look like a peak time service, does it?”

The conductor, probably worried about getting into an argument, said nothing. Similar conversations have been heard on many other main line services out of London at that time of day. Sometimes voices are raised in anger and sometimes ridiculous amounts of money are demanded from passengers unknowingly caught out by the complexity of British rail fares.

In November a Virgin passenger – a student – was ordered to pay £172 for a single journey from Lancaster to London because he had failed to buy a ticket before boarding. No! he was told, he could not use his 16-25 railcard. Again, the train was embarrassingly empty. Most Railfuture members know enough about



PEAK FARES: The virtually empty coach C on the 09.07 Pendolino service to Liverpool as it leaves Euston on Monday 14 November

the system to bag the few bargain fares that are on offer and usually do not get caught out. But they are not typical of the general public.

Despite industry boasts, only 20% of rail fares are booked online and most rail passengers pay “walk up and go” fares, according to a BARRIERS report by HackTrain.

It asks: “Why has the average price of rail fares increased by almost a fifth in real terms since 2004 while air fares have fallen dramatically?”

Some trains coming into London in the morning peak are uncomfortably overcrowded, but many trains leaving London in the morning peak are embarrassingly lightly loaded, yet the train operators do not respond

by offering bargain fares on contra-peak trains. This hard-nosed attitude by the rail companies has embarrassed London Mayor Sadiq Khan, who promised a four-year fares freeze in his May election campaign, only to find that he has power to hold fares down only on the buses, the Underground and the Overground.

The London suburban services run by national rail operators will see fares put up by between 2 and 5% in January, in line with Government policy. In January 2016, all the rail firms increased their fares by the maximum allowed.

Mr Khan said in November: “I am calling on Londoners to heap pressure on the Government and the train operating companies to finally show they are on the side of passengers.”

Pollution

He is lobbying for all London suburban services to come under his control and for the Government to bring in a 21st century Clean Air Act. He said the Government should “get a grip” and stop passing the buck on air pollution.

“The Government has been seriously complacent about this health emergency,” he said.

Every car driver who can be persuaded to go by train is helping solve the chronic problem of long-term exposure to air pollution, which now claims 9,500 lives every year in London alone while also blighting schools near busy roads.

Every person who travels by train is also helping to reduce our consumption of scarce energy

resources. The rail industry is on the right side of virtually every economic and political argument but rail companies must be wary of being mere profit seekers.

The Government could remind – or even require – them to recognise the social benefit of getting more people sitting in the empty seats on those contra-peak trains.

Train companies can exploit the conditions of their franchises to make as much profit as possible, or they can recognise it is not sensible for trains to be full of nothing but fresh air, an accusation made by politicians over the years. The industry boasts of the record number of journeys being made on the railway but the statistics are misleading.

In an article headed *Lies, damn lies and statistics*, it was pointed out by *Rail News* in November that the 1.7 billion journeys actually represent 1.4 billion passengers, because one journey often requires more than one ticket.

Many details of the deals between rail operators and the Department for Transport are clouded in “commercial confidentiality” so it is often impossible for passengers to assess whether the operators are shady rip-off merchants or socially responsible businesses. There have been reports that some companies divert revenue off-shore to avoid paying British tax.

In Scotland, Dutch-owned Abellio is accused by the RMT union of “plundering £1 million a month in profits that railways across Scotland desperately need” for investment.

Abellio also runs the 08.30 inter-city train from London Liverpool Street pictured on page one.



stop times. On the Lea Valley route from Stratford, the new franchise requires Abellio to provide two trains an hour to Angel Road where there is a big shopping centre and large-scale house building planned at Meridian Water. Network Rail is expected to add an extra track on the route where it is currently difficult to improve local services because of non-

Express trains. Abellio is confident it will be able to respond to the Norwich in Ninety campaign by providing two speeded-up trains a day from 2019. On fares, Abellio promises to cut Stansted Express fares and improve the “transparency” of its fares system by ensuring that ticket machines show the best fares. Railfuture welcomes steps to attract more Stansted Airport passengers to travel by rail.

Picture: ABELLIO GREATER ANGLIA

Can hydrogen be the third way forward for rail?

What is claimed to be the world’s first passenger train powered completely by hydrogen was unveiled by Alstom at the Berlin InnoTrans show in September, picture right.

The train, a variant of Alstom’s Coradia, is expected to go into service in Germany in December next year, on the 60-mile non-electrified line from Hamburg Buxtehude to Cuxhaven via Bremervörde.

Alstom says the train does not cause pollution at the point of use and offers a third alternative to diesel and electric. Officials in Lower Saxony are hoping that the hydrogen can be made from electricity generated from North Sea wind farms and that the trains will have a range of 500 miles between refuelling. Hydrogen can also be a by-product of some chemical processes.

The train will be assembled at Alstom’s factory in Salzgitter, Lower Saxony.

It is not clear yet how much the trains or the refuelling stations will cost.

“Hydrail” experiments have been carried out in Japan and China,



Picture: ALSTOM

while in Topeka, Kansas, BNSF has operated a hydrogen-powered locomotive, part-funded by the Defense Department.

Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands are interested in the train, says Alstom, as well as transport authorities in Baden-Württemberg, Hesse and North Rhine-Westphalia.

Rail links to airports

By Bruce Williamson
media@railfuture.org.uk

Rail campaigners are calling on the Government to bring some joined-up thinking to the issue of airport capacity.

“Airports cannot work without integrated transport links. Our economy needs an effective, efficient and integrated transport system to sustain the economic development of the UK, and we will continue to depend on world trade,” said Chris Page, chairman of Railfuture in an October press release.

“So if the Government wants to increase airport capacity there are two key issues it needs to think about: how to spread the economic benefits across the UK and how to meet our environmental obligations. That is why we need improved rail

links to provide access from across the UK to our airports for both passengers and staff, and increase rail’s modal share of travel. Only rail can save us from gridlock.

“At Heathrow, the western and southern rail access links are essential, as is a connection with High Speed Two via Crossrail. Crossrail must serve the main Heathrow terminals. Gatwick already has good regional rail connections with Thameslink, but it needs a far more resilient railway, and there are a number of options that can be developed there. In the shorter term there is a real need for a faster and more reliable high-capacity rail link to Stansted, which already has spare capacity and the option of expanding in the future.”

Airport rail links: Page 15

Railfuture draw winners

Winners in the Railfuture annual draw were announced at the Birmingham conference:
£500 G F Gillham, Salisbury SP2 7JS; £200 Roger Blake, London N16 0DX; £100 Mr R Paul, Lowestoft NR32 2LU; £50 Mr C Brown, North Hykeham LN6 9ZP; £20 B Meadows, Leicester LE3 8BG, Allison Cosgrove, East Linton EH40 3BN, Ken Findlay, Knaresborough HG5 0AA, P Smart, Ipswich IP3 0PU; £10 Martin Stoolman, Exeter EX4 3BL, John Rice, Ormskirk L39 8RJ, Mr J P Green, Milton Keynes MK3 5AJ, Mr H Patten, Bedford MK42 0HD, Mr T A Graham, Bourne-mouth BH7 7EL, David Bushell, Leeds LS10 3QG, D A Scruton, Hull HU12 8SN, M C Blanch, Harrow HA2 9BW.

◆◆◆◆ Railfuture conference 17 June 2017. Leeds Carriageworks Theatre LS2 3AD

railfuture

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

Call for expressions of interest

Britain’s railway is a success story, with passenger numbers doubling in 20 years. This is partly thanks to Railfuture, which has campaigned successfully for decades for more investment and better rail services. Funded by subscriptions from thousands of members, Railfuture seeks to represent the needs and wishes of all rail passengers, in particular the growing number of younger people who use the train or tram rather than own a car.

We are looking for a new director to join our board and grow our membership by inspiring a new generation of rail users to join us. This is a strategic role at a time of technological and cultural change within society, the railways – and Railfuture.

Your success will be measured not just by the number and diversity of new members, but also by their enthusiasm for campaigning and the resulting increase in our profile. You will help shape the future campaigns which will attract members and build our influence with stakeholders on policy decisions. You will work with other directors, our local branches and our specialist groups to transform Railfuture. It is your opportunity to find out from rail executives how the railway works while putting something back into society by improving the travel experience of millions of rail users.

We are looking for someone who:

- Is a good communicator with the interpersonal skills needed to motivate volunteer members
- Has a natural affinity with young people, women, and ethnic minorities
- Thrives on the use of social media
- Is keen to promote public transport, especially all forms of rail
- Has a proven track record of recruiting and retaining members and active volunteers

Ideally you will have experience at a senior level in membership organisations and the voluntary sector, and be a more-than-occasional rail user.

As a volunteer, you will be self-managed and will choose when and how much time to commit. You could fit the role around full-time work. The role will be what you make of it – success will depend on your ability to motivate and work through the organisation. Your location is not important. No remuneration is payable, but agreed expenses will be reimbursed.

To apply, email our national Chair chris.page@railfuture.org.uk. For an informal conversation, phone Chris on 07928 299288.

Railfuture is Britain’s only independent national organisation that campaigns exclusively for rail transport for both passengers and freight. Our aim is a bigger and better railway that people are pleased to use and recommend.

By Paul Hollinghurst
paul.hollinghurst@railfuture.org.uk

Railfuture plea to boost service levels

We have previously reported our disappointment that very few frequency improvements were included in the new Greater Anglia franchise. The service between Cambridge and Ipswich should be at least half hourly. We are told it would not fit on the train graph because of a lack of platform capacity at Ipswich (another Railfuture campaign). Our response has been to submit a compromise timetable with an extra hourly service between Cambridge and Bury St Edmunds which the operator says it will consider. This would give Bury St Edmunds two trains per hour to both Cambridge and Ipswich, and double the service at Newmarket. Other timetable enhancements in urgent need of implementation are being postponed because of capacity problems around Ely and at Trowse Swing Bridge.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Greater+Anglia

Easy Stations awards in honour of Clara

On 24 October Phil Smart of Railfuture East Anglia launched our *Easy Stations* awards at the Suffolk Rail Conference. The awards are funded by Clara Zilahi's legacy and will celebrate stations which have seen significant improvements to make them easy and pleasant to access, especially for disabled people and families who can find poor-quality stations a challenge. Step-free routes, shelter, information, help points, cycle racks and CCTV are all desirable, with different standards for staffed and unstaffed stations. Gold awards will be presented for stations which include most of the desired features, and Silver awards for significant improvements. We are inviting nominations from Railfuture members, organisations including local councils, the public, and press.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Easy+Stations

Station improvements



MANNINGTREE: Now has new lifts



IPSWICH: The station's new ticket office

We are pleased to see the new lifts installed at Manningtree. This is likely to be recognised in our *Easy Stations* award. Works are near complete at Ipswich, where the forecourt has been remodelled to separate vehicle and pedestrian flows. The final stage can go ahead now the ticket office has moved into its new home. In Cambridge, mid-October saw the opening of the new station square with

taxi rank and a passenger drop-off area. The enlarged ticket office is expected to open soon, bringing more ticket windows, more ticket machines and a longer gateline, hopefully eradicating the congestion often seen by the 11 million people using the station per year.

Thameslink timetable consultation

Govia Thameslink Railway is consulting on the proposed Thameslink timetable for 2018 when Cambridge and Peterborough join the Thameslink network. Cambridge North and Cambridge will be linked by a half-hourly semi-fast service to Gatwick Airport and Brighton while, in a change of plan, stopping services from Cambridge head to Maidstone East rather than the previously suggested Tattenham Corner. It is proposed to link Peterborough to Horsham every half hour. The changes to the planned timetable are the result of difficulties finding train paths through Windmill Bridge Junction south of East Croydon.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Thameslink

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia

Twitter: @RailfutureEA

By Anthony Kay anthony.kay@railfuture.org.uk

Worries over delays to electrification

Following the pausing and un-pausing of Midland main line electrification, there is concern in the region that the completion of electrification north of Kettering will slip. In Parliament on 7 November, Loughborough MP Nicky Morgan asked Rail Minister Paul Maynard to confirm that the 2023 deadline for the project will remain unchanged. Before the debate, Ms Morgan said: "We will want a formal reply." In the House, Mr Maynard told unhappy MPs: "I will repeat what I have said, which is that we are committed to the development of the ongoing electrification programme."

Boost for service at Radcliffe-on-Trent

The campaign group sponsored by the local parish council in Radcliffe-on-Trent has been successful in getting East Midlands Trains to stop an additional five trains a day (two eastbound and three westbound) on weekdays. This enhanced service will start from the December timetable and bring the total number of trains stopping at the station up to 16 a day. This still falls short of the goal of the campaign to have an hourly service to both Grantham and Nottingham and the group, which has significant support from the local community and local elected officials, will continue to lobby to achieve their goal.

HS2 station key to Midlands regeneration

Railfuture East Midlands vice-chair Ariadne Tampion attended a Westminster social policy forum seminar on regional devolution in Birmingham in September. Eleven local enterprise partnerships have joined forces to promote transport and regeneration under the flag of the Midlands Engine for Growth, which has won £12 million in Government funding. Ariadne was keen to ensure the East Midlands was not overshadowed by its western counterpart, and took the opportunity to talk about our preference for East Midlands Parkway as the location for the region's HS2 hub.

Franchise renewal is opportunity for growth

Ahead of the 2018 franchise renewal, East Midlands Trains have consulted with a wide variety of stakeholders and have produced a report, *A Railway for Growth*, setting out a

vision for the future of the region's railways. The aspirations include faster journey times to London (60 minutes from Leicester, 90 minutes from Nottingham, 110 minutes from Sheffield), and a fleet of new bi-mode trains to replace the InterCity 125s which should be withdrawn by 2020. The trains need to be bi-mode so that they do not need to wait for electrification to be completed and can continue to run over non-electrified lines such as the Erewash Valley. The vision also includes new trains to improve capacity on local lines within the region, where the current single- and two-car trains are often overcrowded.

One station for 342,627 people

Leicester has the fewest number of railway stations per head of population, with just one station for its nearly 350,000 people, according to research by the Press Association. Northampton is fourth on the list, with one station for 222,462 people.

Corby gets its trains back

Train services between Kettering and Corby returned to normal in October after a six-week closure to allow bridges and viaducts to be upgraded, as well as track doubling. Prospects are bright for Corby, which reopened in 2009, said local Railfuture campaigner David Fursdon. Electrification to Corby should be completed by 2019.

Conference 2017 and other events

Planning for the Railfuture autumn 2017 conference, to be held at the Curve Theatre in Leicester, has started by Railfuture East Midlands. Railfuture members in the region are encouraged to attend any of the local events listed on our website pages:

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch

Twitter: @RailfutureEMids

By Chris Hyomes chris.hyomes@railfuture.org.uk

Positive news for York-Beverley reopening

Minsters Rail campaigners had a positive meeting in October with Rail Minister Paul Maynard and MP Graham Stuart at the Department for Transport in Westminster. Beverley and Holderness MP Mr Stuart is planning to contact local enterprise partnerships to discuss funding for a business case study which would unlock Government funding to enable the project to be included in Network Rail's plans for 2019-24. Campaign chairman Peter Hemmerman said: "The feasibility study must show that the project will bring greater economic benefits than it costs. The study conducted in 2005 showed conclusively that it would." Railfuture believes reopening York-Beverley would add journey opportunities and also improve the resilience of the rail network by providing an alternative route for Hull-Leeds trains.

New trains for TransPennine

Production of carriages for the new TransPennine franchise has begun in the CAF factory in Spain. Thirteen loco-hauled five-coach trains will be delivered in 2018. The mark 5a coaches will have free wi-fi and electric sockets for laptops and phones at each pair of seats. TPE will also take delivery of 12 new five-coach CAF electric multiple units and 19 five-coach Hitachi bi-mode trains between 2018 and 2020.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch

Twitter: @RailfutureYorks

THE CAMPAIGN FOR RAIL FREIGHT

Mega-lorries threat to future of rail freight

By Lee Davies

lee.davies@railfuture.org.uk

Four years ago, the Department for Transport gave permission for the trial use of so-called mega-lorries, saying their design would cut congestion and air pollution.

Road safety groups said they would pose dangers and damage pavements in towns, and Railfuture said they would damage rail freight.

Now under the guise of "research", the DfT wants to allow even more 18.55 metre long articulated mega-lorries. Currently 1,800 such vehicles are allowed.

These "research" lorries are two metres longer than the standard articulated heavy goods vehicle.

As justification for its actions, the DfT claims that up to 90,000 lorry journeys have been taken off the road over the past four years because of the introduction of longer vehicles which can carry a bigger load, while also saving more than 3,000 tonnes of CO2 from reduced emissions.

Railfuture's haulage expert, George Boyle, believes this "research" is flawed and too simplistic.

"Once again we see the same old arguments trotted out 'proving' that larger lorries equal fewer lorries," he said.

"This is achieved by simply dividing the weight or volume of goods carried by the number of shorter lorries carrying it, then doing the same calculation for larger lorries to prove that 93,000 fewer lorry journeys were made.

"This takes no account of the abstraction of traffic from other modes that the more efficient lorry permits and is a worthless calculation. Taken to absurd lengths, it is possible to calculate that a double "B" road outfit, capable of carrying 2 x 40ft ISO containers, would, at a stroke reduce road haulage of those



FREIGHT ON RAIL: A cement train from Willesden, London to Tunstead, Derbyshire. Imagine it as a fleet of lorries on a road near you. Think of the pollution, road safety and fuel implications

containers by 50%. This of course takes no account of the fact that rail and coastal shipping of such containers would end, resulting in a net increase in lorries carrying those containers.

"The current allocation of trailers has still not been fully taken up by hauliers so there is simply no need to increase numbers at present."

The DfT will shortly launch a consultation on plans to extend the system, allowing more of the longer vehicles to operate, which it says are largely between out-of-town warehouses.

Road safety groups say that longer lorries pose a significant danger and cause damage to pavements when being driven in towns and cities.

"In spite of the self-steering rear axle fitted to longer trailers, there is still an increased danger to other road users as the drivers swing out to manoeuvre round tight bends and junctions," said George.

The *Times* transport reporter Graeme Paton quotes the

Campaign for Better Transport analysis that shows the vehicles can have double the "tail swing" – when they swing into other lanes – trying to make tight turns.

There has been a spate of deaths of cyclists in built-up areas after being hit by left-turning lorries.

Philippa Edmunds, freight campaigner for the group, said: "The Government is continuing to ignore the danger posed by these longer lorries on urban roads.

"Our concern is that these longer trucks will become the new standard trucks operating on all roads, regardless of the dangers to other road users.

"We want to see the Government limit their use to designated local authority routes within urban areas to reduce the risks to other road users, protect pavements and property from damage, and reduce the current financial burden of repairs that currently falls on local authorities and taxpayers."

Railfuture says there is no need for more of these vehicles. If the existing trailers are allowed to

continue on UK roads, the "go anywhere" attitude must end. They must be restricted to wide roads, banned from city centres and stopped from moving during high winds when the danger of overturning is greater.

In 2011, George wrote that the continual search by the road haulage industry for longer, heavier vehicles would lead to what we see as hidden dangers.

The lorries would also threaten rail traffic such as stone, coal, cement, steel and iron ore, undermining the supposed "benefits" of the exercise.

The road haulage industry sees this as another stepping stone to even longer and heavier lorries, one more stage in the constant leapfrogging of size and gross weight that the road haulage industry wants.

Railfuture believes these higher, longer, heavier vehicles are not compatible with densely packed urban areas and country lanes. They also threaten the only safe way of transporting goods – rail freight.

'Tragedy' as 1,116 train drivers face redundancy

Monday 17 October 2016 will go down as a black day for rail freight in Britain. The DB Cargo UK announcement that 893 jobs out of 2,974 are proposed to go at the company is a devastating blow to staff.

The action follows the collapse of the coal-fired power industry, but the German-owned company has shocked its employees by wanting to make all 1,116 of its drivers redundant. The redundant drivers will then have to re-apply for 725 jobs on different terms and conditions. Hans-Georg Werner, chief executive of DB Cargo UK, claimed

that his "responsible and successful business" must evolve as markets change.

He added: "We firmly believe in the future of rail freight in the UK. Our motorways and roads are becoming more congested and rail offers fast and clean supply chain solutions."

Mick Whelan, general secretary of train drivers union ASLEF, accused the company of being in a race to the bottom in the freight industry. He said: "The news is an individual tragedy for each man and woman who loses a job, and a collective tragedy for our

rail industry. These job losses are almost entirely the fault of the management of DB Cargo. I say almost because the Government has sat on its hands and watched this tragedy unfold. The only way to build freight on rail – which is by far the best and most environmentally friendly way of moving freight around the country – is to bring it back into public ownership."

One day after DB's announcement, the sale of GB Railfreight to a Swedish investment company, EQT Infrastructure II, was agreed by Eurotunnel.

By Roger Blake roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

Barking Riverside extension moves forward

A public inquiry took place in October into the scheme to extend the Barking-Gospel Oak line to a new station at Barking Riverside, where 11,000 new homes are to be built. One objector maintained his personal opposition to Transport for London's application for a Transport and Works Act Order. Railfuture supports the scheme and is hopeful that the Government will give it the go-ahead next year and that the extension will be completed by 2021. Electrification works are currently under way on the existing line. More details: <http://bit.ly/2eXutOM>

Mayor commits to east London rail crossings

An extension of the Docklands Light Railway across the river Thames from Gallions Reach to Thamesmead is being progressed by Transport for London on the instructions of London Mayor Sadiq Khan. It will serve 17,000 new homes in Newham and Greenwich, to be built over the next 5 to 10 years. He has also asked TfL to carry out further assessment work on extending the planned London Overground line from Barking Riverside over the river to Abbey Wood. More info: <http://bit.ly/2dXogSI>

Thameslink 2018 timetable consultation

Railfuture is consulting passenger groups for our input into the timetable consultation for the mega Thameslink franchise, which will cover services after 2018 to Bedford, Peterborough, King's Lynn, Ashford, Brighton, Portsmouth and Southampton. There are opportunities for extra services, with Maidstone and the Medway towns being added to the Thameslink map. There may also be opportunities for better early morning and late night services. More info: <http://bit.ly/2f1NDRt>

Railfuture lobbies for a high-speed Hastings

Railfuture, along with local stakeholders, is lobbying, for direct services to London via High Speed One to give East Sussex coastal communities a much-needed economic boost. The draft Kent Area Route Study may identify funding for a connection at Ashford station, to enable faster journey times to Bexhill and Hastings by the early 2020s. Railfuture will aim to ensure that the next South Eastern franchise, from 2018, requires acquisition of Javelin-type, bi-mode, trains. www.railfuture.org.uk/Marshlink

Oxford's new link, a gateway to the East

New passenger services between Oxford's main station and London Marylebone begin on 11-12 December. For Railfuture, the Oxford-Bicester link is step one in completing the East West Rail link which will eventually provide rail services from Oxford to Cambridge and on as far as Ipswich. More info: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/ox-cam>

Railfuture responds to the planners

Railfuture has been busy responding to London TravelWatch's review of Tube ticket office closures, Network Rail's Freight Network Study, and Local Transport Plans produced by Kent and Hertfordshire county councils. Hertfordshire's LTP suggests digging up the Watford Junction-St Albans Abbey rail line to make way for a busway!

Latest station usage estimates out soon

Figures purporting to show how many people are using each British rail station are published on 6 December by the Office of Rail and Road. Details: <http://bit.ly/1RPwvMQ>
More local rail campaigning news:
www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East+branch+news
Twitter: @RailfutureLSE



ST ABBS MEETING: Members of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland, check out the latest RAGES Rag



By Jane Ann Liston secretary@railfuturescotland.org.uk

Inspiring 'can do' line from Abellio

Railfuture Scotland held its autumn meeting in Edinburgh in October, where we heard an inspiring address from James Ledgerwood, head of economic development at Abellio ScotRail. Mr Ledgerwood has a refreshing "can-do" attitude to the railway, pointing out that it has to do more than simply connect big cities.

Model method of promoting Railfuture

Railfuture Scotland committee members have continued to promote our aims at model railway exhibitions, generating interest in the organisation and taking our vision of what the Scottish network could look like to Dundee and Aberdeen, resulting in considerable press coverage. Railfuture Scotland is also represented on the reconvened cross-party group on rail at the Scottish Parliament, as are the Levenmouth, Newburgh, St Andrews and Borders campaigns.

Press heralds opposition to Abellio

Railfuture Scotland received coverage in the *Sunday Herald* over the concerted campaign to strip Abellio of the ScotRail franchise, although, as we pointed out, Transport Scotland must share some responsibility for any shortcomings and, in any case, it is far from clear who would take over running Scotland's trains should Abellio forfeit the franchise.

Anniversary of Borders rail reopening

The first anniversary of the Borders rail reopening was marked on 9 September. Despite the constraints on reliable running imposed by an inadequate amount of double track, signalling failures and poor rolling stock (class 158) performance on a route with challenging gradients and curves, the passenger journey total for the year is expected to have been over 1.4 million, around 20% more than forecast. Local and national politicians have welcomed the boost to the economies of Midlothian and the Borders which has resulted from the reopening. For example, Abbotsford House, the home of Sir Walter Scott, has seen a 12% increase in visitor numbers. On 20 October the Scottish transport minister called for an improvement plan to address the issues of reliability for ScotRail as a whole. However some of the problems specific to the Borders Railway result from government decisions and will not be easily or speedily resolved.

Plea to minister on East coast stations

Rail Action Group East of Scotland continues to apply pressure to the Scottish Government. RAGES has written to the transport minister Humza Yousaf requesting a meeting following the required increase in contributions from East Lothian and Scottish Borders Council towards the construction of East Linton and Reston stations. The previous transport minister Keith Brown had assured them that trains could be stopping there by 2016.

Hopes high for Beattock station

Beattock is well on the way to achieving the next stage of its Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance, following South West Scotland Transport Regional Transport Partnership and Dumfries & Galloway Council's acceptance of the pre-appraisal.

Silver spade inspires St Andrews

St Andrews Rail Link now has a patron, the former MEP and local businessman John Purvis CBE, whose ancestors cut the first sod on the St Andrews-Anstruther railway with a silver spade which he still has. The Old Course Hotel is proposing an extension that looks to where the Tata report identified a route for reopening the railway. So StARLink has submitted an objection to Fife Council. StARLink is not opposed to the extension per se, but hopes that the work will not make a new railway more difficult to achieve. In the meantime StARLink is raising money for a policy review of transport into St Andrews, which will comprise the pre-appraisal Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance, as well as arranging a meeting with local MSPs.

Scottish Rail Contacts

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES) www.rages.org.uk/
Beattock Station Action Group (BSAG) www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/
St Andrews Rail Link (StARLink) campaign www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/
Levenmouth Rail Campaign www.lmrc-action.org.uk/
Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG) www.capitalrail.org.uk/
Newburgh Train Station campaign newburghtrainstation.org.uk/
Forth Rail Link www.forthrailink.com



StARLink's Jane Ann Liston, left, and fellow Railfuture member Sheena Barker

Pictures: ALISON COSGROVE

Rail Stars

By Roger Blake

roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

Campaigners from rail user groups throughout Britain were recognised in November at Railfuture's national conference in Birmingham. Delegates at the conference applauded as 12 certificates were awarded to winners of the annual Rail User Group competition.

The Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield Rail Users' Association won the gold award for best newsletter.

The silver went to the Furness Line Action Group, while the Friends of Reddish South Station (one train a week, in one direction only!) won a commendation.

Two groups shared the gold award for best website, Copeland Rail Users' Group and the Friends of Rose Hill Station, Marple.

The judges decided that both websites were excellent, each displaying best practice while serving quite different aims.

The award for best campaign was won by the Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail Users' Group with its *Brief History of the CHLFUG Campaign*.

Best campaigner for 2016 was Tony Smale, editor of *Rail User Express* for many years, and still the compiler of the national registers of RUGs and reopening campaign groups. Tony is now secretary of Railfuture Wessex. The award is made in memory of Railfuture stalwart Clara Zilahi.

The best social media award went to the Friends of St Anne's Stations, on the line to Blackpool South, for their use of Facebook.

North Cheshire Rail User Group won a Commendation for its YouTube video about the Halton Curve. The judges hope this award will attract more entries from user groups next year as it is the way the rail industry itself is developing.

The Friends of St Anne's Stations also won the award for best new group, awarded in memory of Cotswold Line Promotion Group founder Oliver Lovell. The Salisbury to Exeter Rail Users' Group won a commendation. Both the award and the commendation were presented by Cotswold Line promotion Group chair John Ellis.

The Judges' Special Award went to Richard Crane,

The 2016 Railfuture awards



BRANCH LINE STAR: Bedford-Bletchley's Richard Crane, who had a class 150 Silverlink unit named after him in 2006



INNER CITY CAMPAIGN: Maggie King, Ray King and Roger Blake of Cambridge Heath and London Fields RUG



COMMENDED: A still from the Halton Curve YouTube video

founder and chairman of the Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users' Association, for his 35 years of devoted work.

Railfuture vice-president Chris Green said: "I have known Dick for 30 years and have found him tireless not just in the development of the Bedford - Bletchley line, but in the wider rail industry. He has run two first-rate railway discussion groups at Bletchley and Surbiton which attract record numbers of younger members at a time when railway supporters are all supposed to have grey hair! He is also a modest person

who does not shout about his contributions to our industry." Nominations for Railfuture's 5th annual Awards for Rail User Groups were judged by a team of six vice-presidents – Paul Abell, Ian Brown, Barry Doe, Roger Ford, Chris Irwin, Stewart Palmer – and President Christian Wolmar.

Roger Ford (also known as Captain Deltic) wrote in his *Informed Sources* e-magazine: "November starts with one of the year's most enjoyable meetings. As an honorary vice-president of Railfuture I get to join the judging panel for the annual awards. For someone who spends too much time writing about high level policy in these difficult times, it is a refreshing change to help celebrate the successes at the grass roots."

Railfuture welcomed by mayor

More than 100 delegates attended the Railfuture conference in Birmingham on Saturday 12 November.

Birmingham's Lord Mayor Carl Rice opened the conference, which had the theme: *How the West Midlands will lead the way to the future*.

Councillor Rice explained that he had some inside knowledge of the rail system, having started his working life with British Rail at Kidderminster station in 1974. Birmingham was chosen as the conference venue to coincide with the completion of the New Street station modernisation and the opening of the Midland Metro extensions.

Students from Birmingham and Aston universities attended the conference as guests of Railfuture West Midlands.

The improvements resulting from the new West Midlands franchise were described by Toby Rackcliff, the rail policy and strategy manager of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Sarah Spink of Midlands Connect talked about ways of powering the "Midlands Engine".

Lord Berkeley, chairman of the Rail Freight Group, talked about the challenges facing rail freight in a devolved rail sector, as well as explaining the capacity, investment and access issues.

Alice Gillman of Vivarail gave details of the class 230, based on former London Underground trains, which will soon be working rail services between Coventry and Nuneaton.

Stephen Joseph of the Campaign for Better Transport outlined his own views on future priorities for the railways.

Professor Clive Roberts of Birmingham University talked about the digital changes, especially new signalling, which are expected on the railways.

The conference was chaired by Railfuture vice-president Stewart Palmer, who replaced Railfuture president Christian Wolmar.

Christian is now Labour's candidate in the Richmond Park by-election on 8 December.

He opposes the expansion of Heathrow and Brexit. He says the referendum "was conducted on such dishonest terms that Parliament – or the electorate – needs to vote on the issue before a decision to leave the EU.

Car horrors

Martin Smith says so many sensible things in his *Railwatch* 149 letter – particularly regarding the gross stupidity of making tunnels for buses and trams in cities.

This “tunnelitis” seems to be almost universal. Stick all the lower-status things like public transport out of sight, disregard the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, while allowing environment-hostile but status-symbol cars to reign supreme, to further clog up our towns and cities and make an unsightly mess. This seems particularly sacrilegious in beautiful, old and historic towns such as Oxford, Cambridge and Marlborough, to name but three.

It amazes me how most people seem able to enjoy visiting or living in towns and cities, despite the frustration of not be able to cross the road easily, or enjoy a leisurely walk on pavements often narrowed to allow for easier passage of cars.

I could never enjoy a relaxing al fresco drink or meal in town with the hassle of cars parking nearby and the ugly jarring sounds of car doors constantly being slammed! If I wanted this sort of noise and ugliness I could simply go and sit in a car park. It would be wonderful if cars could be tamed but I doubt if it could ever happen in this car-obsessed world.

It is a world with many powerful motorist’s lobbies to further the cause of the motorist. I feel it would take more than just appealing to people’s better natures for the car to ever be curbed.

Catherine Barber, Hungerford, Berkshire.
kate@catbarber.plus.com

Brussels campaign

Ian Brown states in *Railwatch* 149: “We will not be campaigning in Brussels.”

I would suggest Railfuture should continue campaigning in Brussels, even though the method and emphasis may change.

Brussels is served by direct trains from London and is a gateway between our country and others in Europe. We need to keep working with colleagues in Belgium, France and elsewhere to ensure that rail keeps and indeed expands its share of the international market.

That also means continued dialogue with bodies such as the Community of European Railways (of which the Association of Train Operating Companies is part) and Union International des Transports Publics, and these are both based in Brussels.

If we are to “strengthen our knowledge of best practice overseas”, that means dialogue with like-minded bodies representing passengers (such as the 34 represented in the European Passengers Federation), not just taking pictures of trains and stations. Such meetings sometimes take place in Brussels.

As far as MEPs are concerned, reliable sources indicate that they will be in position until the spring of 2019 at any rate, and so we need to keep in touch with them.

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Readers’ questions

May I raise some issues in the hope that *Railwatch* readers may know the answers.

- 1. I thought that originally the Bristol Metro was to include reinstatement of the line from Temple Meads to Mangotsfield but recent publicity does not show this.
- 2. I thought the extension to Blackpool Tramway was to be a loop from North Pier via North

Isn’t that the girl on the train?



One of this year’s most advertised films was *The Girl on the Train*, starring British actress Emily Blunt. But for one weary traveller, the ever-present promotional poster provoked this “amendment”. For everyone who has suffered the indignity of travelling on a rail replacement bus, the amendment raised a wry smile. And no wonder she is looking so miserable.

Station to Gynn Square, but it now appears to be only a spur from North Pier.

3. I see the proposal for electrifying the North Downs route is for 25kV overhead. Surely 750V third rail is preferable, as significant parts of the route are already electrified using this method. If Great Western is still to run the Reading-Gatwick service, the new class 387 trains are already equipped.

Martin James, Egham, Surrey
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■ Railfuture Severnside’s Nigel Bray writes: I think Mr James is confusing the

current MetroWest scheme with the 1979 Advanced Transport for Avon proposals for a Bristol Metro.

The latter scheme did include reopening the Mangotsfield lines from Bristol to Bath Green Park and Yate, but did not attract the necessary political support. MetroWest Phase 1, which includes reopening the Portishead line, is scheduled for completion in 2019. Phase 2, which includes three new stations and reopening part of the Henbury line to passengers, is scheduled for completion in 2021/22.

Railfuture would support further phases of MetroWest but, as far as I am aware, no definite proposals have been put forward by the West of England local enterprise partnership.

Send your letters and emails to:

The Editors, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU
Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk
Railwatch also welcomes articles and pictures
Please use email if possible but include your postal address

The rail industry must sharpen up its act

By Ian Brown
ian.brown@railfuture.org.uk

The world is in a “post-truth” era where facts are subordinated to particular polarised opinions, according to some commentators following the US election result.

However, ignoring facts is not sustainable.

Transport has already risen up the political agenda, joining the ranks of health, education and employment as political imperatives. It can no longer be denied that there is a clear economic need for proper investment in infrastructure.

Quite right therefore that the British Government, despite disarray over Brexit plans, is pressing ahead with High Speed Two by announcing the next stage.

The focus is increasingly on integrating HS2 in the North West with the existing West Coast main line. Railfuture has long campaigned for HS2 to be targeted at improving capacity and resilience of the total rail network. We are being listened to.

In the East Midlands, better plans are also needed to integrate Toton with Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

The eerie silence on whether HS2 should serve the existing Sheffield (ex Midland) station is worrying but at least the HS2 station at Leeds has moved nearer to the existing Leeds (City) station recognising the massive economic importance of West Yorkshire and the need for regional distribution by rail. There is still work to be done by Railfuture members here.

Electrification

Railfuture has campaigned strongly for electrification, which is essential for growth, sustainability and fuel supply resilience in the long term.

The industry laid down ambitious plans starting with the intelligent Lord Adonis incremental approach, adding new electrified linkages in north west England, each stage adding new opportunities for higher quality, higher capacity electric services, albeit using old trains spruced up to tide us over until new electric trains are delivered through the Northern franchise.

Following this successful approach, Network Rail went headlong into wholesale main line electrification of the Great Western and Midland main lines without the management skills to go with the programme, resulting in massive cost and time overruns. The result – a pause on the Midland main line, another on the Great Western and a further pause on the Midland main



JOB WELL DONE: Severn Tunnel was closed for six weeks up to 22 October for electrification equipment to be installed

line moving investment into a later control period to “save” money.

This approach does not save money at all. It wastes even more money but spreads it out in order to keep approximately within industry funding limits. More money for less.

Does the industry have the right electrification strategy?

Paul Abell’s article on page 20 describes what has been chopped from the Great Western electrification scheme.

Sadly such an approach together with massive cost overruns undermines the business case for these main line electrification schemes.

How does Swansea fare in this? Another eerie silence. Worse still, the panic switch to order all bi-mode trains (diesel and electric) for the Great Western appears somewhat to relieve the pressure to deliver electrification.

While Railfuture has continued to support main line electrification, several members have concluded that a continuation of the incremental approach started in north west England would have brought more benefits sooner, particularly given the advent of viable hybrid trains for regional services.

Many of the “cascade” benefits of main line electrification are being lost or postponed.

One example is the resultant delay in moving Great Western IC125s to Scotland where they are needed to provide more capacity, reduce serious overcrowding and stimulate tourism.

At least we can be confident that electrification is not being abandoned. But Network Rail must sharpen up its act and deliver committed projects. The capital costs of providing new and

enlarged stations have also risen simultaneously to “silly money” levels when compared to other modes of transport. There must be another way of delivering these surely?

More new diesel units needed

Railfuture has long maintained that a build of new diesel trains for regional, local and commuter services is necessary to provide for overdue replacement of 30-year-old diesel trains and, importantly, to accommodate growth in passenger demand.

The massive investment projects in the South East – practically a whole new electric fleet for Southern, Thameslink and Crossrail, together with main line electrification suggests that this may not be necessary.

What we now have to contemplate is a surplus of redundant electric multiple units being put into store across the country while a critical shortage of diesel units remains. Not what you might call strategic planning!

At the time of the Brexit vote, the new Northern franchise was announced, including new trains, some of them diesel multiple units.

This partially mitigates the situation, but there is little scope for growth on the diesel operated part of the Northern franchise area. Of course, the problem also remains throughout the rest of England.

Anglia fared better, with complete replacement of all trains used by the franchise, plus scope to accommodate growth.

Scotland also fares slightly better than the norm – except for IC125 cascade delay – provided the programme of incremental electrification in the Central Belt (Glasgow-Edinburgh-Stirling triangle) is not subject to further

review or being paused “English style”.

The places of real concern are south west England and Bristol, which depended on a cascade from Great Western electrification, and Wales, particularly South Wales and the Valley Lines.

After optimism in the North of England and Anglia, comes pessimism with CrossCountry

While we can be optimistic about the Northern and TransPennine refranchises, we are worried by the CrossCountry extension.

This franchise already operates some of the most overcrowded trains over long distances and is in drastic need of a complete recast based upon the provision of new, higher capacity bimodal trains.

What we have in the short term is one new four-car set reformed out of two spare Voyager power cars, and reducing two further trains from 5 to 4 cars, plus some extra stops at Morpeth, presumably to keep “open access” operations at bay. This is hardly a recipe for sustainably developing these CrossCountry routes.

Railfuture through its branches intends to coordinate a strong response to the Government’s CrossCountry franchise consultation which as issued suggests further cutbacks at the extremities, particularly the Paignton branch, in order to strengthen the core.

This is a real chance for Railfuture members throughout England, Wales and Scotland to get involved with their Railfuture branches to provide a more intelligent and informed response to this consultation with a view to “Making Cross Country Great Again”.

A turning point

Railfuture is confident that the success of the Borders Railway reopening will be matched by the Oxford-London Marylebone service which starts this month.

Both schemes have a well-defined output and a strong business case.

Momentum from the Scottish reopening will continue in England with the restoration of Oxford-Bedford-Cambridge.

We in Railfuture have sharpened our act, focusing on key economically sustainable priorities which include reopenings and physical upgrades, but also involve customer service improvements, such as vehicle design, information and fares.

It is time for the rail industry too to sharpen up its act and deliver.

■ Ian Brown CBE FCILT is Railfuture’s director of policy

A tram-train is 'not a match' for the Leeds cross-city link

By Brian Dunsby
Harrogate District
Chamber of Commerce

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We wish to reply to the full-page feature article entitled *Tram-train solution for Leeds Region* by Paul Abell in Rail-watch 149.

Specifically we strongly object to the suggestions from the Parliamentary Light Rail Group, chaired by Greg Mulholland MP, that the existing heavy rail line between Leeds, Harrogate, Knaresborough and York should be converted to "light rail" with "tram-Train" operation.

Our objections to this suggestion are three-fold. First, the success of the existing heavy rail service, second, the current plans for upgrading the line and its franchised services, and third, the inherent technical and financial weaknesses of tram-train technology.

The need for a rail link to Leeds-Bradford Airport is now widely recognised and the Government has funded a consultancy study into alternative surface access strategies. It concluded that a new direct rail line terminating at the airport would not be technically or financially feasible within the foreseeable future.

West Yorkshire Combined Authority is currently assessing alternative road and rail options in detail, including the scheme which Harrogate Chamber first proposed in 2011, namely an airport parkway station on the existing line near the Bramhope tunnel.

The proposed parkway station would be adjacent to the existing long-stay car park and could be served by the existing airport shuttle buses synchronised with arriving and departing trains. This scheme has been endorsed by the airport management in its latest strategic development plan and surface access strategy 2016.

The latest news is that Harrogate Line Supporters Group has devised a novel cross-city line scheme based on connecting the Harrogate line to the Bradford and Skipton lines – serving the proposed new station at Leeds Bradford Airport. This scheme has recently been submitted to West Yorkshire Combined



WINNERS: Brian Dunsby, left, of Harrogate Line Supporters Group being presented with the Clara Zilahi Award for best rail campaigner at the Railfuture Rail User Group Awards last year by Railfuture president Christian Wolmar. The group also won the Gold award for Best Campaign

Authority for evaluation. It has also been presented to Leeds City Council which is currently undertaking a wide-ranging "conversation" with business and residents to develop its future transport strategy and plans for transport investment across the city. The benefits and advantages of this Leeds cross-city line and an airport parkway station are summarised on two papers (HT447x and HT476). The group has also produced a line diagram.

The key point which we wish to stress is that the construction of a new airport station on the existing Harrogate line is a relatively low cost "quick-win" without any of the major capital funding and operating costs – or planning blight – that would inevitably delay the suggested direct line to the terminal – whether heavy or light rail.

The design and construction of this new station should cost only around 10% of the £173 million NGT legacy fund, and it could possibly be ready for when the existing train frequency on the Leeds-Harrogate service is doubled

to every 15 minutes and the rolling stock is upgraded to class 170 diesel multiple units in 2018. In addition, Virgin Trains East Coast are scheduled to operate direct services between Harrogate and London King's Cross every two hours from 2019, which could also serve the proposed parkway station with selective door opening. This would be especially valuable whenever flights have to be diverted to or from Leeds Bradford Airport.

We want to publicise the essential details of our scheme to refute the claims by the All Party rail group of MPs which would further delay the current firm plans for upgrading the Harrogate line.

We believe it will cost much more per seat to build and operate tram-trains. They are still not approved for use in the UK.

They are incompatible with 25kV electrification and their maximum safe speed is severely limited by line-of-sight driver control.

More information:
www.harrogatechamber.org

PERSONAL OPINION: 'Warmed-up pizza'

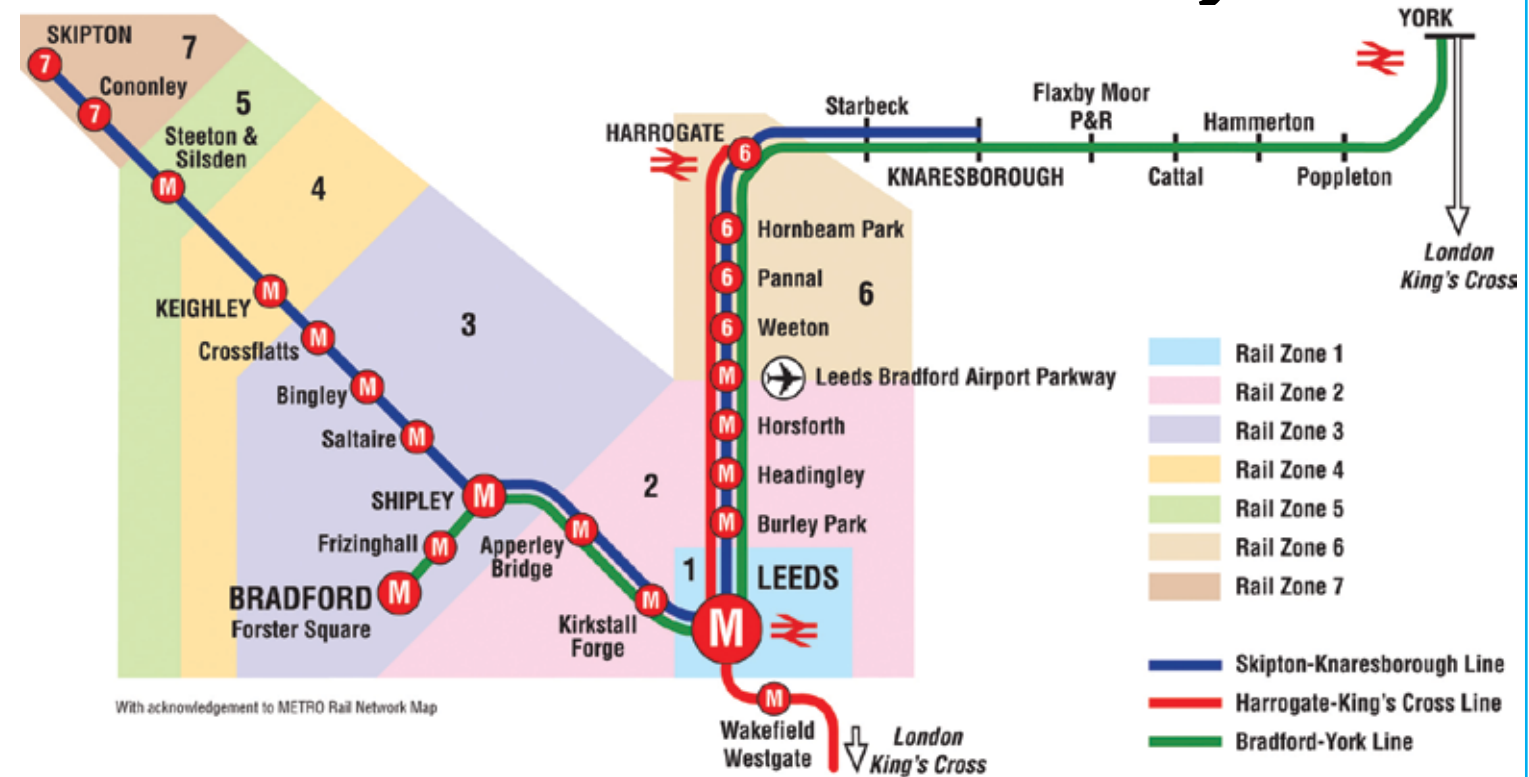
As a regular user of the Leeds-Harrogate-York railway, I was horrified to read Paul Abell's uncritical support of the idea to convert the entire line to tram-train (*Railwatch* 149).

The Harrogate loop is a strong, growing railway, and on the back of this success, huge improvements are imminent for services on the line. 2019 will see two additional fast services every hour between Harrogate and Leeds, giving four trains per hour. Some redoubling between Knaresborough and Poppleton will happen before 2019, allowing a doubling of service frequency to York and journey time savings to follow, with longer term plans for a new platform 12 at York accessed via the goods lines. Class 170s will be used on our services from 2019. These improvements, which people have been fighting for decades to achieve, are now threatened with being lost by this ill-considered plan.

In Leeds itself, the railway is not well aligned for population centres and will be a poor substitute for a transit scheme on the A65 or A660 corridors themselves. Leeds Bradford Airport can be well served from a new heavy rail station on the Harrogate line north of Horsforth, linked with the airport car parks' circular shuttle bus services. A spur up to the airport has been deemed impractical because of the gradients involved. Beyond Horsforth, what are the benefits to passengers from this huge spend on tram train conversion? I can think of several disadvantages – less capacity, less comfort and less luggage space, very much longer journey times and, I understand, a long walk at Leeds to connect to heavy rail.

The tram-train idea needs to be compared to the future committed service levels with class 170s, not with today's Pacers. Harrogate has a nine-coach HST to Leeds (then London) at 07.34 which is full after picking up at Horsforth. A four-car train follows six minutes later, another after a further 11 minutes. How can trams deal with this volume? Harrogate also generates large inbound flows for conferences, exhibitions and tourism, for which a tram service is wholly unsuitable. This traffic would atrophy, with devastating consequences. The light rail scheme for the Harrogate line, already rejected once, is a warmed slice of yesterday's pizza and needs to be quickly binned again. Heavy rail, with these improvements already committed and electrification to come, is obviously the correct solution for the Harrogate loop.

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Harrogate Chamber of Commerce's proposal for a Leeds cross-city service

How cross-city would work

The Leeds cross-city line to Leeds Bradford Airport is the basis of a new, surface-access strategy providing the most efficient, cost-effective and economically sustainable option for the region. Compiled by Mark Leving and Brian Dunsby for Harrogate Chamber of Commerce, the plan would:

- Extend existing services on the York-Harrogate-Leeds rail line to Bradford and Skipton. These are being enhanced to an all-day 15-minute frequency in the new Northern franchise from December 2017
- Provide a new dual function airport parkway station south of Bramhope tunnel, connected to the terminal by existing shuttle buses which now serve car-parks
- When the Harrogate line is 25kV electrified, integrate with the Leeds north west Airedale lines to provide direct services from Bradford, Keighley, Shipley and Skipton to the airport, Harrogate and York

The benefits

- Avoidance of high capital and maintenance cost of new route infrastructure and trains
- Operationally efficient. There is no requirement for separate dedicated rail or bus services which would involve significant recurring additional operating costs
- Improved capacity utilisation of platforms 1-5 at Leeds will be possible as these services already share tracks and platforms between Leeds City station and Wortley Junction.
- Improved regional connectivity (including new direct services) to the airport from the whole region including Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Skipton and Wakefield, plus North Yorkshire via Leeds or York.

- Better, simplified regional penetration to include Harrogate, Knaresborough, York and beyond
- Reliably faster generalised and actual journey times than any other mode
- Significantly lower and more efficient use of public funds with sustainable costs
- Many additional local park and ride beneficiaries including Arthington, Bramhope, Pool and Yeadon, while Cookridge is within easy walking distance
- Overspill for constrained Horsforth station in terms of car access, parking and platforms
- A proportionately greater fare-box contribution to net costs than any other option

Harrogate Chamber of Commerce believes cross-city is a better approach, using existing infrastructure, and is entirely consistent with prioritised and committed plans already in place for improved walk-up service frequencies, train capacities, and electrification. It takes full advantage of 25kV electrification of the Harrogate Line prioritised for control period 6 (2019-24).

It would provide excellent wider connectivity to the airport from the region via both Leeds and York stations and would use scarce capacity on the rail network by integration with existing services.

The multifunctional station would combine airport access with substantial local commuting needs. High frequency shuttle buses would link the parkway station to the terminal, which is less than 1.5 miles away. The plan recognises that this regional airport, like most others, functions primarily for leisure users with luggage.

Railfuture vice-president Paul Abell responds to Andrew Whitworth's opinion

Dr Whitworth raises a number of excellent and very valid points, but he does not mention the chronic congestion at Leeds City station, which is going to get worse with the increasing frequency of services, regardless of the eventual effect of the arrival of HS2. In brief, ameliorating this problem is one of the objectives of the tram-train plan, while a light rail loop around the city centre would improve connectivity to areas relatively remote (and uphill) from the station, such as Leeds General Infirmary and the important district around the Headrow. Such a loop would run through City Square to serve the station.

In addition, Leeds Bradford Airport deserves something better than a bus connection from a station some distance away. This is the unfortunate situation which geography has dictated at Liverpool, and is much worse for passengers than the direct rail connections they enjoy at Manchester and Newcastle. We need to bring LBA into the 21st century. A preliminary survey of a connecting line gives no gradient steeper than 1 in 16, well within the capability of light rail, but a gradient which would tax a class 170 diesel multiple unit.

It should be possible to integrate the London service with the tram-train service, especially in view of the relatively low line speed involved (it will not be doing 125 mph anywhere on the Harrogate side of Leeds).

I am sure that a comfortable tram-train vehicle (and I fully appreciate that the people of Harrogate expect something better than plastic seats) running on the fast timings made possible by electric traction would give Dr Whitworth the kind of service both he and visitors to Harrogate rightly require.



By Nigel Bray nigel.bray@railfuture.org.uk

More trains for Bristol as Turbos head west
Great Western Railway has told Railfuture that the start of electric services between Paddington and Hayes in west London has cleared the way for the first class 165 Turbo diesel multiple unit train to be transferred to Bristol in early 2017 for driver training, with the possibility of a second set transferring in the summer. The bulk of the cascade of Turbos will occur when electrification is completed from Paddington to Didcot, said regional development manager Tom Pierpoint. The Network Rail projects review by Sir Peter Hendy estimated that the cascade will be completed by December next year.

Campaigners battle to boost Pilning service
The future of Pilning station, situated on the English side of the Severn tunnel and latterly served by just two trains on Saturdays only, has come to a head following Network Rail's intention to remove the station footbridge during electrification work. NR considers that the tiny number of users does not justify rebuilding it to clear the overhead wires. At the time of writing, removal of the footbridge was imminent, with the station to be served only in the Bristol direction. Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways has asked for an investigation into whether the existing footbridge could be modified at a lower cost to meet electrification clearances. Railfuture Severnside has contacted the West of England local enterprise partnership and Network Rail, saying that Pilning station had the potential to attract commuters to industrial developments planned on Severnside and to a possible new power station at Oldbury. We pointed out that a footbridge was provided at Ascott-under-Wychwood when the North Cotswold line was redoubled in 2011, despite that station having only one train each way, five days a week, timed for normal office hours in Oxford. By contrast, Pilning's service has been of no use to daily commuters. Our response to the South Gloucestershire 2010 Local Plan suggested that Pilning needed a daily service of three trains each way to suit commuters to Bristol and South Wales.

James White, transport and rail coordinator for the West of England LEP, replied that the LEP had called for more trains to call at Pilning and had asked the Office of Rail and Road to reveal what was planned for the footbridges at this and three other local stations including neighbouring Patchway. Mark Langman, Network Rail's Western Route director, replied that NR was not actually closing the westbound platform but would be removing the footbridge. Its view was that services from Severn Beach offered a reasonable alternative.

Steps to help Somerset get back on track
Railfuture's affiliated group Friends of Bridgwater Station held a public meeting in September entitled Somerset Back on the Rails. Keith Walton, chairman of Severnside community rail partnership, explained that the CRP had helped fund a new footpath between the station and Bridgwater College. He also referred to the likelihood of longer trains on local services after the cascade of Turbos from the Thames Valley. Phil Edge, representing Langport Transport Group said the 27 miles between Taunton and Castle Cary were the

longest gap on a railway in the South West without a station. Three sites for a station at Langport had been considered and the group was expecting to meet GWR and NR in mid October. Tony Lloyd described the campaign successes of Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways, including Sunday services on the Severn Beach line. Challenges included making the case for a Henbury loop service and for Ashton Gate station on the Portishead line in the face of negative studies by consultants. His advice to campaigning groups such as FOBS was "Keep battling on and don't always believe the experts!"

www.railfuture.org.uk/SevernsideBranch
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By Tony Smale tony.smale@railfuture.org.uk

Raw deal for Weymouth passengers
Regular travellers between Waterloo and Weymouth will be heartened to see a clause in the tender document for the South Western franchise, to begin in June next year, requiring the new operator to "take the lead in identifying and developing proposals to reduce journey times". Currently, the journey from Capital to Coast takes around three hours. That is fine if you are not in any hurry and seated in comfortable inter-city stock. At certain times of the day you can find yourself on a class 450 train with 3+2 seating designed for "outer suburban" use. If the train is running late, there is a risk it will be terminated short at Dorchester South and passengers for Weymouth turned out on to the platform to await the next service. Needless to say a number of rail users in the Dorset resort think they are getting a raw deal!

Award for Templecombe
Templecombe station on the Salisbury-Exeter line was the winner of the Best Small Station at the National Rail Awards ceremony in September. The judges said "the station's secret was a remarkably active Friends of



Picture: PAUL BLOWFIELD

BEST-KEPT STATION: Templecombe

Templecombe Station group which had gone beyond gardening to work with local staff to improve the overall station environment." Templecombe Station was reopened in 1983 following a long campaign backed by the Railway Development Society. The station now falls within the remit of the new Salisbury-Exeter Rail Users Group, which was set up with support from Railfuture.

Better news for Coastway passengers
The latest round of industrial action on Southern has seen a welcome Havant-Chichester replacement bus. During previous strikes there was no service at all. We would like the dispute resolved as quickly as possible so that a full service runs each and every day.

Community rail in the south
Several Railfuture Wessex members went to South West Trains' community rail event in October. The day included visits to Netley and Swaythling stations, to view the impressive efforts of local volunteers. Both stations have military connections and it was interesting to see how these associations had been commemorated, with historic displays, anniversary plaques and school artwork. The two stations are among those covered by the Three Rivers community rail partnership. The partnership was originally set up to support passenger services on the reopened Romsey-Eastleigh route, but its tentacles now reach along the line towards Portsmouth. A logical conclusion would be the creation of a county-wide CRP for Hampshire in the same way that Devon & Cornwall and Sussex are each covered by a single partnership organisation. Funding for CRPs and station adopters is guaranteed, whoever wins the franchise.

Railfuture Wessex AGM fixed for 2017
The Railfuture Wessex AGM will be held at Brockenhurst Village Hall on the afternoon of Saturday 1 April 2017.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+Branch
[Twitter @RailfutureWessex](https://twitter.com/RailfutureWessex)



Rivals for new West Midlands franchise

The Department for Transport has issued invitations to tender for the West Midlands franchise, previously called London Midland. The two remaining bidders are Govia and Abellio. Railfuture welcomes many of the proposed innovations, including extending the operating day, enhancing Birmingham-Worcester and Worcester-Gloucester frequencies, Boxing Day services, and better rail services to Birmingham Airport. We are seeking meetings with the two bidders. Details of the franchise can be downloaded at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/west-midlands-franchise-competition-invitation-to-tender>

Small step forward for CrossCountry
Arriva has been successful in extending its CrossCountry Trains franchise under the Government's direct award process. It includes modernisation of the IC 125 train fleet, free wi-fi and 4G connections by April 2018. However there are no improvements on the routes to Leicester, Stansted and Nottingham. Railfuture continues to urge CrossCountry to provide additional stops at the new Bromsgrove station.

Walsall-Wolverhampton direct
Railfuture is campaigning for reintroduction of direct Walsall-Wolverhampton services. We presented our case at a meeting in August with Walsall's cabinet member for transport, Councillor Lee Jeavons, Network Rail's Chris Skilton and Walsall's transport strategy officer. The main driver for transport enhancements is now economic regeneration. It is not enough just to argue for improved connections, traffic reduction, or even climate change benefits. Walsall is committed to reintroduce the service and plans to investigate options, including new stations at Willenhall, Portobello and Darlaston. Railfuture believes extending the present Walsall-Birmingham-Wolverhampton back to Walsall direct could be the best way forward

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[Twitter @RailfutureWMids](https://twitter.com/RailfutureWMids)

The red revolution



BUXTON STATION: How a clever lighting scheme enhances a masterpiece of Victorian design

The picture of Buxton station, above, is a dramatic illustration of how our railway stations can be enhanced.

A simple and inexpensive scheme highlights the magnificent fanlight window in the gable wall between the platforms.

Built under the guidance of Joseph Paxton (of Crystal Palace fame), the window is now a stunning feature of the station at night.

The picture is also evidence of a community rail revolution.

This year I was one of the judges for the Community Rail Awards and the winners received their awards in Southport at the end of September, followed by a community rail festival at the large, bright and busy station the next day.

This was the largest event ever in the community rail calendar, over 400 people attended, and the guests included Rail Minister Paul Maynard and the managing director of rail passenger services at the Department for Transport, Peter Wilkinson, who is a huge supporter of community rail.

Also there were the managing directors of four train operating companies.

The range of entries was stunning in its variety, imagination and impact. Overall winner was Great Western Railway for its commitment to community rail, while Mike Fitzgerald, the chair of the Kent community rail partnership, was awarded the lifetime achievement award.

Many partnerships work with local schools to introduce young people to rail travel and, with the British Transport Police, to reinforce the safety message. Some of this engagement results in artwork which is displayed at stations, or



Buxton in daylight

gardening projects. Pupils at Rose Grove, near Bolton, researched the history of their engine shed where the locomotives drew water from the local canal, sometimes sucking up sticklebacks which would be found much later when the loco went to Horwich works in Manchester for overhaul.

The adventures of one little fish travelling round the newly reopened Todmorden Curve were chronicled in *Small Fry*, which won first prize in the category involving young people, with a book, artwork and a DVD.

Gobowen station in Shropshire might have ended up as an understaffed halt, but instead provides the local community with services it wants, through a travel agency with a friendly personal welcome. Gobowen won awards this year for its café, run by pupils

with special educational needs from a local school, also for its "loo with a view", redecorated with striking images of wildlife in the African savannah.

Many stations now have superb station gardens, often on sites that had previously been overgrown with weeds and brambles.

Hindley station near Wigan is perhaps the most impressive, but the busy urban station of Cricklewood also won a silver award for the work of a newly formed and dynamic group from the local community drawn together through social media.

There is a new push to develop railway stations as community hubs. This has hitherto involved making use of redundant railway buildings, but the Heart of Wales line partnership has taken this a stage further.

At Llandeilo, the station buildings had long since disappeared, so a new prefabricated building has been provided, testing out both the building techniques and the complex contractual requirements needed on today's railway. Known as the Caboose, it is capable of use as a meeting room, a pop-up shop or indeed to sell rail tickets.

After a decade of community rail, there is no shortage of innovative ideas, or of willing community rail volunteers to implement them. You can see on YouTube the wide range of achievements of the Sussex CRP by going to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPqziBuX5a0>

Campaigners to meet in Rotterdam

By Trevor Garrod

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Next year's annual conference of the European Passengers Federation will be held in Rotterdam.

On Friday 17 March, the afternoon session will be open to all members of EPF affiliates, which includes Railfuture, and will focus on campaigning.

The AGM will take place at 17.00 on the Friday.

On Saturday 18 March, the theme of the conference will be connectivity, multimodal transport and the "last mile".

Speakers will include a representative from Rotterdam's transport authority and the European Commission. Nick Brookes of the web retailer Captain Train will also be speaking. The afternoon will conclude with a forum on European affairs, introduced by Dutch MEP Wim van der Camp. On Sunday 19 March, three local excursions will be offered.

Full details of the conference, including how to book, are available on www.epf.eu.

European rail tickets

Railfuture expressed concern in the summer regarding the closure of the Trainseurope facility at St Pancras International where staff could sell a ticket to anywhere in Europe, not just the few places served by Eurostar.

We are pleased to learn that Trainseurope has returned to St Pancras, in a different part of the station, selling tickets over the counter. www.trainseurope.co.uk Tel: 0871 700 7722

Meanwhile, International Rail has also opened an outlet in the STA shop next to London Victoria station where tickets are also sold over the counter. www.internationalrail.com Tel: 0871 231 0790.

Free Interrail for young people

EPF has welcomed a move by the European Commission to give a free Interrail pass to young European Union citizens in 2017, which would allow them to travel by train throughout mainland Europe. Full details will be available shortly.

International rail survey

Railfuture members (and others) are invited to take part in an EPF survey on international rail journeys of more than 200 kilometres, which includes Eurostar journeys.

By Peter Kenyon peter.kenyon@railfuture.org.uk

Combined authority project collapses

Negotiations for the proposed North East Combined Authority were abandoned in October and the Government’s Secretary for Communities and Local Government Sajid Javid withdrew funding for the project. The five authorities south of the Tyne voted against continuing with the scheme, leaving Northumberland, Newcastle and North Shields high and dry on the north side of the Tyne. It is possible these councils will continue on their own, but it appears that the opportunity being seized by councils further south has been lost by the resurgence of old regional differences. Work on some projects, including transport, is said to be continuing. Nexus controls transport planning for the old Tyne and Wear county area which includes Sunderland, but the opportunities for a scheme covering the whole of the North East seem to have evaporated.

Branch officials visit Alnwick

Branch chair Trevor Watson and secretary Ian Walker talked to the Aln Valley Railway Society in September with the title *Railfuture – Our Aspirations for the North East*. The meeting took place in the old waiting room at the former Alnwick railway station, now the home of Barter Books. The talk was well received and was followed by a lively question-and-answer session. The Aln Valley Railway has had a very successful season, attendances at the Lionheart station site being boosted by the attraction of Richboro the working steam locomotive. For more detail and the monthly newsletter see: www.alnvalleyrailway.co.uk

Morpeth to be a hub for inter-city services

The South East Northumberland Rail User Group has received astonishing proof of the value of its informed and persistent campaigning. As a result, Virgin will provide two extra stops each way from December 2016. From December 2017, CrossCountry will provide an additional two each way. From December 2019, First Transpennine Express will call hourly each way and finally the new open access operator will provide an hourly service to London and Edinburgh from 2021. So the station building, when restored with its bistro style cafe, will be a scene of bustling activity. Northern will also review station staffing. A new bus service to serve the station has started but SENRUG has had to provide information and a bus stop sign.

Proactive Northumberland Council

Northumberland County Council has adopted SENRUG’s proposal to move Cramlington station 200 metres south, nearer to the town centre and a housing development, by organising a workshop for the train operators, the development trust, SENRUG and rail consultants. Going further, the council has agreed to fund the GRIP3 study for the Ashington Blyth and Tyne line by December 2016 and GRIP 4 by October 2018. February 2019 has been identified for the start of work on the ground, and 2021 as the target for the first train service! For further information see: www.senrug.co.uk/Re-open-AshingtonBlythTyneLine.php

Cross-border co-operation

SENRUG has joined Rail Action Group East of Scotland to commission an attractive colour brochure setting out the benefits of their



MORPETH: Plenty of passengers ready to board an approaching CrossCountry train

campaign for a local rail service north of Morpeth with the reopening of stations and an hourly service to Berwick and on to Edinburgh.

Leaves on the line benefit passengers

The temporary autumn timetable (to cope with leaf fall) has brought improvements by retiming some morning trains from Middlesbrough to York and beyond. This has avoided the normal 54 minute wait for coast line connections. Coastliners are urging the retention of this convenient retiming. For details see: www.tpexpress.co.uk/travel-information/autumn-changes/

Ticketing arrangements have also improved. Through period return tickets from Hartlepool which include Metro travel to Newcastle Airport have been introduced, albeit with minimum publicity. Similarly the abolition of “Duo” tickets and the reversion to peak and off peak day returns resulting in cheaper fares has received little publicity. Why is it that so often rail travel improvements are treated as a state secret? Finally the user group has reassured Durham County Council of its firm support for a new station in the Peterlee area, Network Rail having found the site originally proposed unsuitable.

www.railfuture.org.uk/North_East_Branch
[Twitter @RailfutureNEast](#)

By Martin Smith martin.smith@railfuture.org.uk

Economic benefit of rail taken to heart

The economic importance of East West Rail was highlighted by the guest speaker at the Thames Valley members’ meeting in Bicester in September. The four counties traversed by the East West Rail route have a combined economy equal to that of Wales, said Martin Tugwell, programme director of the new Heartland Strategic Alliance Transport Forum. Mr Tugwell said both the Treasury and Cabinet Office are more receptive to rail development if presented as an “economic infrastructure project”, rather than just a transport project. He is confident East West Rail will get the go-ahead, even though decisions keep being deferred. Other priorities for the area in his view are four-tracking to relieve the bottleneck between Oxford and Didcot, and upgrading South Ruislip-Old Oak Common to main line standards. Expansion of Marylebone to handle additional traffic from the East West line and Milton Keynes is not possible, so Old Oak Common could be a useful alternative terminus connecting with Crossrail services to Heathrow and central London.

Evergreen 3 link to Oxford nears completion

The newly reconstructed line from Oxford Parkway to Oxford North Junction is now

reconnected to the main line, and Network Rail is working hard to complete the Evergreen 3 works into Oxford city station in time for the introduction of through services to Marylebone in December. Some North Oxford residents still complain that Network Rail has not installed adequate noise abatement measures. Thames Valley Branch is planning to hold its 2017 AGM on 22 April in High Wycombe, so members from Oxford can use the Chiltern service.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Thames_Valley_Branch
[Twitter @RailfutureTV](#)

By Gerard Duddridge gerard.duddridge@railfuture.org.uk

Tunnel could be best option for Dawlish line

Details emerged In October of a Network Rail plan to rebuild a short stretch of the coastal line at Teignmouth on a causeway about 30 metres out from the cliffs. This has caused confusion, as pictures of Dawlish have been shown in the press and a line nearer the sea would seem less secure. The plan would actually give space to stabilise the foot of the steep 45 to 50 metre high cliffs which are too close to the railway near Sprey point, between Parsons Tunnel and Teignmouth station. The rock (Teignmouth Breccia) is weak and there have been a number of rock falls. The most recent was the Woodland Avenue landslip. Fortunately it occurred when the railway was also closed during the 2014 sea wall breach at Dawlish. A large section of cliff slipped down leaving a visible back scarp.

Network Rail’s alternative plan is to reduce the slope of the cliffs, but this would affect properties on the cliff above. A cost of around £500 million has been mentioned for the causeway, which is enough money to bore over a mile of tunnel. A two-mile tunnel bored inland from Teignmouth to Kennaway Tunnel would completely secure the route against cliff falls and from the sea. Railfuture suggests this option is also evaluated.

The new tunnelled line could not be extended towards Exeter without cutting through Dawlish town centre. Instead, at a later date, a grade-separated junction could be completed within the new tunnel for a line avoiding Dawlish. This would require a further 1.75 miles in tunnel and two miles in the open to a junction with the existing line just north of Dawlish Warren. In the meantime attention must continue on the Okehampton route which is needed to increase line capacity between Exeter and Plymouth and provide a back up route for the entire 52 mile line via Dawlish.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Devon_and_Cornwall_Branch
[Twitter @RailfutureDC](#)

Airport rail links for green prosperity

By Graham Nalty

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Good rail links to airports are an essential part of a civilised society, and for British people wanting to travel abroad.

For people arriving as tourists in an unfamiliar country, reliable public transport links, especially rail, are even more important.

We have heard much about the “need” for an expanded Heathrow or Gatwick. If they do expand, their poor rail links need to be improved to reduce the already dangerous road traffic pollution around the airports.

All passenger airports should be integrated into the national rail network.

For business travel, my airports of choice have been Heathrow and Birmingham, but other people from the Midlands choose Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow and even Gatwick.

For leisure travel, I have started my journey at almost all the major regional airports within 100 miles of Derby, where I live.

The variety of destinations served by airlines at different airports means that your nearest airport may not be the most convenient, and some travel agents offer holidays with only one or two choices of departure airport in the UK.

A traveller may require rail links to all major airports within 100 miles of home.

A station under or adjoining the air terminal, served by a main line, ideally part of a high speed network, should be the standard for the future. Good examples can be found at Gatwick, Schiphol, Paris Charles de Gaulle and Frankfurt.

An airport station can be served by a variety of destinations via a spur from a main rail route, such as Stansted and, Manchester.

A station on the main rail network located up to a mile from the airport but linked by an automatic transit system can be adequate. Examples are Birmingham and Dusseldorf.

Another option is an airport station linked directly to a city centre. Examples are Heathrow (Piccadilly line and Heathrow Express), Moscow airports and Munich. The big drawback is that passengers from other locations have to travel to the city centre to get a train to the airport.

A bus link from the city centre station to the airport, as at Leeds or at Derby for East Midlands airport, is probably less useful.

Of course, onward travel from our destination airport in foreign parts is another problem. Some

◆◆◆◆ Rail User Express can be downloaded from www.railfuture.org.uk

AIRPORT	Air passengers 2015 (millions)	Rail passengers at airport stations (millions)	Passengers using rail to travel to airport	Comparable main line stations	Notes
Heathrow	75	5.6 (Heathrow Express) 13.4 (Piccadilly line)	25%	Birmingham New Street, Leeds, Liverpool	
Gatwick	40	17	34%	Brighton, Reading	commuter traffic
Manchester	23	3.5	15%	Preston, Derby	
Stansted	22.5	4.3	19%	Cambridge, Norwich	
Luton	12	2.75	23%	Luton	
Edinburgh	11			Aberdeen, Dundee	
Birmingham	10	5.1	51%	Coventry	commuter traffic
Glasgow	8.7			Dundee	
Bristol	6.8			Weston-super-Mare, Taunton	
Newcastle	4.6	not applicable		Middlesbrough	
East Midlands	4.5	0.3	7%	Loughborough, Chesterfield	poor connections
Liverpool	4.3	1.8	42%		
Aberdeen	3.5			Perth	
Leeds-Bradford	3.5			Harrogate	bus from Leeds
Southampton	1.8	1.65	92%		commuter traffic

POTENTIAL: Rail use to British airports could be increased but the rail links need to be improved.

business travellers may be met by a customer or supplier while many leisure travellers have to rely on travel by road coach.

For the overall journey, most travellers have two surface transport legs to consider.

When campaigning for improvements, Railfuture should remember that our departure airport is an arrival airport for tourists to Britain. They should be able to visit as much of Britain as possible without a car.

High speed rail advocate Green-gauge 21 has suggested that

Heathrow should be recognised as a rail hub as well as an air hub. The planned western rail access needs to provide at least an hourly direct service to Heathrow from each of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, South Wales, Bristol, the West Midlands, Oxford and the East Midlands (using the East West Rail link).

The table above lists the main UK airports with the annual count of passenger entries and exits for the rail station that serves the airport. While the figure for Birmingham’s airport station is high because of commuter traffic, a

well-connected airport station should be able to attract a rail passenger usage of around 25% to 35% of air passenger numbers.

The fifth column of the table lists stations of comparable size that each airport station should equal.

The rail station at Heathrow would need to be almost as large as Birmingham New Street or Leeds, but certainly larger than Liverpool Lime Street.

Railfuture branches can use this for planning campaigns to target airport connectivity improvements.

By Arthur Thomson
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Competition on Arriva Northern

Railfuture North West has written to the Competitions and Markets Authority questioning its ruling on "lessening of competition", following the award of the Northern franchise to Arriva Trains Northern in December 2015. It considered routes where Arriva ran both bus and train services. The CMA initially suggested 38 overlapping rail routes and 44 where bus routes competed with rail, but it later whittled this down to four "rail-on-rail" routes, including Chester-Manchester and Chester-Stockport, even though Arriva Northern is the only operator on the Chester-Stockport route. The CMA believes there is a risk of higher fares on these routes and is considering remedies such as fare caps.

Halton Curve latest

Halton curve is on target for regular passenger use by 2018, according to the North Cheshire Rail Users Group. A Liverpool-Chester service is expected to start in December 2018, although this could be affected by work starting soon to increase capacity at Liverpool Lime Street. An extra platform and improved platform layout is designed to improve flexibility, maximise train access to the station and clear the way for longer trains.

Manchester Airport western link

Pressure from Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association and Railfuture North West has resulted in Manchester Airport authorities safeguarding the alignment for the Manchester Airport western link from Mobberley to the airport in its latest sustainable development plan. Previously the land would have been available for other development. MCRUA believes the western link could revolutionise the train service on the Mid Cheshire Line.

Friends groups at Community Rail awards

Members of the Friends of Bentham Station were delighted to be presented with a duo of awards at the Community Rail Awards Event in Southport in September. Bentham won Gold in the *It's Your Station* category. Bentham also scooped a first prize in the *Best Community Engagement Event* for its *A Day in the Life of Bentham* photographic competition last summer which proved extremely popular.

The *Rail to Trail - 12 Station to Station Walks* project was third in the *Best Marketing Campaign* category. This was a joint project by Leeds to Lancaster and Morecambe CRP, Lancaster and Skipton rail user group, Northern Trains and Stuart Ballard.

Friends of Glossop Station's embankment garden was awarded a bronze certificate and their heritage lantern LED lighting was third in the *Most Enhanced Station Buildings and Environs* category. The group shared a second place award with friends' groups from Hattersley, Hadfield and Guide Bridge for a Teddy Bears' Birthday Party event held to mark The Queen's 90th birthday.

Hope for Southport-Manchester service

The Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Association and associated rail campaign groups have secured a meeting on 21 November with Northern following on from their passenger surveys which indicated that large numbers of passengers would

be inconvenienced by the service changes proposed from December next year. Northern is currently proposing that all Southport-Manchester services terminate at Manchester Victoria from that date, leaving many passengers needing to change trains to get to Manchester Piccadilly and beyond. An independent passenger survey report agrees with OPSTA's surveys.

OPSTA accepts that Northern has some cost and rolling stock concerns but believes the Department for Transport will not stand in the way of alternative improvements to the franchised service.

www.railfuture.org.uk/North_West_Branch

Twitter @RailfutureNWest



By Rowland Pittard
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Free travel for school children

Following calls in the European Parliament to give free travel to school children, a petition has been handed to the Welsh Assembly petitions committee by pupils from Treorchy Comprehensive School in Rhondda Cynon Taff. The petition was received by the chair of the petitions committee, Assembly Member Mike Hedges.

North Wales Issues

Proposals are being drawn up for a new road bridge over the Menai Straits – which separate Anglesey from the rest of Wales – because of the increase in traffic to and from the ferries for Ireland. Railfuture advocates that freight services should be restored to Holyhead as an alternative to the new bridge and has submitted this view to Network Rail's draft freight network study. The proposed resignalling of the North Wales main line is to be rephased and the present proposals omit the Llandudno branch. Signal box opening costs have been given as the reason for no late evening services and no winter Sunday services on this branch. Railfuture will seek to have this decision reversed.

Meeting with government officials

Railfuture Cymru/Wales committee members met with government officials in September. Issues of concern to Railfuture arising from the meeting included:

■ Continued uncertainty as to exactly which cross-border routes will be included in the new franchise

■ Reduced extent of electrification of the Valleys network in plans for a metro network

■ Lack of co-ordination between the Wales & Borders operator (currently ATW) and other companies running trains into Wales

■ The fact that oversight of Network Rail is not a devolved matter

■ Our fear that, in the new franchise, lines beyond those to be electrified may lose out in terms of improved frequencies and rolling stock

It was agreed at our subsequent committee meeting that in our future campaigning we need to emphasise that:

■ At least the entire existing Wales and Borders network must be included in the new franchise

■ All rolling stock used by the new operator must be new (as in the new East Anglia franchise) and fit for purpose, especially in relation to routes with tourist potential (as

in the new ScotRail franchise). Units must have full-width corridor connections to allow conductors and buffet trolleys to get through the train if it consists of more than one unit. Suburban units need full-width corridors throughout (as in the case of London Overground) to help with passenger security ■ The levels of passenger service frequency as set out in Railfuture's Wales Development Plan are essential (a minimum level of every two hours including on Sundays).

New Wales and Borders franchise

The Welsh Government is conducting a single procurement to appoint an operator and development partner to undertake the following functions:

A The operation of the Wales and Borders rail franchise

B The design and management of the development and implementation of capital works to deliver a Metro style service on the Core Valleys Lines and subsequent infrastructure management of the Core Valleys Lines

C The operation of rail and related aspects of the South Wales Metro service

D The design and development of further schemes to improve rail travel in Wales.

The selection process for the operator and development partner has begun and is being undertaken by Transport for Wales, a wholly owned, not-for-profit company established by the Welsh Government.

On 12 October 2016 the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, Ken Skates, announced the four ODP bidders who have been chosen to progress to the next stage in the selection process.

The four pre-qualified bidders are Abellio Rail Cymru, Arriva Rail Wales/Rheilffyrdd Arriva Cymru Limited, KeolisAmey and MTR Corporation (Cymru) Ltd. Railfuture Cymru/ Wales has met the four bidders and discussed with their representatives the contents of the Railfuture Development Plan for the Railways of Wales and the Borders and other issues.

Cabinet Secretary Ken Skates announced in the Senedd on 19 October that the four bidders will present outline solutions to the Welsh Government next month. There will then be a Transport for Wales consultation lasting about 12 weeks. The new franchise will start in 2018. The franchise may include the extension of services to Bristol and London. However there has been no confirmation about the retention of services from North Wales to Manchester Airport. There are proposals for Merseyrail to extend to Chester via the Halton Curve and for TransPennine to operate services from Chester.

Phase 1 of the Metro is being delivered now with Ebbw Vale branch capacity improvements, and £13 million of investment in the network. The Metro should be complete by 2023.

Arriva Trains Wales upgrades

The upgrading of rolling stock continues with emphasis being given to the class 150 units which are expected to be fitted with wi-fi. ATW maintains a good position in the tables for punctuality and reliability, with the latest figures for punctuality between 95% and 98% and reliability over 99%.

ATW is still recruiting staff to ensure a high level of service to the end of the franchise. Passenger numbers continue to increase with some overcrowding at peak times and on event days, which indicates an urgent need for additional rolling stock.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk
Twitter @RailfutureWales

www.railfuture.org.uk

Working together

There have been significant changes over the summer in the world of heritage rail.

For a start, it was a period of change at the All Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail.

The chair of the group, MP Mark Garnier, whose Wyre Forest constituency includes the Severn Valley Railway, was appointed to a ministerial post in the Department for International Trade, and so had to relinquish his post as chairman.

Following the same July reshuffle though, Loughborough MP Nicky Morgan left the Cabinet and has consequently been able to take over as chair of the all-party group.

The Great Central Railway is part of Nicky's constituency and she played a leading role in the all-party group five years ago. It has been good to welcome her back.

The heritage rail highlight in late summer was the introduction of the North Norfolk Railway's dining train to Cromer, the second heritage line after the North York Moors Railway to run out on to the national network.

As if to prove its value on the first day, the steam train carried main line passengers on to Sheringham, after Greater Anglia had to turn back a late-running train from Norwich at Cromer.

Elsewhere in England, Great Western Railway has introduced through ticketing between its staffed stations and three preserved railways – the Bodmin & Wenford, Cholsley & Wallingford and the West Somerset.

On the West Somerset, the through ticket includes travel on the local 28 bus between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard stations.

This has been backed up by poster advertising and attractive leaflets and it is on the website at: <https://www.gwr.com/destinations-and-events/heritage-railways>.

To promote the initiative further, GWR ran a shuttle service between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard on 8 and 9 October in connection with the WSR's autumn steam gala, using a newly refurbished green unit.

The trains were well patronised and may lead to more such through trains next year. In the longer term, the two operators are looking at a more regular through service, but this depends on the availability of rolling stock, which is in turn affected by the delayed electrification scheme and, of course, dependent on funding. Swanage Railway is making steady

◆◆◆◆ Please remember Railfuture in your will: <http://tinyurl.com/3qtdzj7>



Staff from the national network operator Great Western compare notes with counterparts on the preserved West Somerset line at Bishops Lydeard during a gala in October



progress towards inaugurating its through service to Wareham next year.

The project has revealed the issues involved in reconnecting to the main line network, and in upgrading heritage rolling stock to meet today's demanding technical requirements.

Swanage Railway has really blazed a trail here and credit is due to them for the way their staff and volunteers have steadily worked through and resolved the issues that have arisen.

In Scotland, the Keith and Dufftown Railway is also looking to reconnect to the network to encourage through trains such as the Royal Scotsman, which are so important to the tourist economy of Speyside.

Network Rail's new approach to route gauging has led to some problems for main line steam locomotive operators where tight clearances have been revealed on routes over which the locomotives have run in the past without problem.

This may result from changing track geometry as tamping and lining takes place, or it may be due to accuracy of the new

Railfuture lottery winners

Railfuture is now offering electronic payment of prizes in our monthly lottery . . . so not only can you enter using PayPal or internet banking, you can also get your prizes this way too.

Railfuture will still accept and send cheques for those who prefer to use this method. Whichever payment method you prefer, you can still win with us!

Please email lottery@railfuture.org.uk for more details of the scheme, or to register a preference for electronic payments . . . every month there are six prizes from £40 downwards.

Recent winners:

May: Roger White, Alan & Hilary Everett, David Porter, Graham Smith, Steve & Sue Boulding, John Ward.

June: Philip Bisatt, Alan & Hilary Everett, Walter Richardson, Patrick Hughes, Ralph Coulson, Ray King.

July: Graham Smith, Peter Hillier-Palmer, Chris Hyomes, Fiona Mackey, Eric T Smith, Roger White.

August: H R F Mills, Alexander Macfie, A T Hill, Barry Buttigieg, PJE Tyson-Woodcock, Andrew Carr.

September: Bill Berridge, David Stocks, Peter Lawrence, Ian Clatworthy, Martin Lloyd, Fiona Mackey.

October: Lianne Woodman, Janet Cuff, Philip Bisatt, John Ward, Cedric Martindale, Alan & Hilary Everett.

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RDS Group Travel

Seven-day spring visit to Innsbruck by high speed trains from London

Wednesday 3 to Wednesday 10 May 2017

For details, email trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk or send an SAE to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

Cambridgeshire shows the 50% way to win students over to rail

By Susan van de Ven
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Anyone searching on the Govia Thameslink website for information about student rail fares will soon discover an anomaly.

The Cambridgeshire Student Connect offer is a unique 50% discount fare available to 16-18 year-olds in education or training within Cambridgeshire. It means that access to these critical years of education and training is that bit more affordable. Everywhere else in the country, the standard student rail discount is 33%.

Why is there an exceptional offer in Cambridgeshire? Can the train operating company afford it?

The fare originated in 2010 in Meldreth, 10 miles south of Cambridge. But the railway came to the village 165 years earlier for the purpose of transporting apples and plums to Covent Garden. In particular demand was the Cambridge Gage, or green-gage – the sweetest of all plums. Today there are plenty of fruit trees dotted around, though not so many commercial orchards.

The legacy of the line, however, remains central to the community, providing a premier public service. People have settled and built their lives around it.

Commuting to London King's Cross is a draw, but so is getting around locally, to Cambridge, Royston and the nearby villages of Shepreth and Foxton.

Over the years, bus services have dwindled to one commuter run per day, while footfall at Meldreth station has grown steadily at 10% annually, now serving a quarter of a million people every year. Since the 50% student discount was introduced, a modal shift to rail has been



CHAMPION: Susan with Mohammed and other students at Meldreth station

tracked and evidently contributed to that growth. Like many good inventions, this one happened somewhat by accident. In 2009, the then train operating company, First Capital Connect, announced sweeping adverse changes to services at Meldreth. Free parking was to be replaced with a prohibitive charge, the booking office was to close on Saturdays and the student fare to Cambridge – the destination for all 16-18 year-olds in education or training – was to be hiked off-the-charts.

First Capital Connect explained that it was “aligning” its business operations. To many people, this meant that travel by train was going to become unaffordable.

At the time there was no relationship at all with the operator,

except for the much-loved station master who made tea and rang people at home to warn them of late-running trains. He was regarded as a local man, not a company man.

A ferocious campaign took off and the non-existent relationship with the operator was replaced with a new and adversarial one. Petitions, packed public meetings and TV cameras saw the booking office service saved.

Student fares and parking charges were the next line of battle. Out of the fray, some key constructive relationships were established. At First Capital Connect, Larry Heyman took an interest in the student fare issue. “Shall we meet up to discuss?” he asked.

As Cambridgeshire County Councillor for the village, this was an opportunity for me to bring in the County Council education transport team, and our meeting was held together with council officers at Shire Hall in Cambridge.

Larry and his team proposed a 50% discount, as opposed to the standard 33% off the adult fare. The premise was that students should be entitled to a greater proportional discount. For Meldreth students, this would reduce the annual cost by about £140 – a significant saving.

But the offer went further. First Capital Connect suggested this be a Cambridgeshire-wide offer, and that was how it was set up.

Very quickly, the other main operator in the county, running the Liverpool Street-Cambridge line, offered to match the

discount, and so it became the county standard.

The fare came into force in September 2010, as the bite of national recession began to hit local authorities hard.

The council had long provided a discretionary subsidy for post-16 bus travel, but the rail discount now undercut the cost of bus travel, even with council subsidy. Students opting for rail, with its half-hourly peak or hourly off-peak service, paid significantly less than those opting for the once-per-day bus run. By not tapping into council bus subsidy, every student who opted for rail saved the local authority £110.

A couple of years in, using data from student rail pass lists and sixth form college registrations, it was possible to see that for Hills Road Sixth Form College in Cambridge, the entire intake from Meldreth had opted for the rail pass over the subsidised bus pass. While this was not helpful to bus ridership, it set out certain clear parameters.

In 2014 the First Capital Connect franchise ended. Out of that initial confrontational contact, other good things had been achieved too, including hugely reduced parking charges, a thriving community rail partnership and outstanding communication with the operator and the rail industry generally. Good personal relationships meant that new ideas could be explored. The community had a strong voice in the run-up to the change of franchise, with a long and clear list of objectives for the new franchise holder. All the bidders approached the community rail

over to rail

partnership to discuss priorities going forward – and retaining the 50% student discount was prominent on the list.

The winning operator was Govia Thameslink Railway. But the terms for this franchise were distinctly different from the preceding era.

It became a “management contract” with the Department for Transport, meaning that the operator had less flexibility in running unique schemes and initiatives. Everything had to be approved by the Department for Transport as “revenue generating”.

Whether a scheme was commendable for the public good was measured by strict criteria around profitability. After all, this was public money.

While the 50% discount was carried over to the start of the new Govia Thameslink Railway franchise, for continuation into each successive year it needed to demonstrate its revenue-generating credentials.

This was achieved, and for two successive years now the scheme has been reapproved. The fact that Govia Thameslink had made a clear commitment to support community rail partnerships meant that communication channels have remained strong, and that has helped ensure success.

Meanwhile, Cambridgeshire County Council has become so severely starved – its revenue support grant from central government is being wound down to zero – that this year, for the first time, it is unable to offer discretionary subsidy for post-16 transport, which has always taken the form of bus subsidies.

Those young people living in areas of Cambridgeshire with a rail line have access to a unique discount, while those with only a bus link face a higher fare that reflects the removal of council subsidy. This introduces many questions for the future, including the means to create shuttle bus links to rural rail stations.

At the same time, with the Department for Transport's continuing approval of the Cambridgeshire Student Connect 50% discount, the question must be asked: can the discount be rolled out as a national standard? While ticking the box for Department for Transport revenue generation, it certainly ticks the box for young people in need of more affordable transport.

■ Susan van de Ven is Cambridgeshire County Councillor for Meldreth

■ This article was first published by the Campaign for Better Transport at www.bettertransport.org.uk



TRAM-TRAINS: Chateaubriant station, which has a regular service to Nantes

By Philip Bisatt
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Railfuture members enjoyed a visit to France's sixth largest city, Nantes, in September. Since the 1970s, light rail systems have been built in around 30 French cities, compared to only eight systems in Britain.

We stayed in St Nazaire, which is linked to Nantes by regular local electric trains – and very popular these are too, with the metropolitan region having a population of around 900,000.

Our trip included a 40-mile journey by tram-train to Chateaubriant at speeds of around 60 mph.

The line from Nantes to Chateaubriant was closed to passengers in 1980 and to freight in 2008, but reopened as a tram-train in 2014.

Passenger trains still run north from Chateaubriant to Rennes, although timetable co-ordination between trams and trains could be improved.

Our journeys in and around Nantes were made using Metrocéane zone-based tickets, and we even had a journey across the Loire on a water taxi.

We enjoyed excellent hospitality from our French hosts in the Fédération Nationale des Associations d'Usagers des Transports, led by Jean-Bernard Lugadet.

On the first day, we travelled by bus across the Loire using the Pont de St Nazaire to the coastal and picturesque town of Pornic. In 2015, the line from Nantes

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to Pornic, at risk of closure, saw extensive modernisation and upgrading, thanks in part to a campaign by l'Association de défense Sud-Loire-Océan, affiliated to FNAUT.

We returned to Nantes by a comfortable low-floor diesel unit on excellent track. We were impressed by the way the

former goods shed at Le Pallet station had been converted to a crèche, mainly used by rail commuters.

Thanks to FNAUT for an excellent welcome, and to Trevor Garrod for his leadership of the group and co-ordination of the arrangements for our visit.

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Short circuit for GW electrification

By Paul Abell

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The Government's deferral of parts of the Great Western electrification scheme will have far reaching effects, including delaying a diesel cascade.

In a written statement to the House of Commons on 8 November, Rail Minister Paul Maynard announced that five sections will be delayed:

- Slough-Windsor
- Twyford-Henley
- Didcot-Oxford
- Thingley Junction-Bath-Bristol Temple Meads
- Bristol Parkway-Bristol Temple Meads

The Henley and Windsor branches were lumped together in the minister's announcement as "Thames Valley branches" but there was no explicit statement on whether the Acton-Willesden and Maidenhead-Marlow lines stay in the present programme.

The main line out to Maidenhead is being electrified now as part of the Crossrail scheme, while Maidenhead-Cardiff through the Severn Tunnel, and the Berks and Hants line (Reading-Newbury) remain in the electrification programme.

There is an implication, but no guarantee, that the remaining lines will be electrified during Network Rail's control period 6 (2019-24).

Huge increase in costs

In part, these deferrals reflect the ability of the new bimode trains on order from Hitachi to change to diesel power when they reach the end of the overhead wires, but the financial problems behind the minister's decision were laid bare in a hard-hitting report from the National Audit Office entitled *Modernising the Great Western Railway* published the day after Mr Maynard's announcement.

This NAO report notes a decline in the benefit-cost ratio of the whole GW scheme from the "high value for money" 2.4:1 expected by the Government as recently as March 2015 to a current estimate around a "medium" 1.6:1.

This is partly because the expected cost of electrifying the lines in the original programme as far as Cardiff has reached £2.8 billion, more than double Network Rail's 2013 estimate.

The NAO estimates that if costs increase by a further 3-4% the benefit-cost ratio will dip below 1.5:1, putting it in the "low value for money" category. Meanwhile the NAO states that trains will be able to run "electric" from Paddington only as far as Didcot



Picture: PAUL ABELL

FAR-REACHING EFFECT: One of the services where replacement of Pacers now seems likely to be delayed is Rose Hill-Manchester Piccadilly. Our picture shows a 142 Pacer on the 15.23 to Manchester at Rose Hill in October with, left to right, Stuart Patrick, Greg Lane-Serff, Margaret Patrick and Rachel Singer from the Friends of Rose Hill Station. The excellent work done by FORHS is obvious at the station, while their website, developed with input from web designer MET Technology Ltd, deservedly gained a Gold Award at the Railfuture Awards in Birmingham

in December 2017, having to use their diesel engines for the remainder of the journey to Cardiff until December 2018.

Electrification from Cardiff on to Swansea currently has a "completion date to be determined; expected by March 2024".

The effect on cascades

Reasons for the huge increases in costs are discussed in detail in the NAO report, and it also goes into the effect of the electrification delays on the cascades of displaced diesel trains scheduled to replace rolling stock on other parts of the railway network.

The electrification of the Thames Valley lines was expected to release class 165 and 166 diesel

units for services around Bristol, Exeter and Cornwall, which would in turn release class 150 and 153 diesel units for transfer to the Northern franchise, where the replacement of Pacer diesels is a franchise commitment.

The class 165 and 166 trains will now stay on Thames Valley services until their electrification is completed in CP6, at which time there will be a phased transfer of class 387 electric trains from Thameslink.

Meanwhile, new class 387s have been ordered to work services which do have the option of electric traction.

Consequently the transfer of the 150s and 153s from the West Country to Northern, which

should have started in August 2017, has now been postponed to 2018, while the withdrawal of the Exeter area class 143 Pacers has been put back from December 2017 to December 2018.

Reprieve for IC125s

The manual doors of Great Western's IC125 trains are causing significant delays at stations as many passengers are unfamiliar with trains where they have to open and close doors themselves.

These trains were due to be withdrawn from GW services during 2017, with some being renovated for further service in Scotland. However 11 of the other IC125s which were due to go off-lease are now to be "retained and modified". Operators hope that includes the provision of power-operated doors.

Watch this space

Unfortunately it has to be said that past experience has shown that the dates quoted above may well be subject to further delays. This is a very unfortunate state of affairs in view of the benefits of electrification for the environment, and in reducing operating costs. Meanwhile the Government will have to bear the extra expense.



A GOOD START: New British-built class 387 trains are now operating some services from London Paddington

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