

# railwatch

PUBLISHED BY RAILFUTURE – THE INDEPENDENT CAMPAIGN FOR RAIL

No 157

£2

October 2018



Picture: ANN VERNER

**TRANSPORT FUND YES FOR ST ANDREWS: PAGE 2**

Our Page One picture shows St Andrews rail campaigners Dita Stanis-Traken and Jane Ann Liston at the site of the old St Andrews rail station.

They are pictured after meeting Scottish Government minister Michael Matheson.

Mr Matheson, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure & Connectivity, announced the 10 successful applicants for funding from the Scottish Government's Local Rail Development Fund.

The announcement was made in August, not in the Scottish Government's home in Edinburgh, nor in the offices of Transport Scotland in Glasgow, but on the site of the former railway station in St Andrews, Fife.

As StARLink (St Andrews Rail Link) campaign was one of the lucky recipients of money, the fact that the Minister chose to come to the Fife town was considered very significant.

Mr Matheson said: "Providing funding for these transport appraisals will allow the successful applicants to consider the transport issues and opportunities affecting their local communities. It has been great to hear, first-hand, the enthusiasm and drive behind them.

"Helping communities bring forward proposals to tackle these specific, local rail connectivity issues, will allow us to consider potential projects as part of our plans for future investment in our railways." The £2 million fund was a result of negotiations with the Green Party over



**ACHNASHEEN:** This tiny village in Ross-shire still retains its rail station, thank goodness, and fantastic views. It also serves a very wide, thinly populated area, stretching far into north-west Scotland. By contrast, St Andrews, which has a settled population of 17,000, plus a highly mobile student population of around 8,000, does not

the Scottish budget, because the Holyrood government does not enjoy an absolute majority.

The decision followed the setting up by Mark Ruskell MSP of the Fife Rail Forum, an umbrella organisation looking at how the Fife rail network could be enhanced and including representatives from the Dunfermline-Alloa, Levenmouth, Newburgh and St Andrews rail campaigns.

The 10 successful applicants out of 35 were awarded a total of nearly £700,000. They and their areas of interest were:

■ East Lothian Council – rail connections particularly Haddington and Tranent

■ Fife Council – Cross Forth Travel (access to railway stations near the Forth Bridge)

■ Hitrans – HMNB Clyde Transport Opportunities

■ Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council – Access to Linlithgow Station

■ Nestrans – Accessibility at Inch Station

■ Newburgh Train Station Group – Newburgh Transport Appraisal (further STAG work)

■ StARLink – St Andrews (pre-STAG and STAG 1 appraisal)

■ South Lanarkshire Council – connectivity in Clydesdale (concentrating on possible reopening

of Law and Symington stations, also supporting Beattock re-opening)

■ Tactran – Bridge of Earn/Oudenarde Park & Ride

■ Tactran – Stirling Strategic Park & Ride

It will be noted that seven of the successful applicants were local authorities or regional transport partnerships.

East Lothian Council's grant will be used to take a fresh look at options for improving rail connections in the county, particularly for Haddington and Tranent.

In the past 20 years East Lothian Council has twice investigated the reopening of the Haddington branch line, but concluded that the costs outweighed the benefits.

However, the changing landscape of significant increases in population resulting in growing congestion on both road and rail networks, the proposed four-tracking of the line near Prestonpans, and the environmental need to reduce emissions from transport, mean that it is timely to re-evaluate how the future population of East Lothian will access employment and amenities.

Fife Council's application took as a premise the high demand for railway station parking, which needs to be addressed as it is constraining access to the rail network for longer distance trips, reducing travel choices available

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## Tribute to Helen

A plaque was unveiled at East Kilbride station in September to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Busby to East Kilbride line.

John Yellowlees, honorary rail ambassador at the ScotRail Alliance, said: "It is great to be able to celebrate East Kilbride station's place at the heart of its community. The line has been a phenomenal success."

The East Kilbride line almost closed in 1963, following the Beeching Report.

However a vigorous campaign led by Railfuture members Jack and Helen Broadbent resulted in it becoming one of only seven routes in Scotland to be granted a ministerial reprieve.

When ScotRail introduced Class 156 trains in 1989, the line went from strength to strength. Sunday services came in 1996, followed by longer platforms in 2004.



South Lanarkshire Council Deputy Provost Collette Stevenson, left, East Kilbride station team member Louise Costello, Doris Donnelly and Arlette Robinson from the Kiwi Preschool Playgroup and pupils who have adopted the station



Rail champion Helen Broadbent who died in 1990, several years after her husband Jack.

She was still serving enthusiastically on the national executive of Railfuture's forerunner when she died.

At a service at East Kilbride station, the then ScotRail director Cyril Bleasdale praised the vision of both Helen and Jack.

## Scottish transport fund

◀ From Page 2

to commuters, and causing parking overflow issues for many towns. In particular, Inverkeithing railway station continues to have high passenger and parking demand because of lower fares and higher service frequency.

With work habits and travel patterns changing, the opening of the Queensferry Crossing, the expansion of East Dunfermline and the west of Edinburgh and proposals for a significant review to the rail timetable, a review of strategic, multi-modal, Cross Forth travel is required.

The appraisal work is to consider how to optimise passenger access to the rail network and to develop solutions that could benefit travel in the Forth Bridgehead area. The Newburgh campaign seeks to have a station in the town re-opened on the Ladybank-Perth line, as there was until 1955.

This part of North West Fife suffers from poor transport links, both within Fife and over to Perth. A railway station would alleviate this isolation.

Scotland

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### ■ ■ St Andrews success

The main news has been the announcement of the successful applicants to the Local Rail Development fund (details on page 2 and left) receiving a total of £681,000 out of a possible £2 million for appraisal work. Most of the funds were granted to corporate applicants, mainly councils or regional transport partnerships, though in some cases on behalf of community groups. Some community or action groups, for example StARLink, were successful on their own account. It was unfortunate that Railfuture could not pursue these funds to advance various highly desirable schemes, apparently on account of director liability and lack of project management expertise.

### ■ ■ Breich station

The Scottish Government has provided £2.4 million to completely rebuild Breich station on the Shotts line. The station has very low usage and was reduced to one train a day each way. Because of the expense of bringing it up to standard during electrification of the line, Network Rail applied for closure. There were many objections, though most from people who will never use the station and were objecting "on principle". The location, though, is most unsuitable, with no community within normal walking distance. Through mischief or malice, Scottish Government ministers simply told Network Rail to rebuild it, to the extent that even the platforms were demolished to ground level. There will be no footbridge access, with passengers having to use a ramp up to a nearby road overbridge. Responsible objectors to the closure proposal actually wanted the station rebuilt at the village of Breich, which would have resulted in a much safer and better used station.

### ■ ■ RAGES (Rail Action Group, East of Scotland)

RAGES met the then Transport Minister Humza Yousaf to present him with a petition, signed by over 3,400 people, calling for reopening of Reston and East Linton in the early part of Network Rail's control period 6 (April 2019 to March 2024). The

minister, while not committing himself to a specific date, instructed Transport Scotland that this should happen at the same time as the upgrade of Portobello Junction. It should be remembered that Reston and East Linton were supposed to be open by the end of 2016. The lack of services to Dunbar, which is planning to have 1,500 new homes, was also drawn to the minister's attention, as the current capacity will not be enough to accommodate all those wanting to commute to Edinburgh and elsewhere.

### ■ ■ LevenMouth Rail Campaign

The LevenMouth Rail Campaign continues to sign up supporters to its charter while the further STAG evaluation is carried out. That makes three STAGs for this campaign, almost a herd! STAG: Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide.

#### Contacts:

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES): [www.rages.org.uk/](http://www.rages.org.uk/)

Beattock Station Action Group: [www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/](http://www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/)

St Andrews Rail Link campaign (StARLink): [www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/](http://www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/) [facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign](https://facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign) [twitter@StARLinkRail](https://twitter.com/StARLinkRail)

LevenMouth Rail Campaign: [www.lmrc-action.org.uk/](http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/) [facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/](https://facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/)

Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG): [www.capitalrail.org.uk/](http://www.capitalrail.org.uk/)

Newburgh Train Station campaign: <http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/>

Forth Rail Link (Dunfermline-Kinross-Alloa): [www.forthraillink.com](http://www.forthraillink.com) [facebook.com/forthraillink/](https://facebook.com/forthraillink/) [twitter@forthraillink](https://twitter.com/forthraillink)

Thornhill Station Action Group: [chrisandmimi@supanet.com](https://chrisandmimi@supanet.com) [www.thornhillstation.co.uk/](http://www.thornhillstation.co.uk/)

Bonnybridge Railway Campaign: <http://bonnybridgerailway.scot> [www.facebook.com/bonnybridgerailway](https://facebook.com/bonnybridgerailway)

Campaign for Borders Rail: <http://www.campaignforbordersrail.org/>

## President's column: Root and branch crisis on the Lakes Line

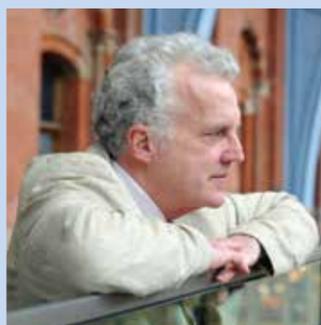
It seems like there is nothing but bad news on the railways.

The Thameslink and Northern timetable crises were quickly followed by announcements of fare rises and then the announcement that Crossrail will be nine months late and £600 million over budget.

There is no doubt that this has been a challenging year for the railway, especially as passenger numbers have started declining for the first time since privatisation, apart from that short blip following the 2008 financial meltdown.

Yet, begin to unpick all this and actually many of the problems arise from the fact that there is a massive investment programme taking place on the railway.

It can easily be forgotten that the timetable changes which caused the collapse in performance were the result of



Railfuture president Christian Wolmar

investment programmes such as Thameslink 2000 (only 18 years late!) and the reinstatement of the Ordsall Chord.

However, there are more fundamental problems which will not be easy to resolve. I spent a couple of days in the Lake District recently and met a couple of members of the Lakes Line Rail User Group who were

in no doubt about the root of their particular problems – train cancellations.

They can date the deterioration in service to the point two years ago when their service was transferred from TransPennine to Northern.

A reliable service run by staff who took great care in dealing with passengers turned quickly into one with large numbers of cancellations and an unresponsive management.

The last straw was a complete shutdown of the line in response to the timetable chaos in May, which was averted only because local protests led to a temporary heritage service being provided. While this attracted a lot of favourable publicity, sadly it is not a viable permanent solution. The user group members were clear that it was a decision made by the

all-too-remote Department for Transport that led to the decline in their local service. It is the fact that the railways are run by too many different people with no one in overall charge that is at the root of many of its problems. Having civil servants running the railway is never a good idea and oddly they have far more control today than they did in the days of British Rail.

There is, apparently, set to be another examination of the franchising system, a mere five years since the last one which resulted in very little change.

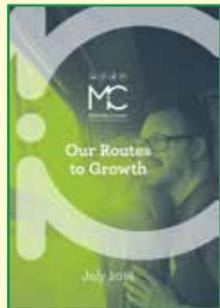
While that is to be welcomed, given the recent chaos over franchising, in the longer term disengaging the Department for Transport from the day to day decision making on the railway is probably the biggest change needed.

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North Staffs line campaign

Railfuture East Midlands is preparing for an event in Derby to launch the artwork we have commissioned from artist Laura Buckland. She will create an image of the class 153 rolling stock typically used on the Derby-Crewe line as the *Inter-City Kitty* with its strapline *Shouldn't it be a lion?* The event will be a twilight slot reception, with invitations going to representatives of a wide range of organisations with an interest in improving services on this line. It is hoped that a few stirring speeches will buttress everybody concerned's belief in the line's importance, following which the artwork will be made available to all who would like to use it for the purposes of the campaign.

Our Routes to Growth



Several Railfuture members were present at the launch of the latest Midlands Connect report, *Our Routes to Growth*, on 9 July. The items of most interest to us are the proposals to improve rail connections between the East and West Midlands. These

include reinstating direct services from Leicester to Coventry with a journey time of 35 minutes, reducing Birmingham-Leicester journey times to 40 minutes and Birmingham-Nottingham to 50 minutes, as well as the improvements needed for the Derby-Crewe line. The report also refers to the need for good connectivity to the HS2 station at Toton (if the HS2 station was at East Midlands Parkway, it would already have good connectivity), including connections to the classic network to enable fast journeys such as Leicester-Leeds.

Derwent Valley line



Ian Clark has taken over from Ariadne Tampion as Railfuture East Midlands' portfolio holder for the Derwent Valley Line, now that Ariadne is branch chair. His duties include attending the meetings of the Friends of the Derwent Valley Line in order to understand their particular concerns, representing these concerns both within Railfuture and in the wider rail forums available to Railfuture as a national organisation, and exploring the potential of this line in the context of the national rail network. One concern raised at the last meeting was that the new franchise may specify only a Matlock-Derby service, when it is important to retain through running to Nottingham.

Summer lunch

Following last year's successful event, Railfuture East Midlands has repeated its *Free-form railway conversation* summer lunch gathering

at the Canalhouse pub in Nottingham. Together with their traditional pre-Christmas gathering, this now gives Railfuture East Midlands members two opportunities a year to discuss local rail issues without the discipline of an agenda, and to get to know one another better.

Little on offer for station opening

Corby Railfuture campaigner David Fursdon protested to his MP Tom Pursglove about irregular closures of the station which prevented passengers reaching the ticket machines and toilet when the ticket office was closed. Rail Minister Jo Johnson responded with a letter of explanation that East Midlands Trains was required to keep the ticket office open only until 13.00 on weekdays! Mr Johnson said the ticket office hours could be reviewed when the new franchise starts after 2020. Mr Johnson added: "I wish to reassure you that the Department does not believe that there is a case for Corby station now or in the future to become unmanned."

Bimode train future

Derby-built 125mph trains capable of operating as diesels or electrics are likely to be offered to the new East Midlands franchise by Bombardier from 2023, according to a report in *Railway Magazine*. Bombardier is expected to face rival bids for bimode trains from Hitachi, Stadler, CAF and Talgo.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch)  
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Improvements in Norfolk

The Mid-Norfolk Railway has become an unexpected beneficiary of Greater Anglia's new train fleet. A £3 million deal will enable the train operator to store some of its new Stadler trains at the heritage line during the testing and commissioning phase before their launch into public service. The project will involve the provision of extra track capacity which will initially be used to store the new trains and also the old trains as they are taken out of service, but will then leave the railway with the benefit of the additional infrastructure once the new trains are launched into service.

Great Yarmouth bucks the trend

On the coast, improvements are planned at Great Yarmouth which has disappointingly seen a drop in passenger numbers over the past five years in contrast to the growth seen elsewhere, possible reasons being the lack of through trains beyond Norwich, infrequent services compared to the competing bus service, and the edge of town location of the station. The walking route from the town centre to the station is being radically improved and Railfuture is calling for a half-hourly service, some services extended beyond Norwich, better bus connections at Yarmouth, and a longer term aim of achieving a timing of Yarmouth in 120 minutes from London.

Engagement with decision makers

The East West Rail consortium of local authorities held its AGM in Bedford in June. A draft prospectus for the eastern section was discussed at length and it was agreed that a separate meeting of eastern section authority officers would undertake further work on this, before sharing with the rail industry and launching to MPs in the autumn. Proposals included doubling the line between Cambridge and Newmarket (including

reinstatement of the west curve), passing loops for freight at Bury St Edmunds, and platform capacity improvements at Cambridge, Newmarket, Norwich and Ipswich, as well as schemes already in the pipeline from Network Rail at Soham, Ely, Trowse and Haughley. These would see both Ipswich and Norwich enjoying two trains per hour to Cambridge, both fast and stopping, with the fast services extending towards Oxford.

Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership

Railfuture East Anglia submitted a four-page document in May, responding to the recently published New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership strategy for integrated transport in Norfolk and Suffolk. The submission was followed up by a meeting in July with Ellen Goodwin, infrastructure manager at NALEP, attended also by David Cummings of Norfolk County Council. We raised the case for improved train/bus integration in both Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth and improved accessibility at certain stations (such as Needham Market, Stowmarket, Diss and Wymondham) and for new stations in the Norwich area. We were informed that NALEP would contribute to work to improve the capacity of the Felixstowe branch and could potentially fund a feasibility study to improve line capacity to Stansted Airport jointly with neighbouring authorities.

East Midlands franchise

The East Midlands franchise is entering the bidding phase and Railfuture East Anglia has met with the lead members from the three preferred bidders to discuss with them our concerns for the service and how it might be developed. The talks must be regarded as confidential, but topics discussed were:

- ☐ Backing of the through Liverpool to Norwich service
  - ☐ The need for fast journey times from Norwich to Peterborough
  - ☐ Wymondham as a secondary access point for Norwich
  - ☐ An evenly spaced half-hourly service (with Greater Anglia) from Norwich to Ely
  - ☐ The need for a Sunday morning service
  - ☐ Extended services to Great Yarmouth
- [www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Rail+Network](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Rail+Network)

Action for freight

Works continue on the Felixstowe branch line to increase capacity for freight trains serving the port of Felixstowe. With the current infrastructure, careful timetabling has permitted the number of freight services to rise to 33 trains per day each way alongside the hourly passenger service, although this inevitably leads to delays. When the line was built in the 1870s sufficient land was acquired for the branch to be a double-track railway except for a single-track viaduct. The urgent priority is to raise capacity to 45 trains per day, and currently the double trackbed is being used to install a 1.6km loop at Trimley.

East Coast dive-under

Further west, the grade separation at Werrington Junction, 5 km north of Peterborough, has been granted its Transport and Works Act Order, which will allow freight services from Felixstowe heading for Yorkshire and the North East to dive under the East Coast Mainline north of Peterborough then travel via the upgraded line through Spalding and Lincoln to Doncaster.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia)  
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# Bright future spelt out for high speed rail

By Graham Nalty  
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A remarkably positive endorsement of future railway development to warm the hearts of all rail campaigners was published this year by Greengauge 21.

*Beyond HS2* is an extensive list of work parallel to HS2 and has been prepared to enable the Government to be better equipped to address questions from people who claim that HS2 does not benefit them.

At the same time *Beyond HS2* makes the case for a proper national strategy for rail. Greengauge 21 believes that the benefits of HS2 can be spread over a much wider segment of the population if certain sensible options are explored.

It points out that the regions with best rail connectivity to other regions are those with the highest earnings.

Inevitably, even with a project as far reaching as HS2, there is the potential danger that economies that are currently left behind because of poor transport links may be further left behind unless other action is taken.

Greengauge 21 is an ardent supporter of the HS2 project and has contributed a great deal to our knowledge of high speed rail by research reports, many of which have influenced HS2 and other rail developments. It understands high speed rail and all it does.

The measures suggested by Greengauge 21 have been very thoroughly researched for a year and deserve to be taken seriously. Some of the most noteworthy recommendations are:

Maximum train paths

Greengauge 21 argues that no railway has ever run 18 trains an hour on a high speed railway and that a lower number of 16 trains will be more reliable.

East Coast main line

Additionally Greengauge 21 notes that HS2 will offer very small journey time savings between London and Newcastle and that this market is better served by upgrades of the East Coast main line, enabling the number of train paths on the southern section to be reduced.

CrossCountry

The HS2 services between Birmingham and both Leeds and Newcastle duplicate the CrossCountry services which will still be needed to serve stations not on HS2. Those HS2 services would be better extended to Bristol or Cardiff via Birmingham New Street, with a connection from HS2 into New Street, and Greengauge 21 recommends

◆◆◆◆ Morocco is preparing to open its high speed Tangier-Casablanca line by the year end



Picture: GovHK

**POST-COLONIAL PROGRESS:** 21 years after Britain handed over sovereignty of Hong Kong to China, a new high speed train service has opened from the former colony to the mainland cities of Shenzhen and Guangzhou. A ceremony was held on 23 September to launch the line and celebrate the completion of the final 16-mile length of the 80-mile line. China's high speed network now amounts to an amazing 15,500 miles. "High speed rail will open a new page in rail travel in Hong Kong and will impact positively on the city's economic development," said Professor Frederick Ma, chairman of MTR Corporation which acted as project manager for construction of the 16-mile route and has been awarded a 10-year operating concession

that the route from Birmingham to the South West is upgraded, changing the HS2 network from a Y to an X.

Nottingham-Birmingham

Greengauge 21 notes the published aspirations of Midlands Connect for faster rail services between these cities. Greengauge 21 recommends making connections between the classic lines and HS2 south of Nottingham and east of Birmingham to meet Midlands Connect aspirations.

Old Oak Common

Greengauge 21 suggests that only one in every four HS2 trains stops at Old Oak Common.

Manchester Piccadilly

There will always be capacity limitations of East to West trains crossing the throat of Piccadilly station. Greengauge 21 recommends building a two mile tunnelled route from the West to the proposed Piccadilly HS2 platforms. Not only could this in future serve the proposed fast Liverpool-Leeds services, but also creates the opportunity for London-Manchester HS2 trains being extended to Glasgow.

Manchester Airport

By extending the line to the west to join the mid-Cheshire line, the rail catchment of the airport is increased to Chester and North Wales, but this offers an alternative route to Sheffield avoiding Piccadilly.

Stansted Airport

A new high speed line from London Stratford to Stansted airport

extending to Marks Tey in the east and Audley End in the west could form part of alternative routes from London to Norwich and Cambridge-Peterborough for an additional East Coast route to Doncaster and further north.

Glasgow

New high speed lines are recommended from Glasgow to both Carstairs and Shotts plus a new line from Edinburgh airport to Perth using the Forth Bridge.

The underlying message of *Beyond HS2* is that of extending the benefits of HS2 by applying carefully considered options. They are based on viewing the railway as it is now but with the full HS2 network added.

But what if we look beyond Greengauge 21 to consider what further improvements could be made once both HS2 and the *Beyond HS2* recommendations are in place?

If London to Newcastle services run via the East Coast main line, then the value (in terms of passenger minutes saved) of the Shimmer Estate route bypassing Sheffield is much reduced.

All London-Leeds HS2 services could more sensibly go via Sheffield, saving considerable track costs and achieving more efficient rolling stock utilisation. Extending these trains to Bradford would benefit a city very much left behind by present HS2 plans. A Nottingham HS2 South connection built for Nottingham to Birmingham services could

also be used for a direct Nottingham to London HS2 service, at least 15 minutes faster than either the Midland main line or via Toton.

It would have a much better business case than many of the currently proposed HS2 London services.

Nottingham is the largest city in the East Midlands and as the regional capital ought to have direct HS2 services to all the main HS2 destinations including London, Birmingham, Leeds, York and Newcastle.

The very high cost of building the proposed parkway station at Toton can then be avoided.

There are many more possibilities which I have not covered.

I hope Railfuture members in other areas will follow my example to see how much more their railway can be developed following *Beyond HS2*.

It offers rail campaigners a new framework with which to view their own rail expansion projects which I hope will be explored vigorously by all Railfuture branches.

Greengauge 21 is a not-for-profit registered company that aims to investigate and develop the concepts associated with a UK high-speed rail network

You can view *Beyond HS2* at:

[http://www.greengauge21.net/wp-content/uploads/Beyond\\_HS2WEB.pdf](http://www.greengauge21.net/wp-content/uploads/Beyond_HS2WEB.pdf)

# CrossCountry connections are a major asset

By Steve Wright

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Consultations with Railfuture branches are now over and a response has been submitted to the Department for Transport.

The consultation ran from June to August and the new franchise is expected to start in December next year.

The Railfuture submission ended up not being as radical as I suggested it might be in *Railwatch* 156.

I was enthusiastic about CrossCountry adding a set of inter-city services to something akin to the present network.

I even asked if we needed a franchise at all, instead allowing open access operations to provide long distance inter-city services, and regional train operators to provide the inter-regional services.

Only two people liked the idea of leaving it to the market. One other person thought the idea had some merit but doubted the open-access operators would be much interested. It was likely that they would want to serve only the cities of the present core, plus any significant towns en route.

It was the connectivity of the present network that was liked by almost everybody I consulted. In fact, what was wanted was more connectivity, with more destinations.

However, adding more long-distance trains to the present core has one major impediment and that is the lack of capacity at Birmingham New Street station.

I was advised by a Network Rail manager that the station was "full" (although West Midlands Trains has some plans to alleviate that).

Therefore, we have parked that idea until the new chords are built at Bordesley to allow some trains presently using New Street to be diverted into Moor Street – probably towards the end of the next XC franchise.

**So we are advocating a strengthening of the present core network:**

■ Two trains per hour (approximately every 30 minutes) between Birmingham and Bristol/Exeter, Reading (most to Southampton), Manchester, and Sheffield/Leeds

■ One per hour continuing beyond Exeter to Plymouth, with two or three per day to Penzance, but at more convenient times than now

■ Two or three of the Exeter trains per day continuing to Torquay and Paignton in the winter months, more in the summer,



Picture: RAILWATCH

**LONG SERVICE: A Cambridge to Birmingham New Street CrossCountry train passes through the Victorian station of Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, in July. The Derby-built three-coach class 170 diesel trains are now 20 years old and are often overcrowded for much of their journeys. Luggage space and bike space is so limited that there is likely to be significant potential demand that could be tapped if longer and better trains were provided**

again at times more convenient to typical optional travellers

■ One per hour continuing beyond Southampton to Bournemouth, one or two of the other Reading trains per day to Portsmouth (perhaps via Southampton) or Brighton. Again the times of these trains should be convenient to the typical leisure traveller

■ One train per hour to Edinburgh via Newcastle, two of these per day extended to Aberdeen and one to Perth and Inverness.

On one thing there was almost unanimity, namely transferring the Birmingham-Leicester and

fer Birmingham-Stansted Airport to the East Midlands franchise as it already operates the Nottingham-Norwich service, so managing both would enable better integration and should provide better connections between the Midlands and East Anglia.

Railfuture members will probably have noticed from the above scheme that there are four trains per hour into Birmingham from the south west or south east, but five to the north west and north east. Transferring the Cardiff/Birmingham/Nottingham semi-fast service to other train operators would give the opportunity to make Cardiff to and

population and business centres to the CrossCountry network and provide a direct connection to these areas from the Midlands and beyond that they have never had in the past.

It is probably unnecessary to say there is unanimity also about the inadequacy of the present rolling stock, both in terms of train lengths and on-board facilities. We think it impractical to try to reduce overcrowding by restricting short-distance commuting, omitting stops or making stops set down or pick up only, as this would generally restrict longer distance connections and give rise to a great deal of adverse press and no little ill-feeling from existing passengers.

Railfuture therefore sees the only practical solution to overcrowding to be substantially longer trains – say, seven or eight coaches – on all long distance services, possibly with some splitting or joining of train sets to reduce the number of empty seats over long distances.

Not just longer trains, but more comfortable trains with better seats, more leg room, seats aligned to windows as far as possible, more four-seat bays with tables, less smelly toilets and far better catering available throughout the operating day and to the extremities of the network.

It is also time to have trains that can make use of the overhead line electricity supply between Coventry and the North West and between Doncaster and Edinburgh/Glasgow.

So, not a radical package as we said at the outset, but we hope something useful for most parts of the country and distinct improvements on what we have at present.

[www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk)

# It may be a little late but it will be great

By Christian Wolmar

Railfuture President

It is a shame Crossrail did not make its deadline of 9 December, but frankly it was never going to.

I have spent the past nine months writing a book about the new Elizabeth Line, the rather misleading operational name, and I realised some time ago that the deadline was impossible. There was simply too much to do, too much complexity and too many unknown unknowns.

Nor was it a surprise that the budget limit of £14.8 billion was broken and the eventual cost will be £15.4 billion.

The announcement of the delay did take me aback in two respects. The opening day will be in Autumn 2019, not a specific date.

And it is set so far in the future. I had expected May, but I reckon Crossrail's managers want to make sure this is the last bit of bad news from them.

They may be able to squeeze in some kind of train service before then, perhaps not serving all the stations, which might give them a positive news story. But do not hold your breath.

The delay and cost will be forgotten however once the line opens. Crossrail will be recognised as London's most impressive piece of transport infrastructure. The money has been well spent.

Some may argue that the specification was too lavish but the important point is that there has been no skimping on the details. My grandchildren's grandchildren will be travelling on this line well into the 22nd century and that was always recognised by the scheme's managers, if not their paymasters.

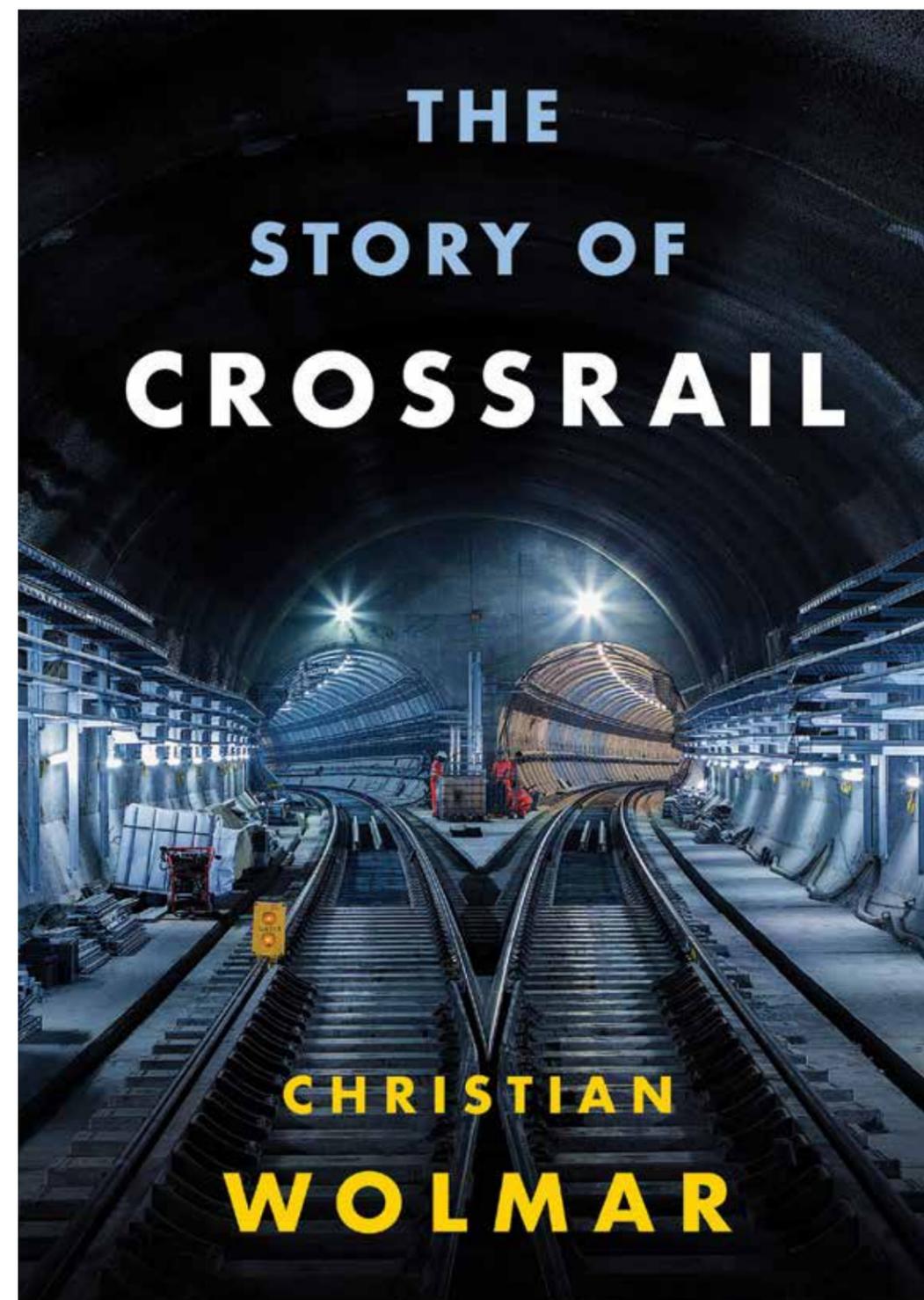
The stations are magnificent, on a scale far beyond anything London has seen underground before. But I think it was a bad idea to call it the Elizabeth Line.

Crossrail is not a new Tube line for London but a large main line railway which happens to go beneath the capital.

There are platform-edge doors at all the below-the-surface stations, and air conditioning. There is a relaxed feel to the architecture. Walk-through carriages will allow passengers to move to less crowded areas.

But above all, the sheer size of the stations will impress. They are bigger than any existing Underground stations, apart from those such as King's Cross St Pancras that have recently been expanded. Passengers will be amazed at the feeling of space compared with the Tube stations on adjoining lines. There

◆◆◆◆ You can join the Railfuture lottery at [www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery)



FRONT COVER: A Crossrail junction on the front cover of Christian Wolmar's new book

is, though, a major flaw in the scheme. Half the 20 trains per hour (which may later go up to 24) will turn around at Paddington because no useful destination could be found for them. In a decision that will be seen as shortsighted, Labour's Alistair Darling scrapped the idea of running services through to Richmond and Kingston without creating another route for trains arriving at Paddington from the east. Over time this will probably change and there are various

possibilities, such as running services up the West Coast main line or south west through Heathrow, but it will cost more money and many years to realise.

For now, though (or rather from next autumn) enjoy what is the most fantastic addition to the rail network in the capital – or indeed nationwide apart from the Channel Tunnel – since the early 20th century when three Tube lines were opened in 1906/7. Once it is open, there will be pressure

to build Crossrail 2 – though at twice the cost. There is a rather big financial hurdle to overcome which will need some innovative forms of funding. The opening of Crossrail will also increase pressure to get rail investment on a similar scale outside London.

■ My new book, *The Story of Crossrail*, is published by Head of Zeus on 15 November. To reserve a discounted signed copy at £16 inc post and packing, email [Christian.wolmar@gmail.com](mailto:Christian.wolmar@gmail.com)

*railwatch* October 2018 7

**‘If some CrossCountry services are transferred to East Midlands or West Midlands, there may be a tendency, to favour their own local travellers’**

Birmingham-Nottingham services away from CrossCountry to a local train operator.

But which one? If they are transferred to East Midlands or West Midlands there may well be a tendency to favour their own local travellers.

So we are proposing that Midlands Connect should become the key stakeholder for these and other West to East Midlands services, such as Derby to Crewe.

A chance meeting with Maria Machancoses, the director of Midlands Connect, yielded that that organisation is thinking along very similar lines. It would also make sense to trans-

fer from Birmingham into a proper express service and extend it to the north east, to at least Leeds or York, thus providing the extra train northwards and restoring a connection lost in 2007 or earlier.

At least Leeds/York? The DfT is intimating that with the new hourly Liverpool/Edinburgh TransPennine Express service there will be a path for only one CrossCountry train north of Northallerton.

Railfuture suggests that some of the trains to Leeds go forward to Teesside and to Newcastle via the Durham coast. Also that one or two trains per day go forward to Hull. This would add substantial

Twitter: @railwatch

## Inter-regional bus

Thank you for an interesting *Railwatch* 156, especially the news about possible rail reopenings in Wales where long-distance buses have replaced many train services.

In 2006, the Welsh Assembly introduced TrawsCymru buses for long-distance travel and in Llandrindod Wells we benefit from the T4 bus which runs from Cardiff rail station to Newtown. Some years ago the T4 used to serve Newtown rail station but it was cut back to the bus station, a great pity because it is a long walk from bus to rail station. I hope that Newtown rail station will again be served once the Newtown bypass is completed. The T4 bus is slow, taking four hours from Newtown to Cardiff, and it does not have toilets which means that many people are prevented from even considering travelling.

On the Aberystwyth-Carmarthen route, the T1 bus takes more than two hours. The loss of the Aberystwyth-Carmarthen rail route was fairly typical for the 1960s. The line near Tregaron was washed away so "they" decided it was a good excuse to scrap the whole line. It would have been much more sensible to provide a bus service from Aberystwyth to Aberaeron or Lampeter and then the journey could have continued by rail. Sadly public service and the wellbeing of local people was completely ignored.

Something similar happened when the Severn Railway Bridge near Lydney was damaged in 1960 and 1961. Instead of being repaired, it was demolished because it was £80,000 cheaper than repairing it.

Thank goodness that 50 years later, attitudes have changed slightly and when the line at Dawlish, Devon, was washed away in 2014, it was repaired and rail services from Exeter along the coast to Plymouth and Cornwall continue. Meanwhile in North Wales, I am not convinced that the narrow gauge railways can offer a practical public transport service. The Welsh Highland Railway takes 2.5 hours for the journey from Porthmadog to Caernarfon, compared to 20 minutes by bus. The lack of Carmarthen-Bangor rail services is highlighted by a visit to Dovey Junction, near Machynlleth, where many people used to change trains on their north-south journeys. Today Dovey Junction is windswept and has no vehicular access. I am also worried by



© Picture: SHROP-SHIRE STAR

## Money tree bears fruit for roads

This Shropshire Star picture shows construction of part of the Dolfar Bridge, on the bypass road for Newtown in mid Wales. Construction has involved extensive earthworks.

The £60 million road will be welcome to local people who have suffered the tyranny of road traffic for decades because it is one of the major north-south routes in Wales.

But it is a big contrast to the attitude shown to railways in Wales. The Severn Railway Bridge was closed 50 years ago because it was £80,000 cheaper to knock it down than to repair it. Result: More traffic on the roads.

Around the same time, the Carmarthen-Aberystwyth line was washed away near Tregaron. Rather than repair the line, it was closed. Result: More traffic on the roads.

This stupidly short-sighted policy continues in Wales and the rest of Britain today with money being found for new roads which merely attract more traffic and worsen the problems of pollution and danger everywhere.

the promises of a grandiose future under the new Transport for Wales franchise. Arriva Trains Wales and Network Rail had achieved an enormous amount with a consistent policy of improvement, with upgrades at many stations. Abergavenny and Llanelli stations however are badly in need of improvements, including lifts to improve accessibility and, at Ammanford, there are no car parking facilities and no taxi rank. What do the locals do? I wonder.

J Evered, Llandrindod Wells, Powys

## Reopenings priority

The "Lifeline for West Wales" article in *Railwatch* 156 highlights the urgent need to spend what money is available on reopening certain Beeching lines rather than continuing with High Speed Two.

If an additional route is needed between the two cities it has been estimated that reopening part of the former Great Central Railway to Rugby might be a cheaper option. Attempting to reopen closed lines exposes

enthusiasts to incredible difficulties and delays before any positive result is achieved.

The Waverley route to Tweedbank took long enough but how much more time will be spent before it reaches Carlisle?

Then there is the Okehampton to Bere Alston line (mentioned in the letters), Leicester to Burton, Oxford to Cambridge, Matlock to Buxton, Skipton to Colne and many, many others, not to mention the benefits of electrifying main lines and reopening closed stations on existing routes.

Another section of *Railwatch* 156 mentions the use of Heritage Railways for commuting.

It seems that many in central and local government pay lip service to the above, while often giving the road lobby priority. With so much additional housing in all parts of the country, the roads are barely able to cope with the burgeoning traffic, therefore additional rail services are needed to take what load they can off the highways.

Unfortunately, buses travel on

the same congested roads as cars and lorries.

It is salutary to be reminded that much of the country's rail network was laid down within about 10 to 20 years in the early to mid nineteenth century and now it can take much longer than that to get one route back, if at all. Where are the priorities?

Ted Bottle, Coalville, Leicestershire

bridgelif12@yahoo.co.uk

## Leicester-Coventry

The letter in *Railwatch* 156 from Tim Mickleburgh refers to a future planned direct rail service between Leicester and Coventry. Unfortunately trains can no longer travel in and out of Nuneaton Trent Valley station as the connections across the West Coast main line were removed about 10 years ago to make the high-frequency Virgin service possible. There is no way to cross the WCML at Nuneaton.

The solution being proposed is to remake the tunnel under the WCML south east of Nuneaton station and build a line from the Leicester-Nuneaton line under the WCML.

At that point there is a choice of turning right into Nuneaton station or left to join the Coventry line avoiding Nuneaton. It would make more sense to bring all trains into Nuneaton station for connections, but going left towards Coventry and avoiding Nuneaton will reduce the overall Leicester-Coventry time and also create a possible route for freight. It may be possible to build links in both directions.

Graham Nalty

naltyt@quikmail.co.uk

## XC to Lichfield?

Steve Wright's article in *Railwatch* 156 prompted me to suggest that CrossCountry trains should consider changing the route of its Birmingham to Newcastle upon Tyne service, to accommodate at least an extra 370,000 potential passengers, the combined population of the city of Lichfield and the

## Send your letters and emails to:

The Editor, 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. Postal and email addresses may be published unless writers specifically ask to exclude them

www.railfuture.org.uk



## Buses replace trains in Wales

So many rail lines were axed in Wales in the 1960s that enormous detours now have to be made to travel around the country by train. The Welsh Government has attempted to create an alternative with subsidised long-distance bus services, branded TrawsCymru. The buses are advertised as having free wifi and are completely free to travel on at weekends. Our lead letter shows that problems still remain.

town of Walsall. Currently CrossCountry's train comes into Birmingham New Street from the south and departs south, going through Water Orton and Tamworth. I think it would be better if it came in from the south but continued through Birmingham New Street via Walsall, Brownhills (Anglesea) and Lichfield. This new route

would miss Tamworth but only six of the 26 daily Birmingham-Newcastle CrossCountry trains stop there anyway. Tamworth has a population of 77,000 while Walsall has 269,000 and Lichfield 100,000.

The new route would also attract passengers from all over the Black Country by providing a rail route which did not require

## Accessible station? But mind the big gap

I am pleased to see accessibility problems at Lichfield Trent Valley being raised in *Railwatch* 156. Platform 1 may be technically "accessible" but getting on or off a train is a huge problem for anyone with reduced mobility. The gap is both high and wide. Sad to say, booked assistance is not always forthcoming.

R G Burns, Stroud Green, London N4 3QD

people to travel into New Street. An 8km length of track would have to be reinstated north of Walsall on the former South Staffordshire line which happily remains unobstructed. At Brownhills a modern rail overbridge takes the line over the M6 motorway.

I am realistic enough to know that not only CrossCountry would have to be involved, but countless other authorities.

As well as providing a better route and bringing CrossCountry more revenue, it would solve one of my problems, how to book a forward-looking seat in a train that currently reverses at New Street. Few booking clerks are aware of how to do so.

I travel with my wife from Bridgnorth to Newcastle regularly to visit relatives, and we go by road to Wolverhampton, and then by train to New Street to catch our CrossCountry train.

Of course, CrossCountry could also improve its service by not cramming us into its trains like sardines.

Michael H Peard, Bridgnorth

Editor's note: The *Connecting Communities: Expanding Access to the Rail Network*, published in 2009 by the Association of Train Operating Companies, identified Walsall-Lichfield as a viable reopening with new stations at Pelsall and Brownhills. The estimated cost was £122 million.

## CrossCountry query

While reading the article on CrossCountry Trains in *Railwatch* 156, it begged the following question in my mind: Has anyone carried out a study to understand what proportion of current, proposed new rail connections were originally part of the system prior to the 1960s cuts? At Rail Haverhill we are currently endeavouring to get the line from Haverhill to Cambridge reinstated as you probably know.

Marcus Field-Rayner, Chartered Engineer, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk  
marcus011@btinternet.com

## Through service

I was pleased to see in *Railwatch* 156 that Kenilworth station has at last reopened. The new service, operated by a class 153, seems to hang around between duties at the south end of Coventry station. The station has no bay platforms (I understand remodelling is planned) so the lines to Leamington and Nuneaton must

be a nuisance from the operating viewpoint. Why not, therefore, have a through service from Leamington to Nuneaton? The service would be more useful and the main line platforms at Coventry would not be occupied for long periods by the local trains. The distance to both Leamington and to Nuneaton is only 10 miles. I am sure that a decent through service is better than a fragmented one requiring unnecessary changes.

In the 1960s timetable, before closure, virtually all the services were through trains from Leamington to Nuneaton.

Peter Fleming, Dunstable  
peterff100@gmail.com

## Plastic pollution

I am concerned at the over-use of plastic which is having serious implications for the environment, in particular the marine ecosystems. Plastic pollution is widespread in the oceans and marine life is being killed on a large scale as a result.

It is important we reduce our dependency on plastic, particularly that of single use. Under the circumstances, please would you discontinue mailing *Railwatch* magazine with plastic packaging and use paper instead.

David Bailey  
davidpbailey77@hotmail.com

Ben Simmons of Intercity Communications which dispatches *Railwatch* said: "Our wrapper is 100% biodegradable. We switched to this at the start of this year as many clients are now looking into helping the environment and this was a way we could do our part as well."

## Pass it on

The best way to recycle *Railwatch* is to pass it on to a friend who may be interested in railways and tempted to join Railfuture.

Recycling plastic is a very complicated issue. Readers may need to check what their local council recommends.



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nigel.bray2@railfuture.org.uk

**Advice on boosting commuter profile**  
At the Railfuture Severnside meeting in Trowbridge in June, Peter Travis explained his role as Railfuture business transformation director and suggested ways in which the Railfuture branch could increase its membership and profile. He said Railfuture needed to become more representative of people commuting by train. The meeting approved grants to three local campaigns, including Melksham Rail Users Group, which used the money to produce a leaflet promoting the enhanced TransWilts services which they distributed at the town's carnival.

**Rail's key role in transport strategy**  
The draft Taunton Transport Strategy, produced jointly by Taunton Deane Borough and Somerset County Councils, contains some sensible proposals for rail. Those described as shorter term commitments include upgrading Taunton station, developing a case for a station at Wellington, and encouraging the rail industry to trial connecting services from the national network to the West Somerset Railway at Bishops Lydeard. Longer term aspirations include working with the Peninsula Rail Task Force to secure electrification of the main lines through Taunton and supporting the industry in formulating a plan for regular services between Taunton and Minehead. Our response to the strategy consultation welcomed the rail policies but expressed reservations about a proposed transport hub at Taunton station.

**Walkers and cyclists spend more**  
A perceptive comment in the draft strategy's section on active travel is that spending by walkers and cyclists is underestimated. We commented that tourists arriving by public transport spend more in eating places because they do not bring provisions on the scale which are carried in a car. While we would support extra car parking at stations, we recommended Somerset developed station travel plans, on the lines of those in Gloucestershire, to make rail more accessible by bus, bicycle or on foot. On 16 August, just before the consultation closed, the *Somerset County Gazette* included a very positive article on plans for a connecting rail service to link the national rail network with the West Somerset Railway at Bishops Lydeard in the summer of 2019. Our affiliated group Minehead Rail Link Group has sent a supportive letter to the *Gazette*, summarising the benefits in terms of journey opportunities and potential for reducing traffic on the A39.

**Links to hospitals**  
Railfuture campaigns to improve access to hospitals by train. Our campaign for direct access from Gloucester station to Gloucestershire Royal Hospital achieved success in September. We support a Taunton plan for a cross-town bus service linking the rail station with Musgrove Park Hospital. We would like to see the shuttle bus between Bristol Temple Meads and Bristol University Hospitals extend its service to weekends.

**Campaign for Pilning**  
The campaign continues for improvements to services, restoration of platform lighting, and ultimately reinstatement of the footbridge to enable westbound trains to call once again. Meanwhile usage continues to rise despite the station's limited service.  
[www.pilningstation.uk](http://www.pilningstation.uk)  
[www.railfuture.org.uk/SevernsideBranch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/SevernsideBranch)  
Twitter @RailfutureSSide



Picture: PAUL ABELL

### Tram-train test under way at last

Test running has at last started on the Rotherham tram-train pilot (picture above), though as car 399 202 left Rotherham Central heading for Sheffield on 15 August it was clear that there was work to complete on the new tram train platforms. The tram train service through Rotherham between Sheffield Cathedral and Parkgate will, we hope, be open by the end of the year.

### Tube trains to be built in Goole

The yet-to-be-built Siemens train factory in Goole has won a contract to build 94 trains for the London Underground Piccadilly line, at a likely cost of £1.5 billion. There could be a further £1 billion contract to build another 150 trains for the Central, Bakerloo and Waterloo & City lines.

### TransPennine disruption ahead

Network Rail has warned that engineering work on the TransPennine route between Manchester and Leeds will cause disruption for five years. Parts of the route will have to be closed for up to 39 weeks a year, after 2020. The work will involve Leeds-Huddersfield and Stalybridge-Manchester Victoria electrification. Four tracks will be reinstated between Huddersfield and Ravensthorpe near Dewsbury.

### Call for Calderdale stations

Network Rail held drop-in sessions in Brighouse in August to explain what plans it has for the station, which has seen a 48% growth in passenger numbers over seven years. There are now calls from the public for new stations not just at Elland, but also at Hipperholme.

### Backing for Bradford hub station

A new hub rail station in Bradford city centre as part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail plan could provide an economic boost of £1.5 billion a year to the local economy, according to a report by building company Mace for the Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals. However, it appears that these proposals disappointingly do not include the joining up of the two railway routes into central Bradford.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch)  
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### Outcry over strike-day provision

Industrial action on the South Western Railway network continues to inconvenience the travelling public, although the operator does manage to provide most stations with either a reduced rail service or a bus replacement on strike days. Salisbury-Exeter rail users were incensed to find that minor stations on their route were being offered no service at all. After lodging a complaint and conducting a media campaign, they managed to secure the promise of a replacement bus service for every station on the line on days when there are no trains due to strike action. On the subject of rail replacement buses, one of our members on the Isle of Wight questions why there appears to be no requirement for the vehicles to be accessible to persons with mobility difficulties, whereas buses used for local bus services now need to be fully accessible.

### Infrastructure matters

It is encouraging that Network Rail has begun work to extend freight sidings at Redbridge to accommodate the longer (775m) container trains from Southampton docks. Meanwhile, passengers along the South Western main line would like the infrastructure company to give some attention to eliminating temporary and emergency speed restrictions on the line, which are having an impact on punctuality.

### Progress along the Waterside

Our campaign for a restored passenger service on the Waterside Line took a major step forward in the summer. The developers of the redundant power station site at Fawley have revealed proposals for a "Hythe and Fawley Parkway" station at the southern extremity of the line where it enters Fawley oil refinery. They envisage a train every 30 minutes between the new station and Southampton, with a journey time of 20 minutes. Buses would connect the station to their main housing development south of the refinery, although we would prefer to see the new town served by a "tram-train" extension skirting the refinery perimeter. The northern part of the line continues to carry regular freight traffic for Marchwood Freightliner Terminal.

### Island Line hangs in the balance

A decision on the future of the Island Line is awaited from the Department for Transport after South Western Railway submitted its preferred "Priced Option". There is recognition of the need for infrastructure improvements to bring the line up to an acceptable ride quality, and it is certain that more modern rolling stock, refurbished to as-new condition, forms part of the plan. Isle of Wight MP Bob Seely has written to the Transport Secretary backing SWR's proposals and goes further, urging him to consider the possibilities of line extensions to both Newport and Ventnor. The Isle of Wight Council wants the Government to explore extending the island's rail network to serve Newport, the island's county town.

Council leader Dave Stewart made the request in a letter to the DfT supporting First/MTR's plan to modernise the Island line between Ryde and Shanklin.

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

# Engaging the next generation

A report on *Young People and Heritage Railways* was published in July by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Railways.

The findings followed an 18 month study of the subject with the committee taking evidence from heritage railways, the National Railway Museum and the STEAM museum at Swindon as well as Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate, insurers and experts from the Heritage Railway Association.

The evidence showed that volunteering on heritage railways is a great way for young people to learn life skills as well as the technical skills involved in running a railway.

Heritage railways have also proved to be an important recruiting ground for the national rail network.

"Members of our group found some of the evidence from young people involved to be inspirational and the work being done by the railways to be a powerful force supporting social cohesion and a great example of vocational development and training," said MP Nicky Morgan who is the group chairman.

However, the evidence also showed that the number of young people volunteering on heritage railways was only a small proportion of the total volunteer workforce – around 3.5% which, the committee concluded, was not enough to continue the present level of heritage rail activity in the long term.

The number of young women volunteers is very small indeed, even though the opportunities offered in terms of encouraging young women engineers are entirely in line with Government policy.

It is 50 years now since the end of main line steam on BR, so the appeal to youngsters today is not nostalgia but the engineering challenge and the stark contrast between the physical reality of a railway and the virtual world of social media and gaming, and this appeals to young people of a practical disposition.

A major stumbling block to progress is an outdated piece of legislation passed in 1920 which has inadvertently been extended by subsequent interpretation to prevent children under 16 working on heritage railways, even as volunteers with their parents.

This was not the intention of Parliament back in 1920 (no heritage railways existed then) but since its provisions were highlighted in 2016, the Employment of Women, Young Persons and

◆◆◆◆ Sweden has started building the 170-mile long North Bothnia line



NOT A SMART PHONE IN SIGHT! Young volunteers totally focused on the controls of a West Country class locomotive on the Swanage Railway



Children Act of 1920 has inhibited the engagement of youngsters in railway work.

This is a real problem as it is during this period between 14 and 16 years of age when many children become fully engaged, and if they can't go to the local heritage line they are likely to go somewhere else and will be lost to the railway.

So far, the Government has shown no inclination to correct this divisive piece of legislation, which is excluding children from the fun and excitement of working on a steam railway that we all enjoyed at that age, and of

## Stay Grounded teams up with Back on Track for Vienna rendezvous

Stay Grounded is an informal alliance pressing for alternatives to airport expansion, writes **Trevor Garrod**. It is non-party and includes academics, trade unionists and transport professionals as well as environmental and passenger bodies from around the world.

Members of Railfuture and other EPF-affiliated organisations took part in its recent conference in London and a follow-up weekend event takes place in Vienna on 12-14 October. Stay Grounded issued a six-page position paper which includes a call for modal shift. It stated: "Short-haul and

course it is denying them the benefits of the skills they could have acquired and friendships they might have made during the process.

The All-Party Group will be following this up with meetings with ministers involved during the autumn.

The group is open to all Parliamentarians from any party, but the work of the group in producing this report was largely undertaken by the chairman, Nicky Morgan (Great Central), Liz Saville-Roberts, whose constituency in North Wales includes no fewer than six heritage railways, Martin

Vickers (Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway), Lord Faulkner (Heritage Railway Association president), Lord Grocott (Telford Steam Railway), Lord Berkeley, Lord Snape and Lord Shutt.

The report follows the first produced by the group in 2013 on *The Value of Heritage Railways*, which highlighted their value to the local economy in terms of employment, skills training and tourism.

Together, the two reports demonstrate a balanced picture of the key social role played by heritage railways, a far cry from the public perception of them a few years ago as little more than a theme-park ride.

The full report is available on line on the HRA website:

<https://www.hra.uk.com/all-party-parliamentary-group-on-heritage-rail>

some medium-distance flights can be shifted to trains in regions where relevant railway infrastructure exists. Trains do not necessarily need to be high-speed, but daytime and night services should be attractive, affordable and powered by renewable energy."

The Back on Track alliance, which promotes night trains as part of the international European Network, will also meet in Vienna that weekend and plans joint sessions with Stay Grounded.

[www.stay-grounded.org](http://www.stay-grounded.org)

Picture: ANDREW P M WRICHT Swanage Railway

# Rail industry must get a grip and recognise that passengers come first

The press, politicians and even rail supporters have revelled in the current rail industry problems culminating in the Thameslink and Northern timetable fiascos.

Each player blames another of course and many observers have used the situation to advocate their own, often political, solution, including a chorus of Bring Back British Rail.

We have seen the East Coast franchise handback, followed by operational performance under its national operator LNER being the worst for six years.

Nothing has really changed and the performance dip is directly related to the weather.

So, where does Railfuture stand in all this? Can we afford simply to ignore it and carry on campaigning for re-openings and service improvements?

The danger is that railways are becoming toxic in the minds of many stakeholders, politicians and the general public.

The level of toxicity increases when fare rises are announced. We need to have the confidence of stakeholders that Railfuture understands how the rail industry works and that what we campaign for is sustainable in transport and economic terms. We need to engage with both passengers and industry insiders because talking among ourselves is pointless.

## Railfuture's view

We have published our own diagnosis of the current time-table problems entitled *Murder on the Thameslink Northern Express*.

The House of Commons transport select committee has a copy of it, and so too do many industry players. I will not repeat the detail here but you can find it on the Railfuture website. <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1797-Murder-on-the-Thameslink-Northern-Express>

We can draw several principal issues from this, all in the area of governance. Just a couple of these issues, timetabling and resilience, are discussed below.

There is a lot of talk about how the rail industry goes about creating its timetables. Putting train paths on a timetable graph is only the start of the process.

Issuing this a couple of weeks before the service is expected to start clearly does not work.

The timetable has to be distributed and the people expected to operate it have to be able to make their own plans for which trains, staff and routes will be used. The key role belongs to the systems aggregator. Crew diagrams have



Picture: IAN BROWN

**QUALITY TRAVEL: View from the 14.05 Carlisle via Dumfries to Kilmarnock and Glasgow. A refurbished, comfortable train with tables and great views. Helpful, friendly staff, lovely stations en route, new disabled toilet available, licensed at-seat trolley service and working no-fuss free wi-fi. It can be done, even with a two-car ex-BR diesel train, which ran on time throughout**



IAN BROWN

to be produced, maintenance schedules agreed, rolling stock has to be matched to expected demand.

In fact a complete operational plan has to be compiled, based on what the timetable requirements actually are.

Some people are advocating a separate independent organisation to do this. Railfuture is not.

A disciplined systems aggregation role, with timely sign-off points, is clearly necessary, and this should be done by Network Rail. The industry is too fragmented as it is – and that is part of the problem. Network Rail has a recognised process for this. But in the case of Northern, for example, Network Rail did not adhere to its own processes because it was part of the problem. It was responsible for late delivery of enhancement projects.

## Resilience

It is clear that the rail industry is not as agile as it needs to be in delivering change. We have seen the RMT union involved in a series of disputes throughout the country over the future role of the guard.

We have seen that travel on Sundays is increasing to weekday levels. Even with seven-year franchises, train operating companies have not been able to integrate Sunday working into four-day working patterns. We have seen gullible government

officials allocating franchises mid-way through projects such as the Waterloo rebuilding or immediately before major service changes as in North West England.

We have seen the inflexibility of rolling stock contracts frustrating the effective “cascade” of rolling stock when electrification schemes have been delayed as in Scotland and the North West.

This is not a happy story, strongly indicating that the rail industry is not fit for purpose. It needs to be if we are to continue to see a growing railway.

The industry reaction is to go into its shell and become risk averse.

There are signs of this already, with timetable enhancements due in December put back until May 2019. All very pragmatic in the circumstances, but who is going to invest in an industry that does not deliver the promised benefits from investment schemes?

Things will go wrong if the industry takes no risk at all and becomes stagnant.

The key is to ensure the industry is resilient enough to cope with specific problems without falling apart. All parties must pull together to do this – the unions, the leasing companies, the train operators and Network Rail, instead of ducking and diving to protect their own positions at the expense of the industry and its

customers. Customers, both passengers and freight hauliers, are the last people to be considered. They should be the first.

If we step back from the firmament of all this for a moment it is probably worth reflecting on some of the positives which are currently being eclipsed by the negatives. Probably the key point is that most of the myriad problems besetting the rail industry result from worthy attempts to provide more rail services.

The aim was to achieve this by a combination of including extra services in franchise contracts and by embarking on big infrastructure projects to enable more trains to run.

The problem with the privatised model in Britain is probably not ownership in itself, but more the fact that the structure, as adopted in the 1990s by John Major's Government, was based on the notion that demand was steady. The mistaken assumption was no growth. In fact, the opposite has happened as road conditions have worsened and people have become more aware of the resulting pollution problems.

At that time, our political leaders saw no real need for a guiding hand. The idea was to leave all parties simply to carry on as normal, taking a modest margin for a small amount of risk.

In a stable environment this might have worked well, even if it was likely to increase the overall cost of running the railway.

At least we can content ourselves with the knowledge that we have the safest railway in Europe.

## The reality

In fact, passenger journeys have doubled since privatisation as

## HIGH FARES POLICY DOES NOT RECOGNISE RAIL'S SOCIAL BENEFITS

By Ian Brown

Railfuture has been a strong campaigner on fares. The Railfuture website has a chart showing how they have risen in real terms every year over the 14 years since 2005.

Successive governments have adopted a policy of attempting to remove or reduce taxpayers' subsidy of rail transport. But such a policy ignores the social, economic and environmental value of rail travel.

The aim was to increase rail fares to match the annual rise in the retail price index, but also to add a further 1% per annum on regulated fares. Railfuture has argued consistently and successfully

over the years that the RPI +1% price increase each year should be abandoned. We have also called for the consumer price index to be used instead. CPI reflects what families spend including travel and is lower than RPI. It is a better measure of the real price rises which people have to cope with. The Government has, at last, recognised the need to switch to CPI but says the switch will be “in the future”.

Railfuture believes the switch from RPI to CPI should be applied immediately. The argument has been won but passengers will lose out again in January 2019 when fares go up. Train operators argue that franchise bids were made on the basis of RPI. They will almost certainly seek compensation from the Government when the switch is made.

The fares issue must be addressed because passenger numbers are going down after years of big increases.

I believe the reason for this dip is a decline in the quality of service, particularly reliability, cancellations, incidents, strikes, poor performance, poor punctuality, weekend and even weekday diversions, and substitute buses because of engineering works, sometimes hopelessly organised.

Without this string of calamities the trend would have continued upward, particularly for longer distance travel. There is one

important area where demand is structurally weakening – season tickets. Further increases in season ticket prices, especially if they are above CPI, cannot be good business when there is a decline in demand. Imagine a retailer on the High Street advertising a sale where prices are increased owing to a reduction in sales!

A more radical solution is needed for irregular work-related travel. Far fewer people work a standard five-day 9am to 5pm week. Many people vary their hours of working, for example, work four or even three days a week at their base, working from home at other times or travelling to other locations.

Many stay late at work in the evenings. A morning doctor's appointment makes it sensible to buy an off-peak day ticket.

There is evidence that many people are trading down – using full or off-peak day tickets for the days they travel.

A new product, using smart technology, is urgently needed which will provide value for money and flexibility on a daily basis for the passenger. The benefit to the train operator would be an increased number of passengers using off-peak services.

## 'Simplification'

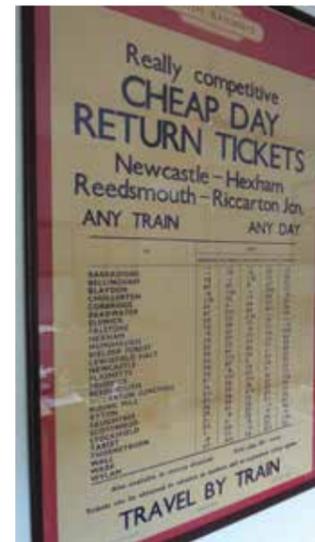
Railfuture is part of the ongoing dialogue about rail fares in general. The formal consultation exercise is being

led by the Rail Delivery Group (formerly the Association of Train Operators), an industry trade body, hardly likely to champion the interests of passengers unless it means more income for the train operating companies.

The RDG proudly announces an intention to simplify rail fares. You know it makes sense – or do you? Railfuture takes the view that this can quickly lead to a reduction of flexibility and choice for passengers. What is needed are clearly explained fares which offer choice, not simplistic ticketing which removes flexibility.



Picture: ELLIE KING  
**NOW: The tickets for two people and two bikes from London to Strathcarron**



**THEN: BR advert for cheap fares at Saughtree station**

we know. Instead of addressing increased demand structurally, the Government has attempted to use the existing franchise structure to implement massive change through the franchise bidding programme in the form of huge investment programmes.

In parallel, Network Rail has attempted to implement massive project programmes, including an ambitious electrification programme.

The Government is at last beginning to realise that structural reform is required to achieve better results from franchises.

The most problematical aspect of letting franchises has proved to be the difficulty of assessing likely revenue at a time of economic uncertainty.

There has also been increasing demand for devolution. It seems clear that franchising will

have to move towards the concession model where the client stipulates what is required and probably procures the kit to run it. This seems to work very well for the London Overground, for instance.

We are conditioned to think that railways have low market shares. This does not have to be so if the conditions and the product offered are right.

Network Rail took on too much, and just at the point when Network Rail was starting to gear itself up to a massive project programme, including electrification, the Government threw a spanner in the works by ordering cutbacks.

Network Rail is delivering many projects such as London Bridge and Derby very well. We need these capacity enhancement projects as growth will resume and

the industry needs to facilitate it. We also need electrification as part of a policy for growth in the use of railways. Railfuture will continue to campaign for a consistent policy of incremental electrification.

Education is expensive and Network Rail has by now learned many expensive lessons on how to carry out electrification projects.

Now is the time for a strategic approach to a rolling programme of incremental electrification. Scotland is on the case already, but elsewhere we still seem to view these as individual schemes.

## Who cares anyway?

We do. Many of us recall the days when transport, particularly railways, was seen as a marginal activity when compared to the

big three political imperatives of health, education and the economy.

Cost minimisation and transfer of costs to the user through fares were the name of the game.

But good, integrated transport is actually an enabler in addressing many issues, not simply a secondary activity competing for resources. Transport actually matters to people, hence the outcry about service failures and relentless fare increases demanded by the Government.

We need to continue to campaign for capacity and service enhancements to the network and an improved, more consistent offer to passengers, including those with mobility impairments. Dare I say we need an integrated transport system for Britain?

■ Ian Brown CBE FCILT is Railfuture's policy director

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### ■ ■ Bridges cause a spot of bother

Railfuture is dismayed that the Vale of White Horse District Council has rejected Network Rail's application for planning permission to rebuild Steventon bridge, to provide greater clearance for the overhead line electrification. Objectors said the bridge work would cause inconvenience by cutting off direct road access to the village from the south. They also said the bridge is a listed historic structure which must be protected. Network Rail will appeal against this decision, and in the meantime bimode trains are running through the bridge under diesel power with a 60mph speed restriction. A similar problem could arise with the bridges at Appleford and Culham when electrification is extended to Oxford. Steventon and Culham bridges will actually be preserved – as models



Picture: Oxfordshire Guardian

### Protestors at Steventon bridge

in Pendon Museum, Long Wittenham. On the Oxford line, the footbridge across Hinksey yard was closed in August following a bridge strike by a lorry. Local people have demanded that when it is rebuilt for overhead line electrification it should be provided with access ramps which would cost millions of pounds. This might give Network Rail an excuse to remove the bridge, even though the right of way existed before the railway was built, even being shown on an 1830 Ordnance Survey map. At Osney Lane footbridge, just south of Oxford station, Network Rail put up notices declaring it is not a dedicated right of way. In fact, the lane was there well before the railway.

### ■ ■ Positive encounters with MPs

Railfuture Thames Valley committee members met Layla Moran, Liberal Democrat MP for Oxford West and Abingdon, who is keen to promote public transport. She opposes the proposed Oxford-Cambridge expressway. She is also concerned about delays in rebuilding Oxford station and extending electrification to Oxford. So far, only artist's impressions of the new station have been shown to the public. Layla agreed to put an oral parliamentary question to ask what progress has been made in planning the new station. Written questions get only a written answer, but the minister has to reply in person to an oral question, which opens the subject to debate. We have also had a meeting with Robert Courts, Conservative MP for Witney. He admitted he does not know much about railways, but he would be glad to receive any information that we could feed to him. We are hoping he can persuade West Oxfordshire district council to take an interest in rail matters, and in particular the role for Hanborough station as the railhead for Eynsham, where 2,750 new homes are proposed in the local plan.

### ■ ■ County transport chief backs rail

Railfuture Thames Valley members had another meeting with County Councillor Yvonne Constance, the cabinet member for transport and the environment. She is enthusiastic about proposals for a new station at Grove/Wantage. The existing road network could not cope with extra traffic generated by planned new housing, and the new station would serve as the railhead for the whole Vale of White Horse. We think it could be as successful as Oxford Parkway. Councillor Constance also supports the development of Hanborough station. Good news is the Government's grant of £300,000 for studies on reopening the Cowley branch for passengers. Discussions on rebuilding Oxford station envisage not only widening Botley Road bridge with extra tracks, but widening the road beneath. Councillor Constance doubts whether road widening is necessary, and hopes the volume of road traffic could be controlled by traffic management measures.

### ■ ■ Community Rail for North Downs line

Railfuture Thames Valley heard a presentation in June from the Sussex Community Rail Partnership which has extended its reach into Surrey and Berkshire, along the North Downs line from Guildford to Reading. David Daniels, North Downs community rail development officer, talked about work being done between Reigate and Guildford to involve local communities in promoting rail travel and improving stations. Information boards about the easily accessible Surrey Hills are being installed, along with signs from each station to the North Downs Way. Pupils from local schools are providing art work for the stations. Tim Sparrow, a "founding father" of the Sussex CRP, talked about the general framework of partnerships which are supported by rail and bus companies, transport authorities, tourist bodies and local government. Schools are involved with courses to encourage safe travel by children. The Department for Transport now includes partnerships in rail franchises. [www.railfuture.org.uk/ThamesValleyBranch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/ThamesValleyBranch) [Twitter @RailfutureTV](https://twitter.com/RailfutureTV)

## North East

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### ■ ■ Tees and Durham bid for CrossCountry

The Department for Transport's consultation on the new CrossCountry franchise gave rail campaigners the opportunity to put the case for running trains directly to Teesside and the Durham coast towns. With half a million people living along the coast alone, Saltburn Line User Group and Coastliners believe their rail route deserves more inter-city-style trains, to complement those which Grand Central already operates to York and London. We have known for some time that Sunderland city council shares this view and it was heartening to find, at a DfT stakeholder meeting in York in June, that a spokesman for Tees Valley Combined Authority put the case for adding the coast route to the CrossCountry network. The new franchise will begin at the end of 2019 and is the first franchise renewal since Transport for the North was set up. Railfuture North East wants to see TfN closing the large gap in transport spending per head between the London area and the North of England.

### ■ ■ CrossCountry 2

Fears of a reduction in the number of CrossCountry trains serving Morpeth prompted a strong response to the Department for Transport by South East Northumberland Rail

User Group. SENRUG warned that even the local service between Newcastle and points north is chronically inadequate. The DfT approach conflicts with Network Rail's *East Coast Main Line Route Study*, which states that there is insufficient capacity for additional local services and that the answer is for more long-distance trains, not fewer, to call at Morpeth. Main line expresses must continue to call at smaller stations, just to cope with present traffic levels. Cramlington – with 40,000 inhabitants – should be added as a calling point.

### ■ ■ Hornden hopes rising

Durham County Council's detailed design for Hornden station and its the car park is in its final stages. A planning application for the new station from Network Rail is imminent.

### ■ ■ Tyne Valley collaboration

The new entrance at Blaydon station (*Railwatch* 156), was influential in getting Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership's Blaydon project shortlisted for an *Influencing Change* award from the Association of Rail Partnerships. From September, the partnership has tourism intern Matthew Barrett working with partnership officer Fiona Forsythe for a year to research new opportunities to link in with rail services. This post is funded through a collaboration with CrossCountry and Northern, supported by Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site and Northumbria University. The partnership participated in heritage open days in early September, showcasing the Old Booking Hall and signal box at Haltwhistle station.

### ■ ■ Last of Teesside semaphore signals

A tentative long-term plan to transfer signalling control to York, away from Teesside itself, and to close signal boxes around Stockton, Norton and Billingham, suggests that Network Rail is radically revising operating possibilities. Railfuture North East hopes this will allow higher speeds, especially from Northallerton to Eaglescliffe, which would benefit virtually every passenger train journey to or from Teesside.

### ■ ■ Apology and correction

Apologies for mis-naming the shadow transport spokesman in *Railwatch* 156. He is not Andy Taylor, but Andy McDonald, and he is the MP for Middlesbrough.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthEastBranch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthEastBranch)  
[Twitter @RailfutureNEast](https://twitter.com/RailfutureNEast)

## European Passengers Federation

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The European Passengers Federation, of which Railfuture is a founder member, has started an investigation of customer experiences with rail passes, ranging from international Interrail to national and regional passes, in the UK and in the rest of Europe.

The best of such passes give flexible travel by train, bus and urban transport and we campaigners need to spread good practice. Some passes also give easy travel across national borders.

Trevor Garrod has already received customer experiences of some passes, including in Berlin-Brandenburg, the Czech Republic, the Loire region of western France, Switzerland and Wales.

If you have used one or been deterred from buying one because of negative experiences, please contact Trevor at 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ or by email.

## THE CAMPAIGN FOR RAIL FREIGHT

# Rail battles against 25% drop in tonnage

By Lee Davies

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ASLEF leader Mick Whelan warned the Government in September that rail freight has declined by 25% in five years.

The general secretary of the train drivers' union called for higher levels of investment to offset the drop.

He said the collapse from 22.7 billion net tonne kilometres to 17 billion was largely due to the problems of the steel industry and the Government's decision to tax coal traffic.

In the past year, coal transported has fallen by 12.7% along with a 5.4% drop in metals.

Mr Whelan told the Trades Union Congress in Manchester: "Areas of growth for rail freight such as intermodal consumer goods and construction, have not been able to compensate for this rapid decline. Unfortunately, while decline in capacity can happen very quickly, growing capacity and recruiting drivers takes far longer."

### ■ ■ Be fair to rail freight

Rail freight is unfairly treated by the Government, according to Philippa Edmunds of Freight on Rail. Lorries pay only a third of the cost they impose on the economy yet diesel duty for lorries has been frozen since 2011, while rail freight charges have increased by 22%. Another rise is threatened to 29%.

Lorries are also excluded from the Department for Transport's ban on selling diesel road vehicles.

Yet 79% of car drivers want to see fewer lorries on the road and want to see necessary rail upgrades to transfer freight to rail. Ms Edmunds called for Government investment to unblock rail pinch points.

Enhancements to rail freight infrastructure often have strong benefit-cost ratios – typically varying from 4:1 to 8:1.

"Lorries receive a large subsidy from the Government which adds another barrier to enabling rail freight to compete on a level playing field," she said.

Maggie Simpson, executive director at the Rail Freight Group, said: "Moving freight by rail is good for the environment, reduces road congestion and is safer than by road."

### ■ ■ Post-Brexit plans

The creation of new railway customs areas at freight terminals throughout the country is being



**DRIVER'S VIEW: Retired Bedford train driver Bill Davies had a chance encounter with a colleague who was driving this class 60 train of empty tankers from Knuckle Yard. Looking into the cab, Bill said: "I see they have fitted a cab fan since I last drove one of these." The jovial driver from Margam replied: "Yes but they are pretty useless so open windows provide the air conditioning!"**

suggested by the Rail Delivery Group as a way to avoid the need for a single border checkpoint for imports through the Channel Tunnel by rail.

At present, rail freight inside the European Union operates without the need for customs declarations.

Over 2,000 trains transported 1.22 million tonnes of freight last year, excluding containers from ships. In the first three months of this year, international rail freight across the channel increased to 100 million tonne kilometres, up by nearly a quarter (23%) compared to the same period in 2017.

The report *Rail Freight – Working for Britain* sets out how rail freight secures over £1.7 billion of economic benefits for Britain.

### ■ ■ Shippers in rail deal

A group of shippers called Ocean Network Express (ONE) and train operator Freightliner have signed a deal to guarantee capacity on the main intermodal routes in the UK. According to ONE, the agreement will encourage modal shift, removing 118,320 miles of lorry use from UK roads per day and reducing greenhouse gases by 67 per cent.

Freightliner, a subsidiary of Genesee & Wyoming, already worked with shipping companies MOL, NYK and K-Line before they gathered to become ONE in 2017.

### ■ ■ Gypsum deal for Dawson

Middlesbrough freight logistics firm A V Dawson has signed a

multi-million pound deal, securing business and jobs in Teesside. British Gypsum imports materials through its site in Middlesbrough and will use A V Dawson's Teesside terminal at Riverside Park to deliver material to the East Midlands area.

A £2 million investment will allow the material to be loaded directly on to trains, under cover.

### ■ ■ Train name for Lord Tony

Leaders of the UK rail freight industry gathered at London

Victoria station in June to wish Tony Berkeley a happy retirement. Lord Berkeley was speechless for a short time as he unveiled his own train – a GBRf class 66. Guests were taken on the Pullman style coaches for an on-train lunch around the Kent countryside. Lord Berkeley praised his successor Maggie Simpson.

### ■ ■ Rail hub plan

Harworth Group has submitted an outline planning application to Selby District Council to transform its Gascoigne Wood site in Sherburn-in-Elmet, North Yorkshire, into a major rail-connected hub servicing the north of England.

The 276-acre site, formerly the Gascoigne Wood Colliery, includes the existing 124-acre Sherburn Rail Freight Terminal.

Selby District Council leader, Cllr Mark Crane, said: "Gascoigne has the potential to be a really significant new investment site."

### ■ ■ Rail freight in Spain

Spain is to have a new standard gauge rail freight line along the Catalan coast. The Spanish Transport Ministry has decided to develop the new line between Castellbisbal, in the south of Barcelona province, and Tarragona.

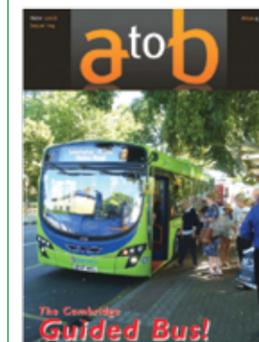
It will allow existing lines to be used exclusively by passenger services.

The line will also allow chemical products from Tarragona to be exported directly to France, without broad gauge wagons being needed.

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# www.atob.org.uk

rowland.pittard@railfuturewales.org.uk

### Public transport for the future

A new approach to transport is needed in Wales to replace the "road-based solution" that has been on the table for 30 years. That is the verdict of Sophie Howe, who was appointed by the Welsh Government three years ago as the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. The commissioner says the Welsh Government should not spend £1.4 billion building a new Black Route section of M4 motorway around Newport. Instead it should use the money to invest in public transport, active travel and delivery of all phases of the South Wales Metro.



COMMISSIONER: Sophie Howe

The commissioner's new report *Transport Fit for Future Generations* calls for far-reaching and ambitious solutions.

The report says: "Over three million people in Wales rely on its transport infrastructure on a daily basis and it is important to know that the Welsh Government and public bodies are investing in a transport infrastructure that is fit for current and future generations."

"With transport and technology developing rapidly, revolutionising not only how we travel but the ways in which we will live and work in the future, we want to help formulate policies and interventions which are in the interest of the future generations we champion."

"We want to help transport in Wales become truly sustainable, maximising its contribution to all seven well-being goals."

"We offer an alternative package of transport solutions to help solve congestion and make a better contribution to Wales' well-being goals. "We need one that better contributes to local well-being objectives and the aspirations of Cardiff Capital Region and one which helps the Welsh Government and local authorities meet their decarbonisation targets, reduce inequalities and transport poverty, improve physical and mental health and reduce noise and air pollution."

The report focuses on south-east Wales, but the findings and conclusions in the report are designed to apply to any area of Wales – or beyond.

### Wales and Borders franchise

Arriva Trains Wales arranged a number of farewell events after 15 years of operating the Wales and Borders franchise. KeolisAmey takes over the new franchise on 14 October. Most of the ATW vinyls had been removed from the exterior of the coaches by mid September.

### Transport strategy consultations

Railfuture has participated in three regional meetings organised by Welsh Government, which is the start of what will be a long term process developing its transport strategy.

### Transport innovation networks

The transport innovation networks were launched across Wales earlier this year, with Railfuture attending the South Wales event. The initiative is part of the *Connecting Communities in Wales* project being delivered by the Community Transport Association. This project is supported by the Welsh Government Rural Communities Development Fund – Rural Development Programme 2014-20, which is funded by the Welsh Government and European Union.

The feedback provided by people who attended the first round of transport innovation networks meetings is shaping transport solutions for the benefit of people living and working in rural Wales. There has been a further series of meetings to find out how ideas have been taken forward and what plans there are for the future for the community transport sector in Wales

[www.railfuturewales.org.uk](http://www.railfuturewales.org.uk)

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### North West

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### CrossCountry franchise renewal

In its submission to the CrossCountry franchise consultation, the North Cheshire Rail User Group calls for the completion of the Halton Curve to provide an opportunity to restore direct services previously lost from Liverpool, without adding to congestion on the West Coast main line south of Runcorn. Although these services could lead to capacity issues on the Rossett Junction to Wrexham North junction section, if Transport for Wales sticks to its words then this section will be re-doubled in the not too distant future. Previously, Liverpool had direct rail links to Scotland (soon to be reinstated by TransPennine Express), Bristol, Plymouth, Penzance, Southampton, Bournemouth, Weymouth, Brighton and Poole to name but a few, and NCRUG feels that new routes on CrossCountry could help to remedy the present sad state of affairs.

NCRUG accepts CrossCountry is currently a Birmingham-centred operation, and to have a route which does not take in New Street would be a departure from the norm, but hopes nevertheless that consideration will be given to linking Liverpool with the South West of England and possibly the Thames Valley, bypassing congested Birmingham New Street. As well as making this key point, NCRUG calls for longer trains, better seating and a complete re-think of the seat reservation system.

### FLAG raises service concerns

The Furness Line Action Group notes that during the summer timetable chaos when Northern was unable to run services on the Lakes line, service reliability on the Furness line improved to its best level since Northern took over the franchise, without the emergency reduced timetable imposed by Northern across much of the rest of their network.

However, all came crashing down again when Northern recommenced Lakes line services in early July. Cancellations on the Furness line swiftly returned to the grossly unacceptable levels before the timetable change. FLAG believes that the postponement of the original December 2018 timetable changes (which included the restoration of through services to Manchester) would enable Northern to resolve staffing issues and run a reliable timetable, but as a short-term expedient FLAG feels the Department for Transport could



Picture: ADRAIN NICHOLLS

**RESCUE: West Coast Railways came to the rescue of the Lakes line in June by providing a heritage diesel to run the regular service. It is seen here at Staveley level crossing on the line from Oxenholme to Windermere**

ask West Coast Railways to run the Lakes line service on a full-time basis, charging the costs to Northern, until Northern can prove it is capable of operating it alongside other services. This could then provide the necessary focus and incentive for the staffing issues to be resolved.

FLAG hopes that the timetable improvements can then be implemented as soon as possible, hopefully in May 2019, ready for the full introduction of the Northern Connect service, with new stock, from December 2019.

### Morecambe line suffers too

Railfuture member David Alexander who is station adopter at Bare Lane, points out that the focus of the timetable meltdown was on the Oxenholme-Windermere line during the summer. Yet the Furness line and the Morecambe branch (both of which also see summer holiday visitors) have also been significantly affected by the Northern timetable cuts. It will be a challenge to recover the passenger traffic lost as a result. The mix of buses and trains during the summer on the Morecambe branch has caused confusion among passengers, many of whom deserted the line. The RMT Saturday strikes during August and September, which halted the service completely, have added to the woes of passengers. The Furness line still has cancellations because of driver or conductor shortages or mechanical failure.

Now a proper rail service is finally restored on the Morecambe branch, it is going to take exceptional effort on the part of Northern to regain lost traffic.

### Southport-Piccadilly bonus

Campaigners are celebrating some good news on the long-running issue of the loss of through services to Manchester Piccadilly. The Ormskirk-Preston-Southport Travellers Association and Southport Rail Transport Forum, with Merseytravel support, had a meeting with Northern on 22 August when it was confirmed that two additional direct Piccadilly services will be added from December.

A Southport-Piccadilly service will leave at 0817, with a return at 1618, calling at Oxford Road. Northern also announced that from September it expected to return to running a full timetable of services between Southport and Manchester Victoria.

The groups, with Merseytravel support, are pressing for the full service to return in May next year, despite the "industry resistance" to change after this year's fiasco (which could delay any further improvements until at least December 2019). However the groups do not accept that, and will be pressing their MPs and Transport for the North, as well as Northern. They were pleased to hear Northern's commitment to restoration of a full service at the meeting.

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Twitter @RailfutureNWWest

# Prize challenge for engineers of the future

By Ariadne Tampion

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The future of the railways depends fundamentally on people.

Rolling stock and infrastructure do not magically appear when politicians release funding.

They have to be designed, constructed and commissioned by engineers. With this truth in mind, the Institution of Mechanical Engineers has set up Railway Challenge to find the next generation of Sir Nigel Gresleys.

The challenge for each team is to build a locomotive of the appropriate size to run on the Stapleford Miniature Railway near Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire, where the competition is held over a weekend every summer.

The requirements change from year to year, so there is always a fresh challenge. Some teams are made up of university students, others are young graduates and apprentices from industry. Some are a collaboration between neighbouring academic and industrial organisations. A few are from overseas.

The 2018 competition began on Thursday 28 June with teams arriving, unloading and setting up camp.

On the Friday and Saturday the locomotives were assessed for maintainability, and undertook

Institution of  
**MECHANICAL  
ENGINEERS**

test runs. Each team was also required to give a business presentation.

Sunday 1 July was the main challenge day, when spectators were welcomed and trains from the Stapleford fleet were run for them in between the competitors' trains. The competitor locomotives were assessed for ride comfort, traction, noise and energy storage.

The worthy overall winning team was from Ricardo Rail, with their first ever entry in the competition. Their locomotive excelled at the energy storage challenge, which was weighted very highly, in line with contemporary environmental concerns. Its striking camouflage livery turned heads too!

My daughter Isobel Catt, whom some readers will remember from her role in the Railfuture Leicester Conference last year, was a novice member of the Sheffield University team, being

◆◆◆◆ Please remember Railfuture in your will: [www.railfuture.org.uk/legacies](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/legacies)



Picture: ARIADNE TAMPION

ENGINEERS: The University of Sheffield team with their locomotive. Isobel is third from the left

in her first year of Mechanical Engineering undergraduate studies there.

She found participation in Railway Challenge overwhelmingly positive.

It gave her the opportunity to work in a team with students from different year groups and different engineering disciplines, on a real-world project to a deadline.

As a bonus, the competition camping weekend proved a real bonding experience. She referred subsequently to her "Railway Challenge family".

In the seven years for which the competition has been running so far, the number of entries has been restricted to a maximum of twelve, due to the limited facilities at Stapleford.

But such has been its success that these are being expanded so that many more teams will get the chance to take part next year.

Registrations for the 2019 challenge open on 8 October 2018.

For further information, including how to become a spectator, see

[www.imeche.org/events/challenges/railway-challenge](http://www.imeche.org/events/challenges/railway-challenge)

■ Dr Ariadne Tampion CEng  
MIET is chair of Railfuture East Midlands.

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## Nuneaton changes

I do not know how long ago it was that Tim Mickleburgh was a student in Nuneaton, but I suspect that the layout of Nuneaton Trent Valley has changed considerably since then. For a Coventry-Leicester train to reach the Leicester platform from the Coventry side would entail crossing at least four running lines of the West Coast main line. Pathing this would be extremely difficult.

There used to be a single-track dive-under at the south end of the station but this was aimed at traffic running directly between Coventry and Leicester, avoiding the station. The dive-under (to what extent it still exists) would need extensive reconstruction in order to provide direct access between Coventry and the Leicester platforms.

As a resident of the West Midlands, I enjoyed reading Steve Wright's analysis of the CrossCountry franchise. One thing that Steve did not touch upon was that because of XC's stranglehold on the eastern routes into Birmingham from Leicester and Derby, the eastern part of the city lacks a suburban service commensurate with that provided by West Midlands Rail. A glance at the map on page 17 of *Railwatch* 156 shows the lack of suburban stations in east Birmingham and beyond. The first station on these routes is Water Orton, which has a very irregular service.

There is a need for stations at places such as Saltley, Washwood Heath, Fort Dunlop, Castle Bromwich and a park and ride serving Castle Vale. Since XC is probably



**DIVERSITY:** ScotRail's Alex Hynes, centre, with rail staff

unwilling or unable to provide these services, it is therefore necessary for another operator to do so. West Midlands Railway is the obvious front runner and there is no reason why they should not operate to Tamworth and Nuneaton. In order that no more diesel fumes are produced in Birmingham it is essential that early consideration is given to electrification.

There will be electrification teams looking for a project once Bromsgrove and the Chase Line are in service. Electrification to Nuneaton in particular provides a useful diversionary route should there be any kind of interruption between Rugby and Birmingham.

West Midlands Mayor Andy Street and the Midlands Engine need to seize this opportunity.

Donald Payne, Tipton DY4 8EE  
donpayne@btinternet.com

## Electric future

One of your correspondents in *Railwatch* 156 criticises bimode trains, but it is not clear what

he is proposing instead of the Stadler bimode trains now being built for services in East Anglia.

Is he suggesting new diesels to replace the ones that are between 20 and 30 years old? Or that old trains should continue to soldier on until such time as all the lines are electrified? It has long been Railfuture's policy to press for a rolling programme of electrification, but that presupposes priorities.

As I indicated in my earlier letter, the Stadler bimotoes have been designed so that they can in future be converted to all-electric trains as more of the network is wired up. They are a logical response to present needs in this region and quite possibly elsewhere.

Trevor Garrod, Lowestoft, Suffolk  
trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk

## No room for buggies

I agree with those campaigning for a lift at Cambridge Heath, as this would be a great boon for those with wheelchairs (*Railwatch* 156). But I cannot share any enthusiasm for encouraging buggies on trains, based on my experiences with buses.

They take up space that would be occupied by fee-paying passengers, who are annoyed when they have to stand as a result. There is a case for charging for buggies on space grounds.

Tim Mickleburgh, Grimsby  
Tim.Mickleburgh@Nelincs.gov.uk

## Hunstanton appeal

Is there any kind of campaign up and running for reinstatement of King's Lynn-Hunstanton? I was recently in the area, and it took us about an hour and a half to cover 20 or so miles by car.

Some observations:  
There is already a freight railway coming out east of King's Lynn. It would have to follow

## Pride of Scotland

ScotRail trains were branded with the rainbow symbol in June to support two LGBTIQ events – *Pride Edinburgh* and *Pride Glasgow*.

Alex Hynes, ScotRail Alliance Managing Director, lined up with representatives from British Transport Police, Network Rail and ScotRail.

He said: "I'm thrilled to support *Pride Edinburgh* with our specially designed rainbow trains."

"We want our workforce to reflect the diversity of our customers."

"I would encourage anybody with an interest in LGBTIQ to get in touch with us to find out more about the work the ScotRail Alliance is doing to celebrate diversity and promote equality."

a completely new route for some miles before joining the old trackbed perhaps around Dersingham. At the Hunstanton end, although the line has been built on, there might well be room for a tramline. Hence a tram/ light rail/ tram-train solution might be best. This would surely help at other points where the trackbed has been messed with.

It would not have to be very fast to be faster than the road. The key to its success in my mind would be frequency and well-placed stops near key tourist locations.

Peter Solomon,  
botrossess@googlemail.com

Editor's note: According to the *Eastern Daily Press*, a group was formed in 2017 to campaign for the reopening of King's Lynn-Hunstanton. More information:

<http://www.hunstantonrail.org.uk/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/KLHunstantonRailwayCampaign/>

## Railwatch welcomes articles and pictures from rail users and rail user groups

Send your material to: The Editor, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU  
Email: [editor@railwatch.org.uk](mailto:editor@railwatch.org.uk)  
Please use email if possible but include your postal address. Postal and email addresses may be published unless writers specifically ask for them to be excluded.



**WIXAMS:** Earth movers on a part of the site near Bedford where 4,500 homes are being built and where a station was promised

[roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk)

### ■ ■ Raising Railfuture's media profile

Several requests for live radio and TV appearances on topical rail issues gave Railfuture opportunities to get our message across during the summer. The stories included July's *10 most crowded trains*, and the restoration of most of Northern's reduced services. Railfuture joined forces with the Campaign for Better Transport for the May launch of a campaign for a Government-funded network development fund, similar to the new stations fund. We handed in a 4000-signature letter to the Department for Transport after meeting at Lea Bridge, one of London's newest stations. Lea Bridge reopened two years ago with support from the new stations fund after a Railfuture-inspired campaign.

### ■ ■ Speakers on fares, tickets and accessibility

Railfuture Sussex and Surrey division members were able to quiz speakers from the Rail Delivery Group and Transport Focus who spoke in July on the Easier Fares consultation (which concluded in September). In June, speakers from Govia Thameslink Railway and Brighton & Hove Buses spoke about passenger accessibility. The four presentations are available in the Sussex Division page of the Railfuture website.

### ■ ■ A million reasons to provide station lifts

Volunteers from Railfuture-affiliated Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail User Group have concluded their annual passenger counts at two London Overground stations. Weekday patronage has jumped by 28% at Cambridge Heath and 23% at London Fields in the three years since Transport for London took over from Greater Anglia. This gives both stations "a million passengers a year" status, although the Office of Rail and Road data do not yet reflect that for Cambridge Heath. But it puts the stations in the same league as other stations which have received Access for All funding for lifts. Lifts are badly needed at both stations and larger platform shelters are also needed for the increased number of passengers.

### ■ ■ Railfuture makes waves in Sussex

The timetable changes in May caused ructions in many parts of Britain but East Coastway and MarshLink saw the successful introduction of the Railfuture-inspired "Eastbourne overlap" services. Bexhill now has an extra train per hour and there are quicker connections with St Pancras services at Ashford International, when the train service works properly. Recent reliability has been poor. Regular liaison between the alliance of six local user groups and Railfuture with the two local MPs, one of whom sits on the House of Commons transport committee, continued with a catch-up in June, and with Govia Thameslink Railway timetable planners in September. We now hope for fine-tuning improvements in December's timetable. The trains themselves need substantial reliability improvements.

### ■ ■ Railfuture puts the passenger view in three reviews

Railfuture has responded to consultations on the Economic Connectivity Review carried out by Transport for the South East, the future of rail in London by the Greater London Assembly's transport committee, and the timetable disruption on Thameslink and Great Northern carried out by the Office of Rail and Road. We are confident that our contributions have been informed, independent and influential.

### ■ ■ London's new connection to heritage railway

The heritage Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway became fully connected with the main line network when it opened its reinstated link into Princes Risborough on 15 August.  
[www.chinnorrailway.co.uk](http://www.chinnorrailway.co.uk)

### ■ ■ Talks to improve service at adopted station

The campaign to improve Sudbury & Harrow Road station's skeletal service was recently featured in the local press. Sudbury Town Residents' Association has officially adopted the station and is in talks with Chiltern Railways about improvements. Despite the sparse service (four trains each way daily, Mon-Fri only) the station is becoming increasingly

popular with residents of the adjacent new Barham Village housing development.

[www.stra.org.uk](http://www.stra.org.uk)

### ■ ■ Mayor backs cash input for new Bedford station

Plans for a £27 million railway station south of Bedford could be back on track, according to the *Bedfordshire Times & Citizen*. Bedford Borough Council executive was meeting in September to consider whether it should help bridge a £14 million gap. Extensive house building is currently under way near the site and developer Gallagher Estates has pledged £13 million for the station at Wixams which was proposed 12 years ago. The Liberal Democrat Mayor Dave Hodgson said: "While it is not the job of councils to build railway stations and that was never intended in this case, I am stepping in to make it our business. We will make sure residents get the station they were promised." He said the council could act "on the basis of recovering the costs from fares". Wixams would be served by Thameslink trains to Bedford and London.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East)  
Twitter: @RailfutureLSE

## railwatch

ISSN 0267-5943 [www.railwatch.org.uk](http://www.railwatch.org.uk)

is edited by Ray King, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU  
Tel: 020 8985 8548 [editor@railwatch.org.uk](mailto:editor@railwatch.org.uk)  
Printed by Print-Out, High Street, Histon, Cambridge CB4 4JD  
Tel: 01223 232709. **Railfuture members receive *Railwatch* free.**

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**Non-members can subscribe** online at [www.railfuture.org.uk/shop](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/shop) or by sending £8 (cheque payable to Railfuture) to: Alan Cocker, 11 Derwent Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 0QR.

**Copy deadlines:** For the next issue, published in November/December, please email material to [editor@railwatch.org.uk](mailto:editor@railwatch.org.uk) by Thursday 25 October. Emergency late news up to Tuesday 13 November.  
Postal address: 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU.

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**Membership** £18 per year. Pensioners, students and unwaged: £14. Joint: £20.

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**Elections** Board elections held annually. Nomination forms can be obtained from [www.railfuture.org.uk/Elections](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Elections)

**Who's Who** Many other useful contact details can be found on the Railfuture website: [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk)

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# Portishead Railway Group comes of age

By Wendy Thorne  
wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk

A celebration was held in July to mark 18 years of campaigning to bring trains back to the West Country town of Portishead in North Somerset.

Members were treated to a presentation which charted the highs and lows that Portishead Railway Group have endured since that day in March 2000 when residents of Portishead formed a rail pressure group to reopen the Portishead to Bristol line, closed in the Beeching cuts of 1964. Over 2,600 people had signed a petition, a pretty impressive feat considering internet access was limited and social media in their infancy.

**Projected cost of reopening the line was £7 million**  
By 2002 the £21 million Royal Portbury Docks project had been



Picture: WENDY THORNE

**PARTY TIME: Founder members of Portishead Railway Group celebrate 18 years of campaigning**

delivered on time to clear the way for freight but the line was not built to passenger standards.

The marina development in Portishead was starting, with a promise of a railway in the future. The projected cost had risen to £13 million. Over the next few years, good news was intertwined with bad. In 2008 North Somerset Council bought the three miles of disused track, GRIP 3 had been published and a 30-minute TV programme on the Portishead line aired, but the

projected cost was now up to £38 million. In 2013 MetroWest was formed and suddenly Portishead was part of a much bigger project that incorporated lines into and out of Bristol, Bath and Severn Beach to name but a few. Hopes were raised as the track was cleared for the first time. But the projected cost was now £56 million. Local newspaper headlines over the years have swung between *End of the Line* to *Back on Track* in equal measure. Back to the present day, in 2018

we await news of how the funding gap can be filled. Projected costs have now soared to £116 million.

Staying upbeat and optimistic has its challenges but members were in party mood as a birthday cake was cut by a founder member and glasses raised with a celebratory drink.

Residents of Portishead have been very patient over the years but, despite the funding gap, returning trains to Portishead seems more hopeful than ever.

## Agents of change

By Wendy Thorne  
wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk

It has long been recognised that Railfuture needs to recruit more active campaigning members to ensure it continues to be an organisation of significance within the railway industry.

It is necessary for financial reasons but, even more importantly, it is to ensure Railfuture has a membership profile that better represents the wide range of rail users and rail campaigners. The prime target is to recruit more of those who are actively campaigning for a better railway and persuade them to join Railfuture and campaign with us.

They might be battling to reopen a railway line or they might be protesting over timetabling problems and dysfunctional industrial relations, both of which have meant mass cancellations and huge disruption to rail users. I believe these campaigners are demanding better railways and we want them to join Railfuture as we share that same goal.

I have been tasked with the membership portfolio within Railfuture's board and Peter Travis, a marketing consultant,

has been appointed to work alongside me to try to drive the transformation of Railfuture.

Peter explained: "What we are seeking are 'agents of change' within Railfuture. We want to find people to work with us to drive this transformation process throughout the organisation as part of a Change Team. "We need volunteers with a range of skills in areas such as social media, event management and recruitment. We also need to change the way we engage with our membership."

"Branch meetings will always remain a vitally important part of Railfuture but we do need to recognise that the majority of our members do not attend these meetings. Furthermore our future members will probably want to engage with Railfuture through digital channels and social media in addition to lobbying face to face."

Anyone who would like to volunteer to join our Change Team and help recruit new members please contact me or Peter Travis at [peter.travis@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:peter.travis@railfuture.org.uk)

## In love with lonely stations

Author Peter Caton combines a love of remote places and travelling on interesting trains.

In his new book *Remote Stations* Peter visits 40 of Britain's most lonely railway stations.

His travels even took him a mile out to sea.

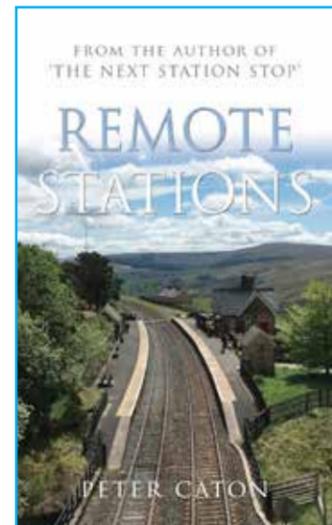
He also journeyed to all four corners of the country, to the top of a snowy mountain, to moors, hills and marshes, as he rode on some of our most scenic railway lines.

Along the way he unearthed stories of some bizarre accidents, tales of human endeavour and railway history. He found a station that closed before it officially existed.

His choice covers a wide variety of stations, including a few on resurrected narrow gauge railways. Some are well known, others obscure. He often writes that the train stopped "just for me" and the station "serves nowhere at all".

A committed environmentalist, Peter Caton dedicated the book to his father, Railfuture vice-president Michael Caton.

*Remote Stations* is written with a railway theme but is designed to appeal to those who enjoy an easy-reading travel book. Peter's



previous book *The Next Station Stop* was published in 2013, and recalled his childhood journeys 50 years ago. His research into old timetables showed that a surprising number of routes are now slower than 20 years ago, but with frequencies increased.

The £9.90 book is illustrated with more than 150 colour and black and white photos, both recent and historical. It is published by Troubador. ISBN: 9781789014082

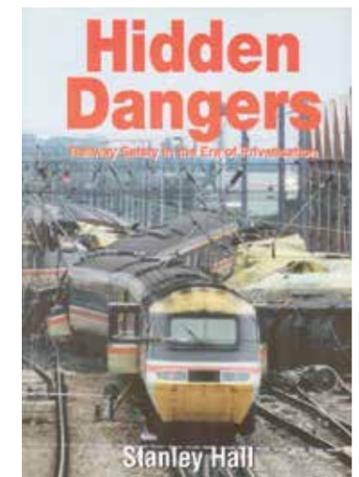
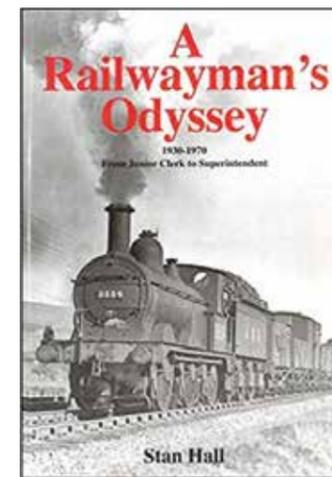
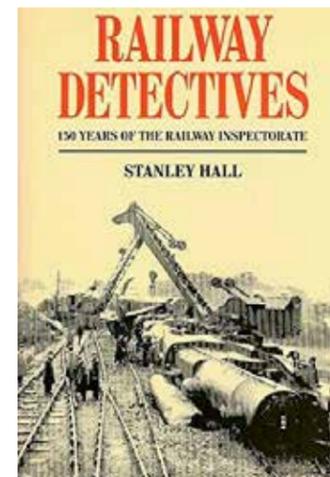
# Railfuture vice-president Stanley Hall MBE

**Stanley Hall MBE was a Railfuture vice-president for many years until he retired because of ill health in 2015**

**Fellow vice-president Roger Ford said: "He provided a beacon of experience, realism, common sense and authority."**

**Stanley was one of Britain's foremost commentators on the subject of railway operation, signalling and safety**

**His friend Bob Swallow has fond memories of him**



Stanley Hall was born in Bingley where, from an early age, his interest in railways was generated when his mother would park his pram on a railway overbridge so they might both watch the trains go by.

School days were punctuated by frequent visits – initially by bicycle – to locomotive sheds at Low Moor and Mirfield.

Soon he and his like-minded mates were using their pocket money to visit sheds further afield such as Camforth, Crewe, Leeds and York.

The defining moment in Stan's life came in 1943 when he answered an advert for *Vacancies for Temporary Junior Railway Clerks to replace staff in HM Forces*.

He was accepted, starting at Keighley on 30 April as a junior booking clerk.

He set his sights on becoming a stationmaster and was in due course appointed to Battyeford on the "New Line to Leeds via the Spen Valley".

My favourite aunt and uncle lived in Battyeford so it was a station I was familiar with just before Stan's time there.

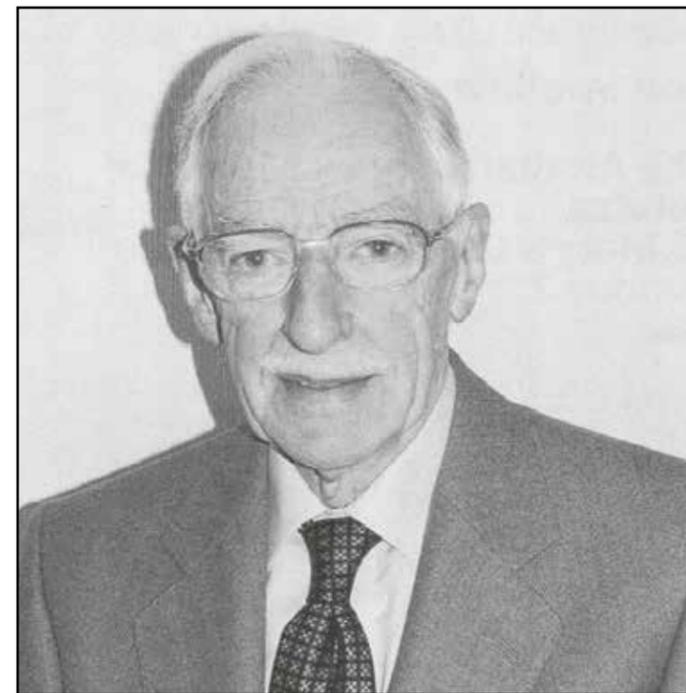
A stationmaster had supervision of signal boxes, and Stan soon had no less than fifteen signalmen under his wing.

It was not to last. The local passenger service on the Spen Valley line was axed, though expresses continued to run through.

A spell as stationmaster at Ravensthorpe followed though soon pastures new beckoned at Winston on the eastern side of the Stainmore Railway. Double-heading plus sometimes a banker was not unusual.

Stan was on an accelerated promotion scheme and was soon getting his hands dirty as Assistant Yard Master at Heaton, Newcastle, followed by Yard Master at Blaydon close by.

The pace was now hotting up,



Stanley Hall MBE

9 April 1926 – 29 June 2018

next stop being New England Peterborough as Yard Master.

This was 1959 and there were plans to build a huge new marshalling yard there.

Stan however was then promoted back to passenger work during 1961 as Assistant Station Master at King's Cross where on his first day he watched as the stationmaster welcomed Her Majesty the Queen back to the capital.

His next move was a deal closer to home as Assistant Movements Superintendent, Barrow, which position covered not just the West Coast main line plus the coastal route from Barrow to Carlisle but also – joy of joy – the Settle and Carlisle from Settle station northwards.

It was from his home in Barrow that being on call he was awakened by phone at 04.00 on 7 December 1964, a very wild day,

with the news that "You won't believe this but four or five brand new motor cars are lying upside down on the up line on Ribbleshead Viaduct".

Exciting times, especially when he realised just how much worse it might have been had not the signalman at Blea Moor noted several unoccupied flat trucks which should have been carrying Humber Super Snipes!

At the time they were simply secured by chocks under the wheels on the Luton-Bathgate car transporter train. The cars, being level with the parapet, were simply toppled off by the gale.

Stan had wonderful memories of his times on the S&C, especially travelling up Mallerstang on a wild night in a 12-wheeled dining car with half a bottle of claret inside him.

Promotions followed at regular intervals, his final posting being

to British Rail board headquarters as head of signalling and accidents. By this time he and doubtless his lovely wife Val had lost count of the number of properties they had lived in.

Stan certainly had his say at the inquiry over the proposed closure of the S&C, this being the one conducted in the Victoria Hall, Settle.

On retirement there was no question of Stan putting his feet up. He founded, at Skipton U3A, the Railway Study Group which he ran for 14 years. With latterly around seventy members it was by far the largest group.

It was here that many Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line members joined, coming to hear Stan expound his railway knowledge.

Never one to mince his words, his thoughts on some of the directions taken by the Railways Board and their masters in the Government caused him to be, as we the audience liked to put it, "Having a rant again".

He soon cooled down and saw the funny side of things.

Latterly many of us helped to organise the annual railway holidays, initiated by Stan, visiting several heritage lines in a particular area of the country.

Sadly for him this came to an end when he suffered a stroke during 2014. His legacy continues under the expert hand of Ian Appleyard.

Stan wrote several books on aspects of the railways including *Level Crossings* with Peter Van Der Mark; *Hidden Dangers*, dealing with railway safety and his two-part autobiography *A Railwayman's Odyssey*.

Stanley Hall was a smashing person whose MBE for Services to the Railway Industry and U3A is richly deserved.

■ Bob Swallow's article was first published in the *Settle-Carlisle Railway Journal* in August 2018

◆◆◆◆ Turkey is planning to build a high speed link from Istanbul to Bulgaria

# Electric the norm for rail, all the way to the Pyrenees

By Peter Hall

Railfuture life member  
hallcarpet@yahoo.co.uk

At the start of May 2018, I joined a group of Railfuture members and a few partners assembled expectantly at St Pancras International for the latest European adventure.

That same evening, courtesy of Eurostar and SNCF, taking the TGV on the high-speed line to Bordeaux, then the "classic" line, we checked into our comfortable hotel in central Toulouse.

The station and its entrance were impressive, but the city itself – the fourth-largest metropolitan area in France, and about the size of greater Glasgow in terms of population – was a little disappointing.

It was undergoing major building works which made it a little harder to get around. But with the help of Trevor Garrod, our leader and tour guide, we soon got our bearings.

The Toulouse metro was quite impressive, and one line was having its train lengths doubled from two to four coaches.

Less impressive were the understaffed ticket gates which nearly always left one or two group members stranded from the remainder of the group, despite their having a valid ticket.

However, the nimble-footedness of those members ensured that with a bit of tail-gating, they were able to rejoin their colleagues! Alas, the Paris metro was similar in that respect.

Monsieur Evin from Tisseo, the public transport and mobility authority for greater Toulouse, gave the group a presentation in French about current and future plans for transport in the region for the next 10 years.

The story was familiar, trying to tempt people out of their cars, with promises of longer trains, greater frequencies and longer operating hours, with more and extended lines, and even a cable car. Let us hope it succeeds.

We experienced the vagaries of SNCF ticketing, whereby between us we managed to pay at least three if not four different fares for the same day trip!

That of course created a feeling of both satisfaction at having bagged a bargain and trepidation in case *le conducteur* ruled that the ticket was invalid in some way.

Despite the strikes on some days, members did manage to visit some other places by rail. Albi with its massive brick-built cathedral was quite an attraction for most of us.

Some ventured to Lourdes, some to Carcassonne; others took the



SNOW ON PYRENEES: Railfuture members at Latour-de-Carol with a French train from Toulouse

scenic ride all the way up to the Spanish border at Latour-de-Carol in the Pyrenees.

The station is the terminus of three lines, each with different gauges so passengers have to change trains for onward travel.

Once past Toulouse commuting distance, the line from Toulouse is no more than a single-track branch line with an infrequent service. But it does have overhead electrification!

So do the other two lines from Latour-de-Carol. Come on Windermere, Swansea and Leicester!

The ongoing SNCF strike meant that our booked train home along the scenic route was cancelled.

Our leader managed to rebook all 20 or so of us, one-at-a-time, on the TGV so we still got to Paris in time for our homeward journey on the Eurostar, for no extra cost. Big thanks.

Mind you, the people behind him in the queue at the Toulouse booking office probably had different views!

So overall it was an enjoyable trip, and members learnt how one French city plans to address its transport problems over the next decade or so.



SPANISH CONNECTION: The train for Barcelona at the border station of Latour-de-Carol which has three different gauges. One of them, Le Petit Train Jaune, goes to Villefranche-de-Conflent, with onward connections to Perpignan

## Roll up for the lottery

ROLL UP for the Railfuture Lottery – and help boost our prize fund! The Lottery raises funds for our campaigning, but also pays back half of what is received in prizes, so the more of you who join, the more is paid out in prizes every month!

There are six prizes each draw with a top prize of £40, and it

costs just £1 per month per entry. You can pay by PayPal (see [www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery)), internet banking or by cheque. You can receive your winnings using any of these methods too!

For more information, email [lottery@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:lottery@railfuture.org.uk) or send a cheque for a multiple of £12, payable to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND.

### RECENT WINNERS

**June:** Peter J Pass, Graham Smith, John O'Sullivan, Alan John Boultonwood, Michael John Savage, Brian Balmain.

**July:** Graham Smith, Robert Crockford, Allison Cosgrove, Susan Riley, Roger Goring, Mark Edgell.

**August:** John Fancourt, Peter J Yates, Steve and Sue Boulding, Brian Balmain, Michael Blackshaw, Barrie G Meadows.

### GROUP VISIT TO BERLIN IN MAY 2019

RDS Group Travel, which is independent of Railfuture, will run its main visit next year to Berlin 8-15 May. More details will be in the December issue of *Railwatch*.

The trip will be by high speed trains from London via Brussels and Cologne, with seven nights in an hotel and optional visits, including one across the border to Poland. There will also be the chance to meet campaigners from our German sister organisations.

If you are interested, please contact Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ ([trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk)) at this stage. Booking forms and further information will be sent out immediately after Christmas.

# Are you sitting comfortably? No!

## EVEN THE RAILWAY INDUSTRY NOW WANTS BETTER SEATS



The Thameslink experience: it is not difficult to see why these seats have been dubbed "ironing boards". Captive commuters may have to put up with them, but clearly such seating will do little to encourage off-peak travellers to go by train



The facing seats on Thameslink are hardly more attractive



Revelled in its time to the extent that they encouraged the Underground Group to extend Tube services through North London, even the LNER Quad-art stock of the 1920s is nowadays regarded by passengers as offering seating which is a great improvement on current provision

## We are not amused

Her Majesty The Queen is said to dislike the seats on the new Thameslink trains. She is said to prefer older class 365 trains for her journeys from London to Sandringham in Norfolk.

## Paul Abell looks at the deteriorating travel conditions for train passengers' bottoms – but now there is hope

Long-suffering passengers, especially those who travel regularly on the class 700 trains used on the Thameslink services, will be relieved to hear that the Rail Safety and Standards Board is looking at ways of improving train seating.

As part of its research and development programme, the RSSB is managing a research project *Defining the requirements of a seat comfort selection process*.

The research will explore the human factors affecting comfort, taking into account factors such as the shape of the seat, its material and cushioning, lumbar spine support, vibration, leg-room, and the length of the journey.

Announcing the project, the RSSB was at pains to point out that it was a continuation of previous work, rather than a reaction to widespread public criticism of the ironing board seating on the Thameslink trains, but it did admit that the rail industry had woken up to the fact that "seat comfort was an issue that could be better informed by new research."

### But how has train seating got into such a mess?

One important factor has been that successive train procurement programmes have seen the seating as an area in which costs could be reduced. If seats cost around £100 a time, there is a great temptation to cut this by £10, and, a cynic would say, especially if you do not intend to travel on these trains yourself.

The resulting decline in comfort is palmed off as being insignificant when passengers are only travelling a short journey.

Thameslink has brought this into the spotlight – a lot of influential people live in North London and were expecting Thameslink to give them a direct comfortable ride to Brighton, just to mention one of the more alluring destinations on the Thameslink network.

What a let-down, or to be accurate a bump-down, as they made contact with the ironing board seats. One just hopes that they could not remember the Brighton Belle.

Unfortunately West Hampstead to Brighton is scheduled to take 97 minutes, at the end of which passengers will be hoping that the RSSB research bears fruit, and quickly.

Meanwhile the shortcomings of modern seats are totally shown up by the comfortable passenger experience to be had on heritage railways.

The Department for Transport used to claim that the seats must be acceptable because there were so few complaints about them – make sure that this excuse is no longer tenable!



Some things were definitely better under British Rail, such as the seats on this Class 323 electric train built in the last days of BR in the 1990s



Moving to First Class, the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway clearly did not want to offend its local millowners when it offered them this level of comfort in the 1880s



The new diesel trains of the 1950s offered First Class seats matching the L&Y standard of comfort – little did passengers know what was to come!



Thameslink passengers might prefer to go back to the 1930s and Brighton Belle style. They would have had to pay a Pullman supplement, but this photo shows part of the Third Class accommodation

# Rail revolution planned for the Midlands

By Colin Major

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Rail services across Birmingham and other Midlands cities are set for a revolution – with journey times cut and train frequencies boosted.

A new 20-year strategy aims to create a Midlands rail hub, creating capacity for six million more passenger journeys while reducing many inter-city journey times to an hour.

*Our Routes to Growth* has been drawn up by regional transport agency Midlands Connect in collaboration with Network Rail, train operating companies, local enterprise partnerships and the West Midlands Rail Executive.

It also aims to increase the use of rail freight and take 4,320 lorries off the roads by creating a further 36 train paths per day for freight.

The benefit from improving rail connections is expected to be worth £649 million a year to the regional economy.

Midlands Connect, which was set up four years ago, wants to double the number of trains per hour from Birmingham to Nottingham, Leicester and Hereford.

Hourly services between Birmingham and Derby would increase from four to six.

Lincoln-Birmingham would increase by one train per hour.

A direct Leicester-Coventry service would also be introduced which does not require a change at Nuneaton.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling joined Midlands Connect bosses to launch *Our Routes to Growth* in July.

He said the Government has invested £5 million to help develop the Midlands Rail Hub.

It involves longer and restored platforms, improved junctions and signalling, and some minor electrification.

One target date is 2026 – to allow some new services to run in time for the arrival of HS2.

Midlands Connect chairman Sir John Peace said: "The Midlands is the beating heart of our nation and the centre of the UK transport network. Our ambition is to improve rail connectivity from the Welsh border to the Lincolnshire coast."

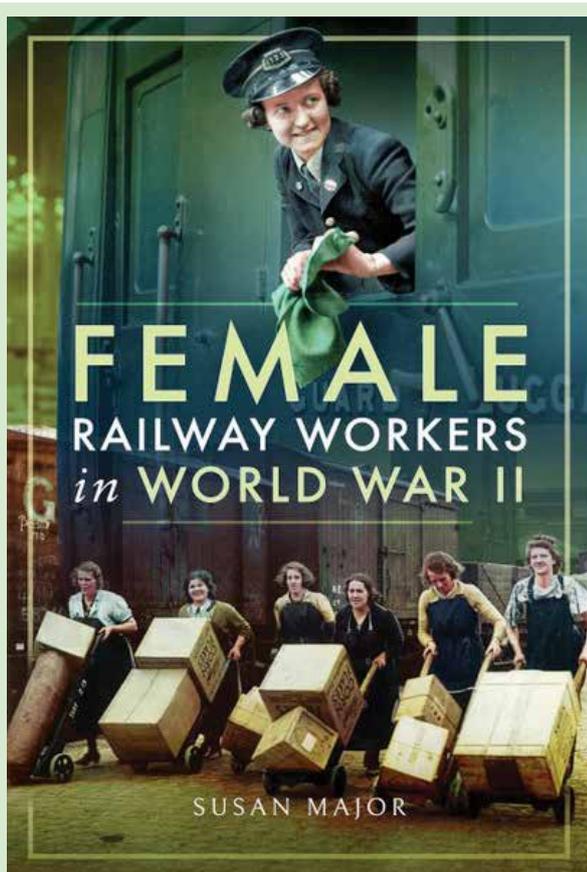
He added: "The initiatives are based on thorough research and detailed studies to identify which projects would give the greatest returns to rail passengers, road users and most importantly, the regional and national economies."

Nottingham-Birmingham journey times would be reduced from 69 minutes to 50 minutes while Hereford-Birmingham would be cut from 84 to 60 minutes.

The improvements would support the growth of more than 100,000 planned jobs.

The improvements are essential, said Malcolm Holmes, executive director of the West Midlands Rail Executive.

The launch was well received and had extensive media coverage including BBC Radio 4, BBC Midlands Today, BBC East Midlands Today, ITV News Central, and newspapers from Hereford to Lincoln including the *Birmingham Post*, *Coventry Telegraph*, *Express and Star*, *Nottingham Post* and *Derby Telegraph*.



**Women took on railway roles which were completely new to them during the Second World War.**

**They worked as porters and guards, on the permanent way, and in maintenance and workshop operations. Susan Major's new book features the voices of women talking about their wartime railway experiences, based on interviews carried out by the Friends of the National Railway Museum.**

**Many were working in "men's jobs", or working with men for the first time, and these interviews offer tantalising glimpses of conditions, sometimes under great danger.**

**What they say contrasts with the way they were portrayed in official publicity campaigns.**

**They talk about there**

**often being no toilets for them and how they coped with swearing and troublesome colleagues.**

**Most books on women's wartime roles focus on the military services or industrial work. This book offers valuable insights into the perceptions and concerns of these young women.**

**Susan Major completed a PhD with the Institute of Railway Studies & Transport History at the University of York in 2012. Her earlier book *Early Victorian Railway Excursions* was shortlisted for the *Railways and Canal Historical Society Book of the Year Awards 2017*.**

**She was also a programme consultant for the BBC series *Railways: the Making of a Nation*. She is retired and lives in York.**

## Accessibility campaign goes to DfT

The campaign to make Chinley station in Derbyshire (*Railwatch* 155) more accessible continued over the summer as the Government said it would make £300 million available as part of its Access for All programme.

The aim is to provide more step-free access at rail stations.

The funding was announced as the Government published its *Inclusive Transport Strategy*, hoping to improve all types of travel for those with disabilities.

The announcement came after campaigners from Chinley went to the Department for Transport for a meeting with Minister Nusrat Ghani (who has responsibility for rail access) and MP Ruth George.

The MP had earlier presented a petition organised by the Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group.

Also at the DfT meeting were Miriam Walton and Paul Tattam from the Chinley/Buxworth Transport Group.

They explained that Chinley has a centre of excellence for children and adults with disabilities.

The inaccessible station prevents activities such as training for independent travel.

Of course also affected are travellers with luggage, families with pushchairs and people wishing to use the train with a cycle.

The Minister undertook to look very carefully at the case for Chinley station to receive Access for All funding.

## 40th birthday

This edition of *Railwatch* marks a 40-year milestone. The magazine started life in October 1978 as duplicated A4 pages stapled together, when it was called *Railway Development News*. The first *Railwatch* magazine (number 23) was published in 1983.

**40th birthday:** The Railway Invigoration Society and the Railway Development Association merged in November 1978 to form the Railway Development Society which later changed its name to Railfuture.

ISSN 0267-5943



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