

railwatch

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Picture: WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

BRITAIN'S NEWEST STATION: PAGE 2

Our page one picture shows work on the new £35 million world-class Worcestershire Parkway rail station progressing well in October, with external steelworks and glazing nearly finished.

The station is expected to open next year and connects two lines on different levels. There will be one platform on the North Cotswold line and two on the Birmingham to Bristol line.

A key priority for the council, which is funding the project, is to link Worcester into the CrossCountry train network but it also hopes the station will provide quicker and more frequent services to London.

The station will also feature a 500-space car park and the "competitive" charges will help the council to pay off the loans needed to finance the station.

In the city centre, Shrub Hill station has 40 parking spaces while Foregate Street has none.

The council was helped to develop its business case for the station by Ian Walters of SLC Rail who was a speaker at Railfuture's Reading conference in November.

He said that he has helped third parties to achieve their rail objectives. He has been involved in helping to plan for nine new stations, with three currently being built and five under development.

He said: "The railway barons of yesteryear used property sales to fund railways. We have to find ways of finding funds. Car park revenue can be the key."

Reading conference: Pages 12-13

Railfuture rides an elevator

By Wendy Thorne

Key members of Railfuture from across the country practised condensing the long list of Railfuture successes into a convincing 90-second "elevator pitch" when they attended the annual branches and groups day in Birmingham in October.

The aim of an elevator pitch is to develop a message that would persuade someone to join Railfuture and to do this in a very short space of time, ideally the length of time it would take an elevator to go from the ground floor to the top floor in a skyscraper.

That is probably the same amount of time one might have to pitch Railfuture's case to anyone attending a membership recruitment stall.

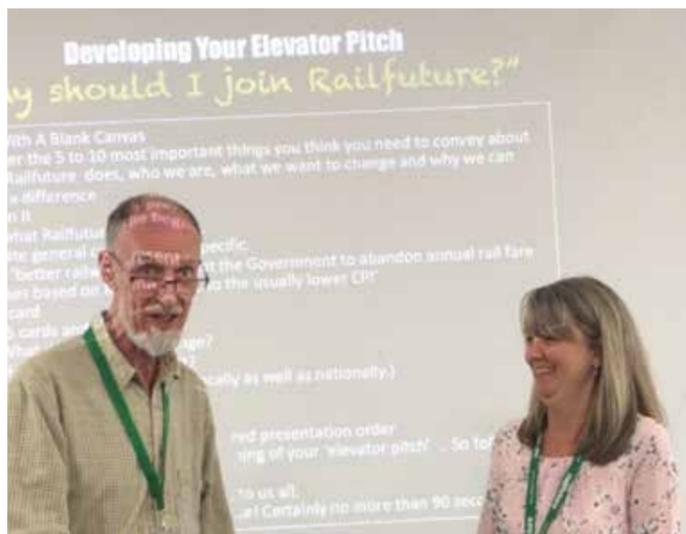
People agreed that Railfuture should be organising more recruitment events in future.

The pledge to recruit more new members was one of nearly 50 pledges made by attendees to develop a programme to transform Railfuture into a more active campaigning organisation. It was a very useful day where lots of exciting ideas were developed by our dedicated volunteers as well as a fantastic number of pledges of action. We now all need to deliver on those pledges.

Jerry's pitch

Jerry Alderson, Railfuture's director of finance and IT, in his elevator pitch made the following case:

"Railfuture is run entirely by volunteers, all of whom are rail users, and our day-to-day



SEEING THE LIGHT: Thames Valley's Andrew McCallum develops an elevator pitch with Railfuture's membership director Wendy Thorne

operations are funded entirely by our members across Britain (individual rail travellers, affiliated local rail user groups, local authorities/parish councils and local businesses), and our supporters (who pay a lower rate but are not members of the organisation).

"This funding model enables us to be entirely independent of all vested interests, whether it is the rail industry (including unions) or political parties or groups.

"As a result of this independence we attract members from across the political spectrum and we can engage with and influence all levels of government in Britain.

"Because of the wide range of knowledgeable people we

attract, including current and retired rail employees up to very senior level, and our focus on rail improvements that have a business case, we are a credible campaigning organisation and our views are taken seriously.

"At local level, for example, we conduct station audits, whereby we suggest improvements and help leverage local authority funding where an operator cannot justify the expenditure themselves.

"Our consistent pro-rail lobbying over decades has helped to change the perception of the railway in Britain so that all British political parties now believe that sustained investment in the railway network and train services is vital."

transport, pushing rail into a downward spiral of service reductions and job cuts, just at a time when investment in more sustainable rail is needed to reduce UK carbon emissions.

All parties must therefore act in the interests of passengers and the planet to reach a resolution, rather than seeking capitulation. Railfuture will continue to campaign for sustained investment, a reliable train service, and great customer service with value-for-money fares which together will promote carbon reduction, economic growth and modal shift to rail.

Please take every opportunity to tell your friends and colleagues of our successes and encourage those who share our campaign aims to join Railfuture and add their voices to ours.

UK's tram-train arrives at last!



BAKE OFF: Celebration cake

By Paul Abell

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The tribulations of the tram-train project have been reported at length, but happily 25 October saw the public service between Sheffield Cathedral, Rotherham Central and Parkgate inaugurated with some aplomb by Sheffield City Region Mayor Dan Jarvis and Transport Minister Jo Johnson (since resigned).

Railfuture was represented by president Christian Wolmar, vice president Paul Abell and Railfuture Yorkshire committee member Mike Rose who took the opportunity to enjoy the start of the new service, which was blessed by sparkling weather.

As an essential part of the tram-train pilot to discover the implications of running a tram-train service under UK regulations, three trams an hour link Sheffield city centre and the Parkgate Retail Centre, using the existing Supertram Meadowhall route then the new Tinsley Chord to the Network Rail tracks through Rotherham Central.

The 27-minute journey serves Meadowhall and Rotherham town centre en route and will enable the customer satisfaction, passenger numbers, reliability and costs of tram-train operation to be tested.

For example, passengers may notice a short pause on the



NORMAL FOR GERMANY: But at Sheffield Cathedral the tram-train is officially 'a pilot project'

Tinsley Chord in each direction while the vehicle is reconfigured for the change between Network Rail and Supertram, the two networks having their own communications systems for one thing.

The modern shops make Parkgate Retail Centre an attractive destination, and a new purpose-built footpath gives easy access from the tram-train terminus, while the stop at Rotherham Central station is very conveniently located for the bus station and the town centre. It was clear on the first day of operation that there was much local interest in the new service.

Unfortunately the service to Parkgate had to be suspended on the first afternoon of public operation after a collision between one of the tram-trains and a lorry in Attercliffe, but the route reopened the following day.



Railfuture president Christian Wolmar (with scarf) on day one

Chair's column: Rail risks losing Government investment

By Chris Page

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Rail now stands at a junction. The climate change report published on 8 October 2018 by the United Nations gave dire warnings of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people if carbon emissions are not reduced by 45% by 2030.

That is as close in the future as 2006 is in the past!

Rail is the most energy-efficient form of transport, and can be zero-carbon if renewable electricity is used.

A massive modal shift to rail of people and freight would reduce our carbon emissions, but this depends on investment to electrify intensively used routes and to develop battery or hydrogen



Railfuture chair Chris Page

technology for less-used routes where it may not be cost-effective to erect overhead wiring. But large-scale modal shift also requires the rail industry to reduce its costs so that fares can be set at a level to attract people out of cars, coaches and planes.

The growth in rail travel that we have seen over the past 25 years is stalling however. This may in part result from industrial disputes over modernising working practices making the rail service less reliable, and because the price motorists pay today for petrol and diesel is the same as they did in 2011 while rail fares have risen 25% over the same period.

During the 1950s the government response to prolonged industrial action on the railways was to deregulate goods traffic on the roads, which decimated rail freight and hastened line closures.

Which route to set? Failure to resolve the ongoing disputes could trigger a government response which would switch investment to other forms of

Railfuture board takes steps to improve director competence

By Stewart Palmer

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The Railfuture board runs the company and its directors are responsible for setting the strategic direction of the organisation.

In any company, directors have onerous and specific legal responsibilities. It is therefore important that any potential board member has a proper understanding of the responsibilities they will assume if elected to the board and the values and behaviours that they would be expected to adopt. On 3 June 2017 the board approved a new process that will operate

for all new directors and any existing director seeking re-election. In accordance with the articles of the company, any ordinary member can stand for the board. This is not going to change. However, from now on, any member considering standing will be able to avail themselves of the opportunity to have a structured discussion with a panel of Railfuture vice-presidents who will explain the responsibilities of a director and provide the opportunity to ask questions and provide clarity. Candidates will be required to produce a written



Stewart Palmer

statement in advance of the discussion, setting out their experience and personal qualities that demonstrate their suitability to be a board member. This will enable the panel to have a structured discussion

with the candidate. This will also be an opportunity for the individual to explain their understanding of Railfuture's policies and values and to demonstrate what they can bring to the board.

The vice-presidents' panel will not be approving candidates and they are not board members.

The purpose of this is not to bar anybody from standing but to make sure potential board members make an informed decision to stand, or not.

The returning officer may annotate a candidate's election statement if they decide to stand but have not availed themselves of the opportunity to have a discussion with the vice-presidents' panel.

If you are thinking of standing for the board in 2019 please advise company secretary Lloyd Butler by 31 December 2018 so a discussion can be arranged before nominations close.

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■ ■ A dementia-friendly railway is possible

Train operators need to be more aware of the issues caused by dementia – that was the key message from Liz Withington, our main speaker at our Norwich meeting. Liz, who is town councillor and member of the Sheringham Dementia Friendly Community, told the meeting that it was in the train company's own interests to make stations and trains dementia friendly. Around 1 in 14 people over 65 have dementia so every train will have passengers that are affected. Ensuring such people have a positive experience when they use the railway will result in further train use.

Although dementia is often associated with short-term memory loss, it does affect other aspects such as sight loss, mobility and perception. Train companies need to make improvements at stations and have dementia-aware staff who can deal sensitively with problems when they occur. Examples at stations include simple obstacle-free routes between the entrance and platforms with clear signs. Simple colour schemes with good colour contrast are also important as complex patterns can confuse some people. This approach needs to continue once on the train. A good test is: Can passengers see station name boards from the train and are they lit at night? This was a very interesting and thought-provoking presentation.

■ ■ Major stations in need of improved access

The Government has recently announced the next round of funding to improve access at stations, and Railfuture East Anglia has sent letters of support to Greater Anglia for step-free access at Diss, Marks Tey, Stowmarket and Whittlesford Parkway stations, and to Govia Thameslink Railway for Biggleswade station. We also support the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership who are pressing for step-free access at Meldreth.

Diss station has large car parks either side of the railway line, but the only realistic way to get from the car park to the platform on the other side of the station is via the footbridge, which makes station access difficult for many people, and there are no convenient adjacent stations for mobility impaired passengers to use. The station acts as a railhead for much of south Norfolk and parts of Suffolk and Breckland, and the Greater Norwich Local Plan indicates considerable growth in the area.

Marks Tey is used by passengers travelling from the Sudbury line towards London, or from Colchester, but they need to use the existing footbridge when making connections. The station is also used as an interchange point between trains and buses when the railway line is closed for engineering work.

Stowmarket has step-free access, but this requires a 190-metre detour involving the busy level crossing and travelling along unpaved roads. New lifts would provide a quicker and more secure route between platforms. The current Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2012 updated document) shows that 2,000 new homes are planned in Stowmarket between 2012 and 2027. Such growth will increase use of the station and could provide Community Infrastructure Levy money to help pay for any station improvements.

Whittlesford Parkway is close to a number of research sites employing thousands of people. Further development is proposed and this provides opportunities for Section 106 money to help pay for improvements. The station is also close to the Duxford Air Museum, but poor access at the station means that Cambridge station is used for bus interchange during major events.

Biggleswade station on the East Coast Mainline has over one million entries and exits and needs

step-free access to all platforms by adding lifts to the existing station footbridge. The emerging Central Bedfordshire Local Plan shows there is likely to be considerable growth in the area over coming years, including a new village of 1,500 homes east of Biggleswade and a strategic employment area south of the town.

■ ■ Scottish power wind farm proposals

Railfuture East Anglia has responded to the consultation on proposals for the East Anglia North/ East Anglia 2 offshore wind farm development which suggests that consideration be given to the site, at Broom Culvert Sizewell. We welcome the fact that Scottish Power is working closely with EDF Energy in evaluating the suitability of this site. Railfuture has previously given evidence to the Sizewell C consultation urging that rail should be used to transport construction materials and potentially to provide a sustainable transport option for staff who will be employed there.

■ ■ Railway safety under the spotlight

Railfuture East Anglia's December meeting will coincide with the publication of *Railwatch*. It will be held in Cambridge on Saturday 1 December with guest speaker Ian Prosser, HM Chief Inspector of Railways at the Office of Rail and Road. Great Britain has the safest railway in Europe with only one passenger fatality in 14 years and Ian will explain why our railway is the safest form of land transport by far. He will also answer questions.

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■ ■ New initiative to reopen Ollerton line

The 2019 AGM of Railfuture East Midlands will take place on 23 March at Mansfield Central Library. The venue was chosen to draw attention to the need to reopen the nearby Shirebrook-Ollerton branch line which would make a major contribution to regenerating a coalfield community, as well as improving access to some of the main tourist attractions of Sherwood Forest. Before that meeting we have our informal pre-Christmas gathering at the Canalhouse in Nottingham at 12.00 on Tuesday 11 December. All Railfuture members in the region are welcome.

■ ■ MPs move to win support for Narborough

Following a meeting with the Friends of Narborough Station, local MP Alberto Costa has sent a survey to all residents of Narborough and neighbouring Littlethorpe. The survey seeks residents' views on services at the station (which are often overcrowded at peak hours) and improvements needed to station facilities. Earlier this year members of the Friends adopted the station under East Midlands Trains' scheme.

■ ■ MP Anna joins access campaign at Beeston

The recently formed Friends of Beeston Station are campaigning to improve access for people with limited mobility. Avoiding the long flights of steps to the bridge when transferring between the platforms currently requires a 500-metre detour outside the station. Local MP Anna Soubry is backing the Friends' campaign for lifts to be installed, and Network Rail has said that it will bid for Access for All funding for this improvement at the Grade 2 listed station.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch
Twitter: @RailfutureEMids

A mighty roar of approval for Derby-Crewe line

By Steve Jones

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Improvements to the North Staffordshire line between Derby and Crewe via Stoke-on-Trent are a major campaign topic for Railfuture East Midlands.

Local business and industry agree that this strategic Midlands link between East and West is shamefully under-used. It has massive potential as an intra- and inter-regional link for passengers and freight, connecting, as it does, two cities and two major railway interchanges.

But it carries only local stopping services, which themselves are crying out for improvement. The hourly single-coach railcar frequently proves inadequate for the needs of local people.

To launch the campaign, Railfuture East Midlands held an invitation-only reception event on 23 October at The Derby Roundhouse, a prestigious venue steeped in railway history.

Nicknaming the present service "the Inter-City Kitty", the campaign asks: Shouldn't it be a lion?

To raise its profile, artist Laura Buckland depicted the train in feline form. However, Railfuture did not want simply to present its own ideas. We felt a light-hearted image could unite various interests and inspire dialogue on exactly what improvements should be provided, for whom and in what order. The image was launched at the event and is available at www.inter-city-kitty.com for free download.

An audience of nearly 60 "movers and shakers" from across the regions that could benefit was welcomed by Railfuture East Midlands chair Ariadne Tampion who compered the event.

They heard speeches from a range of influential speakers. Mike Willmot from the North Staffordshire Community Rail



CAMPAIGN LOGO: Designer Laura Buckland with Railfuture's Ariadne Tampion at Derby

Partnership pointed to the 220% growth in passenger numbers at the line's unstaffed stations compared with a network average of 84% over 12 years of the CRP.

This major growth has been aided by an army of station adopters along the line. However, the trains have shrunk to single-car units, leading to severe overcrowding. The need for a true rail network, not just a set of radial routes from London, is increasingly recognised. East-west routes are being developed, including TransPennine, Cambridge-Oxford and even London's Crossrail. Derby-Crewe should take its place among them! Nottingham and Stoke-on-Trent are the two main conurbations in the north Midlands and

could so easily be given a direct link that currently does not exist. Jonathan Heal from the North Staffs Rail Promotion Group supported this and referred to the slight decline in the number of train services on the line when most routes have seen increases.

Connectivity has also deteriorated as services have retreated to the Derby-Crewe core when they used to run through to Chester in the west and Nottingham and Lincoln in the east. He observed that, though actual growth has been strong, experience proves that if a good service is provided, people will use it. The line has much greater potential if developed. Declan Riddell from the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce described it as "a

vital artery across the Midlands". There are 1,400 businesses with 60,000 staff. They need good transport.

Freight, too, is crucial and is often overlooked in transport campaigning. This line runs parallel to the much-upgraded but heavily congested A50 dual carriageway road. We need improvements to rail capacity, quality and connectivity.

Next was Sarah Spink from Midlands Connect who observed that campaigning is great but actual investment needs a business case. The strength of this depends on evidence. It also depends on everyone coming together to speak with one voice, which is what this event was all about. Midlands Connect now

has a Department for Transport-approved transport strategy which includes developing east-west routes. As well as working closely with Network Rail and West Midlands Rail, Midlands Connect has had discussions with all the bidders for the next East Midlands franchise about extending the North Staffordshire service beyond Derby. Existing infrastructure could be used without any new construction work. It will even have HS2 hubs at each end.

Richard Bates, senior strategic planner with Network Rail, expressed frustration at the fragmented nature of the railway but alluded to Network Rail's crucial role in managing this. NR is developing its focus on managing things locally and working with local stakeholders.

Valuable local knowledge is essential as is the evidence needed to support investment.

There was then a question-and-answer panel discussion, identifying immediate improvements and more strategic opportunities.

Links between the clusters of cities beyond each end of the present Derby-Crewe service, plus the airports, especially Manchester, need to be developed.

Much discussion and networking followed, over wine and nibbles. Contacts were made, ideas exchanged and possible follow-up actions discussed.

The event was intended to be catalytic, bringing various interests together to allow a shared vision to be developed and promoted. Railfuture East Midlands Branch knew we were taking a risk staging this event and commissioning artwork, but it was a great success.

As Declan Riddell commented in his speech, we now need to make sure the purring Inter-City Kitty turns into a roaring lion!



CAMPAIGN LAUNCH: Railfuture members and supporters at the historic Derby Roundhouse



INTER-CITY? A one-car unit at Derby on a service to Crewe

Oh, Mr Grayling! What should

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling used Twitter in September to announce "a sweeping review to transform Britain's railways".

On the same day, his Department for Transport issued a formal statement promising that the review would "consider ambitious recommendations for reform to ensure our vital rail system continues to benefit passengers and support a stronger, fairer economy."

The review was billed as the most significant since privatisation and was launched before Professor Stephen Glaister's interim report into the problems arising from the timetable changes in May.

The DfT reassured us that the review will take into account Professor Glaister's final findings which are expected before the end of the year.

The terms of reference

The terms of reference for the review were announced three weeks later in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State, on 11 October.

Mr Grayling said that before the 1993 Railways (privatisation) Act, British Rail was in seemingly terminal decline but the Act brought investment in new services and better reliability.

He added: "Privatisation has reversed the decades of decline and heralded the fastest expansion of our railways since they were built by the Victorians, delivering millions of pounds of investment and radically improved safety."

The safety point is true, but it is easy to wonder why such a fundamental "root and branch" review is deemed urgent if everything was that good, albeit requiring investment in growth, an issue very familiar to Railfuture members.

This cannot be simply as a result of the Northern and Govia Thameslink Railway timetable fiascos, as both of these are subject to a separate Office of Rail and Road review. It is also abundantly clear that the government



Picture: JANE WOOD

WELCOME VISITOR: Transport Secretary Chris Grayling at Colne station in February with Pendle MP Andrew Stephenson, right, to discuss the possible reopening of the Skipton-Colne line



has no interest whatsoever in recreating British Railways.

The general reaction from stakeholders appears to be very cautious as the industry goes on hold against a rambling, even political, remit rather than a forensic examination of what is wrong in a growth scenario and how can it be fixed?

The Government's vision is for the UK to have a world-class railway, working as part of the wider transport network and delivering new opportunities across the nation. The Government claims that the rail review has been

established to recommend the most appropriate organisational and commercial frameworks to turn that vision into reality.

It wants it to be comprehensive in scope and bold in its thinking, challenging received wisdom and looking to innovate.

Plenty of motherhood and apple pie here. It would be easy to interpret this as announcing an integrated transport system for Britain.

I doubt we will get that except in the context of encouraging devolution. These aims are not followed through in the published

terms of reference which call for delivery of:

- Commercial models for the provision of rail services that prioritise the interests of passengers and taxpayers
- Rail industry structures that promote clear accountability and effective joint working for both passengers and the freight sector
- A system that is financially sustainable and able to address long term cost issues
- A railway that is able to offer good value fares for passengers, while keeping costs down for taxpayers
- Improved industrial relations, to reduce disruption and improve reliability for passengers
- A rail sector with the agility to respond to future challenges and opportunities.

What is explicitly excluded from the terms of reference? This is the most illuminating part of the terms of reference as it potentially undermines the whole exercise.

The review's remit does not include the infrastructure and services that should be provided by the railway.

It will not reconsider public investment decisions made through existing franchise agreements, Control Period 6 commitments, High Speed 2 and other major projects, or spending deci-

we do? Well, let's try a Review

sions that will be made through Spending Review 2019.

What is not even mentioned in the terms of reference – even more concerning:

Brexit

Whatever the format of Brexit, or even no Brexit, there are potentially significant issues for the rail industry after any transition, particularly in the procurement area, affecting major projects, the supply chain and even the franchising process. There is no mention of how this will be treated in the review.

Similarly, although European Union laws including open access and separation of infrastructure from operations have been transferred into British law, do we assume that these will be changed in a couple of years time when the review is to be implemented?

Does this omission suggest that the review may not be quite as fundamental as billed?

Safety

Another worrying omission is safety. Mr Grayling in his introductory remarks in Parliament mentioned the excellent privatised railway safety record. It is not mentioned in the review terms. Is the Government taking safety as a given? Safety has to be designed in. It cannot be an afterthought.

Structure and process

The Government sets constraints by saying the review should develop a comprehensive and relevant evidence base to inform its findings. This should reflect analysis of the UK's rail sector, the directions set by the Department for Transport's *Strategic Vision for Rail* published in November 2017, evidence from previous reviews of elements of the rail sector, and experiences in other countries.

The review should also consider lessons from recent developments, such as the establishment of the East Coast franchise and Professor Stephen Glaister's inquiry into the timetabling changes in May. We must not simply repeat lessons learned.

The review team must effectively address passenger, workforce and community priorities and concerns, including accessibility and the needs of freight and industry.

It should consider how to improve transport services across the regions and devolved nations, including exploring options for devolution of rail powers.

It should engage with key stakeholders including industry

◆◆◆◆ You can join the Railfuture lottery at www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery



GLOSS: The DfT launched its rail review using Twitter

bodies, national and local government, Parliament, and, where appropriate, the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales.

It should have a structured approach to engagement. There is a strong clue here in that devolution is probably going to be a strong feature of the desired output.

Railfuture members will probably have noted the reference to the UK, but engagement with only devolved government of Scotland and Wales, so Northern Ireland appears to have been forgotten. Perhaps the Secretary of State meant Britain, not the UK, or does he know something about the Irish border issue that we do not?

The review's recommendations must be practical and deliverable. It should ensure improvements for passengers are prioritised as soon as possible while recognising the challenges of delivering significant change within current legal and regulatory frameworks. It should consider how to reform the sector over the short, medium and longer term, and how legislative and regulatory

will be doing the actual review within the Government, presumably within the DfT, which is odd given the detail regarding the composition of an expert challenge panel.

Keith Williams will also chair the expert challenge panel, which will support him in testing the review's analysis and



One Twitter user's response to yet another rail review – from Till@iamths1973

And what is Railfuture's position?

Railfuture and its informed membership understand that many of the problems currently evident in the rail industry are as a result of the premise that privatisation was based on a no-growth scenario. Railfuture is not (at least here), speculating why this growth has occurred. It could be argued that the structure of the industry is crucial or that economic growth, which is directly correlated to ridership, is more significant. Growth has occurred, the pips are squeaking and the industry needs to gear itself up to cater for significant growth.

The review needs to focus on this by implementing well-informed changes including much better investment processes. Potentially disenfranchising the whole industry from this process is probably dangerous as the cure may well be worse than the problem. Challenge is good but it must be informed. We will use our established contacts to help the review focus on delivery of a bigger, better railway in Britain which is actually Railfuture's remit. We will also continue to keep our members briefed on progress with the exercise and our engagement with it.

recommendations, and provide fresh perspective and advice.

It would be more usual for such a challenge panel to have a chair independent of the review itself. Perhaps a little too much challenge is not seen as a good thing?

There is clearly quite a stress on the independence of the exercise and the need to be bold and innovative.

There is a widely circulating view within the rail industry that not involving industry players with experience and a challenge panel with not much depth (other than Dick Fearn) is unlikely to produce practical solutions.

Being bold and innovative are great words but something a little more substantial is seen as required if rail's growing pains are to be fixed by the application of surgery. Some may say that the DfT is part of the problem so how can it find a solution? I could hardly comment on this.

An autumn 2019 White Paper

The review "may" publish interim reports during the period of its work. As Mr Grayling is committed to updating Parliament regularly, this would seem to be essential to avoid a big surprise or disappointment at the end.

The review's final report will be a Government White Paper, which will be published in autumn 2019. It will set out the Government's intentions for reform of the rail sector. It is also expected to reflect ongoing improvements the Government is making to passenger experience during the course of the review.

Implementation (as stated in Parliament but not mentioned in the terms of reference)

The plan is for reform to be implemented from 2020. There is no mention anywhere of how the review output will be implemented or by whom. This actually may be sensible at this stage.

□ Ian Brown CBE FCILT is Railfuture policy director

Members of the expert challenge panel

The rail review expert challenge panel will support the chair of the review.

Its members will help to ensure the review thinks "bravely and creatively" and that its recommendations can deliver the stability and improvements that passengers deserve. The published list of members of the challenge panel is:

- Dick Fearn** chair of Network Rail's Western Route Supervisory Board
- Tom Harris** former Labour transport minister

Margaret Llewellyn OBE chair of Network Rail's Wales Route Supervisory Board and a non-executive director of the Development Bank of Wales

Roger Marsh OBE chair of Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership

Dr Alice Maynard CBE Transport for London board member and the former chair of Scope, the disability equality charity

Tony Poulter non executive board member at the DfT and Chair of the East Coast Partnership

Democratic failure

As many *Railwatch* readers will know, the Minehead Rail Link Group is campaigning for the restoration of a proper train service between Taunton and Minehead, by extending some of Great Western's Cardiff-Taunton services over the West Somerset Railway to Minehead.

We have regular friendly meetings with both the WSR and GWR and at the suggestion of GWR management we wrote to Transport Secretary Chris Grayling in June to request a short informal meeting with him or one of his team to explore ways forward.

We received neither a reply nor an acknowledgement, so wrote to him again. We received neither a reply nor an acknowledgement.

We tried a third time in July, this time copying in the Prime Minister's Office and our local MP, Ian Liddell-Grainger. Yet again we received no reply or acknowledgement from Grayling, the Prime Minister's Office or from our MP.

Still determined to engage with somebody in Government we wrote a fourth time – this time by recorded delivery – to Grayling, the PM's Office and Ian Liddell-Grainger in September, but to date still have received neither acknowledgement nor reply from any of them.

Is this a record for Government arrogance and apathy or is there somebody out there who has had an even worse experience in trying to contact Mr Grayling and his colleagues? I would be interested to hear!

Incidentally, it has been suggested that we would be better off writing to the Labour shadow transport spokesman, because people say that by the time Mr Grayling gets round to replying the present government will probably be out of office and replaced by Labour.

David Latimer, Publicity Officer, Minehead Rail Link Group. david.latimer@btinternet.com

Trent torment

I was interested to read the letters (*Railwatch* 157) from Graham Nulty and Donald Payne about the current track layout at Nuneaton Trent Valley station.

Network Rail's 2004 project, altering the connection across the West Coast main line, was a short-sighted action, precluding later developments such as that now suggested for a direct service between Leicester and



Picture: PAUL ABELL

Melrose station waiting for Borders Railway extension

When the Borders Railway reopened in 2015, Tweedbank station was tantalisingly close to Melrose – about two miles. There have been more than 4 million journeys since the Borders Railway reopened but people who want to visit Melrose have to cycle for 15 minutes or walk for about 40 minutes. The bus service is not a regular pattern. The people of Melrose and their many tourist visitors (Melrose Abbey is just one of the attractions) have been without a rail service since 1969. Ironically the Melrose bypass occupies some of the former trackbed. In its 2017 briefing, the Campaign for Borders Rail recommended that outline engineering studies should be carried out for Melrose, Newtown St Boswells, Hawick and Longtown to confirm and safeguard the line of route.

Railfuture Scotland news: Page 21



Picture: PAUL ABELL

TWEEDBANK STATION: A party of visitors from the Association of Community Rail Partnerships inspected Tweedbank station in October

Coventry. The WCML was very busy long before Virgin took over its running, yet this did not stop CrossCountry services (for example Norwich-Birmingham) from running in and out of Trent Valley station.

Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby DN31 2JP timmickleburgh2015@gmail.com

Poorly Pewsey

A friend contacted me recently about a property he has just purchased which shows Pewsey

as its nearest railway station. He asked me to check on train times but I had no idea that a main line station could be so poorly served.

On weekdays there are frequent gaps of two-hours-plus and there is even one gap of four hours in the up direction between 10.19 and 14.23. Surely this cannot be described as a service? I have always been taught, however, that if you identify a problem, you suggest a solution. My solution would be to extend the Bedwyn trains nine miles to Pewsey.

The empty stock could then run forward a further three miles to the fully signalled Woodborough Down sidings where it could reverse – and run a return service.

The cost of this – one extra train and crew – would still maintain the hourly Bedwyn service pattern as well as introducing a new hourly service to Pewsey.

This could be easily achieved once electric trains run to Newbury and further class 165/166 diesel multiple unit trains are released. Alternatively a five-car class 800 bimode train could be used.

It would also save Network Rail the cost of extending the turnback siding at Bedwyn for the five-car bimodes.

It has also been suggested that a further extension to terminate at Westbury would be possible. Westbury, however, is 20 miles beyond Pewsey and would mean Great Western investing in three extra trains to maintain an hourly service. I think that is unlikely.

Martin James, Egham, Surrey thejamesfamily18rr@gmail.com

Bedwyn potential

A great deal of effort is going into electrifying the Berks and Hants line as far as Newbury, leaving the trains terminating at Bedwyn to run the last few miles on diesel power. The turnback at Bedwyn is being altered to accommodate new rolling stock. It would seem that now would be an ideal time to extend the service beyond Bedwyn to either Marlborough or Devizes or to reopen Savernake and Patney stations as park and ride stops for Marlborough and Devizes respectively.

The population of Bedwyn is only 1,353 as compared to Marlborough's 8,400 and Devizes' 11,700. Although Bedwyn is used as a "drive to" railhead, the bus service from Marlborough is poor for those without cars. An extended service could terminate at a new station on the edge of Devizes, or go through to Westbury, in the process enhancing the Pewsey service and improving westbound connectivity for all stations on the Berks and Hants line. What do others think?

Stuart Nicholls, Pulborough, West Sussex RH20 2QA stuartnicholls1014@hotmail.co.uk

Martin Smith of Railfuture Thames Valley comments: Bedwyn serves as a railhead for Marlborough but Pewsey falls within the area of Wessex branch. The Bedwyn service

Eight bikes on each train for the future



Picture: ELEANOR KING

Cyclists could benefit from the European Parliament's approval on 15 November of the Rail Passengers Rights Bill. Once the Bill is adopted by the European Council the ruling will require all new or refurbished trains in Europe to carry at least eight cycles.

If it applies to Britain, it will be welcomed by cyclists. An unhealthy liaison between the Department for Transport, train operators and train builders has allowed many new trains to be introduced into Britain without proper facilities for cycles. Some of Great Western Railway's new Hitachi Intercity Express Trains have only two spaces (pictured above), with the cycle having to be hung from hooks – a difficult operation for some cyclists. It is also very difficult to fit bikes with straight handlebars into the space, which happens to be a convenient place for staff to park their catering trolleys!

would need to be extended to Westbury to give Pewsey a good service. The Devizes/Lavington area also needs better rail services but if the hourly Bedwyn service were extended to Westbury, it would certainly give better connections to the West of England.

Yes to buggies

What a pity that Mr Mickleburgh shows such negativity towards rail matters. From as far back as

1994 I discovered a letter from him in *Railwatch* complaining about the construction of the Channel Tunnel – asking "who is going to use this?"

In his latest letter concerning babies' buggies on trains, he continues to view rail travel in a pessimistic manner.

If he wants to charge extra for buggies would he think it reasonable that anyone who is larger than average pay more as they are taking up more space on a train?

What about a tax on luggage, as this takes up a lot of room, or briefcases, or even laptops which take up space on tables?

On a positive note, if Mr Mickleburgh cares to visit Scotland I am sure he will find more positivity about railways. Allison Cosgrove, Chair, Railfuture Scotland, East Linton EH40 3BN acosgrove@eastlothian.gov.uk

Back to the car?

I wonder how Tim Mickleburgh expects parents with young children to travel if he does not think they should be on trains. It does not take a great leap of imagination to realise that if buggies are not welcome on public transport, parents will go back to cars, and the children will grow up into yet another car-dependent generation.

Given that childcare is still disproportionately done by women, Mr Mickleburgh's letter also has an undercurrent of discrimination.

Eleanor King, Hackney, London ellieking1@gmail.com

No room for women?

In the same edition of *Railwatch* as we have information on the Female Railway Workers of the World War II and Wendy Thorne talking about changing the member profile, we also have a letter advocating making charges for buggies on trains.

Despite advances in responsibility sharing within households, the majority of people with buggies are women and they have as much right to train travel as wheelchair users and people with bulky luggage. We are unlikely to encourage women to join our organisation while attitudes such as this are held by existing members.

Space for buggies on trains is an equality issue. Families with small children need to be able to use public transport and need support to do so.

We should be campaigning for better facilities for everyone on trains and not penalising one



Picture: PAUL ABELL

Kilmarnock station for active travel

Rail campaigners visited the Active Travel Hub at Kilmarnock station in October to learn about their work to create a healthier, greener future. The Hub says it is passionate about encouraging people to walk and cycle and use public transport in East Ayrshire using the station as a jumping-off point. Volunteers help things happen on a daily basis, assisting with organised rides and walks or attending community events.

One visitor commented: "Absolutely over the moon with the superb build-a-bike service at the Hub. Such lovely friendly and helpful staff, plus a super volunteer-built bikes for my children's Christmas. The bikes were also police security tagged. I simply would not have managed it on my own and cannot thank them enough. They were fantastic!"

sector of the travelling public. Ann Hindley, Crowle, North Lincolnshire DN17 4EX

Rail plus-plus

For many years in Germany and elsewhere rail passengers have benefited from discounted rail fares to and from major airports, when combined with air tickets. In Britain there are only a few examples of this sensible practice.

As the United Nations Panel of Scientists has recently reported that we need to reduce our carbon footprint drastically in the next 15 years, this would seem to be a good time for introducing such an initiative.

While we should also be reducing the number of short-haul flights within the UK and Europe, we also need to encourage more sustainable means of transport to and from airports.

With the benefit of modern computer software programs it should not be difficult to link airline ticketing systems with the UK rail ticketing system in the same way that this is linked in with local bus operators.

Although legislation might be required, Railfuture might wish to make a start by campaigning for British Airways, easyJet and Flybe to offer through discounted rail add-ons for rail-connected airports which they all serve. Nigel Perkins, Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY nigel.perkins@btinternet.com

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.



■ ■ Rail passengers who choose to walk

Walking is the most popular way to get to a railway station for those who live within a one-mile radius. That was one of the facts revealed by Robert Crockford when he addressed Railfuture Severnside's September meeting in Gloucester. Robert is now involved with the campaign to reopen Stonehouse (Bristol Road) station, but drawing on his earlier experience working with British Rail Southern Region he said that on average 70% of rail travellers get to their station by sustainable means (walk, cycle, public transport). Robert also explained rail trip generation. Comparing recorded rail journeys per head of population for different towns and counties, he noted the extremely high trip generation for Bath, where tourism was a major factor. By contrast, train journeys per head in Gloucestershire and rural Somerset were relatively low, possibly reflecting service frequencies no better than hourly.

■ ■ Is light rail best choice for Portishead?

Light rail should be considered to reduce the cost of reopening the Portishead line. That is what West of England Mayor Tim Bowles suggested to Transport Secretary Chris Grayling, according to a *Western Daily Press* report in October. Railfuture is concerned that, far from being a pragmatic solution to cost inflation on MetroWest Phase 1, the suggestion is likely to increase costs and delay reopening of the line because light rail vehicles would have to be specially built and the line electrified.

■ ■ Rail should play a bigger role in Bristol

Positive aims of Bristol City Council's draft transport strategy, such as better health, public transport integration and reduced lorry and van traffic, were welcomed by Railfuture Severnside. But we expressed concern that the strategy underestimates the potential contribution of rail in a city which already has 12 stations, with more in prospect. We believe there is a compelling case for a station and transport hub at Ashton Gate, where a developer proposes to build a basketball arena and hotel complex close to the football stadium. We are not convinced that the strategy's suggested underground system using rubber-tired vehicles is deliverable and view it as a distraction from investment in Bristol's existing rail network. We also oppose the Callington Road Link, which is intended to free up space on the A4 for bus rapid transit towards Bath, duplicating a MetroWest rail route. On the credit side, the strategy has a proposal for light freight to arrive by passenger train for onward distribution by sustainable modes. We asked the council to pursue this idea with passenger and freight operators.

■ ■ Somerset hopes for a better rail service

Railfuture Severnside also responded to Somerset County Council's draft transport strategy, which has numerous aspirations for rail services in the county, a major advance on the non-committal approach of its 2011 *Future Transport Policy*. Key elements include improving the resilience of the rail network, including development of the Castle Cary-Yeovil-Exeter diversionary route, station improvements and support and advice for local campaigns to reopen stations and lines including the introduction of main line passenger services on to the West Somerset Railway. What is less clear is how the aspirations can be delivered. The strategy mentions

the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline, which was introduced by the Department for Transport in March as a means of funding rail schemes from a range of sources. Our response, welcoming the strategy, suggested that a regular service from Taunton to the WSR could be a candidate for pipeline funding as it would meet at least two of the required criteria, keeping people and goods moving smoothly and safely while offering better journeys and opportunities for the future.

■ ■ Double Ashchurch train service now!

Tewkesbury Borough Council was reported in October to be considering a plan for 8,000 new homes at Ashchurch, which would more than double the population in four phases over the coming decades. 3,180 homes could be built by 2031 if the plan is approved. One of the factors influencing the location is the existence of Ashchurch for Tewkesbury station. Both Railfuture and Ashchurch, Tewkesbury & District Rail Promotion Group believe the station needs the current service improved immediately from a train every two hours to a train every hour at least.

■ ■ Imagine a footbridge back at Pilning

Pilning Station User Group has released a new song and video to mark the second anniversary of losing the station footbridge, rendering the station one-direction-only (towards Bristol). The song, inspired by John Lennon's *Imagine*, can be heard at www.pilningstation.uk

www.railfuture.org.uk/Severnside+Branch
Twitter @RailfutureSSide

Yorkshire

■ ■ Harrogate wins LNER pledge

Brian Dunsby of Harrogate Line Supporters Group met with LNER's commercial director Suzanne Donnelly in October to discuss delays to the launch of the new Azuma trains being built by Hitachi for the East Coast main line. She assured him that LNER is fully committed to operating the extra direct services to Harrogate and Bradford every two hours, as planned by LNER's predecessor Virgin Trains East Coast, although the start date is still uncertain.

■ ■ Heritage railway features on TV

The heritage Wensleydale Railway is expected to feature in two TV programmes next year. General manager Richard Brown has been interviewed for a BBC2 series called *The Dales with Paul Rose* and the line featured in an *Amazing Spaces* Channel 4 programme.

■ ■ £15m Doncaster 'high cubes' upgrade

Upgrading the Doncaster-Immingham line to accommodate high cube containers on normal freight wagons at a cost of £15 million is now under way. The project is being led by Network Rail with support from North Lincolnshire Council and Humber local enterprise partnership. The project involves 29 interventions, including alterations to station platforms.

■ ■ Station access improved

Work is now under way at Hebden Bridge to make the station fully accessible to people of reduced mobility. New lifts are being installed in the shafts of the old goods lifts at this Grade 2 listed station. Signalling of Bradford-Todmorden was transferred to the York control centre in October, increasing the line's capacity.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch
Twitter: @RailfutureYorks

■ ■ Touch too soon for smart travel

It is fair to say that the Victorians built an entire national railway network in less time than it has taken to roll out smart card technology across public transport in Britain. When South Western Railway began promoting its Touch card earlier this year, one of our members was encouraged to give it a try for his long-distance commute, only to find that journeys to obscure destinations like ... er ... Waterloo were yet to be covered by the scheme. SWR can give only a vague indication as to when coverage of its own network will be universal, and has no idea at all about journeys that involve other operators. It would appear that seamless travel with a single smart card is forever just beyond our reach.

■ ■ Upgraded trains fail the inter-city test

Refurbishment of SWR's class 444 and 450 Desiro trains is under way. Completion was originally promised for the end of 2018 but maybe it is better to have it done properly than done on time! Work has also begun to upgrade the class 442 Wessex electric trains so they can be brought back into use on the Portsmouth line. The 442 programme will be completed in two phases, the first focusing on renewing interiors and the second on replacement of traction equipment, which dates back to the 1960s. Meanwhile, class 159 diesel trains on the West of England route are being successively taken out of service for modifications to comply with disability requirements. This has led to short formations and overcrowding, prompting a widely circulated apology from the operator. Unsuitable class 158 diesel trains are still the mainstay of Great Western Railway's hourly service between South Wales and the Solent area, and all we are promised for the future are hand-me-down Turbo trains in a 3+2 car formation. Yes, these will provide extra seats to alleviate overcrowding, but they are not going to deliver an inter-city ambience on a route linking no fewer than seven cities: Portsmouth, Southampton, Salisbury, Bath, Bristol, Newport and Cardiff.

■ ■ Planning ahead for a reliable future

Sir Michael Holden's recently published performance review of the South Western network examines in great detail the causes of the significant decline in service reliability over the past decade or so. It is reported that track and signalling renewals have been allowed to slip, while "organisational turbulence" has led to poor managerial oversight of day-to-day operations. The analysis shows that the worst performing routes are those passing through our Wessex area to Exeter, Weymouth and Portsmouth. A flyover at Woking and track remodelling at Salisbury are especially mentioned as key to achieving better performance, and we welcome the suggestion that the bay platform track at Fareham should be reconnected at the Portsmouth end to allow through working. The findings of this 114-page report should keep South Western Railway and Network Rail busy for years to come!

■ ■ Portsmouth for Wessex 2019 AGM

Plans for the Railfuture Wessex 2018 AGM had to be rescheduled at the last minute because of the Beast from the East. We hope for better weather for our 2019 AGM, which is booked for Saturday 6 April in Portsmouth.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+Branch
Twitter @RailfutureWessex

What is the future for black gold?

Heritage railways generally use steam locomotives to haul trains, which are their unique selling point, attracting visitors anxious to relive memories or to soak up some of the magic of what was seen as the golden age of railways.

In reality steam locomotives are costly to run, have relatively poor availability and need a unique set of skills from both driver and fireman to make them work properly.

Nevertheless, they are a core part of the offer to visitors and they motivate many of the volunteers who are proud to acquire the skill set needed to operate them, and in the right hands, and properly maintained, they are relatively reliable.

Over 800 steam locomotives remain in Britain of which over half are working or serviceable, the remainder requiring major restoration or overhaul.

Steam locomotives are fired by hand, using around a tonne of coal for 30 miles of running with a train carrying 250 passengers. Coal is usually the largest single cost item for a heritage railway apart from staff costs, representing typically 20% of operating costs and 10% of total costs for the railway.

There is a strong financial incentive on railway operators to reduce smoke from steam engines, as this represents unburnt coal and is inefficient in producing steam as well as attracting complaints from neighbours.

Coal with a high sulphur content is not used because of the corrosion it causes to the locomotive's firebox and boiler tubes.

Good quality British steam coal is more expensive than imported coal but is more efficient and generally produces lower emissions. Coal supplies are a downstream product from the electricity supply industry, and railways use the large lumps mined, whereas power stations typically require small coal and dust as their furnaces are fed by conveyor belt.

With Government plans to phase out coal-fired power stations by 2024, future supplies for heritage railways are uncertain, as the heritage railway requirement represents a very small fraction of that used by the power stations and other major users, such as steel works.

The remaining British coal mines would not be able to sustain production just for the heritage sector. Railways such as the West Somerset are proud to burn coal from the Ffos y Fran opencast

◆◆◆◆ Greece is rebuilding and electrifying the 70-mile Kiato to Patras line



A former Somerset & Dorset locomotive is coaled and watered at Minehead on the West Somerset Railway



site near Merthyr Tydfil, which is ideal, as the Great Western fireboxes were designed to burn Welsh coal.

But this supply depends on the coal continuing to be needed for Aberthaw power station, and the operation is unsustainable for the small quantities of coal required by steam locomotives (26,000 tonnes a year).

One alternative may be to buy from suppliers to other countries including India and China, which are still building coal-fired power stations.

The problem here will be that apart from the loss of remaining British opencast sites, the whole management and distribution

Heritage railway bids for cash to link up with national rail at Taunton

The West Somerset Railway has submitted a bid to Great Western Railway's customer and communities fund to support the running of a Taunton-Bishops Lydeard rail shuttle next summer to improve its links with the national network.

The WSR has also decided to extend its normal winter closure by 17 days for engineering work and an overhaul of its safety management documentation prior to reopening for the 2019

network for coal will disappear, particularly following the restrictions proposed on the burning of coal in homes.

The issue is currently being considered by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which has been carrying out a public consultation on "cleaner domestic burning of solid fuels and wood" which closed on 12 October. The consultation was about domestic coal burning rather than transport, but the loss of British mines would be a problem for heritage steam, and there are concerns over the statement in question 17 of the consultation that "government is minded to apply this to all businesses because of the

health and environmental benefits of this approach". A Heritage Fuels Alliance has been formed to represent the interests of all heritage users of coal as well as railways - steamships, steam cars and lorries, traction engines and stationary boilers.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail is planning to hold an inquiry into coal supplies as it is so important to the future of heritage lines.

The law of unintended consequences has come into play as a result of some well-intended environmental legislation.

Another regulatory stumbling block is being put in front of heritage railways, putting additional strains on the dedicated group of volunteers who work to keep steam alive and keep the heritage trains running.

Where will it all end up? I will report back when a clearer picture emerges.

season. This follows a visit in October by Office of Rail and Road inspectors who recommended a number of changes. No improvement notice was issued, however, and a full service of seasonal trains will run during December.

WSR chairman Jon Jones-Pratt, in a letter to volunteers, said: "We all need to support these improvements in order to operate a safe, professionally run railway which is now expected by the regulators in the modern era."

railwatch December 2018 11

By Wendy Thorne

wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk
In recognition of the dedication and achievements of Railfuture volunteers we will be presenting the inaugural award for *Campaigner of the Year* at the 2019 AGM in Cardiff. The award will be presented after the formal business is concluded and will be followed by lunch and an opportunity to network. So, do you know someone who has contributed to the success of Railfuture? Someone who has gone the "extra mile"? Perhaps they have raised the profile of Railfuture on key issues or started a successful campaign in their local area. We will require a written statement of no more than 500 words identifying how the nominee has contributed to Railfuture's mission to be the number one advocate for rail users and the rail industry and how they have enhanced Railfuture's campaigning for a bigger, better railway.

- Nominations may be made by any Railfuture member
- All Railfuture members are eligible to be nominated
- You may nominate yourself
- The deadline for nominations to be received is 01 March 2019

For further details or to submit a nomination please email Membership Director, Wendy Thorne at: wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk

AGM notice

Notice is hereby given that the 15th annual general meeting of Railfuture Ltd (formerly known as the Railway Development Society Ltd) will be held at The Sport Wales National Centre, Sophia Gardens, Cardiff CF11 9SW on Saturday 18 May 2019. The formal AGM will start at 11.00. Nominations for election to the board of directors must be sent to Railfuture Returning Officer, 12 Valley View, Great Bourton, Banbury OX17 1QJ to arrive by Friday 1 February 2019. Nomination forms can be obtained from the same address or from the Railfuture website www.railfuture.org.uk/elections. Election and AGM paperwork, including a booking form for the optional buffet lunch, will be produced for the printer by 28 February 2019 and should be received by members around mid-March. Motions for discussion at the AGM must be sent to the Company Secretary, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Ipswich, Suffolk IP9 2ND to arrive by Saturday 4 May 2019. They should be posted in typed format or emailed to CompanySecretary@railfuture.org.uk. By order of the board, L Butler, Company Secretary. More info about the AGM: www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/

Car park levy could be invested in public transport

Railfuture's Reading conference was opened by Mayor Debs Edwards with a ringing endorsement of rail's contribution to the importance of the town but also to her family who use trains to go to work and to visit people all over the country. She said she was proud of the beautiful new Reading station which has the backing of 94% of passengers in a survey.

The council's deputy leader Tony Page was equally enthusiastic about rail, which he said was key to providing for the people who would be moving into the 16,000 new homes which will be built in the town in the next 10 years.

The council was enthusiastic about raising more money for public transport and had considered a congestion charge, but neighbouring councils were reluctant to cooperate and the Department for Transport refused to provide any funding for road charging.

So the council was now considering a workplace car park levy. "Every penny raised from the workplace parking levy will be reinvested in public transport improvements, possibly including light rail or a guided bus," he said.

It could raise £8 million a year and could be used for an East Reading mass transit scheme which would involve dedicated bus and cycle lanes. Only Nottingham has been brave enough to use powers granted to councils to raise funds from car parking. Mr Page said: "We want to encourage every way of coming into



UPBEAT: Reading mayor Debs Edwards opened the conference with an enthusiastic endorsement of rail: 'Our railway system is tremendous'



AIRPORT ACCESS: Network Rail's Anna Holbrook said that Bristol Parkway will be within one hour from Heathrow airport once the western rail link is built

town, other than bringing cars in. That is our strategy for the next 20 years. If every car that came in to Reading was electric, it would improve air quality but Reading would still be congested. We need sustainable travel into Reading."

The council even had to persuade the Government to extend Crossrail from Maidenhead to Reading. The new station at Reading Green Park, on the line to Basingstoke, which opens next year would have been built without canopies if the council had not intervened. The new station is unusual in that it has one platform in Reading and one in West Berkshire. The council is already planning to upgrade Tilehurst and Reading West stations.



SUCCESS: Danny Woodward of the Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway which restored a main line link



LUNCH BREAK: Network Rail's electric power expert Jill Poyton talks informally about the Great Western scheme with Railfuture Severnside's Nigel Bray and Railfuture director Roger Blake

London-Cardiff is 'big ticket' item of GWR electrification

Some of the complications of electrifying the Great Western main line were explained by Network Rail's Jill Poyton.

The electrification scheme had to be re-phased following the Hendy review in 2015 when "we had to step back and think what we could actually deliver". It was decided to concentrate on the London-Cardiff section, the "big ticket" item.

That means Bath, Box Tunnel and Bristol Temple Meads are still waiting for electrification.

But the associated upgrade scheme now under way, four-tracking the Filton Bank on the Bristol Temple Meads to

Bristol Parkway section, is a key element because it will allow trains to run at 125mph, rather than 90mph. Further electrification is dependent on funding being found, because Network Rail can no longer raise money independently as it is now subject to Government borrowing limits. One of the benefits of the current scheme is new style catenary which differs from the East Coast main line by having a "reduced electrical footprint" and which should simplify future maintenance.

In addition, there are many other complications. The live wire has to be adjusted to sweep from side to side across the

pantograph to avoid excessive wear on one part of it. When bridges have to be lowered to allow for the electric wires, it involves realigning track over a four kilometre section.

Sometimes negotiations were needed with four separate landowners at each corner of the bridge. On occasions, National Grid had to be asked to raise the height of domestic power cables being carried across the track.

And in Box Tunnel, eight types of bat have been found, two of which are extremely rare. The track has been lowered but there are no electric wires yet . . .

Crossrail sends land values soaring

New railways generally send land values soaring, said Crossrail's operations director Howard Smith. That was seen as a major benefit when work on Crossrail started but now the line is also expected to provide opportunities to solve the housing crisis. The existence of three different signalling systems has been blamed for the delay in Crossrail opening. The all-new central section uses communications-based train control, while National Rail normally uses the Train Protection Warning System. However the European Train Control System "overlays" the traditional signalling between Paddington and

Heathrow Airport junction. Once Crossrail opens as the Elizabeth line, Romford route control centre will handle the central section but when trains emerge from the tunnel at Stratford they will be signalled by Liverpool Street. At the western end, Didcot will control the trains. Despite these complications, once it opens, the central section alone will deliver major improvements to London travellers. It is expected that Farringdon station, for example, will overtake Clapham Junction as the busiest station in Britain. It will be one of the most important connection stations on the British rail network.



ALL LINED UP AND NOWHERE TO GO (YET): New Crossrail trains at Old Oak Common depot

Best website

Great Western Coffee Shop, a virtual rail user group at www.firstgreatwestern.info/coffeeshop and a forum hosted by a GWR customer.

Best newsletter

Track Record from the Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield Rail Users' Association.

Best new group

The Oliver Lovell Award The South East Wales and West of England Business Link www.sewweb.info/ to develop the connectivity of a corridor via Bristol between Newport and Weston-super-Mare.

Best campaign

The Hastings & Rother Rail Users' Alliance (Ore Transport Group, MarshLink Action Group, Three Oaks and Winchelsea Action on Rail Transport, St Leonards & Hastings Rail Improvement Programme, Bexhill Rail Action Group and the Normans Bay Residents Association) who negotiated with Govia Thameslink Railway an innovative timetable solution to the proposed split of the through Brighton-Ashford service at Hastings.

Best campaigner

The Clara Zilahi Award Graham Collett, co-vice-chair of Yorkshire branch, for his lead on behalf of Railfuture in responses to two important consultations by the Office of Rail and Road, on improving assisted travel, and on the impact of the May timetable on Northern and TransPennine services and their passengers.

Judges' Special Award

Acknowledging the growing role of preserved and heritage operations for integration with main line operations, a double award this year. 1. The Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway for restoring their link into the Chiltern Railways mainline station. 2. Pat Marshall of West Coast Railways, working with local MP Tim Farron, for the special loco-hauled train service for Windermere in June.

Pictures: PETER TRAVIS

martin.smith@railfuture.org.uk

Setback for Bourne End campaign

Passengers travelling between Marlow and Maidenhead will continue having to change trains at Bourne End. Network Rail has decided not to reinstate the chord from platform 2 to the Marlow branch which would have allowed through running. Railfuture and its affiliate the Marlow-Maidenhead Passengers' Association have for long been pressing for the remodelling of the track layout at Bourne End, to permit a half-hourly service of through trains avoiding the need to change at Bourne End. GWR managing director Mark Hopwood has said that if the remodelling project did not proceed, he would consider introducing a two trains per hour service involving a change at Bourne End. But he agrees with Railfuture that it is unreasonable to expect Marlow passengers, who have already lost through peak trains from Bourne End to Paddington, to have to change twice to get to London.

A study into reopening the line from Bourne End to High Wycombe has produced a benefit to cost ratio of only 2.06. If the idea for reinstating the line for heavy rail is considered marginal, perhaps light rail should be considered as a viable alternative. The line from Maidenhead to Marlow and eventually to High Wycombe could be operated as a self-contained system.

East West Rail ground works start

Railfuture Thames Valley welcomes the start of work on the ground to restore the western section of East West Rail between Bicester, Bletchley and Bedford, but we are concerned that the specification seems to have been downgraded. Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has boasted about commuter services between Oxford and Milton Keynes, but there is no mention of using the line for CrossCountry services (for example, between Northampton and Bristol), nor for container trains from Southampton avoiding Birmingham. We do not want to see an Oxford-Cambridge "Expressway" road and question whether building one million new homes in the Oxford-Cambridge arc should be seen as justification for building an Expressway road which would encourage more car use and pollution, undermining hopes for a more sustainable option of development based on expanding public transport and encouraging walking and cycling.

Oxford Parkway gets cars off the road

The opening of Oxford Parkway station has encouraged a switch away from car use to public transport. About 10% of the station's passengers would have used their cars if the station did not exist, according to a report in the *Oxford Mail*. Three years after the station opened, seven million trips have been made on the new line with 2.5 million using Parkway. It is estimated that 250,000 car journeys have been avoided. Bicester Village station has been used by 4.5 million passengers. It is concluded that major economic benefits have been noted from this "landmark improvement to regional transport".

www.railfuture.org.uk/Thames Valley Branch
[Twitter @RailfutureTV](https://twitter.com/RailfutureTV)

peter.walker@railfuture.org.uk

Morpeth station enjoys new facilities

To match the promised increase in its long-distance train services, Morpeth station's buildings are to be restored, with a café and a new booking office among the facilities. Office space to let will also be part of the Greater Morpeth Development Trust's scheme. On the north-bound platform an extra waiting-shelter has been provided, nearer to where standard class coaches usually stop.

Rail is key to Lynemouth development

Harworth Estates is planning to redevelop 254 acres of land formerly occupied by a coal mine and a coal-fired power station, as well as the aluminium smelter at Lynemouth. The planning application includes industrial uses, residential plots and a seaside holiday park. To serve all these needs, a "protected railhead" is in place. Biomass trains from Tyne Dock now serve the power station, but the spur would have to be upgraded to play a proper role in the site's redevelopment. The line could be part of a revived Ashington, Blyth and Tyne rail network.

Hornden station planned for 2020

The planning application for a new station and car park at Hornden has been submitted to Durham County Council. This new Durham Coast station could open as planned in 2020.

CrossCountry franchise confusion

The sudden abandonment of the CrossCountry franchise competition in September, amid the announcement of the Government's review of rail franchising, has dismayed campaigners in Teesside and Sunderland. Tees Valley Combined Authority had high hopes for new direct cross-country services. Despite the uncertainty, however, user group Coastliners and others continue to refine wish-lists, based on what was submitted to the Department for Transport earlier. Campaigners have been encouraged by at least one Teesside MP preparing to lobby for the changes we want to see.

Unstaffed ticket machines

Ticket machines have been installed at unstaffed Coast line stations, including Seaham, Seaton Carew, Billingham and Stockton-on-Tees, but only cards, not cash can be used in them. Advance tickets cannot be bought, although pre-booked tickets can be collected. We believe it will reveal that many long-distance journeys start or finish at small, local stations. This should give us ammunition to campaign for more through trains to Teesside.

Dunston celebrates its survival

Dunston station, between Newcastle Central and Metrocentre, has had a chequered past, but is now used by more passengers than ever. Local people have organised a centenary celebration for January in Dunston Activity Centre, near the station. The original Dunston-on-Tyne station opened in 1909. It closed briefly in 1918, reopening almost at once, but then closed again in 1926. However, once the Newcastle-Carlisle line was re-routed after Scotswood bridge closed in 1982, Dunston was on a passenger rather than a freight route, enabling the reopening of the station in 1984.

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EUROPE BY TRAIN: (from left) Ian Brown, Christina Maier, Jerry Alderson and Martin Kojinkov at Utrecht in October

By Ian Brown

Railfuture's European Passenger Group has had two recent meetings. The first was a full EPG held on 5 October in Peterborough. EPG is a subgroup of Railfuture's Passenger Group with terms of reference focused on two areas. The first is evaluating best practice to strengthen Railfuture's arguments when campaigning for a bigger, better railway in Britain, particularly in comparing fares, passenger facilities and information. The other role, supporting Railfuture's Passenger Group, is to campaign for improved links to and from Britain and mainland Europe essentially by contacts with Eurostar and the European Passengers Federation.

The Peterborough meeting focused on maximising potential benefits from newly established senior level relationships with Eurostar and on providing competent input to the EPF. We can provide extremely useful customer feedback to Eurostar and indeed contribute to EPF given the intense interest in the UK rail scene at the moment with industry changes and Brexit.

International travel from Britain is catered for by new booking systems including the Man in Seat 61, Loco2 and the rapidly developing DB website, now including more information on travel from Britain. Paper leaflets are less useful now as travel and ticketing information is available in seconds online.

Railfuture is not a sales outlet for international rail travel but campaigns for better information to foster increased travel into Britain, which is important because of the complexity of Britain's rail structure. We will be producing a comprehensive guide for inward travel, with a view to linking to travel websites such as Interrail and Eurail.

Two EPG members met Eurail Group's management team in Utrecht in October to discuss cooperation on Interrail, as well as potentially providing Railfuture advice on rail travel in Britain to Interrail and Eurail customers. Our common interest is market growth, in Railfuture's case attracting more members by providing more member benefits and information.

The EPG needs to connect with and understand the market for international rail, and we are looking for new members with an understanding of the needs of today's travellers and familiar with social media, as distinct from wanting to recreate an earlier age. We are therefore looking to attract more diversity into the EPG, younger people, women and people from different ethnic backgrounds. Please let us know if you would like to join us. You can be assured of a warm welcome.

More information: www.railfuture.org.uk/display1864

□ Ian Brown CBE FCILT is chair of Railfuture's European Passenger Group

Magnificent assets in need of an upgrade



HIGH AND MIGHTY: Culloden viaduct on the largely single-track Highland main line near Inverness

Picture: Klaus with K/Wikimedia

By Lee Davies

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Failure to provide effective upgrades on the Highland main line between Perth and Inverness is economic and environmental madness, it is claimed.

The largely single-track line which goes through Pitlochry, Blair Atholl, Aviemore and Culloden (and includes Druimachdar pass) needs more double track and electrification to make it competitive.

Only four minutes have been cut from the rail journey over a 10-year period, instead of a planned 35 minutes at a time when the parallel A9 road has seen £3 billion improvements.

"Everyone wants to see fewer 44-tonne trucks on the A9," said Rail Freight Group's David Spaven, "but the current very limited upgrade to the Highland main line offers little or nothing for rail freight."

"Indeed the worry now is that rather than freight shifting from road to rail – the Scottish Government's policy objective – we will see the loss of existing rail traffics, as the A9 gets faster and the single-track railway becomes increasingly congested. That is economic and environmental madness. We need longer crossing loops, so that freight trains 40% longer than at present can compete much more effectively with road hauliers."

Ten years ago the Scottish Government pledged to slash rail journey times from Inverness to Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Paul Tetlaw, of Transform Scotland, the sustainable transport alliance, said: "A decade later the rail journey remains on average around three and a half hours – yet A9 journeys are getting faster and faster as road dualling advances. The public were told that there would be additional rail passing loops and double-tracking, but all that is being delivered is resignalling of two crossing loops."

"With no additional track it is highly likely we will see more delays and cancellations as more trains are squeezed on to the single track railway. Lessons

need to be learned from the Borders Railway where cutbacks to the original design have created long single track sections leading to poor performance. The Scottish Government now needs to deliver on its promises with serious investment made in the railway to ensure there is a level playing field between road and rail."

Ian Budd from the Friends of the Far North Line, said: "The Highland main line is key to the whole regional rail network. Slow journey times and unreliability between Perth and Inverness have a knock-on impact and discourage people from switching from car to train."

"Rail travellers are entitled to see the Scottish Government deliver on its manifesto promises and make the step-change improvements. What we have at the moment in no way equates with the government's stated transport policy."

The groups urge doubling and electrification of the Highland main line as part of the Scottish Government's newly started *Strategic Transport Projects Review*. The original review, which reported in December 2008, concluded that investment in the Highland main line should be one of the three investment priorities for the country.

Coast to coast coal

Six coal trains a day could be operating from Whitehaven, Cumbria, to Teesside if planning permission is given next year for an under-sea mining operation.

Developers of the project on the Cumbrian coast have promised to use trains exclusively to deliver high quality coking coal to Redcar for use in steel making and for export.

The aim is to extract 3.2 million tonnes per annum and process it at the former Marchon chemical site near Woodhouse before taking it by train to Redcar Bulk Terminal which is able to accommodate 80,000 tonne ships.

It plans to use existing colliery tunnels to mine the coal and to build a two-mile long underground conveyor belt to take the

coke from Woodhouse to the railhead at Pow Beck Valley, south of Mirehouse.

Australian-owned West Cumbria Mining is seeking planning permission for its Woodhouse Colliery project from Cumbria County Council.

It applied in May 2017 and is hoping for a decision early next year. The mine is expected to be productive for 50 years. The company says signalling improvements would be needed to cope with extra trains on the Cumbrian Coast line.

Longer trains

Network Rail is investing £18 million to lengthen freight sidings in Buxton, Derbyshire, to speed up the transportation of construction materials from nearby quarries.

Extending the sidings by 430 metres will allow freight trains to be lengthened from 18 to 26 wagons, allowing up to 2,500 tonnes of materials on each train.

Having longer trains helps create a cleaner environment, as each freight train takes 76 lorries off the road and each tonne

of freight transported by rail cuts carbon emissions by 76%.

The extension runs through a former council-run waste facility which will be made safe and landscaped. The scheme, part of the Great North Rail Project, began in March 2018 and will be completed in April next year.

James Dean, chief operating officer at Network Rail, said: "Freight trains play an important role in the operations of UK PLC."

Thinking bigger

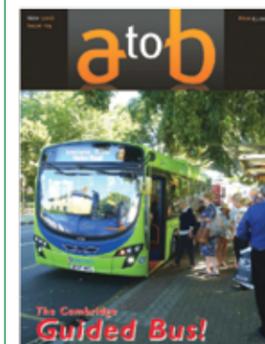
Network Rail is contributing £750,000 and the Tees Valley Combined Authority £250,000 to fund a study into increasing clearances for larger containers to be carried between Northallerton, on the East Coast main line, and Eaglescliffe, near Stockton-on-Tees.

Tesco trains

Eddie Stobart has announced the launch of its first ever train service from Tilbury, Essex, to the Tesco site in Daventry, and then on to Mossend in Scotland. Each train can cope with between 30 and 36 containers.

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www.atob.org.uk

Rewards for imagination and innovation

The annual community rail awards took place in Scotland for the first time this year.

The event in Glasgow on 4 October was hosted by Scotrail, with awards presented by managing director Alex Hynes.

This year was the biggest awards event ever, and was supported by 23 organisations, including Scotrail.

The Community Rail Awards has successfully established itself as a major event in the rail industry calendar and is highly professional in its organisation and promotion.

No fewer than 180 entries were received this year in 13 categories and 38 awards were made, generally providing three levels in each category.

I was privileged to be a judge this year and was blown away by the quality and imagination of each entry. All were worthy of recognition, and here I can pick out only a few of my favourites.

Amazingly, the award for small projects is for those under £500 (and you do not get much on the railway for that price these days). Who would not like the winner in this category, the Friends of Ally Pally station, who decided to grow hops on platform one and then enjoy the beer in the pub next door!

In the category of quirky projects was a knitting circle at Nunthorpe station on the Whitby line, with a knitted tableau of the royal wedding, complete with corgis!

Best community partnership
Sevenside Community Rail Partnership, based in Bristol, scooped most awards this year including the award for the



SUN, SEA AND SAND IN THE CITY: Birmingham New Street concourse is transformed into a Welsh beach for the day, to promote the Cambrian lines and the Great Little Trains of Wales. This was one of the worthy winners at the Community Rail Awards ceremony in Glasgow



greatest contribution to community rail.

This recognises their work over 10 years, including this year a major mural at Montpelier station which has effectively dealt with the previous endemic problem of graffiti.

Second prize went to the partnership for the work they had done with Cotham school in a video clip for social media produced by pupils explaining how to make journeys during a major

engineering blockade affecting the line.

Positive change
The most varied category was "Influencing Positive Change" with an amazing diversity of entries. First prize went to Women in Community Rail, for the work they had done in encouraging a better gender balance, attracting young people, practical mentoring and promoting best practice.

Second prize was for Purbeck

CRP, the Swanage Railway and South Western Railway for the innovative SWR summer Saturday service between Salisbury and Corfe Castle, connecting with steam trains to Swanage, a great example of what partnerships can achieve.

Third prize went to the Avocet Line Rail Users Group for its solar-powered poster cases at St James Park and Polsloe Bridge in Exeter, allowing passengers to read the train times after dark.

Volunteering
The award for the movement's outstanding volunteer was deservedly won by Neil Williams, chairman of Friends of Glossop station, a lively group who promote and look after their station and have links with many other station adoption groups across the north of England. Indeed, these extend as far as Lowestoft, reflecting the wartime link between the two when many evacuee children from Lowestoft were brought by train to Glossop. Gardening, poster and leaflet distribution and cleaning are all part of the regular activities of this group at the end of the former Woodhead route.

Brief Encounters on the West Highland line provided a rare opportunity to see live theatre in remote communities, with performance times arranged around the railway timetable, allowing people from nearby stations to enjoy the performance as well.

Finally, and very much to my surprise, the ACoRP lifetime achievement award for community rail support and encouraging links with heritage railways went to your correspondent.

Authority. Chris joined the ACoRP board in 2009, always giving his knowledge and wisdom freely within community rail circles.

He has done much to bridge the gap between community rail and heritage rail by active involvement in both sectors, being chair of the West Somerset Steam Railway Trust and secretary of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Railways. He is also the author of two well-respected and well-researched railway books.

Jools Townsend, chief executive of ACoRP, said: "Congratulations to Chris Austin OBE for his tireless work in advocating on behalf of the community rail movement. The efforts of Chris and all our winners show how important community rail is, connecting local people with their railways and building happier, more inclusive and sustainable communities. Community rail work often goes unsung, but awareness and involvement is on the increase."

Respect and congratulations for Chris's winning ways

Railfuture's Chris Austin was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the annual Association of Community Rail Partnerships Community Rail Awards gala dinner in Glasgow in October, for his contribution to the community rail movement.

Chris was a key figure from the very early years of the community rail movement. He joined British Rail in 1967, initially working on project planning including the Salisbury area resignalling scheme. By the time of rail privatisation in 1994, he was parliamentary affairs manager.

He became aware of the novel idea of community rail being promoted by activists in the North of England, led by Paul Salveson, and was successful in getting the Strategic Railway Authority and politicians to promote the concept. He led the first consultation on the Community Rail Development Strategy, which at the time attracted a massive response to the Strategic Rail

◆◆◆◆ Please remember Railfuture in your will: www.railfuture.org.uk/legacies



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■ Metro & Me launched in Cardiff

The impact of the planned South Wales Metro was the subject of a report launched in Cardiff in October. *Metro and Me* (see graphic strip above), produced by Cardiff University school of geography and planning, examines how the Metro will improve regional planning, housing, economic development, design, green infrastructure and culture. As well as running the next Wales and Borders franchise, KeolisAmey will design and build the next phase of the Metro, including electrification of the core Valley Lines. First Minister Carwyn Jones confirmed that £119 million of European Union funding has been secured for the Metro project.

■ Looking after the Borders

The big news for Wales was the launch in October of Transport for Wales rail services. See back page for a fuller report. The improvements proposed by Transport for Wales exceed those in Railfuture's *Development Plan for Wales and the Borders*. For example, there will be an extra two-hourly service from Cardiff to Liverpool, additional trains between Shrewsbury and Crewe and a new service from Wrexham to Liverpool. There will be additional locomotive-hauled services with newer stock, with Chester station getting the second biggest spend after Cardiff Central. In Wales there is concern about the large amount of spending in the Cardiff valleys with much lower spending elsewhere. A major promise is improved Sunday services but these have yet to be negotiated with Network Rail and with the TfW rail staff.

■ Rail franchise and Metro scrutiny

The Welsh Government's economy, infrastructure and skills committee in November invited the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport and Transport for Wales to discuss the new rail franchise and contract. Railfuture will ensure that it is involved in consultations on both future timetable consultation and new train design.

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■ HS3 worries in Rochdale and Oldham

Passengers in the Rochdale and Oldham areas have inadequate rail services already and are likely to miss out on the benefits from future rail expansion. Campaigners representing passengers using Littleborough, Mills Hill and Castleton stations are worried that HS3 planners are fixated on the benefits of building a high speed line as a way of speeding up journeys between the cities. They believe the planners are not taking sufficient notice of the existing demand for travel from intermediate stations, let alone their future potential. The criticisms come from rail user group Support The Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester, known by its acronym STORM.

STORM's doubts centre on the promotional approach from HS3, Northern Powerhouse Rail, Rail North and Transport for the North. STORM believes there may be insufficient demand for a new fast service with three or four trains an hour between Leeds, Bradford and Manchester. By contrast, stations in Greater Manchester where considerable housing development is currently taking place within walking distance of the station are being ignored. Littleborough still has to suffer a meagre two trains an hour off-peak service, despite the passenger numbers justifying at least three trains an hour, based on Transport for Greater Manchester guidelines. Patronage between Littleborough and Smithy Bridge towards Manchester is higher than the total Manchester-bound figures for Todmorden, Hebden Bridge and Halifax added together. Mills Hill is the second busiest unstaffed station in Greater Manchester and serves areas with expanding residential development in Oldham and Rochdale, but still gets a mere two trains per hour. Six, soon to be seven, trains an hour pass through Mills Hill and Castleton, but only two stop. Castleton has the largest planned and potential residential development of any place served by the Calder Valley line. STORM asks whether Transport for Greater Manchester really mean it when they say they support three off-peak trains an hour for Littleborough and Mills Hill. How is it that Rail North will not agree to any such improvements?

■ Diesel pollution in Manchester Victoria

Problems with the refurbishment of Manchester Victoria station have been

identified by STORM's chairman Richard Greenwood. The new roof over platforms 1, 2 and the Metrolink platforms brings no benefit to platforms 3-6. Because they are underneath the section with the Arena, they are dark, have no toilet or refreshment facilities and are affected by exhaust fumes from idling diesel trains. The extraction system has little effect on the diesel fumes.

Richard's letter in the *Manchester Evening News* attracted a lot of interest with one correspondent suggesting that the rail unions should take an interest because trains with engines running in stations are a health hazard to train and station staff as well as passengers.

■ Northern's recovery plan stumbles

Hopes that most of Northern's rail services would be reinstated in October were dashed. Cancellations and delays continued on the Kirkby and Ormskirk lines, and on Blackburn-Southport services. The Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Association is worried that Northern and Transport for the North are not getting their acts together. Tuesday 2 October was a re-run of the meltdown that occurred in May. On the Southport line, the first Manchester Victoria service was cancelled and the 07.17 to Manchester Piccadilly was reduced to two cars, with standing passengers at Burscough and no one able to board from Appley Bridge onwards. The evening peak was no better, with the 17.19, the busiest service from Piccadilly, formed of a two-car Pacer, so no one was able to board at Deansgate and beyond. The reasons given for delays and cancellations are "ongoing problems of driver and train shortages". OPSTA's chair Alan Fantom predicts continuing problems with Northern services and he is worried that TfN's assessment of the situation is at odds with the still frequent cancellations, station skipping and lengthy delays. He is worried by the implication that two-car trains are accepted as the norm. He questions what TfN agreed with Northern, speculates about the management of the franchise and believes Northern did not have adequate resources in October. Northern announced that it was expecting a cascade of diesel trains from Scotland – but not until December. More class 769 Flex bimode units are expected – but not until January.

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Wasteful bimodes

I am responding to Trevor Garrod's letter "Electric future" in *Railwatch* 157. Bimode trains seem to me to be an extraordinary waste of resources. It would be more sensible to buy electric trains and use diesel locomotives to haul them over non-electrified sections.

Why are train operating companies so reluctant to couple and uncouple locomotives nowadays? Now that we have automatic couplings, it is much easier than it used to be.

Maintaining a multitude of underfloor engines must be costly and a nightmare for the people who do it. There is also the cooling problem. It is all right with a 300 hp engine but a 750 hp engine is pushing against the physical limits.

There just is not enough space to provide adequate radiator area. We have already had some cases of bimode trains failing because of engines overheating in hot weather.

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Let's be realistic

Ian Brown's reference to the Northern and Thameslink timetable fiasco in May is fair but does not attempt to apportion blame.

Now the dust has settled it has become apparent that the Northern and TransPennine timetables, hastily produced by Network Rail, are far from ideal.

For example, turnaround times at Manchester Airport and at Scarborough are about 10 minutes which provides insufficient recovery time in the event of disruption on the trans-Pennine route. Delays are often caused by scheduling through the Ordsall Chord which may work in theory but in practice frequently does not. I cannot help feeling sorry for the operators who are now being blamed for an unreliable service, when the cause lies further up the line. They need realistic, rather than theoretical, timetables. I believe Lord Reith (of BBC fame) said that if you want a good public service do not let the Government anywhere near it.

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Forgotten cities

Why is the West Coast main line more successful financially than the beleaguered East



Picture: RICHARD CRANE

DIESEL POWER PACK: Vivarail's class 230 was operating trial runs on the Bedford-Bletchley line in October, but a planned December date for introduction on to regular services has been postponed until the new year. The train has an "easily removable" modular diesel engine which is designed to be simple to maintain. The former London District line train has thus been given a new lease of life, at a time when train operators have complained that a shortage of diesel trains prevents them expanding services on branch and secondary lines. Next year five of Vivarail's class 230 trains should also be operating on the Wrexham-Bidston line as part of the

Transport for Wales rail service. Meanwhile a battery version of the class 230 was offering free trips on the Bo'ness and Kinneil heritage railway in Scotland in October as part of its test-running programme. Bill Reeve, director of rail for Transport Scotland, said: "The Scottish Government's programme for 2017-18 included a commitment to trial hybrid self-powered trains." Vivarail's Adrian Shooter said: "I have long admired the stance and political will of the Scottish Government to reduce emissions in towns and cities."

INSET: The charging point for passengers' phones, a facility difficult to find in the new Thameslink class 700 trains.

Coast main line? Collectively Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow are much more populous than Leeds, Newcastle and Edinburgh.

With its various alignments and branches, the WCML also provides good services to places such as Coventry, Wolverhampton, Stoke, Chester, Preston, Carlisle and Edinburgh. The ECML, on the other hand, makes little or no attempt to serve Bradford, Huddersfield, Hull, Grimsby, Middlesbrough or Sunderland.

These major cities and towns are surrendered to open-access operators while Leicester, Nottingham, Derby and Sheffield are served by a different franchise. Leeds and Newcastle are not the only cities in Yorkshire and the North East. LNER and HS2 planners please take note.

Peter Zemroch, Ellesmere Port

East West option

It seems that a route for the Central section of East-West Rail from Bedford to Cambridge will not now be mooted until the New Year. Meanwhile,

Biggleswade station urgently needs a multi-storey car park, and also disabled access to every platform. But where is the money to be found? EWR could be the answer. Any interchange station with the East Coast main line will need a comprehensive public transport network, but

no bus operator would be interested in serving a new rail station in the middle of nowhere. The "Sandy corridor" could be anywhere between Biggleswade and St Neots. Both have well established bus links, but the problem with EWR going as far north as St Neots would be how

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Picture: ROGER BLAKE

First step to sitting more comfortably

I write further to Paul Abell's article "Are you sitting comfortably?" in *Railwatch* 157. My photo shows how to travel in less discomfort on the Department for Transport-specified Thameslink Desiro City class 700 trains. Always head for the rear of the train to find tables, power sockets, and a better class of ironing board seat!

Roger Blake, London
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to serve the new Cambridge South station. From Bedford, EWR could enter Biggleswade from the north, and turn east before the Greensand ridge into the Cam Valley.

The Hitchin corridor was discounted because of its limited capacity, and the problem of accommodating the varied stopping, semi-fast and non-stop trains over the twin-track line. That could be overcome by running EWR west of the Hitchin line and joining it north of Foxtan.

A short link to EWR from north of Royston would then resolve another intractable problem, that of Foxtan level crossing, where trains cross the A10 trunk road at up to 90mph. As well as removing the source of the problem at Foxtan, the loop thus created would also allow semi-fast and non-stop trains to pass stopping services and freight trains.

The EWR Central section needs a holistic solution. My proposal ticks all the boxes.

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Planning for growth

Does the railway plan sufficiently for major new housing developments? That question comes to mind in respect of two particular London locations, alongside the stations at Blackhorse Road and Wembley Stadium.

Blackhorse Road Overground station has narrow steps and narrow platforms, which even now struggle to cope in rush hours with two-car trainloads. Yet there are no plans to widen them and with new four-car

trains being introduced shortly, how will they cope with double-length trainloads plus the likely massive increase in traffic from the new housing development across the road?

Fortunately Wembley Stadium station was purpose-built for big crowds but many of the trains that stop there are only two or three cars long. The risk here is that during the evening peaks, these trains will be packed at Marylebone with an influx of new homegoing Wembley commuters, leaving no room for those returning to short-platformed stations such as the Sudburys who have no alternative services they can use.

This issue has been raised with Chiltern Railways, but again they have no plans to address the problem, seemingly hoping that people will trek the considerable distance to Wembley Park rather than using the station which sits directly below their balconies. In both cases, one can see major problems arising unless something is done to tackle them in advance.

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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
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.

Railfuture in the media

By Bruce Williamson
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So far this year has been a good one for getting Railfuture's message and name out there.

By mid-October, we had achieved as many appearances in the media as we had in the whole of last year, on average once every other day.

Of course, the timetable chaos in May and June generated a lot of interest in the railways, with as many as seven separate interviews being given on just one day, but there have been many other topics as well, including fares, overcrowding, electrification and re-nationalisation.

The second week in October was particularly busy, with two separate appearances on UK-wide television on the same day, as well as appearances on LBC, Radio Wales, Radio Scotland and Scottish TV. We keep track of all our media appearances



Picture: MATT PUGH

BUSY: Bruce Williamson

on our website where you can see and hear our interviews for yourself by typing "Railfuture in the news" into your favourite search engine.

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Can the Midlands star rise in the east?

By **Ariadne Tampion**

ariadne.tampion@railfuture.org.uk

In *Railwatch* 157 Railfuture West Midlands chair Colin Major reported on the launch of the report *Our Routes to Growth* from regional transport agency Midlands Connect.

This companion article looks at the work of Midlands Connect from the point of view of the East Midlands.

Midlands Connect aims to secure statutory sub-national transport body status in 2020. This will give it direct control of funds which it can allocate to its own priorities, rather than having to make repeated pitches to a Government with many competing agendas.

In Railfuture East Midlands we certainly wish it well with that aim! We have been impressed by its insistence on evidence-based research to back up proposed transport schemes, and by the apparently boundless energy of Midlands Connect director Maria Machancoses.

We were able to welcome Andrew Pritchard, a member of the Midlands Connect project team, to give an excellent presentation at Railfuture East Midlands 2018 AGM.

We are encouraged by Midlands Connect's intentions to improve east-west rail links, downgraded by the Beeching programme.

The reinstatement of a Leicester-Coventry through service is something for which we have campaigned ever since it was discontinued in the 1990s.

We are delighted Midlands Connect is developing a business case for extra services on the Derby-Stoke-Crewe corridor, which will beautifully complement our own "Inter-City Kitty" campaign (see pages 4-5).

We hope these initiatives will counterbalance the current London-centric ethos of our national rail network.

However, our big concern is that, from the point of view of the East Midlands, it may be replaced by a Birmingham-centric ethos.

The report describes aims to double the number of trains between Leicester and Birmingham via Nuneaton and reinstate the direct Leicester-Coventry service.

"This would bring 211,000 more people in Leicestershire within an hour of Birmingham, and 161,000 more people within an hour of Coventry," says the report. But we do not want the plan to empty Leicester!

Readers in the habit of looking up into the sky may have noticed the uncanny similarity between



KEY CAMPAIGNERS: From left, Railfuture's Steve Jones, Colin Major, Ariadne Tampion, David Harby and David Bill, who is also a councillor for Hinckley and Bosworth, at Curzon Street, Birmingham. They represent Railfuture's East and West Midlands and Lincolnshire branches



KEY PERSON: Maria Machancoses

the layout of the Dynamic Triangle of the East Midlands cities of Leicester, Derby and Nottingham, and that of the Summer Triangle of Altair, Deneb and Vega.

That does not mean the East Midlands is well-starred for rail investment. On the contrary, the East Midlands rail network has been starved of funding, and subjected to a string of broken promises. The cancellation of Midland main line electrification northwards from Kettering via Leicester is a recent high-profile example.

Key to people's prosperity and well-being is the ability to get around their local areas easily. The East Midlands cities are small in comparison to London or Birmingham, but together they form a significant centre of population with a great diversity of activities: manufacturing, commerce, the arts, sport, and a wide choice of universities.

The counties surrounding them are more than dormitories for the cities. They are tourist



KEY LOCATION: East Midlands Parkway station

destinations, agricultural areas, and a popular location for logistics operations, given the central position of the region within England. The attractive market towns offer an perfect middle lifestyle choice to their residents. More important for the people of the East Midlands than good links with Birmingham and London are good links within the region itself, for it can provide most of what they need.

At the moment these links leave a lot to be desired. The issues are mostly nationally commonplace ones, of services with inadequate rolling stock, or that stop early in the evening, or do not run on Sundays. But one particular bugbear, a direct result of the London-centric nature of national rail services, is the way it is possible to return home by rail from

a good night out in a town or city to the south of one's home, but not from one to the north.

Our biggest disappointment of all in *Our Routes to Growth* is the total lack of any mention of the reinstatement of passenger services on the National Forest Line between Leicester and Burton upon Trent. We believe this line has the potential both to provide a badly needed local facility to the communities along it, and to play a strategic role in the national network.

So while we see many causes for optimism with regard to Midlands Connect, including the involvement of Leicester's rail enthusiast City Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby, who opened the 2017 Railfuture Autumn Conference, we also see plenty of campaigning still to do.

Picture: BRIAN MORRISON

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■ ■ Ferry failure leads to more lorries on Scotland's roads

The Rosyth-Zeebrugge ferry was withdrawn after a fire on one of the DFDS ships. DFDS explained that it had given up hope of making the route financially viable. Scottish freight customers had apparently been finding it cheaper to send lorries down to ferry ports in the north of England. One would have thought that sending freight by lorry rather than sea is against transport economics, especially as road haulage is subsidised by not being charged the full cost that lorries impose upon the network. Rather than level the playing field by subsidising more environmentally friendly rail freight, the British Government and the Office of Rail and Road have increased rail freight access charges where they are competing against road. In other words, the Government has knowingly loaded the dice in favour of road transport. Why?

■ ■ Rail potential rejected as developer cash goes to roads

The Clydesdale village of Law, on the West Coast main line in Lanarkshire, has campaigned for the return of its railway station since Law station closed in the 1960s. There are now plans to build hundreds of houses, which will lead to increased commuting to Glasgow and Edinburgh. It is disappointing that South Lanarkshire Council has now ceased to insist upon a developer contribution towards public transport, but plans to use the money to widen roads instead.

■ ■ Dark days for the campaign to reopen stations in the East

On the evening of Storm Ali, dark clouds formed over Reston Village Hall where RAGES (Rail Action Group, East of Scotland) members were gathered, hoping to hear that the promised new stations at Reston and East Linton would be completed within Network Rail's Control Period 6, that is by March 2024. Unfortunately neither the reports submitted by Transport Scotland and Network Rail nor the local MSP Paul Wheelhouse could give any indication of when these stations, originally scheduled to open in 2016, would finally come into existence. "The reports were completely anodyne and told us nothing new," said RAGES chair Tom Thorburn. "Our group has been put off continually over the years by requirements to carry out numerous studies into the restoration of our stations, and we feel we are playing pass-the-parcel with each successive transport minister."

■ ■ St Andrews is hoping for positive news from STAG

Following the award from the Local Rail Development Fund, the initial part of the assessment is proceeding under the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide (STAG) process. The assessment by Peter Brett Associates and entitled "The Case for Change" is expected to be produced at the end of April, just four months away. In the meantime, StARLink (St Andrews Rail Link) continues to participate in the Fife Rail Forum and is planning a suitable commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the last train into St Andrews on 4 January 1969.

■ ■ Five-mile rail link that could transform Levenmouth

An interim report into restoring a train service to Levenmouth, carried out by Peter Brett Associates, has been completed after 1,000 local people responded to the consultation. PBA is carrying out the Levenmouth Transport Assessment at the behest of Transport Scotland. Levenmouth Rail Campaign is anxiously awaiting the final report which is expected to be completed soon. Levenmouth has a population of 37,600 and is the largest urban area in Scotland not directly served by rail, despite the presence of a five-mile-long mothballed line between Thornton (on the Fife Circle line) and Leven.

■ ■ Five-minute rail ride beats Portobello's 20-minute buses

Unfortunately Capital Rail Action Group's application to the Local Rail Development Fund for a study into reopening Portobello station was unsuccessful, on the grounds that only rail was being proposed as a way to improve journey times to the city centre. A train would take just five minutes to reach the centre of Edinburgh from Portobello, while buses take 25 minutes. To a rail campaigner it looks obvious that road solutions are unacceptable.

■ ■ Verdict soon on three reopened stations for Dumfries

New stations at Beattock (on the West Coast main line), Thornhill and East Rigg (both on the Glasgow and South Western route through Dumfries), are being considered in a stage 3 assessment under the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide process. The results are expected shortly.



Picture: ALLISON COSGROVE

Dumfries station must have one of the most magnificent gardens in Scotland, enhanced in this picture by the luxury train, The Royal Scotsman. The station itself boasts baskets of beautiful flowers and a window of historical photos

■ ■ Borders link options for Tweedbank

The Campaign for Borders Rail is supporting proposals to extend the line from Tweedbank to Hawick and then on to Carlisle. There is also a proposal to connect Tweedbank with the East Coast main line at Berwick-upon-Tweed, which would mean Borders passengers would be able to travel south to Newcastle upon Tyne and York without having to travel north to Edinburgh. Overcrowding is now common on the Borders Railway between Edinburgh and Tweedbank which reopened in 2015. 4.1 million journeys have been recorded since the line reopened.

■ ■ Allander could benefit from Milngavie doubling



Scottish Green Party MSP Ross Greer, pictured left, is backing East Dunbartonshire Council's campaign to double Glasgow's busy line between Westerton and Milngavie, which could lead to a new station opening at Allander. The current single track layout causes continual delays to commuter trains.

■ ■ Rail prospects boosted around Aberdeen

Kintore station is expected to reopen in December next year, after work, expected to start in January, on doubling the track between Dyce and Inverurie. This follows doubling between Aberdeen and Dyce. Nestrans, the regional transport partnership, is also considering reopening Dyce-Ellon, with a possible future extension to Peterhead and Fraserburgh:

Contacts:

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES): www.rages.org.uk/
 Beattock Station Action Group: www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/
 St Andrews Rail Link campaign (StARLink): www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/ facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign
 LevenMouth Rail Campaign: www.lmrc-action.org.uk/ facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/
 Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG): www.capitalrail.org.uk/
 Newburgh Train Station campaign: <http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/>
 Forth Rail Link (Dunfermline-Kincardine-Alloa): www.forthrailink.com facebook.com/forthrailink/
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 Campaign for Borders Rail: <http://www.campaignforbordersrail.org/>

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■ ■ Culvert work to avert future flooding

Flood prevention work finally got under way this summer at Exeter's Cowley Bridge Junction, which is where the Taunton and Barnstaple lines diverge. The railway was closed for three days in June for the installation of 24 hollow concrete rectangular culvert structures. Railfuture was the first to recommend work on the culverts, when the line flooded three times in quick succession at Cowley Bridge Junction in late 2012.

■ ■ Work planned for Whiteball Tunnel

Line closures are anticipated next year on the Exeter to Taunton line for work on Whiteball Tunnel from mid February to 10 March. It is therefore disappointing that Railfuture's recommendation, to make the single track Honiton route an effective diversionary route for London Paddington trains, has still not happened. New passing loops at Whimble and near Crewkerne are needed.

■ ■ Diversionary route needed following culvert collapse

The necessity for the diversionary Exeter to Plymouth via Okehampton line reopening was also demonstrated once again this autumn. On 14 October the coastal route was closed all day, due to a collapsed culvert creating a large hole under the tracks between Teignmouth and Newton Abbot.

■ ■ Dawlish closed three times by high tides and storms

Strong winds and a 4.7 metre early morning tide at Dawlish on 7 November led to the closure of the Exeter-Newton Abbot line from 03.30. The last service through was the westbound Night Riviera, running 49 minutes early from Exeter to beat the tide. It passed Dawlish at around 03.40 and used the landward bidirectional track between Dawlish Warren and Teignmouth. The 09.00 Penzance to Paddington Cornish Riviera was one of the first trains to run through later in the morning. From 16:30 the next day, the high tide at 18.58 resulted in a five-hour evening closure of the line to CrossCountry Voyager trains, plus cancellation of



Culvert work in progress at Cowley Bridge Junction

Great Western local stopping trains. There was a third complete closure the next evening, for another high tide which coincided with strong winds. The line reopened in time for the westbound Night Riviera, but unfortunately the train had already been cancelled from Paddington. A week later, DevonLive reported that Network Rail's David Lovell met Teignbridge councillors to explain that a £500 million plan was being drawn up to realign the line at Holcombe Beach, near Dawlish, and to create a "wave return" to deflect energy away from the line and the cliffs. Funding, however, had not yet been identified.

Picture: RAIL BUSINESS DAILY

All the fun of the feest and no begging

By Bernard Marriott

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The first of October saw the start of the 33rd Railfuture members' trip overseas, this time to Leiden, near Amsterdam, organised by the indefatigable Trevor Garrod.

Most of us travelled mid-morning from St Pancras, changing at Brussels and Rotterdam, while one person crossed by sea from Harwich to Hook of Holland.

Another tried the direct morning 08.31 St Pancras-Amsterdam service, with stops at Brussels and Rotterdam, a worthy competitor for the airlines.

We avoided the fast Thalys to Rotterdam and used the joint Belgian-Dutch international train. While not as fast as the Thalys, it was more spacious.

It is not possible to reserve seats on Belgian and Dutch trains but, to compensate, their trains are generally lengthy with plenty of accommodation for all comers, and provide a very pleasant environment.

Leiden and Oktober Feest

Leiden is on a par, at least population-wise, with Watford, and we arrived as preparations were in full swing for the Oktober Feest, an official city holiday, which marks the relief of Leiden from the Spanish siege of 1574. City centre streets were closed to motor traffic with funfair stalls and rides everywhere.

Our hotel overlooked the station and the adjacent (this is not the UK) bus station. I marvelled at the way cyclists, moped riders, pedestrians and buses interacted without apparent problem.

The bus station handles 100 buses an hour and relies on the slick national OV-chipkaart ticket system which works for trains and buses.

Chip card

OV stands for public transport and covers all forms of public transport in the Netherlands. It works in much the same way as London's Oyster card except that you cannot use a contactless bank card as a substitute.

On local (non rail) transport there is a boarding fee, currently €0.90, plus a distance fee, set by the individual operator.

In Amsterdam you pay €0.155 per km, calculated every 50 metres. If you change bus or tram within 35 minutes you do not pay the boarding fee again.

By train, you must start travelling within 30 minutes of checking in, and must complete the journey within six hours.

On all forms of transport you must check in and check out and, if you change from one train



A LONG WALK: The bridge at Driemanspolder which crosses two tram lines, a local road, a slip road, a motorway, two railway lines, a local dual carriageway, and two bus lanes



PLATFORM PARTY: Members of Railfuture enjoy going Dutch

operator to another you have to check out on the first operator's reader and check in on the next.

The chip card is invaluable for locals, but not convenient for tourists as you have to buy one initially for €7.50, have a €20 deposit on it before travelling by train, and the card itself expires after four or five years.

Tourists usually buy individual disposable cards which can be bought at stations for train and some tram journeys, and on the vehicle for bus and other tram journeys. Various day tickets are also available.

Dutch railway museum

I visited the Dutch national railway museum at Maliebaan, on the outskirts of Utrecht. An hourly shuttle from Utrecht Centraal serves the museum which has, among others, two Beyer Peacock locos from Manchester.

Most principal Dutch stations are gated, and you need to use a chip card to enter and leave. Journeys can be broken without formality.

Later we had the pleasure of meeting Marc Schram, a member of Rover, Railfuture's Dutch equivalent. He advised us to get Tourist Day Tickets (a well kept secret in Leiden, sold only at the tourist information office) and join him for a look at transport aspects of The Hague.

Zoetermeer and The Hague

The Day Ticket is not valid on trains, so we went by bus to meet

Marc at Zoetermeer, rapidly getting the hang of checking in and out every time we changed bus or tram.

Zoetermeer has grown from a small village of around 6,500 people in 1950 to a population of around 125,000 now, the same as Leiden, and slightly more than half that of Milton Keynes. It is connected by tram with The Hague. When the tram arrives it begins a long anticlockwise loop

which sees it crossing over itself at an interchange station, and then completing the circuit at the start of the loop.

We rode the loop and had the impression of a vast new town, very neat and looking at ease with itself.

We stopped at Driemanspolder, and there we used the fabulous cycle and foot bridge (Nelson Mandelabrug – a long walk to freedom?), which crossed two tram lines, a local road, a slip road, a motorway, two railway lines, a local dual carriageway, and two bus lanes.

On we went to The Hague, a city with more tram routes than bus routes. Centraal station is remarkable in having trams or Metro on three levels. Local trams run at street and concourse level.

Visualise now the mezzanine floor at London's Liverpool Street station over the ticket barriers. Imagine that, instead of a row of shops, you have a tram line and station. This gives a good idea of the layout at Centraal. From the upper tram station, go up another escalator, and you arrive at the Metro line which runs to Rotterdam.

Impressions

Overall my impression was one of huge public expenditure on transport infrastructure and housing, all of which is in excellent condition, and a country inhabited by a well-heeled population.

One gauge of their success is that I did not spot anyone begging on the street.

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Picture: DEUTSCHE BAHN

London & South East

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■ ■ Railfuture accepts plan to close Overground ticket offices

Railfuture responded to the proposal to close ticket offices at 51 stations on the London Overground network. Railfuture accepted the plan, while noting that operator Arriva Rail London has a contractual commitment to maintain full-time staffing at the stations which lose their ticket offices. We acknowledge that some Overground stations which do not have a ticket office have seen a growth in passenger numbers. The public consultation was carried out by London TravelWatch, the statutory consumer body. Railfuture advocated that the closures should be delayed or reviewed in locations where two ticket offices are in close proximity. Once one ticket office closes, use at another may increase above the required threshold. Railfuture also pointed out that it is essential that vending machines offer the full range of tickets. You can read the Railfuture response in full at: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display1879>

■ ■ Railfuture welcomes Lea Valley line improvements

Angel Road station, on Greater Anglia's Lea Valley line in Enfield, is London's least-used station. The weekdays-only peak-hours service attracted an estimated 33,544 passengers in 2016/17. Railfuture supports closure of Angel Road because the new Meridian Water station will open in May only a few hundred metres away. Serving a major new development of homes and jobs, it will host an additional, and all-day/ every-day, half-hourly connection with Stratford, via a new third track to Tottenham Hale and the Railfuture-inspired new station at Lea Bridge, opened by Rail Minister Claire Perry two years ago. Meridian Water is being built to accommodate a fourth track for Crossrail 2.

■ ■ Briefings keep Railfuture in the public eye

Railfuture has contributed briefings to Network Rail, the Department for Transport, the Greater London Assembly's budget and performance committee, and Wealden District Council, as well as London TravelWatch. The main topics of interest for Railfuture were East-West Rail's proposed Bicester-Bedford improvements, the future long-term funding of Transport for London, and a council's planned housing growth areas. You can read the Railfuture contributions at: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Consultation+responses>

■ ■ London venue for Thameslink passengers workshop

Railfuture provided input to the Office of Rail and Road's inquiry into the May timetable problems. The ORR has since published an interim report and planned a workshop for Northern and Thameslink stakeholders to discuss the report's findings – in Manchester. That may have been fine for Northern, but it was not convenient for Thameslink passengers. Railfuture's intervention secured an additional workshop in London.

■ ■ Monthly update for Railfuture London & SE members

Railfuture's London and South East members can now subscribe (without cost) to a two-page monthly e-newsletter *inter-railse* which fills the gaps between the eight-page quarterly newsletter posted to all members with *Railwatch*. Both can be viewed or downloaded from the branch website.

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East>
Twitter: @RailfutureLSE

Celebrating our successes at the 2019 Annual General Meeting

By Wendy Thorne

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The Railfuture board is changing the format of our AGMs and the next one, to be held in Cardiff on Saturday 18 May 2019, will be the first to introduce these.

The day will start with formal proceedings, carrying out our legal obligations such as reviewing the annual accounts and announcing results of board elections. This will be

followed by outlining our plans for the future and the presentation of a new award.

After a lunch break there will be a short presentation and/or workshop on a topic to be confirmed. The rest of the day will then be free for people to network or to make their way home. The venue, Sport Wales, is approximately a 20-minute walk from the railway station along the riverside and has a café and restaurant as well as bedrooms that

are available on a bed and breakfast basis. Further details will be sent to members in due course.

The aim of the changes is to allow members to celebrate Railfuture's successes and those of our fellow volunteers in an uplifting day that encourages further engagement. If you have not attended a Railfuture AGM before then hopefully you will give May 2019 a try. The board will be happy to welcome you.



BRAVE NEW WORLD: Transport for Wales was launched in October at Pontypridd with this proud boast – on a Pacer train

Pace of change speeds up in Wales

By Rowland Pittard

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Transport for Wales Rail Services took over running trains on Sunday 14 October.

The first TfW train was the 02.17 Fishguard Harbour to Carmarthen, a similar working to the first privatised train in the 1990s.

The official launch took place next day at Pontypridd with First Minister Carwyn Jones travelling on a Pacer train, with the TfW black banner on its side, from Cardiff Cathays.

The Wales and Borders franchise "is delivered by" Transport for Wales Rail Services. The trains are operated by KeolisAmey.

Responsibility for infrastructure of the Core Valley routes to Cardiff Queen Street and Cardiff Bay (from Treherbert, Aberdare, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) will transfer next year from Network Rail to TfW.

The rest will remain with Network Rail, including Metro routes in South East Wales (Ebbw Vale, Vale of Glamorgan and Maesteg). Only the Core Valley routes will be electrified and there will be battery operation

over sections not electrified.

New trains costing £800 million will be in service by the end of 2023 and 95% of services will be operated by new trains.

The first aim is to remove the two-car Pacer units next year by obtaining nine four-car trimode Flex trains, five Vivarail three-car class 230 trains and other diesel trains. New CAF Cavity bimode units will be assembled at Newport and there will also be new Stadler Flirt bimode tram-trains. All the new trains and services will be in place by Christmas 2023.

A large increase in services is planned for the Core Cardiff Valley lines but elsewhere improvements are small and some routes will see no increase in weekday services. This is of concern, particularly on routes west of Cardiff and Llandudno Junction.

A substantial increase in Sunday services is also promised.

When Arriva Trains Wales introduced their Standard Pattern Timetable there was a 20% increase in services. Railfuture Wales wants to see a similar ambitious increase from TfW and has asked for extensive con-

sultation before a new timetable is issued.

First Minister Carwyn Jones talked of the historic and economic significance of the new contract.

He said: "This is an important moment for rail in Wales – indeed for devolution itself. Led by Transport for Wales with our partners KeolisAmey this will be the very first 'made in Wales' rail service, designed and delivered by the Welsh Government.

"The opportunity to redesign and repurpose our railway network in Wales is a once in a generation opportunity and I am confident that by 2023 it can be the best passenger rail service in the UK. The chance to develop an integrated transport system that encourages economic growth and better supports our public services is supported across all political parties, and the opportunities to develop Metro systems here in South East Wales, in the North East and around Swansea Bay are drawing attention from across the globe."

He added: "It is important to understand that our bold ambitions will take time to bring to

fruition and will not be achieved overnight.

"However, when I talk to the drivers, the guards, the maintenance crews or ticket hall staff across Wales I am always struck by their enthusiasm and their belief in what our rail network can be in Wales.

"We are lucky to have so many people, who come to work for a service every day, genuinely wanting to make it better – and who see in it the potential for growth. We need to harness their ideas and make our railway the envy of the world."

Speaking at an earlier event in North Wales, Transport Secretary Ken Skates outlined some of the many improvements passengers can expect to see in the next few weeks, months and years.

"With investment totalling almost £5 billion over the next decade and a half, our network will be transformed."

"£194 million will be put to improving the passenger experiences at our stations across the Wales and Borders network.

"There is £738 million earmarked to modernise the central Metro lines, support the next phase of Metro and run more trains every hour. Transport for Wales rail services will offer 600 new jobs and 450 apprenticeships over the 15 year lifespan of the contract."

Long wait for London's new electric trains

By Graham Larkbey

It has been an annus horribilis for London's Barking-Gospel Oak line passengers. Far from enjoying the luxury of new four-car electric trains from the beginning of the year as promised, they have continued to endure the misery of peak hours crush-loaded on to increasingly unreliable two-car diesel units, with cancellations a daily occurrence and some passengers unable to board.

To make matters worse, one of those units had to be transferred in June to West Midlands

Trains (which will eventually receive the whole fleet), causing the withdrawal of five peak-hour crowdbuster services and putting further pressure on the remaining units. Network Rail finally granted approval for the new class 710 electric units in October, following which driver training was scheduled to start in November with the trains being progressively introduced as they become available. For the line's long-suffering users, they cannot arrive soon enough.

For updates see www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk

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