

# railwatch

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Pictures: INTERCITY RAILFREIGHT



**Inter-city  
trains and bikes  
How rail freight  
can help combat the  
climate emergency:  
See page 2**

Further to the inaugural award at Railfuture's annual general meeting in Cardiff in 2019, and in recognition of the dedication and achievements of Railfuture volunteers, we will be presenting the award for Campaigner of the Year at the annual general meeting in Birmingham on Saturday 27 June 2020.

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 or someone who has raised the profile of Railfuture on key issues?

Perhaps they work behind the scenes, helping their local branch?

Whoever they are, if you think they deserve

recognition we would like to hear about them. 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 although the nominee must be a member of Railfuture.

The deadline for nominations to be received is 30 April 2020.

For further details or to submit a nomination please email membership director Wendy Thorne at:

[wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk)

## Railwatch contents

- 2 Chris Page
- 3 High speed rail
- 4 East Anglia and East Midlands
- 5 Pennine fast track
- 6 North East Rover
- 7 Investment stasis
- 8 Your views
- 10 Severnside and Wessex
- 11 Rail access champion
- 12 Rail travel in a wheelchair
- 14 Thames Valley and North East
- 15 Rail freight campaign
- 16 Wales and North West
- 17 Scotland
- 18 Your views
- 20 Midland main line
- 21 West Midlands and Yorkshire
- 22 London and South East
- 23 Railfuture board
- 24 Election promises

# HS2 must be just the start of a rail future

By Graham Nalty

High Speed Two must be given the go-ahead because the benefits of faster north-south rail links and additional capacity outweigh the increase in costs to £88 billion.

The verdict came from the Oakervee report which was leaked in November in the face of rumours that it would be kept secret until after the general election.

HS2 is due to run through Uxbridge and South Ruislip, the seat Prime Minister Boris Johnson held, and where the StopHS2 campaign has 5,000 supporters.

The leak – first reported in *The Times* – came two months after the UK2070 Commission called for rail to play the lead role in inter-city travel as the basis for a national integrated public transport system with an integrated fare system.

The UK2070 Commission is an independent inquiry into regional inequalities and is chaired by Lord Kerslake.

Its second report *Moving up the Gears* also recommended widescale improvements to the rail network, including expansion of city rail networks and “missing link” rail reopenings to rural and economically disadvantaged areas, including coastal towns. Cross-estuary rail links should also be developed, across the Tay, Humber, Thames and Neath. The commission believes rail can provide an opportunity to rebalance the inequalities of wealth that occur within the UK between different areas of the country.

It also recommended a major programme of rail electrification, new lines, reopenings and major route upgrades, totalling around 1,900 miles, with a budget agreed in 2020, followed by a detailed plan in 2021.

UK2070 relied for much of its rail understanding on a 2018 report by Greengauge 21 entitled *Beyond HS2*.

In one example UK2070 gave, it was suggested that the uplift of land values in and around Cambridge could help fund the Wisbech reopening in Fenland, one of the most deprived areas in southern England.

The UK2070 report by Professor Philip McCann showed that over 28 separate indicators, the UK is one of the most regionally unbalanced of industrialised nations. This has serious economic consequences in that we cannot take full advantage



**THINKING BIG:** Beijing station opened in 2018 and serves a Chinese high speed rail network of 18,000 miles in total length, which is expected to grow to 24,000 miles by 2025. By contrast Britain has 67 miles of high speed rail – from London to the Channel Tunnel. The proposed HS2 link to Birmingham is 140 miles and when the Y network is completed will be 330 miles long

of the economic potential of the whole of the UK, creating an imbalance of wealth and opportunity that catalyses divisions in society. In the higher performing places, this creates pressures in terms of infrastructure congestion and housing affordability.

High speed rail experts Greengauge 21 were asked to examine how better sustainable transport connectivity could address these inequalities.

This UK2070 vision majors on scheduled public transport in order to establish transport as a basic right for everybody, including those without a car. It covers the whole UK, treating public transport as a single system, concentrating on rail links but with inclusion of inter-urban bus services. This vision also embraces the importance of metropolitan city public transport, extending this approach to smaller towns and cities.

In order to identify places and areas that are disadvantaged, Greengauge 21 examined four separate inequality indices: the Social Mobility Index, life expectancy, proportion of benefits claimants and the proportion of residents aged 16-64 in employment with NVQ4 or higher qualifications.

From this, Greengauge 21 identified different parts of the UK suffering from inequality. Needless to say, these areas correspond to areas of relatively

poor rail connectivity. The findings are very diverse but Greengauge 21 identifies coastal areas as places of high inequality. Journey times between coastal towns may be extended considerably across an estuary (see examples below) and notes that no rail tunnel under water has been built in the UK in the last 100 years outside the South East. In places where rail may not be able to provide transport, it argued that fast buses should be provided from high quality rail-bus interchanges.

Greengauge 21 argues that road investment should be targeted at measures that improve the journey times of inter-urban buses rather than for cars and lorries. Greengauge 21 recommends a list of 771 new rail route miles (including 330 miles of HS2) and 1,121 route miles to be upgraded.

Some of the more interesting new rail routes recommended include: Cross Tees tunnel,

Bradford cross-city link, Humber crossing, Spalding to Grimsby, HS2 link to Nottingham from the south, Nuneaton dive-under (for Leicester to Coventry), Newark flyover, Essex to Kent connections, Heathrow north western, SE and SW connections, Exeter to Plymouth via Tavistock, Swansea Bay cut-off.

Route upgrades recommended include long sections of the east and west coast main lines, but of more note are: Sheffield to Stockport, Crewe to Newport, Leicester to Burton.

While Greengauge 21 proposals cannot be considered comprehensive, they do point the way for campaigners to argue the case for rail on ‘social equality’ grounds in cases that DfT WebTag business case analyses cannot support. Much more work needs to be done to build the case for rail to relieve inequality and to find monetary values for lost economic output directly attributed to inequality.

## Flight shame leads to Green Speed

**Rail passengers may be able to travel direct from London to Germany and south-west France if plans for a new high-speed network are successful. The idea is for Eurostar to merge with Thalys in a project codenamed Green Speed and being promoted by SNCF, the French state railway operator which owns majority stakes in both Eurostar and Thalys. The merger would need approval from the European Commission. Green Speed aims to capitalise on environmental concerns over air travel by giving passengers an alternative to air travel. Thalys is the state-owned high speed rail operator running between France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany.**

## Chair's column: We will expect rapid progress after the election

So the snap general election is with us as expected and we have to wait until afterwards to find out what the recommendations of the Williams and Oakervee reviews of franchising and High Speed Two will be – as amended to make them acceptable to the new government.

The emerging “regional” sub-national transport bodies such as Transport for the North must be given responsibility for specifying rail services and enhancements. Railfuture calls for a doubling of rail capacity in the north.

Likewise, Transport for the South East has set a strategy of doubling rail journeys in 30 years so that sustainable growth can be achieved without a major increase in road travel.

Carrots and sticks will be needed to encourage us all to use public transport, cycling or walking more. This is necessary to address climate change and air pollution. To make rail travel more attractive, sustainable and cost-effective, a rolling programme of electrification is essential, prioritising intensively used and 100 mph plus routes, especially those which are already partly electrified.

Railfuture continues to support HS2 as the best way to provide the significant additional north-south rail capacity needed to replace more polluting road and air travel. However, better connectivity with local rail

services must also be provided so that travellers can access HS2 services easily.

**Government decisions required**  
The Department for Transport is stuck on many other issues besides franchising, HS2 and electrification.

Fares are increasing faster than earnings and to fix this the cost structure of the rail industry must be addressed. The Government must also endorse the Rail Delivery Group's proposals to make the ticketing system less confusing.

The DfT has recently published the latest update of the *Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline* which shows very little progress since the previous update – approvals must be given more quickly.

Finally, the DfT and Treasury must move forward on the “market-led proposals” that have been submitted by accepting that although the finance costs of private capital may be higher than government borrowing, the focus on objectives and delivery by private investors will result in lower cost overall.

The Government must also accept that it has to facilitate access for services running between new and existing infrastructure.

**Network accessibility**  
Accessibility is important to enable everyone – those with heavy luggage or pushchairs as

well as wheelchair users or the elderly and infirm – to use the rail network.

Trains are nearly there. When the final Pacers are withdrawn next year, the focus must change to stations. This will be a long-term exercise.

The *Access for All* programme has provided level access to the platform at many larger stations, but £200 million more funding is needed in this control period to achieve Railfuture's aim of 100 more by '24, covering a greater range of stations. Achieving a level platform-train interface will be an even greater challenge, but one that must also be addressed.

**Local campaigning**  
Local campaigning is equally important. At the proposed 6,000 home Welborne garden village development in Hampshire, Railfuture Wessex has succeeded in getting land safeguarded for a new station as a condition of the planning permission for the development.

We are now working to build a stakeholder consortium which will seek approval, funding and a cost-effective solution for the station.

Earlier this year in the North East, the campaign by our affiliated South East Northumberland Rail User Group succeeded in getting funding from Northumberland County Council for the next stage of development of the project to



Railfuture chair Chris Page

reopen the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line for passengers.

This will create new journey opportunities to Newcastle, boosting the economy of the area.

SENUG was featured recently in a major article about the reopening in *RAIL* magazine, which also carried an article by SENUG chair and Railfuture member Dennis Fancett on why the Network Rail GRIP process is not fit for projects such as this which are not funded by Network Rail itself.

Successes such as these build our credibility with both stakeholders and the public, encouraging people to support us in campaigning for a bigger, better railway.



Picture: BEN WALSH

### RAIL FUTURE: Greater Anglia launched its new FLIRT trains at Cambridge station in September

[paul.hollinghurst@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:paul.hollinghurst@railfuture.org.uk)

#### Railfuture vision for the Mid-Anglia line

Following Railfuture's meeting with the Jockey Club in Newmarket, Railfuture East Anglia published its own vision for the Mid Anglia line at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Ely+Soham+Newmarket>. We believe Network Rail will be undertaking a further study into linkages in Norfolk and Suffolk to cater for growth in both passenger and freight markets. It will develop its thinking in the light of higher growth forecasts than the WebTAG formula used by the Department for Transport, and is likely to recommend that more east-west services continue east of Cambridge. The trend towards the use of larger vessels on the Far East-North Europe shipping routes places an increasing burden on the port of Felixstowe to move large volumes of containers. Only four of the additional 10 train paths on the Felixstowe branch (see October *Railwatch*) can be used until investment is made in upgrading junctions at Haughley and Ely. Two of these paths are taken up already, with the remaining two taken by mid 2020. Railfuture East Anglia wants to see these junctions make rapid progress through the *Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline* process as a matter of urgency.

#### Local Transport Plan

Railfuture East Anglia has responded to the consultation by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority on its local transport plan. We welcomed the significant number of rail schemes but we also want to see new stations at Alconbury and Hampton, an eastern entrance to Cambridge station, Cambridge North track enhancements, capacity improvements between Ely, March and Peterborough, and accessibility work at Whittlesford Parkway, Shepreth and Meldreth, and cycle and rail initiatives. We also want the flawed proposals for a rubber-tyred "Cambridge Autonomous Metro" to be implemented as a light rail network.

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+CPCA>

#### Hunstanton-King's Lynn rail link revival

Hunstanton Rail Campaign Group's Andrew Murray outlined plans to restore a railway to Hunstanton. Speaking at Railfuture's public meeting in Norwich in September, he cited Railfuture vice-president Chris Austin's comment: "Hunstanton appears condemned to remain remote from the rail network, forever held back by road congestion and peripherality". Things change fast thanks to Andrew's group lobbying Norfolk County Council, which has now agreed to commission a study into restoring a rail route. The reopened line would boost the local economy, ease the chronic traffic congestion and reduce pollution. Hunstanton will become a more attractive place to live for young people able to work in King's Lynn, Cambridge or London. Currently the young are leaving never to return. The group got 5,000 people to sign a petition calling for the line to be reinstated, leading to the county council cabinet member for finance Andrew Jamieson saying: "Norfolk County Council has agreed to fund a feasibility study for what the railway would cost and what the benefits would be, and that would include whether to use the existing route, a new route, or light rail."

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#### Vivarail visit

Members of Railfuture East Midlands visited Vivarail at Long Marston, Warwickshire, in September, to view progress with the conversions of former London Underground trains into class 230 multiple units for the national network. These trains are already in service on the Bedford-Bletchley line, and we saw work in progress on trains for Transport for Wales. Other orders are in prospect, both for the UK and overseas. We were also shown the rapid charging system being developed to enable battery electric operation on non-electrified lines. Vivarail made us very welcome, and we were impressed by its innovative low-cost approach.

Vivarail has announced that it is moving its main manufacturing base to Southam, near Leamington Spa, to cope with its growing order book. Vivarail began operations at Long Marston five years ago. Managing director Adrian Shooter, a Railfuture vice-president, said: "We have managed to do so much in a short space of time." Vivarail has also signed a new contract with Cambrian Transport for use of a new test track at Barry, South Wales.

#### Ivanhoe line

After a constructive meeting at City Hall, Leicester in September, the Campaign to Reopen the Ivanhoe Line was asked to conduct a feasibility study on behalf of the donating local authorities. Arrangements are being made to form a sub-committee and to devise a timetable and a process acceptable to all parties. The Ivanhoe campaigners have had positive meetings with two local enterprise partnerships which see the value of a passenger service as a way to create jobs. Further meetings are planned with Bardon Aggregates and Amazon, major businesses on the line.

#### West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan

Railfuture East Midlands has responded to the draft strategic plan for the area covered by the three local authorities that will be replaced by the new West Northamptonshire unitary authority in April 2021. The plan includes reopening Market Harborough-Northampton as part of North South Rail, to complement East West Rail, now under development. We welcome the reopening as it would plug a major gap in the East Midlands rail network, linking the Midland and West Coast main lines and giving the "dynamic triangle" cities of Leicester, Derby and Nottingham a direct rail connection to Northampton, Milton Keynes and beyond. We also flagged up the potential of reopening the former Northampton-Bedford line via Olney. This would give direct access from Northampton to Thameslink, plus easier access to Eurostar services at St Pancras for people with heavy luggage. In association with East West Rail, it would provide improved access to Cambridge and beyond.

#### ACoRP winners

Successes from our region in this year's ACoRP Community Rail Awards were: Most enhanced station buildings and surroundings: 1st place, Bottesford (Poacher Line CRP and Bee Friendly Trust); 2nd place, Matlock Bath



Picture: ARIADNE TAMPION

#### Railfuture at Vivarail Long Marston

(Derwent Valley CRP and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust). Small projects award: 2nd place, Friends of Spondon station. Best marketing or communications campaign: 2nd place, Derwent Valley Line CRP (for communications about Derby Resignalling). Outstanding volunteer contribution: 3rd place, Phil Thomas (lead station adopter at Radcliffe and a Railfuture East Midlands committee member).

#### Nottingham tram extension

Railfuture welcomes further extension of Nottingham's tram system as a way to improve transport provision beyond the reach of heavy rail. Broxtowe Borough Council is considering four options for a westward extension of the tram network, from Phoenix Park to Giltbrook Retail Park between Kimberley and Eastwood. Costings vary from £135 million to £168 million. An initial feasibility study from Mott MacDonald also mentions the possibility of a further extension to Langley Mill and the Amber Valley. Railfuture welcomes the prospect of a rail connection at Langley Mill which would open up many new journey opportunities.

#### Radio appearance

Stephen Chaytow of Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership and the Railfuture East Midlands committee was interviewed on BBC Radio Derby on 21 October about the campaign to reopen Matlock-Buxton-Chinley. The line is needed urgently to provide sufficient rail capacity for the quarry operators in the Buxton area as well as for a passenger service. Local Peaks and Dales journey volumes have more than doubled (up 135%) since 2002. Survey work by MEMRAP is trying to find an alternative route for the popular Monsal trail, a condition imposed by the Peak National Park Authority.

#### Forthcoming meetings

Our pre-Christmas railway conversation will be at 12.00 on Tuesday 3 December at the Canalhouse, Nottingham. All members in the region are invited to come and chat about railway development over lunch.

The next open meeting will be on Saturday 11 January, 14.00-16.30, venue to be confirmed: follow us on [Twitter @RailfutureEMids](https://twitter.com/RailfutureEMids) for updates.

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

Twitter: @RailfutureEMids

# End this Pennine procrastination

By Andrew Oldfield

The doubling of passengers using the national rail network over the past 20 years has been mostly achieved by operating the system at full capacity. Capacity depends on infrastructure. Capacity and connectivity are an item. Connectional opportunities are dependent on capacity.

There is a pressing need significantly to increase network capacity, including expansion, an example of which Tim Weller highlighted in *Railwatch* 161. It is not only about avoiding bottlenecks, as he stated, but also opening up new journey opportunities and providing greater network flexibility by means of further diversionary routes to eliminate rail replacement bus services.

Why then has tram seemingly triumphed over rail? Could it possibly be due to Network Rail continuing to deliver over-budget and missing completion dates on too many projects?

Does not the loss of the Worcester-Derby route represent another case of the tail (tram) wagging the dog (rail), something which Railfuture has not avoided?

Has not Tim Weller identified that devolution does not come without its risks to the national rail network? Should not strategic links be safeguarded against such risks?

In *Railwatch* 161, Ian Brown refers to rail reopenings rising up the political agenda and cites the lack of a high capacity rail link between Manchester and Sheffield, with the need for such being demonstrated by the August Toddbrook reservoir incident (near Whaley Bridge) which saw the closure of the Manchester-Sheffield Hope Valley line for almost a week.

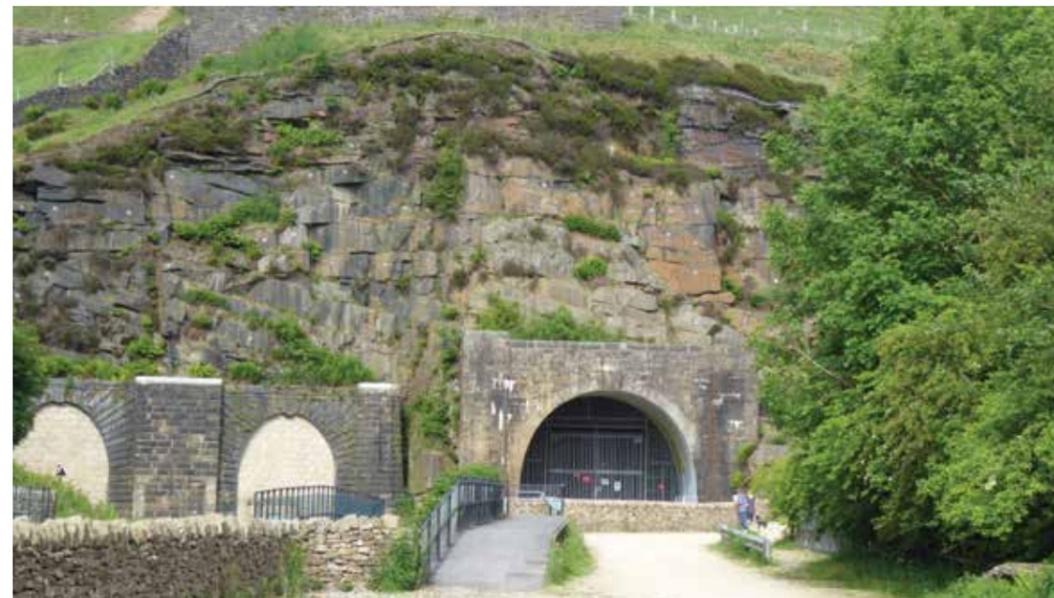
The solution is reopening the Woodhead line to provide a fast Manchester-Sheffield service, but Railfuture nationally and Railfuture North West must be more pro-active.

A dark day looms, for 5 January 2020 will mark the 50th anniversary of the withdrawal of electrified passenger services on the Woodhead route.

An even darker future could prevail because Woodhead is subject to a planning application lodged with Barnsley Council by National Grid to lay cables below the trackbed at Dunford Bridge.

If approved, this could extinguish all hope of future rail reopening at a time of rising public concern over climate change and air quality.

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



**WASTED ASSET:** The west end of the new Woodhead tunnel with old tunnels, left. This was and could return to be an electrified rail route across the Pennines linking Manchester and Sheffield



#### MUSEUM PIECE: One of the electric locos that worked Britain's first all-electric main line route through Woodhead until 1970 is now in York's National Railway Museum

Northern England folk know that the Hope Valley line cannot deliver and also recognise that talk of a new line is classic "smoke and mirrors" tactics.

How can Transport for the North have the aim of improved east-west links as a key target and simultaneously exclude consideration of Woodhead reopening? It seems pressure from the Department for Transport and High Speed Two is the answer.

Woodhead has greater potential for Sheffield than it does for Manchester. This is unfortunate because Sheffield lacks rail credibility which explains why the city is a rail pauper.

*Railwatch* 161 offers a glimmer of hope in the Sheffield City Region integrated rail plan, which centres on a feasibility study into reinstating passenger

services to the Upper Don valley, including the Deepcar-Penistone gap. It may emerge in the 2030s, by which time the planning process will have approved even more housing schemes in addition to the 320 homes sanctioned at Oughtibridge, plus 400 set for Deepcar. For rail to come to the rescue it must respond much quicker.

In addition, the current Penistone population of 22,000 has been earmarked for further expansion. "Modest" summarises Sheffield's integrated rail plan at a time when "ambitious" is more appropriate.

How can ambitious be squared with Midland main line electrification being relegated to only "aspirational" status?

This will not be well-received by passengers choking on diesel fumes at Sheffield station. Platforms 2B/3A were rated eighth worst location in Britain for nitrogen dioxide pollution in a Friends of the Earth air quality study.

Much is made of a link from the East Coast main line to serve Doncaster-Sheffield Airport. The airport claims that it can attract passengers from between north London and north-east England, even allowing for Heathrow expansion.

On what evidence is this based? Is it the result of a piece of immaculate research? Is it realistic to expect such a flow, especially from points south?

Where are all these passengers heading for, could it be Fantasy Island? Meadowhall is an elite station, one of the very few new stations outside London that boasts a footfall of two million passengers per annum, but it receives no mention of upgraded facilities, something which is needed on platform 3/4 especially.

The Barnsley-Doncaster corridor is set for bus rapid transit, even though at one stage a light rail link was mooted. An alternative would have been provided by utilising a curve at Meadowhall, but with its customary vision, South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive presided over its loss. Does not the abandonment of Woodhead by the rail industry and even some campaigners make a complete mockery of Railfuture's mission statement of being the number one advocate for rail?

Where is the vision in ignoring a priceless piece of rail infrastructure? How many tunnels are more modern than Woodhead? Is not a reinstated and electrified Woodhead route a strategic link serving two major cities and adding to the national network capacity for the future, precisely the type of project that rail campaigners, politicians and the rail industry should be united in fighting for?

With the general election campaign in full swing, with parties and candidates deploying buzzwords and soundbites, the favourite word seems to be infrastructure.

Woodhead is abandoned infrastructure. It could and should be brought back into use.

Pictures: RAILWATCH

# How we enjoyed a relaxed few days roaming the North East with a Rover

Pictures: PAUL ABELL



Seen in the early morning light, the view of Durham Cathedral is a bonus for travellers on the East Coast main line

## Railfuture vice-president Paul Abell describes his adventures with a North East Rover (with considerable input from wife Shirley!)

It is unfortunate that so little publicity is given to the many Rover tickets.

Long a favourite of enthusiasts intent on maximising rail mileages, Rovers offer excellent value to all.

One valuable offering for us is the Freedom of North East 4 in 8 Day Rover, offering four days of travel out of eight in an area bounded by Sheffield, Cleethorpes, Berwick and Carlisle.

Shirley requires us to be more measured travellers rather than mileage fiends. She also does not regard travelling on Pacers as a pleasure, so I have to be careful when planning excursions.

Sadly our local station lost its passenger services in 1951, but Doncaster is a convenient railhead for us, with car parking a few minutes' walk away, and has the advantage of frequent trains on the East Coast main line.

Hence recent moves of a daughter to Ashington and a cousin to Berwick-upon-Tweed prompted four days of excursions with the intention of seeing places we had not visited with a similar ticket years ago.

## Hexham

A previous attempt to show Shirley the Newcastle-Carlisle line was thwarted by a train failure. History almost repeated itself when we were delayed at York by a train which had broken down north of the station, with all lines blocked.

However we were kept informed of progress by our train guard (perhaps the complications of rail franchising do at least mean

that a CrossCountry employee becomes loquacious when it is a TransPennine Express train that has failed) and after 20 minutes we were on the move.

The frequent service to Hexham from Newcastle meant we hardly noticed that we were still 20 minutes late crossing the Tyne, and happily the Pacer on which I last travelled to Hexham turned out to have been replaced by a Sprinter, to Shirley's satisfaction.

The ride up the Tyne Valley has impressive scenery, but tree growth has deprived passengers of the view of

George Stephenson's birthplace at Wylam. Stephenson's house is a short and pleasant walk from Wylam station although the house is currently closed to visitors.

Just up the hill from the station, Hexham Farmers' Market was in full swing on a Saturday lunchtime, while Hexham Abbey has inspired pilgrimages for more than a millennium, since the days of St Wilfrid. We had lunch at the excellent Refectory Café in the abbey before exploring more of the town, then on our return to the station we saw the refreshment room being



HEXHAM: An elegant footbridge. The station also has a barrow crossing if there is a staff member to escort you over it. Failing that, it is a long walk to the road bridge



TO ASHINGTON: Once passengers from Newcastle alight at Morpeth, their train disappears down what looks like a siding before coming back and forming the next train south. In fact the "siding" leads to the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne lines, still used for freight but a prime candidate for reinstated passenger services

fitted out as an alternative source of sustenance.

Another Sprinter took us to Carlisle, and en route the banners campaigning for the reinstatement of Gilsland station showed us where to look out for Hadrian's Wall (on the right).

Any change of trains at Carlisle has to involve a visit to the magnificent baronial refreshment room on platform 3 (they just don't build them like that any more), then it was back over the footbridge to the Leeds train on platform 6.

We did wonder from personal experience whether the Swiss would have provided a train more suited for showing passengers the glorious scenery of the Settle-Carlisle line, but our journey over Ais Gill summit on a gorgeous summer evening displayed the route to best advantage. Our two-car Sprinter coped with the many hikers who joined us along the way, and the stopping train from Leeds was a useful link back to Doncaster.

## Berwick

Tuesday was Berwick, a town often glimpsed from the Royal Border Bridge by passengers (like us previously) on trains speeding through the station. At this point I should perhaps thank King Richard III for capturing the town from the Scots in 1482 (as Duke of Gloucester), and hence bringing it within the validity of our North East Rover.

Well-timed changes at York and Newcastle enabled us to stretch our legs, while Shirley gained considerable amusement from my overbalancing on the turn into Newcastle Central despite knowing that the curved line into Newcastle is reputedly the sharpest between King's Cross and Edinburgh.

In contrast, Berwick station is

more of a shock once you see just how much it obliterated the castle – clearly there was not much 1840s concern for heritage.

Even on a dull and misty day (we had not seen much of the Farne Islands on the way north) Berwick is an interesting place to explore, and not only for the views of the three contrasting bridges from the banks of the Tweed. Our return journey went like clockwork, just as the outward journey had.

## Durham

On my first visit to Durham I was surprised to learn that it took as long as 40 years to build the cathedral – but 40 years does not seem nearly so long now that I am 68. The cathedral interior is just as magnificent as the view you get from the railway, and we would wholeheartedly recommend the splendid lunch we enjoyed in the cathedral's Undercroft Restaurant.

One thing to watch is that Durham is a hilly city. You may wish you had gone to York instead as you toil up the climb to the station, especially if your day is as hot as ours was. This time we had an "interesting" experience on our return journey.

We elected to take the pretty route from York to Leeds, via Harrogate, and enjoyed the smooth ride of the class 170 diesel train recently transferred to the route. Shirley would have stuck to the East Coast main line if she had been offered a Pacer on the Harrogate line.

Even better, the LNER timetable offered us a 17.45 Leeds-King's Cross to return us to Doncaster,



TIME STANDS STILL: Newcastle Central has magnificent clocks, but they did not show the right time when we passed through

and when we arrived at Leeds it looked as though we were going to have a first ride on one of the new Hitachi Azumas.

But there was no mention of the 17.45 on the screens. It was gently explained to us that the train that looked like the 17.45 was merely an empty driver-training run! Heaven knows what this did for overcrowding on the 18.15 to King's Cross, but we opted for the stopper to Doncaster.

## Morpeth

Railfuture members will be familiar with the campaign to return passenger services to the Ashington Blyth and Tyne network. Meanwhile Morpeth is the railhead for much of the area, and again we had a pleasant journey north, changing at York and Newcastle before a first-ever visit to Morpeth. Hopefully the efforts of the Railfuture-affiliated South East Northumberland

Rail User Group will bear fruit, and in years to come we will get closer to Ashington by train. Less likely is the reinstatement of the rail connection from Morpeth to Rothbury, but this would potentially have been useful for the family visit we made to Lord Armstrong's house at Craggside. Our journey back to Doncaster was enlivened at York by the racegoers returning home. As a result, the short CrossCountry diesel unit was packed to standing. Whatever the point of franchising actually is (to paraphrase Railfuture President Christian Wolmar), it does not result in provision of extra capacity for sporting event crowds.

## Good value

Our four enjoyable days out cost us £68.80 each, thanks to our Senior Railcards, lots of fun for the two of us for less than £35 per day. As a comparison, a rough calculation based on the running costs of my car took me to the conclusion that the £137.60 spent would have given us four trips to Northallerton, not even

reaching County Durham, never mind Northumberland or the Settle-Carlisle line. Of course the car trips would not have been nearly so enjoyable.

But why on earth are these things not better advertised? They are buried in the National Rail Enquiries website under "Rovers & Rangers".

Unfortunately [www.nationalrail.co.uk/times\\_fares/rangers\\_and\\_rovers.aspx](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times_fares/rangers_and_rovers.aspx) gives you a most uninspiring list, that is not only apparently more concerned with detailing the train companies involved in each "promotion" than in selling them to prospective passengers, but also has confusing similarities between offers.

Happily there is a much more useful source of information in the form of the free Rover Ticket Guide produced annually by Platform 5 Publishing and added to the monthly *Today's Railways UK* magazine (normally with the June-dated issue). Either way, I hope that readers will take advantage of the excellent value offered by these tickets.



NEWCASTLE: Two TransPennine trains and easy connections

## Rail investment just cannot wait any longer

By Peter Travis

When the editor of *Railwatch* suggested I might write an article about the stasis that has been affecting the UK ever since the Brexit referendum and specifically how this has delayed major decisions on our rail network, I did not at first realise just how difficult it is to write about a topic when "NOTHING IS HAPPENING".

The Government, the economy and the rail industry are all mired in this state of stasis.

Leading insolvency practitioner Begbies Traynor reports that some 13% of British businesses are now showing signs of significant distress. That equates to nearly half a million UK companies, aggravated by Brexit uncertainties and inaction.

Brexit over the past three years has been characterised by "a furiously churning status quo in which nothing actually changes".

The lack of decision making is now having a serious impact on our rail network. We wait

in a continuously extending limbo for the so-called "root and branch" Williams Report, for the long promised "once-in-a-generation" reform of the fares system, and the outcome of the review of HS2, once viewed as a catalyst for growth across Britain.

Rail franchises are not being put out to competitive bids, instead they are just being extended. For example, Southeastern was given a five-month extension until April 2020. A Department for Transport spokesperson said: "We have taken the decision to cancel the South Eastern franchise competition. This is because the Government wants to ensure that the recommendations of the Williams Review are taken into account".

But the Williams Review is also paused. One indecision knocks on to another ... to create yet ever more indecision.

As shadow rail minister Rachael Maskell noted, the decision to extend rail franchises means important investment decisions such as new trains "are kicked into the long grass".

Commons leader Jacob Rees-Mogg said recently: "Let us stagnate no more, let us spring forth and seize the victory people voted for."

Even if there is a great spring forward, Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage has warned that the UK will not fully leave the European Union until the end of 2022.

We can thus be sure of continuing uncertainty, continuing indecision and continuing rancour over Brexit. If that is used as an excuse to delay necessary rail spending, rail campaigners will be dismayed.

So Railfuture is launching a "We're watching you" initiative in an attempt to hold any future government to account over its timetable for decision-making on the rail network.

We need to see investment NOW in rail transport, the greenest of all transport modes. No more delays!

■ Peter Travis is Railfuture's communications director and business transformation director.

## First class

Well done for a first-class issue (*Railwatch* 161). The positive coverage of access and environmental issues struck me as exemplary. Juxtaposing copy arguing the merits of more investment in rail electrification with nice case studies of zero-carbon transport in Denmark worked very well.

It was also good to see you were able to provide space for the access battle at Needham. I am now chair of that campaign, and the fight goes on!

I applaud the campaigning tone and hope it has the right effect on all the policy influencers who get RW and results in increased membership from people interested in helping meet green goals through more, better and electrified railways.

The current issue of *RAILEAST* also happens to have an environmental theme at its heart.

Peter Feeney  
Editor of Railfuture's *RAILEAST*  
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## Third rail power

I was alarmed by the recent suggestion that the replacement Networker fleet should be equipped with batteries to avoid electrifying the five or so miles from Hoo Junction into the Isle of Grain, should a passenger service be reinstated after 60 years over the existing freight-only line.

Railfuture should beware of peddling displays of schoolboy dreaming, illustrating a lack of understanding of railway operating and costs, let alone basic physics. Hardly a reputation we would wish to hold.

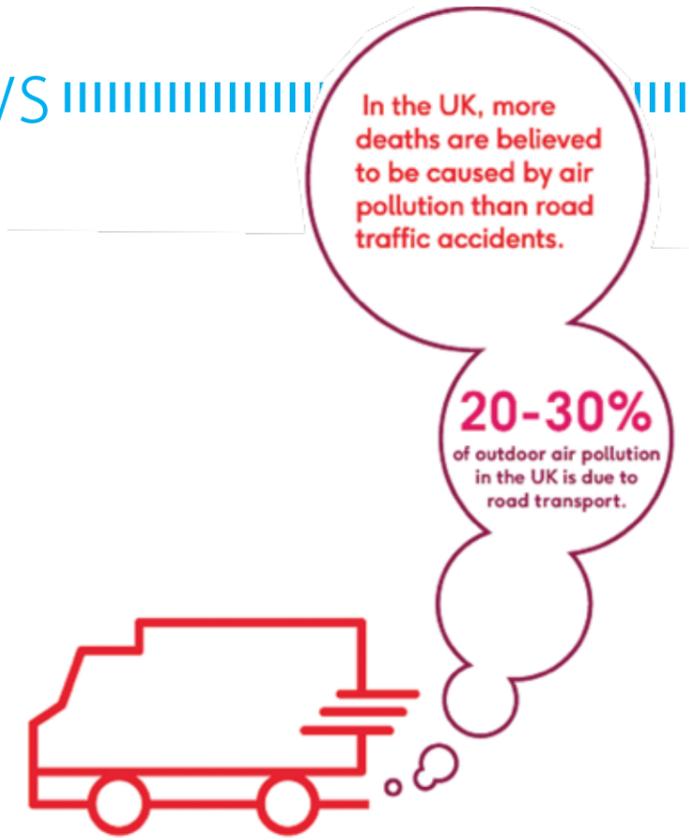
Batteries are heavy, expensive to buy and replace, do not last long even now (!), offer limited power and require maintenance. So up goes the cost of buying and running the fleet.

As the weight of a train goes up, so also does the power required to drive it and more Russian gas is burnt, more carbon dioxide to terrify the environmentalists, and there is more fuel and plant to buy.

All trains within a group (eg the Networkers) must be able to run everywhere they are needed, including the Isle of Grain.

With a big network like South Eastern, the visits for individual units to Grain will be rare, and the batteries may fail just when they are needed. How far and how long will the extra have been lugged around? Maybe for months and years before a brief sojourn in this Kentish backwater?

Then there is the third rail, developed in America about 125



In the UK, more deaths are believed to be caused by air pollution than road traffic accidents.

20-30% of outdoor air pollution in the UK is due to road transport.

## Even low pollution threatens our hearts

Medical researchers have found that people exposed to air pollution, even if it is within UK guidelines, have changes in the structure of the heart, similar to those seen in the early stages of heart failure.

The research was part-funded by the British Heart Foundation and was published in the journal *Circulation*. A team of scientists studied data from around 4,000 UK Biobank participants.

Even though most participants lived outside major UK cities, there was a clear association between those who lived near loud, busy roads, and were exposed to nitrogen dioxide or small particles of air pollution (called PM2.5) and the development of larger right and left ventricles in the heart.

The ventricles are important pumping chambers in the heart. Similar heart changes are seen in the early stages of heart failure.

Air pollution is now the largest environmental risk factor linked to deaths in England. Globally, coronary heart disease and

years ago. Who these days would suggest we should use a ground level, fully exposed conductor rail at 750 volts everywhere from Ramsgate to Weymouth with the risk of death by electrocution?

The actual risk to public and employees is very rare. So Railfuture's job is to persuade the worried people in the Department

stroke account for approximately six in 10 (58%) of deaths related to outdoor air pollution.

Dr Nay Aung who led the data analysis from Queen Mary University of London said: "Doctors and the general public all need to be aware of their exposure when they think about heart health, just like they think about their blood pressure, their cholesterol and their weight."

Professor Jeremy Pearson of the British Heart Foundation said: "We cannot expect people to move home to avoid air pollution. Government and public bodies must be acting right now to make all areas safe and protect the population from these harms."

"We are calling for the World Health Organisation guidelines to be adopted. They are less than half of UK legal limits. We believe this is a crucial step in protecting the nation's heart health."

This research was a collaboration between Queen Mary University of London and the University of Oxford.

for Transport to get on with filling in the third-rail gaps, especially towards Grain.

Third rail is out of date electrically now, expensive to run, offers limited power, is perhaps more vulnerable in winter and we would not use it on the main line (or DC at all) if starting again. But it is highly robust, looks neat and does

Graphic: UK BIOBANK

not require rebuilding the railway when it is installed.

David Bosomworth  
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## Back to campaign

I have just renewed my Railfuture membership for three years.

From the mid-1990s to 2000, I used to run a green transport consultancy section at the University of Wales, Lampeter.

I wrote and coordinated reports and many of my findings and policy recommendations are equally relevant today.

So I was intrigued to read a letter in *Railwatch* 161 about "bikes on meathooks" pointing out the lack of progress on rail-cycle integration.

I wrote a 150-page report called *Bikes on Trains: Time for a Change* which was published in 1997 and mainly funded by the Wales Tourist Board. The report was widely welcomed with several organisations singing its praises. Sadly virtually nothing has changed.

On a visit to Austria, I noted yet again how far behind our European Union neighbours we are on this much-needed integration between these modes.

In 1997, I noted that the Pinzgauer Lokalbahn between Zell am See and Krimml was a good example to follow. In 2019, the railway has made progress to the extent that it now has one carriage entirely for cycles and runs an hourly regular-interval service with three coaches for passengers.

I look forward to becoming more involved in Railfuture campaigning.

Tim Bull, Mumbles, Swansea  
timgdbull@gmail.com

## HS2 estimate

High Speed Two will cause tremendous damage to the environment and the cost is almost twice what was estimated. Railfuture should not support HS2.

Michael Paine, Stow Road, Willingham by Stow, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire  
DN21 5LD

## Electric future

I am renewing my subscription to Railfuture but I wanted to remind everyone else in Railfuture that I am a great fan and supporter of HS2 and I want to see a fully electric railway network.

All the main lines should have full electrification with as many cross-country lines as possible. All the other lines could be worked by battery trains and/or steam trains. Steam trains can be much cleaner now than they were in the past and both battery trains and steam trains can also run on to and

connect with the main line electric trains as well.

I do not want to see either bimode or diesel trains.

James Knight, Glebefield, The Bryn, Church Road, Basildon, Essex SS14 2LD

## Sources of power

The need for more electricity for trains (*Railwatch* 161) has raised worries about supplying peak demand, partly because electricity is difficult and expensive to store.

Solution one is to ensure a plentiful supply of electricity from renewable sources, mainly wind and solar, and to use any surplus to generate hydrogen (which is storable) by electrolysis of sea water.

In contrast to renewables, even without the problems of future storage, nuclear power costs are already twice the cost of renewables. Nuclear is as out of date as coal in this age of global warming.

Solution two is to cooperate with our neighbours, such as Norway, which has lots of hydro power. We can send Norway electricity on windy days and take it back on still days.

Transmission losses can be reduced by using very high voltage DC, rather than high voltage AC lines which we use now.

There have been plans for interconnectors from St Fergus, near Peterhead, to Norway, as well as Wales-Ireland and Scotland-Northern Ireland. The lack of a connector prevents renewable schemes in Shetland.

We should not waste power by using battery vehicles, which are inherently less efficient than pure electric trains, trams and trolleybuses which should replace diesels in cities. Capital costs are also lower for pure electric vehicles. Engineers have solutions while politicians seem to lack both knowledge and political will.

James A Whitworth, Old School, Burravoe, Isle of Yell, Shetland ZE2 9BA

## Heathrow link

I have decided not to renew my Railfuture membership. I joined because I was interested to see whether there would be any support for a new service over existing tracks between the West Coast main line and Heathrow, which would provide a quick and useful service for those from north-west London and north-west of London to reach Heathrow without travelling via London or driving.

Such a service could start fairly quickly since, apart from a presumed requirement for some track and signalling upgrades on the existing two-mile link from the West Coast main line to the Great Western main line, no new track is required, though I understand that WCML



MP Anneliese Dodds, third left, with supporters of the Oxford-Cowley reopening campaign

## Walking the walk for Oxford-Cowley reopening

MP Anneliese Dodds is leading the growing campaign to get the existing freight-only Oxford-Cowley line reopened for passengers.

"Everyone says they support the reopening," said Ms Dodds, the MP for Oxford East, as she joined other campaigners and a Great Western representative in early October to walk the route of the line from Oxford station to the BMW factory at Cowley.

She added: "It is just a question of getting funding to get it running."

The line connects Cowley, Blackbird Leys, the Science Park and the Business Park to the city centre.

Earlier, Railfuture Thames Valley branch chairman Richard Stow and another member who lives in the Oxford East constituency had a meeting with Ms Dodds. She told them she is a firm backer of the East West Rail Link and is opposed to the proposed Oxford-Cambridge Expressway road.

At Railfuture's branches and user groups day in

capacity would be an issue. The current Southern service uses part of this linking route near Willesden and there is a single-track curve which joins the double-track Dudden Hill line (not electrified and mainly used for freight).

After I joined Railfuture, it fairly quickly became clear that such a service essentially falls outside the remit of the Thames Valley branch which has other longer term "pet projects" such as the reopening of the closed branch from Bourne End to High Wycombe.

While this would provide a somewhat convoluted and considerably slower route to Heathrow once the Heathrow West

link is built, it is years away. The WCML route does not fall easily within any other region either.

Chris Read, Milton Keynes  
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## Progress takes time

I was puzzled by Tom Bowes' letter (*Railwatch* 161) saying that rail reopening campaigns never come to anything.

Rome was not built in a day but many rail reopenings have taken place since 1990. The Borders line from Edinburgh to Galashiels (Tweedbank) is a significant example.

Reopening rail lines is a multi-aspect challenge, involving civil

Birmingham Richard said that Thames Valley branch is giving more attention to the Cowley reopening campaign now that EWR is well under way.

He said that reopening the Cowley branch could lead to a cross-Oxford link to Hanborough and Witney, which would be relatively cheap to implement.

The Railfuture branch is campaigning to get Cowley into the next Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline. County councillor Yvonne Constance and Oxford City Council leader Susan Brown are backing Cowley reopening.

One of the advantages of the Cowley branch is that it could open the way for a development of 5,000 houses in the Cowley area.

Network Rail is currently undertaking a study into the feasibility of reinstating passenger services on the line after the Government committed £300,000 of funding.

engineers assessing the problems, local authorities and rail franchises. Some things do take a month of Sundays but we have achieved reopenings of new rail and tram routes.

David Peters, Sussex House, Sussex Drive, Shrewsbury SY3 7NG

Editor's note: You can buy Railfuture's book *Britain's Growing Railway* which tells the reopenings story.

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/shop/books.php?id=bgr1>



Picture: www.saltfordenvironmentgroup.org.uk

**A reopened Saltford station will be of greatest benefit to Saltford's younger generation**

nigel.bray2@railfuture.org.uk

#### Taunton link helps tourists to heritage tracks

Following its successful operation on seven summer Saturdays (*Railwatch* 161), the Great Western Railway shuttle linking Taunton with Bishops Lydeard on the West Somerset Railway ran again on 26 October. Chris Austin advised us that the summer shuttles produced a large number of new visitors from a very wide area including Wales, the north of England and the South-East as well as the South-West. Both GWR and WSR welcomed our offer to promote the service via the Railfuture website.

#### Integrated transport plea

Gloucester's bus and rail stations are about 200 yards apart, although separated by a busy dual carriageway. In early September local member Philip Colls wrote to Stagecoach West, asking for imminent train departures to be displayed at the bus station, so that it can live up to its name, Gloucester Transport Hub, and to the GWR station manager asking for similar live bus information at the railway station. At our recent national conference in Bristol I raised the subject with GWR speaker Matt Barnes, who said he saw no technical obstacle and added that a café near Cheltenham station already had a screen showing imminent train departures. As neither Stagecoach nor GWR had replied to Philip Colls' letters by late October, Railfuture Severnside will be asking Gloucester City Council to apply to GWR's customer and communities improvement fund.

#### Electrification for carbon neutral future

In early October, Bath & North East Somerset Council published a report by corporate sustainability manager Jane Wildblood, proposing policies for making the unitary authority's area carbon neutral by 2030. The report aims at reducing private car and van use by 25% by that date and promoting a major shift to public transport, cycling and walking. Railfuture welcomed its call for rail electrification and said this needs to include completion of deferred sections of the Great Western electrification project such as Thingley Junction (near Chippenham) to Bath Spa and Bristol Temple Meads. We added that reopening of Saltford station (on the line between Bristol and Bath) ought to feature in the council's plan.

A few days later the full B&NES council meeting learned that the Department for Transport is drafting a *Greater Bristol Rail Feasibility Study* which would include an assessment of the viability of reopening Saltford station. If the

result is positive, the council will press the West of England Combined Authority to progress the reopening and consider how to fund it. Councillors from both main parties spoke of the station helping to address the climate emergency by reducing car use. A 2014 study found that a reopened Saltford station would generate at least £770,000 annual revenue and have room for 144 car parking spaces. Ironically the Conservatives, who were less enthusiastic for the station during their four years of controlling the council up to May 2019, challenged the new Liberal Democrat administration in October to deliver it! Our affiliated member Saltford Parish Council is planning to give a talk in January 2020 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the station closure: see [www.saltfordparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.saltfordparishcouncil.gov.uk) for details.

#### Stonehouse Bristol Road station campaign

Railfuture Severnside was gathering support for our branch meeting in November to promote the reopening of Stonehouse Bristol Road station on the Gloucester-Bristol route. David Drew, MP for Stroud, has long been in favour of reopening it. We have also had expressions of support from Green MEP Molly Scott Cato and Stroud's prospective Conservative candidate Siobhan Baillie.

#### Pilning protest to GWR

Pilning Station Group has asked train operator Great Western to reconsider its decision to re-time the station's solitary afternoon train when it introduces new trains. Olga Taylor of Pilning Station Group, said that because the class 800 trains have selective door operation they should be able to stop at Pilning without any problem.

#### Portishead MP calls for rail decisions speed-up

North Somerset MP Liam Fox called on the Government to keep its £32 million promise to help fund the reopening of the Portishead line in a House of Commons adjournment debate on 16 October. Dr Fox described Portishead as the "most overcrowded cul-de-sac in the country". He added: "Unfortunately, despite the extremely modest nature of this particular project, the reinstatement is subject to the weighty process that applies to major rail improvements. Why? Given the urgent need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, which has been widely discussed recently, will the Minister confirm that he and his officials will do everything they can to speed up the processes?"

[www.railfuture.org.uk/SevernsideBranch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/SevernsideBranch)  
Twitter @RailfutureSSide

Twitter: @railfuture

tony.smale@railfuture.org.uk

#### Welborne planning decision

Railfuture members attended the Welborne Garden Village planning meeting in Fareham in October. We did not succeed in making a new station a pre-condition of planning consent, but we did make contact with supporters both at the meeting and via social media afterwards. We are now assured safeguarding of land for a station will be one of the conditions placed on the developer.

#### Pressing for action in the South

We were disappointed to discover that, of the 73 stations to benefit from *Access for All* funding in the current Network Rail control period, not a single one is in the Railfuture Wessex area. On 16 October, the Department for Transport published a list of 58 projects in the *Rail Network Improvements Pipeline*. The plans in the pipeline for Woking, Surbiton and Clapham Junction stations are all very welcome, but there are no schemes within the Railfuture Wessex area. Likewise, Network Rail's *Enhancements Delivery Plan* which was published in September lists nothing at all for Wessex. Is it any wonder that rail users in our area feel they are getting a raw deal?

At least we do now have an assurance from the Department for Transport that the railway on the Isle of Wight will continue operating into the future, with five class 230 Vivarail trains brought in to replace the island's vintage Tube stock, plus infrastructure improvements including an additional passing loop at Brading. Concerns remain over the track and signalling proposals for the line and we will be seeking clarification during the design phase.

A House of Commons adjournment debate on 1 October was devoted to discussions of poor performance and problems for disabled passengers on the South Western Railway network. We congratulated our local MPs on calling for this debate and urged them to keep up the pressure on rail managers to deliver on the recommendations of the Holden Report into the Wessex area which was published more than a year ago.

#### Freight lines may one day see passengers

As the demolition of Fawley power station gathers pace to make way for a large housing development, there is mounting alarm at the additional traffic 1,500 new homes will bring to the already-congested road network west of Southampton. Consequently local support is growing for the reintroduction of a passenger service on the Waterside line from Totton via Marchwood and Hythe. Hampshire County Council has been urged to look again at the business case for running passenger trains into the city. Meanwhile on the freight branch to the Army base at Ludgershall near Andover there has been a recent resumption of military goods traffic. Cautious approval for reinstating a passenger service over the line can be found in a Rail Strategy Report published in July by Systra on behalf of the Swindon and Wiltshire local enterprise partnership.

■ We are now on Facebook: search "Railfuture Wessex"

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

Join Railfuture at: [www.railfuture.org.uk/join](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/join)

# Champion for rail access

By Stephen Brookes MBE

As the rail sector champion for the Government's disability minister, I was pleased to be asked to chair the Railfuture national conference this year.

The event title *Every Passenger Matters* was to focus on inclusion and accessibility for passengers using the rail network which is the very basis of my role.

When the Government appointed me in 2018, the then minister Sarah Newton set a priority which aimed to change the business perception of disabled people through increased visibility and understanding of their consumer needs.

Almost immediately we saw the worst disruption and inconvenience rail passengers have had to endure for many years, and the Government admitted that "the industry collectively has failed the passengers it serves".

This failure is even worse for passengers who have the additional impact of being restricted by their disability.

People are surprised to find that as a sector champion I am not employed in the sector.

But I am a regular disabled bus and rail traveller, and being "retired" I can carry out this role because it matters to me.

My situation has given me credibility and a long reach in a very difficult sector, as I am viewed as independent of and no threat to any associated company relationship.

I started my task by setting out an agenda based on reducing the hierarchy of disability in the rail sector, where the stereotypical "wheelchair and white stick" are all too often seen as the prime movers needing rail access. A range of problems emerged and showed that there is a substantial distrust of the rail industry by disabled and older people in terms of access problems, timetable and cancellation failures, staff and passenger discrimination and flawed promises.

Consequently I am continually working with cross-sector stakeholders on the need to build on any success and create the recognition of disability access needs based on the inclusion of disabled people of all ages and situations, particularly the often overlooked one of hidden disabilities.

I have deliberately established contact and have become engaged in membership with pan-disability projects, as well as the Rail Delivery Group,

(train operating companies and stakeholders), Network Rail, and the Office of Rail and Road. These are already working toward simplification of rail fares, more consistent and efficient assisted travel booking, including "turn up and go", and improved rail-built environment support.

Additionally I have either created, or am assisting with recommending, community stakeholder passenger groups with many of the train operating companies, and working to improve the delivery of awareness training.

Raising awareness depends to an extent on the active involvement of disabled people, which I am achieving while not being dragged into individual cases and complaints.

Currently, to build on creating a better and more consistent service for rail, I am stressing the need to see a more conjoined level of cooperation between companies and stakeholders in rail. This is emphasised by the fact that I have been appalled to discover that there is no minimum required industry standard for staff disability awareness training. This has been the catalyst for work I am undertaking with key players in the creation of a "Plan B" at times of disruption.

While appreciating that there are different passenger load demographics between, say CrossCountry Trains and Southern or Merseyrail, the need for access for disabled people including staff assistance at stations or on trains should not be lost in spurious regional and urban differences.

A negative access experience is as bad at London Euston as it is in a small station in Cumbria such as Harrington, where the humps originate, or in Cornwall at St Germans, all of which are stations I know.

This is why my recommendation to all companies is that pan-disability groups must be a key part of their customer panels, because if we get it right for disabled people we get it right for everyone.

The post has been and continues to be challenging and interesting, and I am pleased to have seen all sides wanting to engage universally to improve the level of service offered to disabled people which most accept is currently below where it should be, and this is where Railfuture is an important voice.

Travelling with a wheelchair:  
Pages 12-13



Stephen Brookes MBE, left, chaired Railfuture's conference on accessible travel, with guest speakers CrossCountry Trains' head of communications Richard Gibson and Network Rail's accessibility and inclusion manager Lorna Brown-Owens

## SO, WHAT DO WE DO NEXT?

By Stephen Chaytow

Two rail campaigning groups in the East Midlands found they had a lot to learn from each other – and a lot to gain by cooperating.

The Campaign for the Reopening of the Ivanhoe Line from Leicester to Burton-on-Trent is known as CRIL.

The Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership wants to see the Peaks and Dales line from Matlock to Buxton and Chinley reopened and is known as MEMRAP.

Each rail campaign has its own unique mix of geography, people, stakeholders and challenges to resolve.

Any rule books would need comprehensive tailoring from day one. Within Railfuture East Midlands, two new campaigns have developed different approaches tailored to circumstances.

But there are always knowledge gaps, temporary loss of confidence and moments of uncertainty when the team is not sure and wish they had access to the inherited wisdom of those who have done it before.

The two campaign groups received some valuable early mentoring from various "experts" but have kept in touch and learnt to share information that might be of use. CRIL faces the challenge of upgrading to passenger use a seriously rundown freight line between Burton-on-Trent and Leicester but lacking land sold off at the Leicester

junction. MEMRAP's challenge is not to disrupt the delicate biodiversity of the Peak District National Park while relocating the much-used and loved Monsal Trail away from the trackbed.

From CRIL has come their budget template to help with fundraising, while MEMRAP discovered an innovative demand model for new stations to create estimates in the strategic outline business cases floated for the two groups.

CRIL sprang from an initial public meeting which spawned their committee, a members' database and a drive to mobilise stakeholders. MEMRAP has taken a different route, trying to align with a pre-existing freight and heritage consortium.

Both campaigns have needed to lobby an array of stakeholders. Each has responded to specific issues in their own way, but retained a sense of collaboration and sharing that should prove to be of mutual benefit as the two projects progress.

Both campaigns are faced with the challenge of breathing new life into cases that were effectively closed and archived and to show how their approach and prevailing circumstances justified further investigation.

Both campaigns have achieved a high media profile, however, the hardest task will be in maintaining that. In this respect they face the same challenge.

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

# Questions for Sarah and for the railway managers

Sarah Ward attended Railfuture's national conference on accessibility in her wheelchair.

We asked her a few questions about travelling by rail and her responses should make politicians and rail managers sit up and take notice.

**What is the worst thing about travelling by train in a wheelchair?**

One of the most uncomfortable things about rail travel, when you use a wheelchair, is the location and number of the wheelchair spaces. Spaces are often located right next to the vestibule, and this can leave you feeling pretty cold in winter.

All you can see, half the time, is the toilet door, and on certain trains the backs of the seats. In many cases your friends cannot sit near you. Limited wheelchair space means that on some trains only one wheelchair user per carriage can travel.

When there is anti-social behaviour onboard, you can feel more vulnerable, because you are away from other passengers, and cannot move to a different part of the train.

Although this is improving hugely, one of the greatest problems is with the passenger assistance system, and on-the-ground help. It is frustrating that in many cases you have to phone or email to book 24-48 hours in advance, to arrange assistance at the station. This limits flexibility. Even when you are booked, you may find that your space has been taken up.

Delayed assistance at stations and on board is a real problem. You might miss a train because there was no ramp ready, or no one to help you to the platform. You might miss your stop, or be left on board at the terminus if assistance does not arrive. Having a series of failed journeys can put you off travelling altogether.

**What is the best thing about travelling by train as a wheelchair user?**

That is a difficult one. It is different for sure. I have not always been a wheelchair user. Things changed about 10 years ago when I was diagnosed with a rare blood vessel anomaly. Although things are a lot more complicated now, travelling by train is still my absolute favourite thing to do. It is a lifeline, and takes me to places that I just would not see otherwise. I meet so many interesting people. Sometimes it

is just nice to let the world go by. I do some of my best thinking on trains.

**Do you think the space on trains allocated to wheelchairs is adequate?**

I do not, no. I think it is unacceptable in this day and age that disabled people often have to travel segregated from their friends. Sometimes there is only one wheelchair space per carriage, and often insufficient turning space. You often find yourself competing with luggage, and less helpful passengers who do not wish to comply with the priority space allocation.

**Is there a simple change that would make your rail journey better?**

Improved staff communication. If only people listened to passengers more, and liaised better, I think things would run more smoothly.

**If you could wave a magic wand, what big changes would you like to see?**

At the end of the day, I would just like to travel comfortably, not in isolation, and not have to second guess what might go wrong. It feels like lots has changed in the past two years, but I still have a huge wish list. I would like to see more new trains and stations designed from the start with universal access in mind. More staff dedicated to passenger assist. Trains that are fully staffed with staff who are fully trained. Two years ago, I said that I would love to see automatic ramps on trains. Back then, it seemed a long way off. Last month, I travelled on a new unit that had little platforms which slid out. It was really exciting. Two years ago, I also spoke about more flexible and electronic booking. Last year, I trialled a passenger assist app. There is no release date for this yet but for me it cannot come soon enough. It is encouraging that we have come this far in such a short time, but things need to keep moving forward.

**What could other passengers do to make life easier for you to travel by rail?**

Most passengers are extremely considerate and helpful, and go to great lengths to help out, even when they are not sure what to do. Sadly there is a minority, who continue to treat disabled passengers as somehow lesser than themselves, show lack of understanding, behave rudely, and complain that we are in the way. Greater awareness, and respect for passengers.



CONFERENCE CALL: Sarah Ward attended Railfuture's national conference on accessible travel

Adherence to onboard signage, and respect for dedicated areas, such as priority spaces, would be hugely appreciated.

**Have you ever had to give up on a rail journey because of lack of facilities at the station or on the train?**

Last year seemed particularly bad. Frequently I had to abandon travel because step-free access was not available and this had not been stated. Lift failure was a big problem. One lift was out of order for months. On certain units, updated ramps were unreliable. Several times, failed toilets prevented me travelling. A lack of reliable information leaves it all feeling like a lottery, at times.

**If so, where was it and why?**

At least three different operators have a history of failing to notify me of a lack of equipment or equipment faults, both at stations and on trains, and failing to take action where it was possible to do so. Disappointingly these companies operate out of some of our largest stations in England and Wales. Even providing basic information prior to travel would really help.

**Have you always been able to use a wheelchair ramp to board the train?**

No. Reasons include faulty equipment. Equipment being in the wrong place, at the wrong time, or locked away. Lack of

trained personnel, and low staffing numbers.

It is fortunate that all trains do carry on-board ramps, but many of them have not been checked for extended periods of time, and some staff just have never needed to use them, even decades after training.

**How does having Asperger syndrome make things difficult when you travel by train?**

I find noise levels, crowding, and unexpected changes very difficult.

I can become very anxious, or just shut down. Disruption and cancellations at King's Cross recently were incredibly hard to deal with. I can hide it a lot of

times, but sometimes it can be just too much.

**What changes would help someone with Asperger syndrome?**

I am pleased to say that staff are increasingly being trained not only in awareness of hidden disabilities, but how to practically support and work with passengers.

The Sunflower and JAM card schemes are two examples (see panel right). Providing more quiet waiting spaces, such as the CALM room at Crewe, would be great.

Some people find the lighting and even the "door opening" warnings are hard to deal with. Research in partnership with service users would really help with this sort of thing.

**Do you have a favourite rail route?**

Yes! I absolutely love the West Coast main line route to Scotland and then travelling through the Cairngorms and continuing on the Far North line all the way to Thurso. It is incredible!

**Which is the worst route you have used?**

This is a hard question. Any route that is short on accessibility, and journeys where the old Pacer trains still operate (sorry, Pacer lovers). Even these routes have lovely and sometimes spectacular scenery. I find city journeys too much, although, at quiet times, and where it is accessible, I love the Tube.

**Do you have a favourite station?**

Gosh, that is hard. Do not make me pick one! For architecture, it is the greats such as Shrewsbury, Bristol Temple Meads, St Pancras, Edinburgh Waverley, and the gem that is Wemyss Bay. All the little blue and white stations, in Scotland? Access is clearly a win. Ultimately, it is the people that make a station, and I love my home station in Shrewsbury.

**Why do you like your favourite station?**

The people, and that lovely building! Have you seen that signal box? And a castle next door. What could be better!

**Which is the worst station you have used?**

Gosh, this is hard. I do not want to be rude to anywhere! Euston is so big and scary, but I have got used to it, and some members of staff really take care of me.

**How could rail signs be improved?**

That is hard too. We are working

## Card and lanyard to smooth the way

Sarah has both a JAM card from Virgin and a Sunflower lanyard from LNER which are both designed to make travelling easier.

The JAM (Just a Minute) card can be used to approach railway staff and make a discrete request.

The Sunflower lanyard can be worn by someone with a hidden disability, such as dementia, anxiety, chronic fatigue or indeed autism.

There is no qualifying list of conditions to obtain a lanyard or JAM card. Train operator Southeastern launched a joint trial in October of both the card and the lanyard.

As the parent of a child with autism, Tonbridge area manager Natalie Leister aims to make it easier for passengers with hidden disabilities, autism and learning difficulties to be able to travel independently. If the trials on the Tonbridge-Hastings route are successful, the schemes will be extended. Southeastern has also hosted a series of internal training sessions for staff.



on this, in the accessibility groups that I am part of. If the signs were more consistent in design, and just located in the right places to see them, it would really help! Font type, size, colour, contrast, scroll rate, and visibility in different lighting are so important. Not everything works for everyone though.

**How could on-train announcements be improved?**

It would be helpful sometimes if they were made more audible. When there are delays, revised estimated arrival times are so helpful, and knowing where your connection will be going from is great. It is always nice if the train manager introduces themselves.

**How could station announcements be improved?**

Clarity is essential. Knowing all calling points, not just "stations along the North Wales coast" would be great. Some stations are very quirky, and it is hard to know how to get to the platforms: You have to go out again to get to platform 3 at Shrewsbury! Identifying where on the platform the train will come is vital, and it would be great to know where the carriages with the wheelchair spaces are.

**How do you normally get to the rail station?**

I mostly use public transport. I still have to wheel myself a long way. There is no accessible long-stay car parking at the station. I sometimes have to use taxis, but they are too expensive.

**Do you ever use the bus to get to the station?**

Oh yes. I have a bus pass which really helps, although it is expensive at certain times and the service does not always run when I need it.

**Do you use the bus for ordinary journeys, not just to get to the railway?**

Oh yes. I often nip into town, and have learnt some of the bus routes in London.

**Do you prefer travelling by train or bus?**

Trains every time! One big frustration with buses is the lack of space, and I am sometimes turned away because a bus is full, or someone will not move from the wheelchair space.

**Do you want to say anything else about travelling by rail?**

You have not asked me if I have a favourite train. I love Pendolinos.

You did not ask me if I treat myself to First Class. I do! It is really helpful in the absence of a catering trolley, and it is nice to have some extra support around.

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### Relations with rail user groups

We have had long-time regular contact with the Marlow-Maidenhead Passengers' Association, which is concerned about the lack of progress on the track remodelling and signalling at Bourne End to permit a regular half-hourly through service. The plans are completed, funding is available, Great Western Railway is keen to get the work done, and yet Network Rail seems reluctant to start work.

The outer reaches of the Metropolitan line fall within the purview of Railfuture Thames Valley, and the branch committee now has a member who can attend meetings of the Chesham and District Transport Users' Group. The most recent meeting was mainly concerning bus services, but the group has had a complaint about the number of trains cancelled or terminated short of destination. The installation of lifts and a footbridge at Amersham has been approved, but without staircases. Because of this penny-pinching, passengers will still have to crowd on to the narrow 127-year-old Metropolitan Railway footbridge.

### Connecting Oxford consultation

Oxford City Council has issued a consultation document on possible solutions to the problem of traffic congestion in the city. One proposal is for a workplace parking levy. The main thrust of Railfuture's response would be that rather than spend the proceeds of the levy on more buses, and bus gates for the planned new eastern arc bus services, the proceeds of the levy should be spent on something far more visible and concrete, a flagship project. Payers of the levy will need to see some substantial benefits from the money paid, rather than see it go on what they will regard as less substantial or less permanent buses. In Nottingham the levy funds the trams, which are highly visible, so tax payers can see a return on the tax paid. Railfuture Thames Valley committee agreed to submit a response proposing that the workplace parking levy should go towards light rail/trams, connecting Headington park-and-ride and its hospitals with a line through to Botley, with Cowley also an option.

### Strategic rail study

A strategic rail corridor study of the Oxfordshire rail network has been under way for well over a year with a £25,000 contribution towards it from England's Economic Heartland, one of the new sub-national bodies that are emerging throughout the country. The main aim of the study, which involves Network Rail, is to see how rail development can help in the large-scale construction of new homes and in promoting economic growth.

The study is looking at what can be done for both passenger and freight links by 2031, with one eye looking as far ahead as 2050. Levels of service are being considered, but so too is how many extra coaches would be needed for peak-hour services, along with how connections can be improved to shorten overall journey times.

East West Rail plans to have three trains an hour between Oxford and Bedford (and Milton Keynes) which are expected to increase demand at Bicester Village, Oxford Parkway and Oxford stations. Even at this early stage, it is expected that train formations will have to be lengthened on EWR, but extra capacity will also be needed on the Oxford-Didcot and Oxford-London Marylebone lines.

The study is examining how direct services to Bristol, Swindon and Northampton could also improve journey times. New stations are being considered on the Cowley branch line, and also at Wantage and Grove and at Begbroke. The study is considering how to improve connections to Heathrow but points out that the western rail link from the GWR main line is not yet funded.

The first stage of the study was being finalised in October but there is a risk that it may not be published until after the general election, along with the Williams Review. East West Rail though will be crucial to delivering much wider benefits and stage 2 of the study will come up with concrete plans by the middle of next year.

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

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Picture: ACoRP

### VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR: Julie Gibbon of Tyne Valley CRP at Telford

[peter.walker@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:peter.walker@railfuture.org.uk)

#### Hornden station – latest

Work is going well to plan – and Northern Rail trains are expected to serve the new Hornden station on the Durham Coast line from May next year. Station construction starts in January and will take place largely at night. See [www.durham.gov.uk/horden](http://www.durham.gov.uk/horden)

#### Billingham station step-free bid

An application for £3 million to pay for proper access to Billingham's island platform recently failed despite high hopes. Now Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen has promised £1 million to go with contributions from Stockton Council and the Department for Transport. The bid this time is aimed at the mid-tier *Access for All* fund.

#### Tyne Valley's volunteer of the year

Congratulations to Julie Gibbon, secretary of Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership, for winning the Outstanding Volunteer of the Year award from the Association of Community Rail Partnerships at its Community Rail Awards ceremony at Telford in October. The station buildings at Haltwhistle have been extensively refurbished. Work has also begun in the waiting room buildings to provide commercial space and a comfortable waiting area. Transport for the North is keen to join efforts to improve the line, and the community rail partnership is promoting tourist travel throughout the year in conjunction with the Open in Winter and Explore in Winter initiatives.

#### A sixth London train for Sunderland

Railfuture and Coastliners are pleased that train operator Grand Central Rail's application for a sixth Sunderland service on weekdays and a fifth Sunday service has succeeded at last. There will be a departure some time after 10.00 from Sunderland, Mondays to Saturdays, and a return from King's Cross just after 14.30, along with a Sunday morning 10.30 departure, returning at 15.30 from King's Cross. The trains will have the added attraction of serving the growing day-tripper traffic between Coast line stations and York.

#### More for Morpeth

Morpeth finally becomes an inter-city station in December with a doubling of train services, now that TransPennine's Liverpool-Edinburgh service calls hourly in each direction. The South-East Northumberland Rail User Group planned an event at the station to celebrate, even though neither station building redevelopment work nor extended ticket office opening arrangements had finished. Sadly the customer information system continues to fail on a regular basis.

However, the feasibility study on providing a Morpeth-Berwick local rail service is now under way. SENRUG was featured in *RAIL* magazine's issue 891 (November 6) which examined rail reopening.

#### Tees Valley strategic transport plan

There were separate rail and road sections in the strategic plan drawn up by the Tees Valley Combined Authority. The area spreads as far west as Darlington, despite that town never having been in Teesside itself, nor in Cleveland County. The rail pages include some good ideas, supported by Coastliners, Saltburn Line User Group, and Railfuture North East.

The authority responded to the Department for Transport's suggestion that CrossCountry trains be terminated at York rather than going further north, by suggesting that inter-city trains along the Durham Coast line should call at Stockton, Hartlepool and Sunderland, and rejoin the East Coast main line at Newcastle. The inter-cities would complement existing Grand Central trains linking London and Sunderland. The authority also calls for more electrification and upgrading of the Northallerton-Eaglescliffe-Middlesbrough-Teesport line, in conjunction with the enlargement of facilities at Middlesbrough station.

Proposals for large-scale remodelling of Darlington station ready to deal with Northern Powerhouse services and HS2 may be over-ambitious at this stage.

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# High speed future for freight

Rail freight is poised to provide a new raft of high speed delivery options, former ScotRail manager John Yellowlees has predicted.

He told the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport: "If we are to provide a serious response to the present climate emergency, there will have to be behavioural change, not only by customers, but also by providers of transport services."

Karl Watts, chief executive of the Rail Operations Group which is trialling a new rail service between Thames Gateway port to London Liverpool Street station, told the CILT meeting in Scotland that privatisation has made the running of trains increasingly complex because with the loss of an overarching authority, standardisation has gone.

The most favoured kind of automatic coupling, the Dellner, is one of nine, and even then comes in two different sizes. Brakes may be mechanical or electrical and gauging is a nightmare.

Only on recently electrified routes is electrification UIC-compliant, which poses a danger because current returned through the pantograph can interfere with the signalling. It can be a minefield of complexity, which relies on specialist firms such as ROG.

But Mr Watts said many of the passenger trains displaced by new units can be recycled for other uses.

ROG's Orion business is aiming to address the decline of traditional heavy industry by targeting new business, using lighter and faster trains for increasingly scarce network capacity.

E-commerce is causing a surge in small vans making deliveries of goods ordered online, so the availability of redundant passenger trains, such as former Thameslink class 319s, provides an opportunity for 100 mph freight services. The aim though is 110 mph running.

An order for 10 high speed new trimode class 93 locomotives from Stadler will enable optimal use of the non-electrified single-track branch that links Britain's busiest container port at Felixstowe to the rest of the network.

### Thames Gateway

Former Thameslink electric passenger trains are to be converted to carry off-peak freight from Thames Gateway port to London Liverpool Street.



Picture: JERRY ALDERSON

**Railfuture directors Allison Cosgrove, left, and Wendy Thorne made the draw for the Railfuture monthly lottery in September at London Euston station. Virgin's "amazing" slogan could well be applied to the draw which is open only to current Railfuture members, so participants have a good chance of winning. Half the entry money is returned to members in prizes with the remainder going to help us to fight for a rail future. More information on the Railfuture website. Search for Lottery.**

Derby-based Rail Operations Group will operate a trial freight service from May next year using class 319 trains, fitted with a supplementary diesel engine to allow them to negotiate sidings in the port.

The former class 319s will have their seats removed to provide local freight services between the port of London Gateway near Thurrock, Essex, and London Liverpool Street station.

The scheme has been prompted by the new charges for lorries entering the London Ultra-Low Emissions Zone and will allow freight companies to avoid the congested A13 road.

From October 2021, Transport for London will extend ULEZ to cover the area within the north and south circular roads. Rail Operations Group is working with London Gateway owner DP World to develop the scheme. ROG said "the longer-term aspiration is to have a UK-wide

network of logistics operations serving both logistics centres as well as major stations."

The Orion train operating company is being set up to run the services. Trains are expected to leave London Gateway at 00.29, 12.08 and 18.56, returning from Liverpool Street at 02.42, 14.21 and 21.00. They will use Platforms 9 and 10.

*World Cargo News* reported that ROG's freight trains will comprise four-car units which have had seats, partitions and toilets removed and with windows plated over. Access will continue to be via the electric sliding doors, but floors and sides are being fitted with anchor points. For the trial, each car will be kitted out differently to cater for a range of loads – pallets, wheeled and unweeled containers, roller cages, totes and shelving units.

"Network Rail has been very supportive and we are getting strong interest from the market;

some prospective customers are new to rail," ROG production director Paul Orchard told *World Cargo News*.

"We are hoping to build the service to two and possibly three round trips a day, seven days a week. There is capacity for this at Liverpool Street, and when the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) opens there will be more, as many suburban services will be running below ground.

"Main line termini are located in city centres, so last-mile services can be provided by e-vans or cargo bikes, while our bimodal capability means we can service any rail siding and divert off electrified routes if there are power supply problems."

#### Alibaba

Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba is running a weekly freight train from Yiwu in China to its European hub in Liege, Belgium. Alibaba already runs a freight train from Zhengzhou to Liege which started last year.

#### Sheffield record

More than 2.5 million tonnes of aggregate from Dove Holes quarry in Buxton has been delivered by CEMEX in the 10 years it has been running trains to its Attercliffe railhead in Sheffield, which is run jointly with DB Cargo UK. Some of the material is used by CEMEX depots at Rotherham and Barnsley.

CEMEX's David Hart said: "Using rail to transport aggregates is an area of our business that continues to grow and is a real focus for us, as we look to decrease road congestion and cut carbon emissions by reducing our number of truck movements."

#### Japan-Europe

Russian Railways told an economic forum in Vladivostok that it is working on reducing the rail journey time for freight from Japan to Europe to two weeks.

## Tool to speed up rail reopening plans

Transport researchers at the University of Southampton have created a new automated online tool which can quickly and reliably forecast passenger numbers at new local railway stations and lines. It should transform the lengthy and expensive process of appraising new stations, which is currently limited to a few specialists and may in future be available for campaign groups to use.

The predictive model that underpins the tool was developed by Dr Marcus Young and was used to assess 12 possible new stations for the Welsh Government. The model was turned into a readily usable automated tool which is available via the UK's new Data and Analytics Facility for National

Infrastructure (DAFNI) – an £8 million initiative intended to bridge the gap between academic research and strategic planning.

The tool is currently being trialled by Transport Scotland, early supporters of the project. Along with the Welsh Government, Transport Scotland gave access to data from passenger surveys, and these were used to develop a way to predict the likelihood of stations being chosen for every postcode in Great Britain. This allows the tool to predict how many passengers will be drawn from existing stations to the new station, which is important when assessing the cost and benefits of a new station. *Railwatch* plans to publish more details in the next issue.



**PLAID CYMRU CONFERENCE: (from left) Aberystwyth-Carmarthen rail reopening campaigner Mike Walker, Assembly Member Elin Jones (presiding officer of the Assembly), Ceredigion MP Ben Lake and Geraint Blaney of Traws Link Cymru**

Reopening the Aberystwyth-Carmarthen line is now included in the Welsh Government's rail and transport strategy. Mike Walker of the campaign group Traws Link Cymru said: "For the first time, the Welsh Government has publicly acknowledged the need for a north-south rail corridor." A *railway for Wales – meeting the needs of future generations* was welcomed by Plaid Cymru's conference in Swansea in October. The Welsh Government funded a 2018 study which showed there were no insurmountable engineering problems associated with reopening, but the Welsh Government must now appeal to the UK Government, which has retained control over funding new rail infrastructure in Wales. The cost of reopening the 50-mile long Aberystwyth-Carmarthen line is less than half the cost of building the now scrapped 14-mile long M4 relief road in south Wales.

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#### Railfuture protests over TFW timetable

Railfuture complained to Transport for Wales and Minister Ken Skates about a lack of consultation on substantial changes to the timetable in December. The main changes for local services in December result from the revision of the Great Western London-Swansea inter-city timetable and the extra locomotive-hauled Cardiff-Holyhead trains. Transport for Wales responded to critical comments by staging a workshop in November to consider further timetable changes from May next year. This provided an opportunity for stakeholders to express their concerns and aspirations and to make constructive comments.

The good news in December is that Paddington-Cardiff services will be 12 minutes quicker, but Cardiff-Swansea services still remain with bunching. Although work is expected to continue to solve electrification problems in the Severn Tunnel, the remaining electrification from London to Cardiff should be complete by January.

#### Railfuture ready with alternatives to the M4

Railfuture is preparing to give evidence to the South East Wales Transport Commission, which was set up after the decision to scrap the M4 relief road in June. The commission was expected to produce a progress report this year, an interim report in the spring and a final report in 2021.

#### Floods and engineering work disrupt services

There have been further closures of the Welsh network while infrastructure problems are tackled. The Fishguard Harbour branch was closed from 17 October after a train ran into a tree near Spittal and remained closed for a month to allow the removal of unsafe trees. Abergavenny-Hereford was closed for seven days from Saturday 26 October after a landslide south of Pontrilas when the river Monnow flooded the line.

The Cambrian line (Pwllheli-Barmouth) was closed for 17 days from 26 October for more structural work on the River Arthro bridge between Llanbedr and Pensarn stations. Platform upgrade work resulted in trains not stopping at Llandanwg station (near Harlech) from 7 to 24 October. Trains between Aberystwyth and Machynlleth were replaced by buses for two weeks from 12 November for work to start on the new £8 million park-and-ride station for Aberystwyth at Bow

Street. Planning permission for the new station (three miles from Aberystwyth) was granted in September. Ceredigion councillor Paul Hinge told the *Cambrian News*: "I am absolutely delighted. We have gone through 23 different plans to get to this point."

North Llanrwst-Blaenau Ffestiniog (on the Conwy Valley line) was closed at the end of September, months after Dolgarrog station was closed by flooding in February. The complete Llandudno Junction-Blaenau Ffestiniog line was closed again from 22 November until 15 December for continuing engineering work, including preparations for rebuilding Dolgarrog station and work in the Ffestiniog tunnel.

#### Western Gateway aims to be a powerhouse

The Western Gateway was launched at Newport in November by the former Wales Secretary Alun Cairns and Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick, with the aim of creating a "powerhouse" in a cross-border area on both sides of the Bristol Channel including Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Swansea, with a population of 4.4 million and an economy worth £197 billion. Sadly there was no mention of transport improvements at the launch.

#### End of freight on North Wales main line

The final flask train conveying nuclear waste from Valley, the railhead for Wylfa nuclear power station on Anglesey which has now been decommissioned, ran in September. Plans for a replacement power station are on hold. This was the only remaining freight traffic on the North Wales main line west of Chester. However, there are hopes of granite traffic restarting from Penmaenmawr and for slate traffic from Blaenau Ffestiniog.

#### Pacers cling on in south Wales

Transport for Wales continues to face rolling stock shortages. Converted Thameslink trains are not yet available so Pacers will remain in service. Vivarail's class 230 and the transfer of class 170 trains from Greater Anglia are also delayed. There are plans to use class 153 units on local services in North Wales, including Wrexham-Bidston, to release some class 150s to the Cardiff Valleys. Poor access because of narrow doors and the difficulties of carrying bicycles have made the proposal unpopular with the Wrexham Bidston Rail User Association.

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

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#### Access at Victoria and Mills Hill

The lifts at Manchester Victoria station, that provide level access to platforms 4-6 from the main concourse are presently out of action, and Network Rail has decided to start planned refurbishment work early instead of repairing the existing lifts. The new ones are now expected to come into service in January 2020 but in the meantime there are access issues. The local user group, Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester line (STORM) is also concerned that the problem is exacerbated by the closure of the level access at Mills Hill station.

At other stations between Victoria and Rochdale there is no up-to-date information warning passengers with access needs that they will not be able to disembark at Victoria, or any information on alternatives. The National Rail Enquiries and Northern websites are however correctly showing the lack of access at Victoria.

Northern staff at Victoria have been using a manual access "caterpillar platform" that can climb the stairs, but this obviously needs time and pre-booking and cannot take heavy electric wheelchairs. STORM has suggested to Northern that on-board staff should be making announcements about Victoria and any alternatives available, but have had no response as yet. Signs at Mills Hill have since improved.

#### Pacers hanging on in North West

A delay in the delivery of new trains has seen rail operator Northern seek approval for its Pacer trains to continue operating on Manchester-Marple-Clitheroe and the Manchester-Sheffield stopping service. Northern was expected to introduce new Spanish-built class 195 trains on its new Leeds-Chester route in October, delayed from May.

#### Local stops cut from TFW-run train

The Shrewsbury-Chester Rail Users Association is strongly objecting to plans by Transport for Wales to remove a popular train service. The revised Cardiff-Holyhead timetable sees trains not stopping at Gobowen, Chirk and Ruabon. The move creates two-hour gaps between trains. SCRUA chair John Mattocks said: "At the start of the Transport for Wales franchise, in October 2018, we were promised more frequent services, improved and new rolling stock and more Sunday services. No mention was made of withdrawing existing services. There was no consultation with any party before this totally retrograde move by the train operator."

New Stadler trains being built for Merseyrail were under test at Wildenrath, Germany, in November. The first train with 25kV pantographs in addition to its third rail equipment is expected to be test-running in Britain by December. Some of the dual-voltage trains will also be battery-fitted, which may allow the Merseyrail network to be extended. The new trains may be tested on the Ellesmere Port-Helsby and Ormskirk-Preston routes.

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#### Levenmouth success story

Railfuture Scotland held its autumn meeting in Edinburgh, where Dr Allen Armstrong of the Levenmouth Rail Campaign told members the story of their long-running quest for reopening. Already the next process in restoring rail to this part of Fife is underway, and campaigners will be keeping a close eye on developments.

#### Talgo train factory plans

Talgo, the Spanish train manufacturer, has signed a framework deal that is expected to lead to it building a £40 million factory in Fife, creating up to 1,000 jobs, on the site of the former Longannet power station near Kincardine. Rail campaigners are confident that the factory will boost the argument for building new passenger stations there and at Clackmannan. It will strengthen the case for extending services from Alloa to Dunfermline.

Talgo, which is bidding to build the trains for High Speed Two, has signed a joint agreement with both Scottish Enterprise and Transport Scotland. Talgo president Carlos de Palacio y Oriel said: "We are committed to Scotland in our bid process. This marks a new phase in an excellent relationship with Team Scotland."

"Now let's get on with securing orders that will bring more jobs and true manufacturing of rolling stock back to Scotland."

Talgo earlier said it would take 18 months for their factory to be built after securing an order. Scottish transport secretary Michael Matheson said: "Should Talgo be successful in its bid to win the contract for HS2 rolling stock, this new factory at Longannet would bring a great number of new jobs to Fife, which would be a welcome boost for the local area."

Talgo has its headquarters in Las Rozas, near Madrid, but has production and maintenance facilities in Germany, America, Russia, Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia.

Part of the turbine hall of Longannet power station was blown up in late October as part of the demolition process.

#### St Andrews options include rail link

The StARLink campaign has just received the first draft of the Case for Change section of the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide study into St Andrews sustainable transport from PBA (now part of Stantec consultancy group). Nineteen options to alleviate the traffic situation have been identified, including heavy rail. These will now be whittled down to a more manageable number in the next stage.

#### RAGES waits for its new stations

Meanwhile, in East Lothian, RAGES (Rail Action Group East of Scotland) is still waiting to hear further details about the new stations at East Linton and Reston, including the particulars of which services will stop there.

#### Nationalisation bid fails

A bid to get ScotRail taken back into public ownership failed in the Scottish Parliament in October. Despite support from Lib Dems and Greens, the Labour motion was voted down by the SNP and the Tories by 85 to 32.

#### Upgrade plan for south-west Scotland

The shortcomings of the rail network in south-west Scotland have been highlighted by transport experts who are helping Transport Scotland review its overall strategy.

The consultants who carried out the survey in both Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway

◆◆◆◆ European Rail Timetable available at <http://www.europeanrailtimetable.eu>



**ACCESS FOR ALL BRIDGE FOR DUNBAR: A new footbridge was lifted into place by crane (below) and lifts were installed as part of a £13 million scheme at the East Coast main line station at Dunbar, together with a second (new) northbound platform to accommodate a 10-car train**

found that train services are far too infrequent with large gaps in the timetable which made integrated journeys by public transport very difficult.

Passengers were left waiting for long periods, and many chose the alternative of going by car which was often much cheaper than going by rail, if only petrol costs were taken into account. The operating day for many rail services is too short, with services starting too late in the morning and finishing too early.

Inadequate timetables on both the lines from Glasgow to Dumfries and to Stranraer deterred passengers from travelling by rail.

A more consistent train service existed on the West Coast main line between Lockerbie and Glasgow but many people in the area were unable to gain access to it.

Given the limited rail network coverage in the study area, buses are the only public transport option for many, and bus fares can be high, with some even more expensive than the train. There was virtually no integration of bus and train services.

AECOM's report was published in June and a second period of public consultation was completed in September.

The consultants recommended Transport Scotland examine the following ways of improving the network:

- More frequent trains on the Glasgow-Dumfries-Carlisle line, possibly accompanied by electrification, signalling upgrades and passing loops for freight. Introduce some express services to Glasgow and Edinburgh.
- New rail stations at Cumnock, Thornhill, Eastriggs and Pinwherry.
- More frequent trains on the Stranraer-Glasgow line and from Stranraer to Prestwick, with new stations at Dunragit and Ayr South (to serve the hospital), and rail freight hubs in Girvan and Barrhill.
- Building a passenger and freight line from Stranraer to Cairnryan, including a new station at Cairnryan (for ferries to Ireland).
- Reopening the former railway line between Stranraer and Dumfries.
- Increased services from Lockerbie to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Carlisle, including ScotRail services to augment the inter-city train service, with a new station at Beattock.
- Consider building a direct rail link between the Glasgow and South Western route and the West Coast main line, possibly at Lockerbie or Dumfries or Annan.



The report can be seen at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/45046/initial-appraisal-case-for-change-south-west-scotland-transport-study.pdf>

#### Contacts:

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES): [www.rages.org.uk/](http://www.rages.org.uk/)  
Beattock Station Action Group: [www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/](http://www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/)  
St Andrews Rail Link campaign (StARLink): [www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/](http://www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/)  
[facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign](https://www.facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign)  
Levenmouth Rail Campaign: [www.lmrc-action.org.uk/](http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/)  
[facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/](https://www.facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/)  
Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG): [www.capitalrail.org.uk/](http://www.capitalrail.org.uk/)  
Newburgh Train Station campaign: <http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/>  
Forth Rail Link (Dunfermline-Kincardine-Alloa): [www.forthraillink.com](http://www.forthraillink.com)  
[facebook.com/forthraillink/](https://www.facebook.com/forthraillink/)  
Thornhill Station Action Group: [chrisandmimi@supanet.com](mailto:chrisandmimi@supanet.com)  
Bonnybridge Railway Campaign: [http://bonnybridgerailway.scot](http://http://bonnybridgerailway.scot)  
[www.facebook.com/bonnybridgerailway](https://www.facebook.com/bonnybridgerailway)

railwatch December 2019 17

Picture: BARRIE FORREST

## Ramp problems

I have just read the latest issue of *Railwatch* and the features about Access for All.

I am not disabled myself yet but the time is coming when I will need help as I have a muscular problem which is getting worse.

One thing that does not get mentioned very often is that there are two aspects about disabled access to trains: getting on to the platform and getting on to the train from the platform.

There has always been access to the platforms of my local station, Egham, but getting on the train is another matter.

Egham does not have platform staff and the disabled person is often unable to attract the attention of the guard who may be at the other end of the train.

Booking help in advance is a very hit-and-miss affair locally.

I have personally helped put a person in a wheelchair on to a train, using the ramp, as I happen to carry a key which unlocks the ramp holder.

The wheelchair passenger had booked in advance to have help but the help did not turn up.

Another issue is the new ramps. The older-style ramps with wheels were easy to use.

The new-style ramps do not have wheels and have to be carried. In strong winds, they can act like a sail. They also need a strong person to use them.

In contrast to the national network, preserved railways do their best for disabled passengers. For example, the Swanage Railway has disabled access at four of its five stations, with Herston Halt as the exception.

*Martin James, Egham, Surrey  
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## Disillusioned

Unfortunately I have finally decided to let my membership lapse. It is mostly due to being utterly disillusioned with the railway industry in general and what I feel is Railfuture's inability to see beyond the current dreadful franchising system that stymies the industry's ability to build a modern transport system.

In the 1990s I lived in Holland where I experienced a truly modern, intelligent and integrated approach to transport. The UK was years behind then and is now nowhere to be seen.

I was struck on a recent trip to Belgium how in the UK we have wasted so many years going nowhere, and there is no sign of this changing.

Around 20 years ago I was really inspired by a leaflet produced by



Picture: JAKE KELLY

**WESTMINSTER: SELRAP campaigners meet MPs and officials along the corridors of power. Keighley MP John Grogan can be seen below the screen. To his left is Hyndburn MP Graham Jones who chaired the meeting. To his left are SELRAP chairman Peter Bryson, and SELRAP executive committee members Andy Dixon and Andy Shackleton**

## Skipton-Colne wins place in the pipeline

Skipton-Colne rail reopening campaigners were cheered by the Department for Transport's publication on 16 October of its list of nationally important projects in the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline.

The Skipton-Colne scheme came third in the list of "schemes with a decision to initiate".

"It is publicly acknowledged that this is now one of the top UK rail projects," said Peter Bryson of the Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership. "Therefore not only are we moving further forward, Skipton to Colne is definitely now on the approved list of schemes going forward for more consideration."

The list was published just a few days before SELRAP campaigners had a meeting in Parliament, in a committee room at the Palace of Westminster.

All the local MPs or their representatives attended, along with two local peers and four senior civil servants from the Department for Transport and Transport for the North, as well as three SELRAP campaigners.

Transport for the North has previously said "we want Skipton to Colne open by 2027" and it is now in the TfN strategic investment plan for the North.

The MPs stressed the scheme's potential for economic and social transformation of deprived areas. This is crucial because East Lancashire is now officially the most deprived region in the UK.

The line is expected to provide good and quick access to employment opportunities in both Lancashire and Yorkshire.

The potential benefits to Keighley, Craven and other areas of Yorkshire are accepted but added

the local branch of Railfuture in East Sussex that suggested serious proposals to improve the rail service between Brighton and Ashford International.

It was both inspiring and seemingly possible, and provided an exciting solution to the

generally appalling state of public transport in East Sussex, and particularly the Hastings area.

Fast forward to 2019, and what has happened – absolutely nothing really. Some tinkering at the edges but the awful state of public transport in East Sussex

benefits include relieving pressure on the Green Belt for housing and providing better access to both Manchester city centre and Manchester Airport.

SELRAP has cross-party support from all MPs on the line, all the way along the line from Accrington through to Shipley, but accepts that there are two issues remaining to be resolved: whether freight trains would use the route and what engineering measures are necessary at Earby to minimise the effect on local residents.

### Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline

The list of projects in the RNEP was published on 16 October by the Department for Transport after more than a year of campaigning by the Railway Industry Association with its SURE message – Show Us the Rail Enhancements – to the Government.

RNEP was introduced by the DfT as a way of ensuring that projects were "well developed before they came to market".

RNEP includes 598 projects, including digital signalling, stations redevelopment, and capacity improvements, and the RIA says publication of the list should allow the industry to plan and invest.

It however has concerns that there are no construction-ready schemes in the current RNEP. It believes that could lead to a major enhancements hiatus in Network Rail's control period six (2019-2024) but is calling for the RNEP to be published annually.

The RNEP does not include market-led enhancement proposals which require private sector investment.

The 15-page RNEP can be downloaded from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rail-network-enhancements-pipeline>

provides a constant drag on the local economy. I work at a local college and all the trains and buses provide a perfect advert for why the students should aspire to buying a car.

We have endured endless plans to improve the Marshlink between

Ashford and Hastings, none of which have ever come to anything. The possibility of a new Willington Chord (which would allow trains to bypass Eastbourne), again came to nothing and then there is the myopic rundown of the excellent Eurostar service from Ashford and increasing journey times.

The final humiliation was local MP Amber Rudd and her seemingly plausible ideas for HS1 being brought to Hastings. I sat through at least two of her ridiculous rail summits, which I finally twigged were only to provide the impression that something was happening, and to improve Ms Rudd's electoral prospects before people realised.

Southern (and previous incarnations) was awful, and similarly the slightly less dreadful South Eastern (and previous incarnations). I could go on.

I of course don't blame Railfuture for all of the above, but I feel that the organisation is not effective in these anti-rail times (except perhaps in London) and seemingly endless political paralysis, which will only get a lot worse post Brexit when we will be a considerably poorer country and rail infrastructure will just be another part of our poor infrastructure in the queue.

My love of railways has waned recently after long periods of toxic commuting and latterly the increasing costs of travel, meaning I am just unable to use trains as much as I used to. Their general unreliability from being run by companies completely out of their depth has remained a depressing constant.

I have really enjoyed being a member of Railfuture, and met some great people. Good luck to Railfuture in all its future endeavours.

*Name and address supplied*

## Levy to help rail

In *Railwatch* 161, Phil Smart demonstrated the serious climatic impact of aviation compared to rail and asks what our response should be.

The answer is to press Government to increase the short-haul APD (air passenger duty). APD should not be viewed as a tax but as an environmental levy on a discretionary activity. APD is easy to collect, covers flights up to about 2,000 miles and would target frequent flyers while adding little to the overall cost of an annual family holiday. My MP also seems to be broadly in favour of increasing APD.

A stepwise doubling of the currently trivial amount would yield several billion pounds per



Picture: MARTIN GARVEY

## Euston Deltic

While in London recently I passed the Euston Flyer pub, something I have done many times, but I have never noticed the pub sign. Surely Deltics never operated out of Euston?

*Martin Garvey, Sydney Road, Nottingham NG8 1LH*

annum, encourage a shift of domestic flight users to rail and pay for some of the improvements needed for rail.

But please do not encourage more flying by diverting the East Coast main line to serve what was Finningley airfield and is now known as Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

*John Davis, Harpenden AL5 5UD  
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## Urban Pacers

In *Railwatch* 161, Paul Abell writes about ambitious plans for South Yorkshire, hoping that the train percentage of local commuting journeys will increase with the replacement of the controversial Pacers.

On the next page, mention is made of the new 60mph Shooter D-Trains designed for lines unlikely ever to see electrification,

such as Middlesbrough to Whitby and the Cumbrian Coast line north of Barrow. The Pacer had the advantage of being economical on lesser-used lines. It failed as a concept when it was employed in urban areas, including well-used services around Leeds. As the Pacer has a limited number of doors, this increased waiting times at stations and prolonged journeys.

*Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby DN31 2JP  
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## South Midlands

Graham Nalty is right to call for new east-west rail links (*Railwatch* 161). The area between Peterborough and Northampton is a particular rail desert. Two new links would greatly improve rail connectivity:

1 An east-to-south chord at Manton Junction would give a direct route from Peterborough to Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough.

2 Reopening the 12 miles between Wellingborough and Northampton would extend this route through to the West Coast main line and open up a range of new journey opportunities.

Elsewhere in the Midlands, the section of Great Central route from Banbury to Leicester could be reopened, to provide a freight and passenger bypass for the congested West Midlands conurbation.

New stations could be built at Staverton (Davenport West), Rugby (near the WCML), Lutterworth, and Countesthorpe. The route would join the Midland main line in the Wigston area. A spur at Rugby on to the West Coast main line northwards would provide a useful new freight route.

*Tim Stevens, Waterton Close, Deeping St James, Peterborough PE6 8PN  
tjstevens558@gmail.com*

## Bus letdown

In early October, we caught the 09.00 (Sunday 6th) rail replacement bus from Bristol Temple Meads to Nailsea & Backwell. When the bus arrived at Nailsea and Backwell, the driver nearly left someone else's luggage on the pavement with us.

He then left, after explaining that the coach would not go under the bridge. We only realised the significance of this when we walked under the bridge and saw the notice that the bus would stop on that side. Waiting there was a young woman passenger on her phone, presumably trying to find out about the bus. The next bus was not for another hour and a half. I am constantly amazed at the incompetence of many train companies. Why did not Great Western give instructions to the

bus driver either to take a route avoiding the bridge or to walk through to check no-one was waiting? Even more helpful would be to have a staff member on the bus who knew the route, the most obvious people being the ticket collectors who would normally staff the train.

*Name, address and email supplied*

## Toilet torture

Recently I wanted to go to the toilet but both toilets on the two-coach Southern Marshlink class 171 were locked.

The guard told me none were working and had not been on that particular train since the previous day, so he advised me to get off at next station and wait for the next train.

The train duly stopped at Doleham, which is one of those ghost stations that only has one train a day. Luckily I stayed next to the guard who by then had realised he would be dumping me for the night.

"You will have to wait until Hastings," he said. By that time I was bent double.

I would suggest to overcome this sort of embarrassment that at least the operator is forced to put on the station departure screens, the in-train screens and in-train announcements that "There are no toilets on this train".

It might cause the operator some embarrassment, but maybe that would force them to check the trains at the beginning of the day.

Finally, for having to wait at Hastings, I tried to get a delay repay. This was refused.

*Simon Smewing  
simon.smewing@post.ee*

## Railwatch wrapper

I believe Railfuture has failed to address the question of the wrapping used to despatch *Railwatch*. I think "biodegradable" is such a weasel term.

The fact that it is simply repeated every time a member raises the issue really does not sit comfortably with the focus in *Railwatch* 160 and 161 on the environment. I am so disappointed by this – as much if not more by Railfuture's failure to respond seriously to members' concerns as by the fact itself – that I am seriously considering cancelling my subscription.

*Harriet Powney  
hacket67@yahoo.com*

**Editor's note: I have contacted Harriet and she was delighted with the news that our despatchers, Intercity Communications, have now agreed to use starch-based wrappers for *Railwatch*.**

# Team work boosts Midland main line

By Christopher Groome

LANRAC stands for Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Rail Action Committee.

It was formed some 20 years ago by local town and parish councils to promote investment in the Midland main line and in despair at the lack of interest shown by their principal local authorities.

The objective was to provide new stations and new services. Nowadays its membership also covers Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Rutland.

LANRAC's mode of operation is to work with the train operator and the infrastructure provider, currently East Midlands Railway and Network Rail, partly as a lobby group and partly as a facilitator. We have also developed good relations with MPs along the line.

There was a huge investment backlog on the line, largely because no one had succeeded in bringing the various stakeholders together to rival the lobbying power of, for example, local authorities in the North West.

Early on we confined ourselves to timetabling, capacity of the trains, and condition of the stations.

We then moved to promote and support the opening of new stations. East Midlands Parkway, Corby and Ilkeston were the successful ones.

We did this through engagement in Network Rail's route utilisation study and the franchising process, supported by networking to get other stakeholders on side.

The first major breakthrough was getting Loughborough station and its environment upgraded. The station had been unfit for purpose, with short platforms. The surrounding area, including the goods yard, was derelict.

Resolving the problem depended on getting the various landowners and regulatory bodies to work together and we had access to them all. The ingredient which triggered action was the drive and enthusiasm of the new MP for Loughborough, Nicky Morgan.

Now Loughborough has a station to be proud of, with full-length platforms, lifts for the disabled and sensitively modernised station buildings. The surrounding area has much-needed new housing with a bus interchange, car parking and better road access.

The next project we got involved in was Nottingham. We realised



**DEMOLITION DAY:** The bridge over the four-track main line at Bedford was demolished in November to make way for electrification work north of Bedford on the Midland main line



**CONSTRUCTION:** The footings for the down slow platform extension at Wellingborough station plus electrification work

that we had a canny team of people at Network Rail who were masters at bringing together various maintenance and improvement budgets to make a scheme financially viable. Worn-out track and signalling have to be replaced periodically, so that is a good time to seek extra funds to increase capacity and upgrade the line. There are other funds for station improvement and Disability Discrimination Act compliance considerations. So the Nottingham project was born and delivered to time and budget. The planning of



**Loughborough MP Nicky Morgan is not standing in the forthcoming general election**

## Rail user group awards

Railfuture's Awards for Rail User Groups will be presented at our Birmingham AGM on Saturday 27 June. The closing date is Sunday 1 March and the judging panel of experts will include Railfuture vice-presidents. Awards will be in six categories: website, social media promotion, newsletter, new group – the Oliver Lovell Award, campaign and campaigner – the Clara Zilahi Award. There will also be a Judges' Special Award. Full info on the Railfuture website. Search RUG+awards.

Philip Hollobone, was crucial in making sure that the upgrading was funded to take place before the electrification.

They were also crucial in getting the "pause" lifted after the 2015 funding crisis, so that the work is now going forward again, albeit at a slower pace. We took the Department of Transport's word that it would still fund improvements and persuaded it to keep the team of engineers and contractors together by sorting out Derby and Market Harborough and retaining electrification to Corby.

We want to be able to demonstrate the rightness of our belief that keeping the teams together and planning the work thoroughly enables success, unlike the Great Western electrification.

My first conclusion is to highlight how improvement of the track and signalling at Derby and Market Harborough contributes to the improvement of the functioning of the line for all the communities it serves.

Under the existing regime the ambition of Sheffield, Nottingham, Derby and Leicester to have faster services to London by taking out intermediate stops sets them at odds with the aspirations of intermediate stations like Market Harborough, Kettering, Wellingborough and Bedford to have frequent stops and connectivity with other stations along the line.

Increasing line speed and capacity gives us the opportunity to have both, with 20 minutes knocked off peak times from Sheffield to London in the December timetable changes and greater connectivity in prospect from the following December. CrossCountry also benefits by a similar amount.

My second conclusion is that Network Rail has shown that it can deliver to time and budget with this team and deserves to be allocated the money to finish the job, starting with Leicester.

My third conclusion is that Railfuture as an organisation has the skillset in terms of networking and railway operation to help organisations like LANRAC succeed. The informed contributions of Terry Holt, Roger Bacon and Steve Jones in particular have helped a group of green enthusiasts make things happen.

■ Christopher Groome represents Burton Latimer Town Council on LANRAC and is the current chairman. He is also active in Kettering Rail Users and a member of Railfuture's East Midlands branch committee.

the works and the replacement services was masterly and showed that the teams at Network Rail and East Midlands Trains could be trusted to handle major works.

It was obvious that all the ingredients were there to go for the "big one", the upgrading and electrification of the line to cope with higher speeds and provide the capacity needed for the massive growth in passenger numbers and freight.

Note that I put upgrading first because electrification without upgrading would provide only limited benefits and would make the upgrading more expensive by locking in the present inadequate track layout and signalling.

This was an issue right up to a week before the Government's announcement that it would fund the upgrading and electrification because the Treasury wanted to save the money for the upgrading and figured that the "sparks effect" was sexy enough on its own.

The network of MPs along the line, headed by Nicky Morgan and including my own MP,

Picture: NETWORK RAIL

Picture: TONY MANKTELOW

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## Lobbying result with West Midlands Trains

As mentioned in *Railwatch* 161, we have not accepted the reduced capacity on the Birmingham New Street to Hereford service via Worcester following the introduction of the May timetable. Since May we have had several meetings with the directors of West Midlands Railway and with West Midlands Rail Executive, and briefed all MPs through whose constituencies this service runs. This culminated in a meeting between the MPs and WMT in September. WMT promised action and managed to borrow two one-coach class 153 units from East Midlands Railway, which arrived in the last week of October and will be used to strengthen the 07.09 ex Hereford and the very overcrowded Birmingham New Street departures at 15.50 and 16.20 from two car to three cars.

When the class 350 electric trains are transferred from TransPennine Express in December, WMT will be able to move three class 170 diesel trains (being used on the electrified Chase line) to operate the Birmingham New Street-Hereford service.

We recognise that the class 153 units are no longer compliant (from 2020) for use by people with reduced mobility. So Railfuture has supported WMT's application to the Department for Transport to use the class 153s if they are coupled to class 170 or 172 diesel trains which do comply with the law.



More than 120 people attended Railfuture's Shrewsbury meeting

## Standing room only at Shrewsbury meeting

More than 120 people attended an open meeting organised by Railfuture West Midlands at the Gateway Centre, Shrewsbury, in October to explore the question *Shropshire Rail – the Forgotten County?* Attendees included the leader of Shropshire Council Peter Nutting and the transport and economy portfolio holders of Shropshire Council, Telford and Wrekin unitary authority and Powys Council, together with several other county, town and parish councillors.

Also there were rail user groups covering the lines radiating from Shrewsbury, plus various residents' and community groups.

Recognising that Shrewsbury is the major interchange station for rail services to and from south, west and north Wales, Cheshire, the West Midlands and London, our invited speakers were Daniel Kawczynski, MP for Shrewsbury and Atcham, Lee Robinson, North Wales development director for Transport for Wales – Rail, Peter Sargent, head of rail development at West Midlands Rail Executive, and Ced Green, secretary of North Cheshire Rail Users Association.

After hearing their short presentations there was a 90-minute question and answer session, where passengers and rail user groups asked challenging questions of the speakers and Peter Nutting on future plans and services.

That day the *Shropshire Star* front page was on the changes in December to the first off-peak service to Chester from Shrewsbury, which would no longer stop at even the second busiest station on the line and would thus leave a two-hour gap in the service. Much concern was expressed, not only on the changes but that there had been no promised consultation from Transport for Wales. Lee Robinson promised that he would put the views of the meeting to the TFW rail management board that month.

The event was so successful that requests were made by attendees for a repeat event in 2020.

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Yorkshire



AZUMA: Andrew Jones, left, and Brian Dunsby at Harrogate

## New Azuma trains are welcomed in Harrogate

Rail campaigners in Harrogate were delighted by the arrival in September of the new Azuma trains, coinciding with the World Cycle Championships in the town.

There to meet the Hitachi-made London North Eastern Railway trains were Harrogate MP Andrew Jones (a former transport minister) and Brian Dunsby of the Harrogate Line Supporters Group.

"Harrogate is a really important destination for LNER so we wanted to support the town and help visitors during the UCI Championships by providing extra services," said Suzanne Donnelly, LNER's commercial director. "We are pleased to provide thousands of extra seats by using some of our brand new Azuma trains, allowing visitors to get a taste of what is to come before they are permanently introduced on the route later in the year."

The Azumas will operate an enhanced Harrogate-London timetable with six trains in each direction from December giving a two-hourly frequency.

The supporters group is hoping LNER will promote the Azumas with promotional fares and to enable Harrogate businesses to get to London whilst also attracting more visitors to Harrogate. The Azumas have four reservable spaces for cycles but have been criticised because the spaces are inconvenient and cramped. LNER says it is making changes to make the areas more user-friendly.

## New Leeds station roof

Work on a new station roof at Leeds was completed in September, as part of a £161 million project to improve the station and its environs.

A Network Rail spokesman said: "Those using Leeds station are already feeling the benefit, with much more natural light entering the main concourse and creating a more pleasant environment."

## Settle-Carlisle project to stabilise cutting

A steep railway cutting that was slipping towards the railway at Fothergill, near Kirkby Stephen, has been strengthened as part of a £1.2 million project to make the Settle-Carlisle railway line safe and reliable. The work at Fothergill was completed by Network Rail's Cumbrian-based contractor, Story Contracting.

To stabilise the slope near Birkett tunnel, engineers dug out waterlogged soil, laid 11,500 tonnes of rock and installed a new drainage system.

www.railfuture.org.uk/

Yorkshire+Branch

Twitter: @RailfutureYorks



The work on the cutting at Fothergill

Picture: LNER

Picture: COLIN MAJOR

Picture: STORY CONTRACTING

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Smiley faces at Cooksbridge 😊 😊 😊

Passengers at Cooksbridge station, near Lewes, are celebrating the restoration of all-day services on six days of the week from 16 December. Cooksbridge will lose its sad tag on the *London & South East rail services map*: "Peak hour or limited service station". The local rail user group, affiliated to and supported by Railfuture, will be celebrating at the station on Saturday 21 December. Come and join us.

**Timetable changes upset passengers**

Train operator Southeastern has provoked an angry reaction by proposing to stop serving Ore station with its three trains each weekday peak. Since May last year, Ore is routinely served by GTR-Southern MarshLink services. Local passengers surveyed by Railfuture-affiliated Ore Transport Group have pointed out that Southeastern's two morning peak services towards London were important because they left before local bus services to Hastings.

GTR-Great Northern has annoyed some passengers with its plan to reduce late-evening services during work in Moorgate tunnels. Railfuture-affiliated Hadley Wood RUG and Hatfield Association of Rail Travellers, through our Herts & Beds Division, have called for a re-think.

**More Crossrail delay**

Contractors' plans to hand over Crossrail's new station at Custom House to Rail for London in October were delayed after faults were discovered in the fire alarm controls. In a report to London Assembly transport committee chair Florence Eshalomi, it was revealed that 31 faulty fire alarm panels across the rest of the line were being replaced. Work on the central tunnels is expected to be complete in January before test running in February. As part of the process of getting Crossrail open, Transport for London Rail is taking over Great Western's Paddington-Reading stopping services in December.

TfL zones do not apply to stations beyond West Drayton, but for the first time passengers will be able to use pay as you go with contactless across the route from Paddington to Reading. Pay as you go with Oyster will not be extended to services beyond West Drayton, due to limitations with the system.

**Clash over ticket offices**

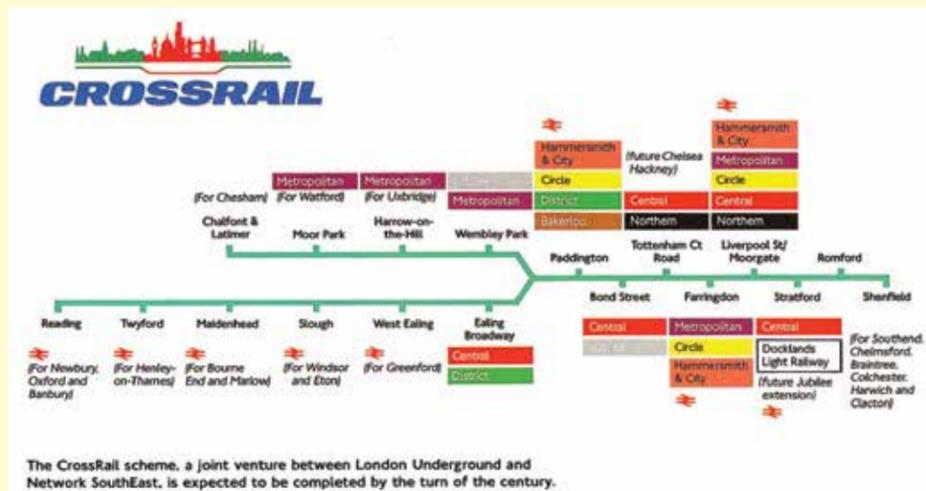
Train operating company c2c is considering reducing ticket office opening hours across its network of 25 stations in Essex and London, after reporting losses of more than £10 million to its parent company Trenitalia.

The TSSA rail union is resisting the move because of the threat to jobs but also because it says there are major ongoing problems with recently installed ticket machines.

**Toxic air on London's Tube**

Pollution is worse on London Tube lines than it is on the traffic-ridden streets of the capital. The London Underground has some of the most polluted air in Britain, according to scientists who found levels of toxic particles to be 18 times higher in its train carriages than in the streets above. The danger comes from tiny particles, mostly iron-based dust from the brakes, wheels and rails plus microscopic fragments of clothing and dead skin cells shed by passengers. The scientists warn that a one-hour daily trip on the Tube could be enough to raise the long-term risk of heart attacks, strokes or other pollution-related health problems.

Brynmor Saunders of University College London



**QUARTER OF A CENTURY WAIT:** We are all still waiting for London's Crossrail (Elizabeth line) to be completed but on this map of 1994 it was predicted that the line would be completed by the turn of the century. In fact the project, much more ambitious than the 1994 scheme, was not approved until 2007, with construction work starting in 2009. A projected opening date for the tunnel section of Crossrail was December 2018. It is still not clear when the line will open. Railfuture has campaigned for cross-London links and, if we are to tackle climate change, ways must be found to deliver improvements such as Crossrail 2 much faster

said. "Most people do not spend that long down there, but it is potentially very worrying for people that do, such as train drivers or maintenance staff. The concentrations are very high even compared to somewhere like Oxford Street."

The Victoria line, one of the deeper tunnels, had the highest levels of particles, 885 microgrammes per cubic metre, 22 times higher than the World Health Organisation limit. Railfuture is looking forward to the new air-conditioned Tube trains, and the Elizabeth line with air-conditioned trains to provide a less polluted journey than the Central line.

**Transport for the South East**

A draft transport strategy for the South East for the period up to 2050 was published in October by Transport for the South East, one of several new sub-national bodies. It says that reducing the region's reliance on private cars is vital because road traffic growth in the South East is not sustainable.

The strategy suggests using spare capacity on HS1 and extending Crossrail to Ebbsfleet. TfSE is a partnership of local authorities, business groups and transport bodies formed to speak with one voice on the region's transport priorities. Railfuture's response to the draft transport strategy is at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1842-South-East-Rail-Strategy>. The deadline for responses is 10 January.

**Bakerloo line extension**

Transport for London's plans to extend the Bakerloo line from Elephant and Castle to Lewisham via Old Kent Road and New Cross Gate are key to tackling the housing crisis, according to a Lewisham council report which says 27,000 new homes could be built. In its consultation, which closes on 22 December, the extension would allow 87,000 more people to travel during every morning peak with the potential to create 130,000 new jobs in London, 5,000 of them in Lewisham.

**Britain's Growing Railway anniversaries**

Rail campaigners can celebrate several railway anniversaries this month, with Eurostar clocking up 25 years of service. The first preview Eurostar

services through the Channel Tunnel started from Waterloo International station in 1994 and used the newly built Stewarts Lane viaduct to connect them via the South Eastern rail network. Eurostar started using the Channel Tunnel rail link to St Pancras in 2007.

1994 also saw the original Eurostar depot at North Pole linked to Waterloo International via the reconstructed Sheepcote Lane curve near Clapham Junction. At the same time, Mitre Bridge curve near Willesden Junction enabled Network South East to reopen the whole West London line to passenger services.

Luton Airport Parkway, West Brompton and West Ham High Level main line stations celebrate their 20th anniversaries this year.

West Ham Low Level station on the North London line reopened 40 years ago for the new passenger train service between North Woolwich and Camden Road.

Stratford International station on High Speed One opened 10 years ago as the domestic high speed trains began operating along the North Kent line. Also in 2009, the West London Line gained another station, at Imperial Wharf, now used by more 3.2 million passengers a year.

More than 3.2 million passengers now use Basildon station, which opened 45 years ago in 1974 to support the new town being developed there.

More information about reopened stations and lines can be found in Railfuture's book *Britain's Growing Railway* which can be bought at [www.railfuture.org.uk/shop/books.php?id=bgr1](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/shop/books.php?id=bgr1)

**Monthly news updates from Railfuture**

London and South East branch members, and others, can subscribe free to our monthly two-page e-newsletter *inter-railse*. It fills the gap between the quarterly eight-page *railese*, sent to branch members with each *Railwatch*.

Both newsletters can be viewed or downloaded from the branch website page, below.

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

By William Whiting

**Railfuture governance director**

For the past two years Railfuture has given potential directors of the company the opportunity to understand the responsibilities and expected behaviours of a company director before they sought nomination in the annual election to the board.

This consisted of a structured discussion with two of our vice-presidents before nominations, which have to be in by 1 February each year. In the light of two years experience, it has been decided to amend the process slightly for the 2020 election.

The company articles allow any member to stand for election as a director and this has not changed. Please put yourself forward if you think you have the skills and personal qualities that can help Railfuture be even more successful than it is already.

For the 2020 election, applicants will be required to submit their nomination papers in the usual way by 1 February. The opportunity to hold a structured discussion will be provided between 1 and 28 February and will be available to potential new directors who have not had the opportunity previously to attend.

Following the discussion, an individual may of course decide to withdraw their application before ballot papers are printed in March.

It is important to remember there is no compulsion in attending such a discussion, but company directors do have onerous and specific legal responsibilities and it is important that any potential board members understand these. Detailed instructions regarding the discussions will be issued to appropriate candidates once nominations have closed.

Railfuture's election returning officer may, in order to make voters aware of

this, put a footnote on any candidate's election statement if they decide not to avail themselves of this opportunity.

**Climate change a priority**

By Nicholas Lewis

Railfuture's passenger group will be concentrating on making climate change its top priority in campaigning during 2020. Of course rail can play a greater role in reducing the transport sector's contribution to climate change. So we will campaign for a rolling programme of electrification. Railfuture's passenger group held its last meeting of 2019 at the Park Inn hotel, Peterborough in November.

Further campaign aims are to improve the integration between rail services on the national rail network to make rail travel easier and more reliable and also between rail and other public transport to provide easier and more reliable door to door journeys. Again, the aim is to promote modal shift to rail.

Passenger group is concerned that some operators have dispensed with timetable posters at stations, as this can make it difficult for some passengers to access the information they need to plan journeys. Around a third of households have no domestic internet access and not everyone has a smart phone.

**Station access campaign**

By Roger Blake

Railfuture's infrastructure and networks group is concentrating on a "100 more by '24" campaign to increase the number of stations that have Access for All facilities. Railfuture welcomed the £280 million to be spent on 73 stations over the next five years, on top of the 24 already in progress. Bids for a supplementary £20 million programme closed in October.

More information on the Railfuture website. Search for infrastructure.

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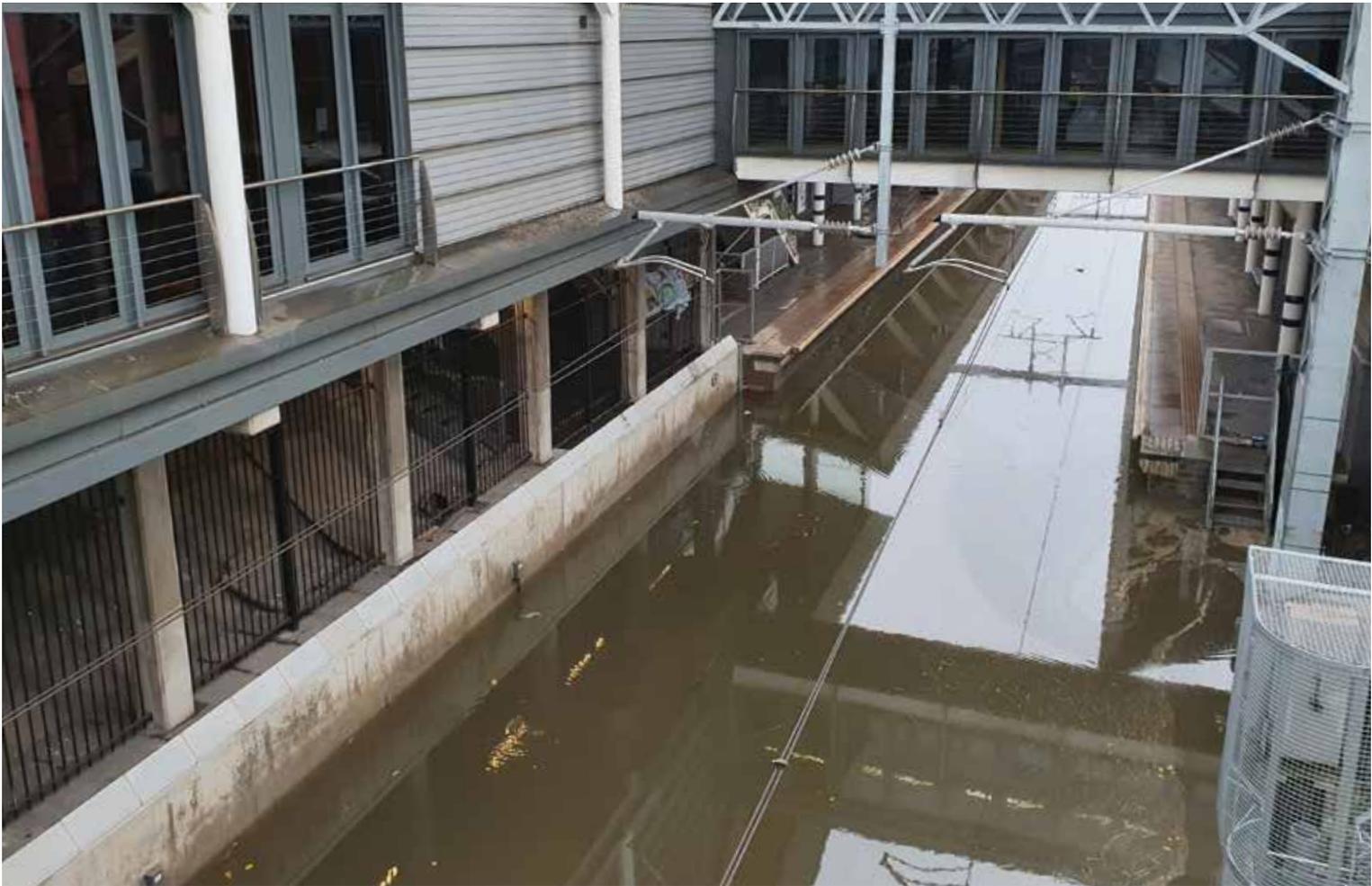
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**ROTHERHAM CENTRAL:** The station closed for a week in November, as flooding, global warming and rail became election issues

# Flooded by promises on rail

**Railfuture vice-president Paul Abell contemplates the implications of party policies for rail in the run-up to the third general election in just over four years.**

As *Railwatch* went to press, the parties were reported to be delaying publishing their manifestos until closer to the election.

As we all know, a week is a long time in politics, but some hints were already being dropped before the manifestos.

Brexit and the NHS may be the major battlegrounds but HS2, the future of franchising and other rail issues raise the political temperature for us – and many voters.

**HS2**

With formal publication of the Oakervee report on HS2 postponed until after the election we are dependent on leaks telling us that it will recommend completion of the full project.

Conservative pronouncements do not rule out curtailing the project when its future is considered by government after the election, but Labour and the Liberal Democrats are strongly in favour of its continuation.

North of the Border the Scottish National Party also prefers continuation, providing that it is linked to Scotland.

Railfuture’s position is that capacity and resilience are the two significant issues for the railways, so HS2 must bring extra capacity to the rail network, and hence needs to be integrated far better into it.

In contrast the Greens are against HS2, wanting to upgrade the West Coast main line instead, while Extinction Rebellion is working with the StopHS2 campaign.

**Franchising**

Public opinion seems to be fairly evenly divided on HS2, but there is widespread disapproval of many aspects of the franchising of passenger services.

Labour is looking to nationalise the provision of services, a move which it sees as giving government the opportunity to boost investment and cap fares.

The Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats want to keep private involvement while accepting the need for changes, one potential change being more involvement for regional bodies in the oversight of services.

Publication of the Williams Review of franchising is also postponed until after the election, but Keith Williams has pointed out that any fundamental changes to the system are likely to take five to 10 years to take effect.

**Reopenings**

“Reversing the Beeching Cuts” is a slogan much favoured by politicians who do not want to remind the electorate that every one of the service closures in the 1960s was actually approved by government.

Nevertheless it does give them the opportunity of demonstrating their generosity when a service is reinstated.

At the time of writing, the Conservatives have promised £500 million to this end: perhaps Portishead will at last come to fruition, or at least part of the Ashington, Blyth & Tyne.

**Electrification?**

Until now any possible resolution of the electrification fiasco has been conspicuous by its absence in England and Wales. Perhaps Sheffield, Derby, Nottingham need to return some SNP MPs to expedite matters.



**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.

**Eco-friendly**

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