

# railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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**'New' trains for northern England**

See page 2 and back page



## Page one picture

For 25 years the train pictured on page one was crammed with commuters on the Bedford-London Thameslink route.

Now it is being refurbished and will enter service in the north of England in May on the newly electrified route between Liverpool and Manchester via Newton-le-Willows.

Six of the dual-voltage class 319 trains will be based at Allerton depot in Liverpool where the trains will be maintained.

The trains are being refurbished inside and out at Wolverton works in Buckinghamshire by Knorr-Bremse. New passenger information screens have been fitted inside the coaches, along with reupholstered seats.

The first train has already been seen on driver training runs in the Liverpool area. The 319s will also be used on services between Preston and Liverpool later this year. In total 20 class 319 trains could be transferred to take over services on other electrified lines in the north west of England.

One advantage of the cascade of the Thameslink trains is that diesel trains can be freed for services elsewhere. Diesel trains are in acutely short supply.

The north of England may also get rebuilt 30-year-old London Underground District line trains. Although built for electric running, the D78 trains are being rebuilt by Vivarail at Long Marston, Warwickshire, as diesels.

Vivarail is headed by Adrian Shooter, the former boss of Chiltern Railways.

Mr Shooter wants them to be used as replacements for the despised “Nodding Donkey” Pacer trains. The D-Trains will be stripped of their electrical equipment and



Vivarail's new-for-old D-Train, above. Lower picture: A seating and glazing unit which replaces the sliding door entrance on the original trains

will be fitted with underfloor five-cylinder Ford engines which will power electric traction motors. The prototype is expected to be completed this year. Eventually 75 carriages could be converted and they are

Pictures: VIVARAIL

expected to be available at half the cost of new diesel trains.

Rail expert Paul Salvesson said the converted trains could be a useful addition to the regional fleet, and could be used on many local lines across England and Wales.

He added: “As far as I can see its main problem is the 60 mph maximum speed. However, there are quite a few routes on which the D-Trains would be appropriate and that have 60 mph maximum line speeds, including some quite long routes. If acceleration is as good as it is claimed to be, the trains would give journey time improvements.”

Mr Shooter told *RAIL* magazine: “We are creating a train that is, in all important respects, as good as new.

“We most certainly intend to produce a train which is perceived by passengers to be just like a new train.”

However, the Government will be wary of being accused of foisting old southern trains on the north of England.

■ ■ There are reports that Wolverton works may be knocked down to make room for 300 new homes.

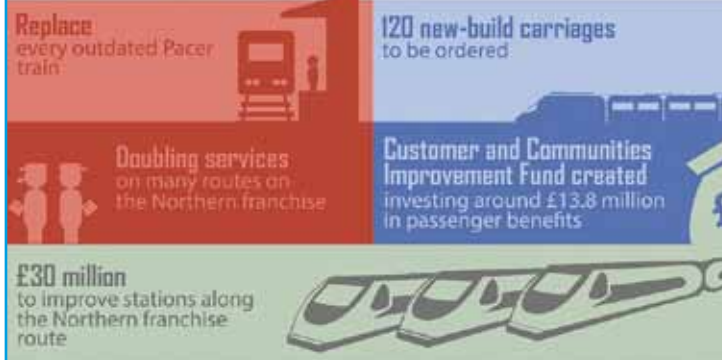
Property owner St Modwen has proposed houses and shops should be built on the 37-acre site, according to a BBC report in February.

St Modwen, which has owned the land since the 1990s, said it would build new premises for Knorr-Bremse to ensure the survival of the works.

But rail campaigners say the sheds, home to the royal train for 150 years, should be preserved.

Knorr-Bremse moved into Wolverton after Railcare went into administration.

### Northern franchise: the benefits



A graphic produced by the Department for Transport when it issued the invitations to tender for the Northern and TransPennine franchises.

For the Northern franchise, the bidders are: Abellio Northern, Arriva Rail North and Govia Northern.

For the TransPennine Express franchise the bidders are: First TransPennine Express, Keolis Go-Ahead and Stagecoach TransPennine Express Trains.

## Railfuture lottery winners

You do not need to have multiple entries to win with the Railfuture Lottery.

One lucky couple have won prizes three times in the past eight months!

There are six prizes each month and a current top prize of £40, with half of the money raised returned in prizes while the remainder, after expenses, goes into Railfuture funds to help our campaigns.

So you can help us and help yourself by joining the Lottery. It costs just £1 per entry per month and you can get more details by writing to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND, or email [lottery@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:lottery@railfuture.org.uk).

Recent prize winners are:

May 2014 P Rowland, E Holland, R Goring, P Yates, S & S Boulding, M Savage.

June R Gibson, R King, A Marsh, A Carr, I Clatworthy, R Blake.

July W Emmerson, GD Smith, F Golding, S Hutchings, M Hill, R Shaw.

August A Carr, E Holland, E Smith, J Moorhouse, C Palmer, D Brady.

September G Smith, M Breslin, A & H Everett, M Breslin, G D Smith, M Kneen.

October R Dodd, J Ward, P Pass, M Edgell, N Bramhall, P Clark.

November J Cuff, A Cosgrove, S Hutchings, R Blake, A Hill, J Ward.

December H Prickett, A Davies, D Peters, S & S Boulding, C Burns, R Burrows.

January 2015 B Buttigieg, M Lloyd, G Chandler, S & S Boulding, R King, M Edgell.

February J Vokins, GD Smith, J Fan-court, C Palmer, J Barfield, P Clark.

### IN BRIEF + IN BRIEF + IN BRIEF + IN BRIEF + IN BRIEF + IN BRIEF

■ Ian Crighton, a modest stalwart of Railfuture died of cancer in January. Ian was a founding member of RDS which was formed in 1978 from the merger of the Railway Invigoration Society and Railway Development Association. One of his many volunteer activities for Railfuture was helping to despatch *Rail-watch* before we switched to a professional despatch company.

■ Turkey Railways has ordered an extra 10 Siemens Velaro high speed trains for its Ankara-Istanbul service.

■ Rail campaigner and co-founder of Friends of Riccarton Junction Geoffrey Evison died at Annan Hospital in January.

■ The European Investment Bank has provided Hungary with £133 million to support the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country's railways.

■ The Irish Government announced in January it is aban-

doning further work on reopening the western rail corridor even though the Limerick-Galway section has been successful.

■ China opened its longest heavy haul coal line in December, the 755 mile long Shanxi south central railway.

■ The final link in the 575 mile long Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan line was completed in December.

■ Alstom is to build Guadalajara's 12-mile long line 3 metro in Mexico.

■ Polish railways launched its first Alstom Pendolino service in December, after receiving £53 million from the European Union. The 125 mph service links Warsaw, Gdansk, Gdynia, Krakow, Katowice and Wroclaw. Trains are equipped for 3 kV DC, 15 kV and 25 kV 50 Hz and the train control systems needed to operate in Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic.

◆◆◆◆ You can buy our book Britain's Growing Railway online at [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk)

### LOCAL ACTION

## Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes  
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### ■ ■ Harrogate triumph

The new Virgin-Stagecoach franchise for the East Coast main line includes seven trains a day each way between Harrogate and London Kings Cross, just as Railfuture proposed in a detailed submission to all three bidders, the Department for Transport and the Office of Rail Regulation. This news comes after five years of extensive research and campaigning to upgrade Harrogate rail services. As a result, Railfuture's triumphant Brian Dunsby was interviewed by both BBC Look North and BBC Radio York.

### ■ ■ New stations plan for Elland and Leeds pass the test

Two stations in Yorkshire, Elland and East Leeds Parkway, could be reopened following an analysis by the transport committee of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Halifax & District Rail Action Group has spent 30 years campaigning for Elland station, and Calderdale Council gave £50,000 towards a feasibility study, after more than 2,000 people signed a Give Elland a Railway Station petition. Elland Labour councillor Angi Gallagher, a founder of Give Elland a Railway Station, told the *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*: “A new station will give a massive boost to both the economy and the community of Elland.” Further studies are planned.

### ■ ■ New track for Sheffield-Rotherham tram-train network

Network Rail is applying for a Transport and Works Act order to build a 150-metre chord linking the heavy rail network to Sheffield Supertram. Tram-trains are expected to provide a direct service, improving journeys between Sheffield city centre, Rotherham Central and Parkgate retail park. They will use the Supertram route between Cathedral and Meadowhall South and then run on to the rail network via the new chord (to be built in 2016) to Parkgate.

### ■ ■ Service boost plea for pretty Esk Valley line

*Modern Railways* writer Alan Williams was one of three speakers at Railfuture Yorkshire's AGM in York in January and called for service improvements on the “pretty” Whitby-Middlesbrough Esk Valley line. Richard Gibson of Arriva CrossCountry said the operator had been concentrating on improving time keeping. David Pennie described how campaigners are seeking government funding for a £100,000 feasibility study into reopening the 34-mile Beverley-York line with stations at Market Weighton and Pocklington. The local enterprise partnership will be asked to back the plan. Peter Hemmerman of the Minsters Rail campaign told the *Bridlington Free Press* that the line should be rebuilt as part of the Government's £15 billion transport master plan for the north of England.

### ■ ■ Railfuture helps rail users to make their case to Abellio

Railfuture coordinated a Leeds meeting in January with 10 rail user groups and Northern franchise bidder Abellio. The key themes that emerged from the day were: the rolling stock shortage and the short-term need for diesels, the need for more Sunday and late night services, and disabled access improvements.

### ■ ■ New heavy rail line proposed for Leeds-Bradford airport

Railfuture continues to believe a parkway station on the Harrogate line plus a shuttle bus is the best option for improving public transport links to Leeds-Bradford airport, despite this idea being dismissed by a consultant's report commissioned by the Government. The consultants favoured an expensive new heavy rail link from Guiseley via the Airport to Horsforth. The proposed direct rail link with a 30 minute frequency would require new paths into Leeds station and through Armley and Shipley Junctions which are currently not available.

# Big step forward for rail in north of England

In the December budget statement, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne said that new trains would be specified in the Northern franchise to replace Pacer trains.

Three months later, the invitation to tender for the new Northern and TransPennine franchises included an announcement that the north of England would receive a fleet of “newly built” diesel or battery powered trains by 2020.

The document requires the new franchisee to modernise the fleet of Northern trains, replacing the Pacers and bringing into service a minimum of 120 new carriages for non-electrified routes.

The tender for Northern says: “These must be newly built (not re-using components from existing rolling stock) and, unless the bidder intends for them to be hauled by a locomotive, must be capable of operating under their own power for significant distances on non-electrified routes.” It could open the way for Bombardier's battery test

train, based on a 379 unit (see page 4). The tender also requires every train to be fitted with free wi-fi and power sockets or USB charging points by 2020.

Also specified are fixed or folding tables at a minimum of 90% of seats, air conditioning and heating systems as well as upgraded luggage space.

On TransPennine, the Department for Transport also wants to see options for new services such as links between Liverpool and Scotland, Crewe to Manchester Airport and extending Newcastle services to Edinburgh.

Rail expert Paul Salvesson commented: “There is lots of good news in the invitations to tender. Many routes get additional services and there is a very welcome proposal to reinstate passenger services between Newcastle and Ashington.

“There will be dancing in the streets of Blyth, Bedlington and Ashington when that comes to pass. Several ‘community rail’ routes get better or brand new

Sunday services (Cumbrian Coast, Esk Valley, Hope Valley).

“There is scope for the use of substantially refurbished trains to make them ‘like new’.

“So existing Northern diesel units, as well as the ex-London D-Trains, are in the frame. There is very strong commitment to community rail, with extra funds to support community rail partnerships. There are new funds to encourage innovation and station development.

“The ITT for Northern tells bidders that they should move towards ‘driver-only operation’ during the franchise but ensure an additional member of staff is on the train to carry out customer-facing duties.

“There is no requirement to reduce staffed station booking offices, but lots of encouragement to make better use of stations, as I have been arguing long and hard.”

Sir Richard Leese of Rail North said the tender was only the beginning. He added: “The

invitations to tender specify the minimum required from the new franchisees, and Rail North will continue to push for greater enhancements in future years which will help deliver regional economic growth by helping people get to jobs faster, in comfort and affordably.”

However, RMT general secretary Mick Cash said: “Any new trains are light years away, with passengers forced to endure the misery of the clapped-out Pacers, and the ancient London Underground rolling stock that's heading north, way off into the future. “These plans are being spun by Nick Clegg and the Tories in a pre-election stunt that they claim will modernise rail services in the North when in reality they will condemn passengers to poor quality, unsafe and de-staffed services for years to come.”

Bidders have until 26 June to make their submissions to the DfT. The winning bids will be announced towards the end of the year with both franchises starting on 1 April 2016.

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



## Scotland

By Jane Ann Liston

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## ■ ■ Labour's new team gives a boost to Glasgow Crossrail

Former transport minister Lord Andrew Adonis (a Railfuture vice president) has been asked to report on how the Glasgow Crossrail project could be implemented. Scottish Labour's new leader Jim Murphy gave his backing to the project which would see the opening of three new stations. The cost of the "missing link" is estimated at up to £200 million, according to a 2008 report (see map above). Railfuture's Ken Sutherland is planning to give Scottish Labour's new transport spokesman David Stewart a presentation about Crossrail.

## ■ ■ St Andrews' Courier features Starlink's reopening plan

The campaign to reopen the line to St Andrews was featured in both *The Courier* and the *St Andrews Citizen* in January. A 2013 study estimated the cost at £76 million and the campaign was given backing last year by Lord Faulkner of Worcester. Railfuture believes the line is one of 23 short branches which should be reinstated to make the Scottish rail network more fit for purpose.

## ■ ■ Restored station building available as a holiday venue

Helmsdale station on the Far North Line has been restored as a community rail partnership project. Self-catering holiday accommodation in the old office and stationmaster's quarters, a reopened waiting room, restored platform features and a photographic darkroom are included in the £170,000 project. Any surplus generated from the accommodation is donated to local community projects and is used to promote the Far North Line and support community rail partnership projects in Scotland. Volunteers are needed for various roles to keep the station business running, with discounted use of accommodation in return. For details of accommodation see [www.helmsdalestation.co.uk](http://www.helmsdalestation.co.uk). For details about volunteering, contact Michael Willmot: [helmsdalestation@gmail.com](mailto:helmsdalestation@gmail.com)

## ■ ■ MSPs given update on electrification project

The Scottish Parliament cross-party rail group was given an update on the Edinburgh-Glasgow electrification project in November. Martin McKinlay, head of rail technical services at Transport Scotland, also outlined the plan for an Edinburgh Gateway station, with a link via tram to the city airport.

## ■ ■ Revolt over changes to Lanark train services

There was an outcry from passengers in December after the timetable change which saw Lanark line trains diverted from Glasgow Central Low Level into the High Level station. The changes are good for many passengers but others have been inconvenienced by badly timed connections with other train services and buses at Lanark Interchange. Passengers complain that there was little or no consultation.

## ■ ■ Rail campaign contacts

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

Beattock Station Action Group  
<http://www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/>

Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG)  
<https://sites.google.com/site/capitalrailactiongroup/>

St Andrews Rail Link (Starlink) campaign  
<http://www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/>

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

Levenmouth Rail Campaign  
<http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>

## Make it simple for our would-be rulers

By Ian Brown

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Our current Parliament will be dissolved on 30 March, followed by a general election on 7 May which will send 650 MPs to the House of Commons.

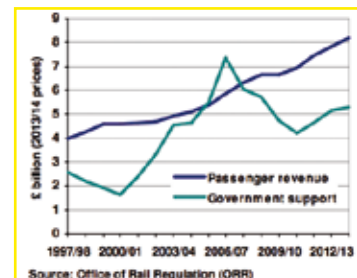
On the same day, the public will choose councillors in 36 metropolitan boroughs, 194 district authorities and 49 unitary authorities. Five directly elected mayors will also be chosen.

Local elections will thus be taking place in all parts of England with the exception of six unitary authorities, seven districts and boroughs and importantly the 32 London boroughs. The mayoral election in London is next year.

Many of those representing us at national and local level will be new to the role. The calibre and attention span of many is likely to be mixed.

Railfuture's task in advocating the sustainable development of our rail network is made more difficult by some of the antics inside the industry at present.

These are giving credence to erroneous claims that rail managers are unreliable and incapable of delivering projects and managing engineering possessions. The



fiasco of the Christmas engineering overruns for instance was broadcast far and wide.

Fortunately the reality is that the number of rail journeys has increased by 50% over the past 10 years, over the safest-ever network. There were also 400,000 more trains last year than in 2009.

With an election pending, however, perception is important, even if not supported by facts.

If we are to be successful in advocating the development of our rail system with potential candidates, we need to focus on about 10 key issues which can be adapted to meet the specific situation and geography.

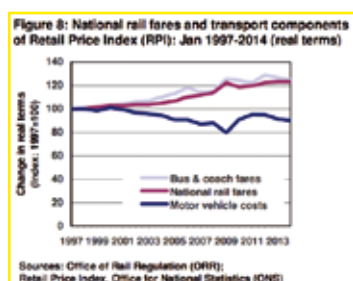
For example, with clear and simple messages on reopenings and capacity, our suggestions could be lifted straight into candidates' draft policies.

We need to communicate to a very broad range of candidates with national and with local issues. We need to recognise that candidates' knowledge of rail might range from nil to quite well



IAN BROWN

informed. We must also be aware that winning the election is their key goal and if this means building on or adopting ill-informed prejudices or bandwagons – this is all fair game when seen from their viewpoint.

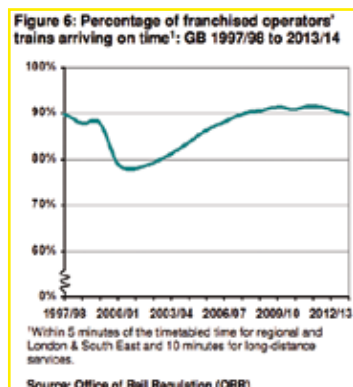


Our messages need to be simple, coherent, easy to express and easy for candidates to adopt. Many a manifesto has involved "cut and paste".

Railfuture as an organisation has its ears to the ground. Our branches cover the country and we are also regularly in touch with politicians at national and local level.

Our key resource is our ability to listen to what people want and communicate back to stakeholders.

This is potentially very valuable to candidates as it gives them well-informed opinion on what the electorate wants on our subject – rail.



Railfuture is not a political organisation, its manifesto is to campaign for a "bigger, better railway".

We have compiled our own non-political *Manifesto for a bigger, better railway* which will be available

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



Picture: BOMBARDIER

## Modern technology will keep electric trains rolling over a bigger network

This is Bombardier's battery train in trial running on the Manningtree-Harwich line in January and February. Bombardier says the adapted class 379 Electrostar is the first battery-powered train to operate a passenger service in Britain for more than 50 years. It uses lithium iron magnesium battery cells in the underframe.

The project is being supported by Abellio Greater Anglia, FutureRailway and the Department for Transport. Campaigners believe it could have many uses, operating over sections of non-electrified line.

One gap it could fill is on the East West rail link to avoid the need for new diesel trains for the Oxford-Bedford service. At the moment, planners are being told that Oxford-Bletchley will be electrified from the start but electrification of Bletchley-Bedford might be delayed.

on the Railfuture website for you to adopt, personalise and use.

I have received a vast number of ideas which we have, through discussion, honed down into 10 subject areas.

These themes come up repeatedly, representing what our members are saying: We need this if we are to achieve a bigger, better railway.

Obviously, local issues dominate, so any manifesto needs adapting to the geographical area in question, for example on line reopening campaigns.

The top 10 Railfuture Manifesto themes

Each of these themes will be developed on the Railfuture website. The headings are:

■ A coherent revitalised national rail system

■ A railway as an agent for city economic growth

■ An intermodal railway working with other transport providers

■ A freight logistics railway serving a developing and growing British industrial base

■ A resilient railway – not consistently in the headlines for service or project failures

◆◆◆◆ Railfuture Bristol conference 7 November 2015 [www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/)

## North West

By Arthur Thomson

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## ■ ■ Blackpool fight goes on

With passenger numbers on the South Fylde line increasing, the Blackpool and South Fylde Rail Users Association is keen to get a passing loop installed, preferably at Lytham, to allow two trains per hour. The group believes the business case for it is obvious but are stepping up efforts to convince Network Rail and the train operator of the need. The group is also pressing for winter Sunday services along the branch. Customer information screens are to be installed at all but two of the South Fylde stations. Only Squires Gate and Ansdell & Fairhaven miss out.

During Blackpool North's long closure from December 2016 to May 2017, as part of the upcoming electrification scheme, the eight platforms will be bulldozed, and in their place will be six, longer and straighter ones. The group has called on Network Rail to consider full canopies on the longer platforms to protect passengers from bad weather. Network Rail seems keen to use the closure as an opportunity to remodel the layout at Poulton-le-Fylde and remove the connection to the mothballed Fleetwood line to increase line speeds, but the group notes that the curves are very tight here and thinks little can be achieved. It is making the case for the retention of the link, especially as millions of pounds were spent renewing it just a few years ago.

## ■ ■ Stockport rail strategy causes concern

Railfuture North West has seen the proposed Stockport Rail Strategy and is very concerned this has not been thought through. The basic proposal includes the introduction of tram-trains from Manchester to Rose Hill Marple with existing railway alignments converted to tram use. The tram-trains would also be extended to Stockport via a connection to the Stockport-Stalybridge line.

This would go through Stockport on street to reconnect with the Stockport-Altrincham railway line, connect with Metrolink at East Didsbury and with the Metrolink Manchester Airport line at Baguley. But the strategy does not mention how existing rail services would be accommodated. For instance where do the Chester-Knutsford-Altrincham-Stockport-Manchester trains go? At one point in the document it mentions replacement of class 101 rolling stock which is long gone. Railfuture North West is liaising with local user groups to respond.

## ■ ■ Record rip-off Rochdale fares are 73p per mile

Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester line (STORM) believes Rochdale has the highest peak return rail fare into its nearest city than anywhere else outside the London and South East area. One member has compiled a table which compares the cost per mile from the main city station. Rochdale to Manchester city centre before 09.30 costs £7.70 (73p per mile), compared to St Andrew's Road to Bristol £3 (30p per mile).

Other comparable peak return fares: Hazel Grove to Manchester £6.40 (69p), Bolton to Manchester £6.40 (60p), Wolverhampton to Birmingham £7.50 (59p), Castleford to Leeds £5.90 (55p), Wigan to Manchester £9.30 (50p), Newport to Cardiff £5.10 (47p), Newstead to Nottingham £4.50 (44p), Sunderland to Newcastle upon Tyne £4.60 (38p).

The full table can be seen at <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Rochdale+Train+Fares>



LOCAL ACTION

Wales

By Rowland Pittard

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■ ■ Walkway station for Magor

Railfuture Wales is supporting campaigners aiming for a Magor & Undy walkway station. The Magor Action Group on Rail (MAGOR) is raising money through a Crowdfunder appeal and it is also applying for a financial contribution from the Railfuture fighting fund. The campaigners want a site in the centre of the village which can be walked or cycled to from all areas of the village within 20 minutes. Car parking is available at Severn Tunnel Junction station. The group wants to raise £20,000 towards £40,000 required for a feasibility study for a Magor and Undy station. <http://magorstation.co.uk> <http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/magor-and-undy-walkway-railway-station/>

■ ■ £230 million electrification gets under way in South Wales

Network Rail was setting up electrification depots in South Wales in March with bridge work in Cardiff already under way. A new accessible bridge will be installed at Severn Tunnel Junction between June and December.

■ ■ Road priority in national transport plan

Railfuture Wales is responding to the Welsh Government's draft 2015 national transport plan. There is only one rail reopening scheme (the extension from Ebbw Vale Parkway to Ebbw Vale Town, which is already under construction), whereas 22 expensive road schemes are proposed.

■ ■ Railfuture meets Welsh Government rail chiefs

Railfuture Wales officials met rail programme director Nathan Barnhouse in Cardiff in January along with the director general of the Department for Economy, Science and Transport James Price, as well as Gareth Morgan, deputy director of delivery.

■ ■ Public join discussions over future of rail services

The Welsh Government has started consulting with rail user groups on the future of rail services in Wales. The first of a series of three meetings was held in Shrewsbury in January with subsequent meetings in Cardiff and Swansea. Railfuture was well represented at these meetings. The Welsh Government's response to the enterprise and business committees' recommendations for tourism was published in November in which many of Railfuture's recommendations were included.


■ ■ Train services needed to link Great Western Cities

Railfuture has contributed to the suggestions for a large cross-border economic region, Great Western Cities, including Bristol, Newport and Cardiff, by recommending that improved rail services are required including services linking Swansea with Bristol Temple Meads and beyond. It is essential that the section of line between Filton Abbey Wood and Patchway is electrified.

■ ■ Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire ferry service axed

Stena Line has announced that the Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire ferry service will not operate this summer. This will result in the closure of Dun Laoghaire as a ferry port. It was the most convenient service for foot passengers with excellent transfers between rail and ferry at both ports. Stena and Irish Ferries provide services between Holyhead and Dublin Port which require bus transfers.

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



Picture: EUROSTAR

A publicity image for the new Eurostar route to Marseille

## Another Eurostar link

By Trevor Garrod  
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Following an experiment two years ago, Eurostar will start running a daily service between London and Marseille in May.

If you use this service before the end of June, please record your experiences on the questionnaire on Railfuture's website [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk)

Thank you to all the members who have responded to this questionnaire with details of journeys made by Eurostar to Lille, Brussels or Paris since last summer. Please continue to do so up to the end of June. We will publish a report in the autumn.

**Night trains**

British visitors to the Continent find night trains can be an excellent way to travel.

In October I took an evening flight from Norwich international airport to Amsterdam, used a local train and then caught the sleeper from Amsterdam to Munich.

Now though the German-operated night train no longer runs on Dutch metals, and has been cut back to Oberhausen, the first large city in Germany. We British can though still go by rail from London via Brussels to Cologne and pick up the sleeper there.

The European Passengers' Federation complained to Deutsche Bahn and in its detailed reply, DB pointed to the competition from low-cost airlines, the effects of faster day-time trains and also referred to higher track access charges in France, engineering work in Denmark and new technical requirements in the Netherlands.

Taking these factors into account, it is more difficult and expensive to operate international overnight trains. Most of DB's night services therefore now operate just within Germany itself.

EPF has put the case for night trains to the Community of European Railways and the transport committee of the European

Parliament. EPF has called for action by the European Commission, urging it to set up an independent fact-finding study on the economics of international night trains and their social, economic and environmental benefits, as a first step towards improving them. More info: [www.epf.eu](http://www.epf.eu)

**International trains**

Some international train services are deteriorating, despite the introduction of more high speed services.

To work out what can be done to improve matters, the European Passengers' Federation hosted a breakfast event for MEPs and transport professionals in Brussels in January.

As EPF chairman, I explained that in some areas – such as between Germany and Poland or Austria and Italy – cross-border services had deteriorated.

Sometimes this deterioration could be reversed at relatively low cost, by reopening sections of track or smarter working practices. More customer-friendly ticketing also had a role to play.

More info: [www.epf.eu](http://www.epf.eu).

Meanwhile Railfuture member Ian McDonald and Pro Bahn member Michael Bienick have produced a discussion paper on how EuroCity services can be developed to provide better international links on routes not served by high-speed trains. This paper was launched at EPF's annual conference in Budapest on 21 March.

**Dutch timetable**

Thanks to the efforts of Railfuture's Dutch sister organisation ROVER, there is again a paper version of the train timetable for all of the Netherlands, plus some international links, in addition to the online version.

The Het Spoorboekje has an initial print run of 5,000 and is on sale at station bookstalls.

Railfuture has suggested the 2016 version should include the Hoek van Holland-Harwich ferry.

LOCAL ACTION

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright

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■ ■ Funding for the future

Funding choices for 2019-2024 and as far ahead as 2043, are outlined in Network Rail's western route long-term planning study. Possible services include one train per hour from Oxford to Bath and another Reading to Nottingham and Leicester train via the proposed East West rail link. It envisages that proposed Heathrow-Oxford services could be extended over the East West link while existing Gatwick-Reading could be extended to Oxford. Pressure on capacity at Oxford is a concern from 2019, when EWR services to Reading are expected to start. Grade separation at Oxford North Junction and Didcot East is suggested, as well as new platforms at Oxford. The potential to use the track bed to the former station site at Rewley Road seems to have been ignored. Oxford-Didcot four tracking is an option depending on funding.

■ ■ Cowley may be added to Chiltern's rail network

The Cowley-Oxford branch saw, in November, Chiltern Railways run a Special Clubman train to show stakeholders the potential of a service. Stations are proposed at the science and business parks. It is likely that Chiltern's new half-hourly London service will be extended to Cowley from 2020. A detailed study is under way.

■ ■ New Marylebone service a major achievement for Chiltern

Chiltern Railways published a draft half-hourly timetable for its Oxford Parkway-Marylebone service which starts in the summer. Chiltern responded positively to representations from Railfuture and the Oxford and Bicester Rail Action Group to improve the service pattern at Islip. Services have still been cut from 11 to 8 and some gaps remain. Railfuture however congratulates Chiltern on its approach and achievements including the replacement bus with cycle provision, Boxing Day services from Bicester North to London, new locos for main line services and platform lengthening. Oxford-Bicester upgrade work is on schedule. Railfuture attended the East West Rail All Party Parliamentary Group update meeting for stakeholders in November and was delighted with the level of support and progress being made.

■ ■ Planning ahead for a successful East West rail link


Steeple Claydon will have passive provision for a station at Queen Alexandra Road included in the EWR plans. Thus, if a business case can be made in future, the infrastructure will be ready. Buckinghamshire County Council wants a station as part of HS2 mitigation and to serve the HS2 depot.

■ ■ Rail solutions for garden cities of the future

A Milton Keynes Future City presentation was attended by Railfuture. Planners Wei Young presented their Wolfson Prize entry. This proposed new garden cities along the Southampton-Milton Keynes-Felixstowe axis. Ann Limb, chair of the South East Midlands local enterprise partnership noted the transforming role of EWR and the national significance of the route. EWRC updated the meeting on EWR progress. In December, four leading Cambridge entrepreneurs, in "Connect People", suggested the need to build infrastructure to link growth clusters. The need to improve links from Cambridge to London and Oxford was highlighted. Bicester has been designated as a site for a Garden Town with £100 million of funding allocated. Local MP Tony Baldry welcomed the news and sees the town as benefiting from good east west and north south rail links.

■ ■ Councils expect rail to offer more travel opportunities

Oxfordshire County Council and the Vale of White Horse Council want to see Bedford-Oxford-Bristol fast services developed, which could serve reopened stations such as Grove/Wantage Road. An Amersham-Watford service, following the completion of the Watford-Croxley link, has also been suggested by SW Herts MP David Gronke.



Picture: EUROSTAR

A publicity image for the new Eurostar route to Marseille

## Another Eurostar link

By Trevor Garrod  
trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk

Following an experiment two years ago, Eurostar will start running a daily service between London and Marseille in May.

If you use this service before the end of June, please record your experiences on the questionnaire on Railfuture's website [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk)

Thank you to all the members who have responded to this questionnaire with details of journeys made by Eurostar to Lille, Brussels or Paris since last summer. Please continue to do so up to the end of June. We will publish a report in the autumn.

**Night trains**

British visitors to the Continent find night trains can be an excellent way to travel.

In October I took an evening flight from Norwich international airport to Amsterdam, used a local train and then caught the sleeper from Amsterdam to Munich.

Now though the German-operated night train no longer runs on Dutch metals, and has been cut back to Oberhausen, the first large city in Germany. We British can though still go by rail from London via Brussels to Cologne and pick up the sleeper there.

The European Passengers' Federation complained to Deutsche Bahn and in its detailed reply, DB pointed to the competition from low-cost airlines, the effects of faster day-time trains and also referred to higher track access charges in France, engineering work in Denmark and new technical requirements in the Netherlands.

Taking these factors into account, it is more difficult and expensive to operate international overnight trains. Most of DB's night services therefore now operate just within Germany itself.

EPF has put the case for night trains to the Community of European Railways and the transport committee of the European

Parliament. EPF has called for action by the European Commission, urging it to set up an independent fact-finding study on the economics of international night trains and their social, economic and environmental benefits, as a first step towards improving them. More info: [www.epf.eu](http://www.epf.eu)

**International trains**

Some international train services are deteriorating, despite the introduction of more high speed services.

To work out what can be done to improve matters, the European Passengers' Federation hosted a breakfast event for MEPs and transport professionals in Brussels in January.

As EPF chairman, I explained that in some areas – such as between Germany and Poland or Austria and Italy – cross-border services had deteriorated.

Sometimes this deterioration could be reversed at relatively low cost, by reopening sections of track or smarter working practices. More customer-friendly ticketing also had a role to play.

More info: [www.epf.eu](http://www.epf.eu).

Meanwhile Railfuture member Ian McDonald and Pro Bahn member Michael Bienick have produced a discussion paper on how EuroCity services can be developed to provide better international links on routes not served by high-speed trains. This paper was launched at EPF's annual conference in Budapest on 21 March.

**Dutch timetable**

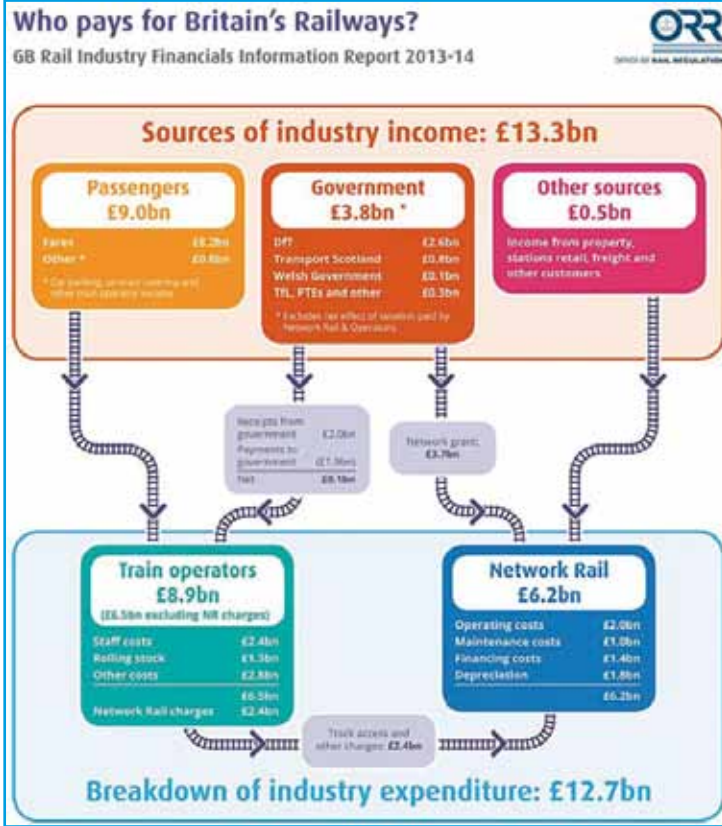
Thanks to the efforts of Railfuture's Dutch sister organisation ROVER, there is again a paper version of the train timetable for all of the Netherlands, plus some international links, in addition to the online version.

The Het Spoorboekje has an initial print run of 5,000 and is on sale at station bookstalls.

Railfuture has suggested the 2016 version should include the Hoek van Holland-Harwich ferry.

Who pays for Britain's Railways?

GB Rail Industry Financials Information Report 2013-14



## Holidays with a rail flavour

Railfuture board member Allison Cosgrove wants members to come up with ideas for holidays that are railway themed. For example, she and her grandson stayed at the station cottages at Kirkby Stephen on the Settle to Carlisle line "where we had a fantastic holiday". She added: "I'm sure other people travel about the country as I do by train and stay at interesting places that others might like to try out. We particularly want to hear from women who are often the organisers of the family holiday." Send suggestions to [editor@railwatch.org.uk](mailto:editor@railwatch.org.uk)

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Twitter: @railfuture

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

◆◆◆◆ Republicans failed to kill off Amtrak in a March House of Representatives vote

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## Logic and dogma

May I say how much I agree with the sentiments of the anonymous writer in *Railwatch* 142, concerning his decision to resign from Railfuture.

Government policy should be logical, pragmatic and evidence-based. That on the railways very clearly is not, as witnessed by the recent East Coast main line rebranding fiasco, and is predicated purely on political dogma, that is privatisation willy nilly.

Railfuture should be supportive when it thinks the railways are being organised and run well, but severely critical when this is not the case.

Instead, it just seems to go along with what is government policy at any given time, basically that we should “just make the best of a bad job”. The Vicar of Bray would have been very proud!

That this is the wrong attitude for the society to take is obvious. Privatised railways – at least the modern British version of them and probably the original post-Stockton-Darlington ones as well – do not work.

They are bureaucratic, expensive and sclerotic in decision-making and planning. By falling in with such policies, the society is not furthering the cause of British railways.

Where I differ from the anonymous letter writer is that rather than resign from an organisation which is not in accordance with my views, I try to stay and fight my corner.

Rarely is there an issue of *Private Eye* magazine without someone in the letters page threatening to resign/not resign because they disagree/agree with one of their stories, cartoons or comments! Incidentally, the *Eye*’s “Signal Failures” column is by far the best source of accurate and up-to-the-minute gen on what is taking place on Britain’s railways. It would be interesting

then, we have had a new transport minister and I now have great pleasure in telling you that she has just confirmed that she is going for a not-for-profit, arm’s-length, government-owned company when the franchise runs out in 2018! In other words, Victory!

However, it is likely that they will extend the ATW franchise period slightly to give the Government time to complete the planning process.

I recommend that the dissatisfied member goes to our Railfuture Cymru website and opens up our new Development Plan for Wales, *On track for the 21st century*, and turns to page 97 where he can read more details of how and why we want an end to the franchise system here, at least, in the first instance, for the Wales and Border services currently run by ATW – and NR Wales.

John Rogers  
chairman, south branch of  
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## Best in Europe?

An anonymous correspondent in *Railwatch* 142 clearly has strong views against privatisation. I regret the way the various parts of BR were sold off cheaply and Railtrack’s distasteful regime, not to mention the bidding fiasco for the East Coast main line franchise in 2012.

Whether or not the costs of running our railways are now higher than in BR days without good reason is very much an “apples and pears” debate, masked by significant increases in enhancements and the spending on “catch-up” maintenance and renewals.

What we do know is that the net subsidy to train operating companies is now reducing year on year; in fact they are now producing a small net premium. The Network Rail cost of maintenance and renewals has also been steadily decreasing for several years and there is no reason why it should not continue to do so. I doubt that there is a railway anywhere in the world that does not need a subsidy of some

### RAIL ACTION

The next issue of the *Rail Action* e-zine will appear in May. *Rail Action* can be downloaded from the Railfuture website but it will be emailed to you direct unless you have requested it not to be.

sort. The only spending that is obviously increasing is that on enhancements and we should all welcome that.

We have the bones of what could be one of the best railways in Europe. In a recent European passenger satisfaction survey, Britain was in the top 6 (out of 26) in all categories, just ahead of France and Spain and well ahead of Germany.

To be fair the survey did not include overcrowding, but we are well on top of resolving this issue with about 3,000 new coaches on order.

It is true that our fares are high compared with the rest of Europe but I would suggest that this is more a matter of government policy, such as allowing above-inflation increases, rather than a result of privatisation. On the other hand, advance fares promoted by train operators now provide some of the best bargains in train travel in Europe.

Whatever money has been squandered in the past has gone and we must look to the future.

Oh, and by the way, Network Rail, which accounts for about half the cost of running the railways, is in fact now nationalised.

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## Politically neutral

I was general secretary of RDS at the time when we campaigned against the dangers of privatisation. I was very concerned to read the letter from a long-standing member saying that he was resigning because Railfuture is “not calling for full renationalisation”.

Some of the worst aspects of privatisation as proposed in the early 1990s were toned down. I suggest this was as a result of campaigning by Railfuture and other bodies. We were “politically neutral” then just as we are now. The motivation of the then government, however, was purely ideological.

The aftermath of the 1994 privatisation did reduce the number of reopenings and new lines or stations, but they have since increased, as a glance at our book *Britain’s Growing Railway* will show.

Your correspondent refers to benefits, and rail usage is certainly on the increase. It might have gone up anyway, but gone up it has, despite “the

highest fares in Europe”.

I suggest that one reason for the increase in usage has been the development of cheap advance-purchase tickets which were started by BR.

What is important is accountability. The franchised train operating companies are ultimately accountable to central government which awarded them the franchises and there is now an encouraging level of consultation before new franchises are awarded. Of course there should be a similar level of accountability and consultation if services are provided by the state.

Railfuture should certainly not slavishly follow the policies of whatever government is in power. It should take as its benchmark “What matters is what works” and be pragmatic, putting the customer viewpoint to whoever is running, or wants to run, the service, in the private or public sector.

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## Electrification delay

The Scotland report in *Railwatch* 142 should have said that Abellio is planning to use refurbished InterCity 125 trains between Glasgow and Edinburgh to Inverness as well as to Aberdeen. This popular train will presumably be a stop-gap prior to electrification.

Those who remember Shap and Beattock before the wires will know that the time-saving effects of electrification over the long steep gradients of the Highland main line will be dramatic. The North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board proposed that the line should be electrified in the 1950s when it was developing its hydro power schemes alongside. It is a pity we have had to wait so long!

Richard Arden, Inverness.

## Far North failings

I am appalled to learn that ScotRail is intending to make passengers suffer for its own inability to operate an efficient service.

Along, I am certain, with many regular travellers on the far north line between Inverness and Thurso/Wick, I have lost count of the hours spent awaiting replacement crew at Wick or hoping to see the Wick train approaching Forsinard from Inverness. As



HEAVY METAL: Two new class 20E electric locos (right) at Kimberley, with, on the left, South Africa’s standard branch line class 35 diesel, built by America’s General Motors in the 1970s

## Chinese electrics line up in South Africa

In the days of empire, South Africa bought most of its railway equipment from Britain.

Now new Chinese-designed electric locomotives are working ore trains on South African railways. Eventually 95 of the dual voltage class 20E locos will be used on freight trains for Transnet Freight Rail.

They have been acquired to haul manganese and iron ore trains from opencast mines at Sishen, run by AngloAmerican, as well as Postmasburg and Hotazel, 150 miles north west of Kimberley, to Port Elizabeth on the Indian Ocean and Saldanha Bay on the Atlantic coast.

The first 10 electric locomotives were built in China by the Zhuzhou Electric Locomotive Company, a subsidiary of China’s leading train manufacturer, the China South Locomotive and Rolling Stock Corporation.

The remaining locomotives are being built in Koedoesport, South Africa by a consortium of CSR Zhuzhou and the South African black economic empowerment company Matsetse Basadi.

a result of these delays and the routine early termination or complete cancellation of so many services, I have no doubt ScotRail finds its already thin margins on this line are further squeezed by compensation claims.

Yet how much money will be saved by removing what are already request stops? Given that trains rarely do more than slow down slightly on approach, how will their banishment from these schedules serve any useful purpose? I fear that the answer may be that this is merely the beginning. If it reduces services so far that no one can sensibly use them, then they can claim that this lack of use warrants complete closure. One can, of course, see things from First Group’s point

of view. Why maintain a delayed and poorly run service in the Highlands when much more money can be made operating delayed and poorly run services down south? Even the ScotRail Caledonian sleeper service to London Euston.

But, I feel we must see this move for what it is, and fight to keep every station on the Far North line open and available on

The locos are appearing at a fast rate with number 76 seen at Kimberley in early March, although there is no sign yet of two blue-painted locomotives which will reportedly be used on the prestige passenger Blue Train which runs through Kimberley from Pretoria to Cape Town.

The locos have regenerative braking, a maximum speed of 60mph and are designed to work in multiple at the front, middle and rear of long freight trains.

They can be used on South Africa’s 3kV DC lines and also on the modern 25kV AC lines.

Initially railway workers reported that the new locomotives needed so much power that they were “tripping” all the substations.

South Africa is suffering from a general power shortage with frequent power cuts. It is building several coal-fired power stations to provide more power.

Chinese technicians are helping local maintenance staff to keep the locomotives running.

every service for trains to and from Wick and Inverness. These stations are in remote areas without a bus/taxi service and serve a wide area of passengers across the Far North Highlands who often arrive at stations in family cars.

I hope the Dutch rival Abellio can run a better, reliable and comfortable service that provides value for money to customers along the entire northern rail route when it takes over the franchise on 31 March.

ScotRail’s Caledonian Sleeper Service is handed over to Serco from 15 May.  
Mr J Atherton, The Firs, Forsinard, Sutherland, Scotland KW13 6YT

## Send your letters to:

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



# Milestone in the Scottish Borders

By Chris Austin

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The final rail in the £350 million Borders Railway was clipped into place on 12 February.

Keith Brown, the infrastructure cabinet member of the Scottish Government, was given the honour of completing the relaying of the line from Edinburgh to Tweedbank.

One month and 46 years since the Waverley route from Carlisle to Edinburgh closed, the railway is back, at least over the 30 miles at the northern end of the line.

The public opening of the line is planned to take place on 6 September.

Completion of the Borders Railway scheme will be a real milestone for rail campaigners, passengers and the people of the Borders.

Not only is this the longest reopening so far implemented in Britain, but its justification was not just based on the transport benefits that the railway will undoubtedly bring.

Rather it was based on the economic benefits it would bring to an area which has few employment opportunities.

Skilled workers are currently separated from the big jobs market in Edinburgh by a lack of adequate transport.

In environmental terms the railway will score too, providing car-free access to an area that is going to be popular with tourists.

It runs through some remote and beautiful scenery, with a spectacular glimpse of the Tweed near the southern end of the reopened line and will also bring visitors to Sir Walter Scott's home at Abbotsford and the National Mining Museum at Newtongrange.

The railway has made good use of the former Waverley route formation and has been skilfully threaded through Galashiels where more recent development had encroached on the old alignment.

Work remains to be completed on stations and signalling in June, leaving time for crew training, but it looks on track to be opened on time.

While concerns have been expressed about the capacity of the railway to deliver the benefits expected, it is a bold project and all credit goes to Scottish Government for backing it and to Network Rail for delivering



Scottish government minister Keith Brown, left, lends a hand with the golden spanner as project director Hugh Wark symbolically fixes the final rail in place with some of Network Rail team

it. If the planned half hourly service needs augmenting, it would not be difficult to add capacity subsequently, particularly if it is part of a project to extend it further south.

Melrose is only a couple of miles further on, Hawick just 15 beyond that, and then it is 38 miles to reconnect with the West Coast main line near Longtown!

**Right: People in Galashiels watch as the rail train passes through the town for the first time on 3 February**



Work under way: An engineering train on freshly laid track and workers lay rails

■ ■ The campaign to reopen Beattock Station on the West Coast main line was boosted last year by a visit from the then Scottish Transport Minister Keith Brown, now the infrastructure minister. Beattock Station Action Group presented the case for reopening the station. "Reopening Beattock Station would greatly enhance rural regeneration, tourism and commerce," said the group's chairman Martin Brown. The minister said he was impressed by the group's enthusiasm and organisation.

Picture: BORDERS RAILWAY PROJECT



Picture: JOHN YELLOWLEES



Picture: BARRIE FORREST

## Station reopenings exceed forecasts

Demand for rail travel continues to grow, despite the economic doldrums.

ScotRail's annual passenger total has reached an all-time record of 86 million journeys and is claiming an increasing share of the overall transport market.

Passenger use on reopened lines has exceeded official expectations.

Edinburgh-Bathgate which in 1986 was forecast to carry 260,000 passengers a year exceeded one million per annum by 1989.

When Edinburgh Park station opened in 2003, the predicted passenger use was 130,000 a year but by 2010 there were 459,000 a year.

Predicted use of the Larkhall line which reopened in 2005 was 225,000 a year but by 2007 the actual patronage was 53% higher, at 344,250.

The Alloa line reopened in 2008 with a patronage forecast of 155,000, but by 2011 the actual patronage was 423,000 a year.

Laurencekirk station was reopened in 2009 and the business case suggested a patronage of 36,000 but by 2011 the figure was almost 75,000 a year.

It is quite clear these new rail routes and stations have been an outstanding success and have demonstrated the latent demand for rail travel in Scotland.

Another two stations, at Reston and East Linton, are expected to reopen in December next year on the line from Edinburgh to Berwick although station design and funding details are not yet complete. Platforms may have to be long enough to cope with six-car trains.

The stations and a new timetable for the line are included in the new ScotRail franchise which starts in April.

The new stations will mark a great success for RAGES – Rail Action Group East of Scotland.

The group has regular meetings with East Lothian Council in Haddington.

Infrastructure Minister Keith Brown said the stations would be a "huge step forward".

He said: "Scotland's railways are a driver for economic regeneration and can bring jobs, investment and new study and social opportunities for communities."

## A cold journey to the Far North

By Allison Cosgrove

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When I became chair of Railfuture Scotland, I decided I would like to get out and about to visit our affiliated rail user groups.

For many people in remoter parts of Scotland, it is easy to feel as far away from Edinburgh as from London, and I thought I would meet user groups at first hand, hear about their campaigns, and see if Railfuture could help in any way.

Below is an account of my visit to Inverness-Thurso to see the North Line Action Group, a distance of well over 300 miles.

My journey started at 08.04 leaving Drem, my local station. Little did I realise that it would be more than 10 hours before I arrived at Thurso that night!

Everything started well until I arrived at Perth, when the train I was on was suddenly cancelled.

We passengers were directed to the next train which, however, would be too late to meet the Inverness-Thurso train at 14.00.

Not to worry. We were assured that transport would be provided at Inverness. It duly was and the remaining passengers heading north piled into two taxis at Inverness station.

Instead of taking us to Thurso though, we were unceremoniously dumped at Golspie, to await the Inverness train which was some distance behind us by now.

Because the rail line does not have the advantage of a Dornoch Firth crossing, the train has to make a long detour, serving several small towns on the way. It consequently takes far longer than the road journey.

No facilities were available at

Golspie station other than a very inadequate bus shelter.

For five people on a cold December afternoon, this was not an enjoyable experience as we had to take turn about in the bus shelter to keep warm.

Eventually the train arrived an hour later, with a welcome trolley service for us to have a hot cup of tea.

We proceeded to Thurso, at one stage going backwards at Georgemas Junction, apparently normal procedure.

It was now well after 18.00 and I was relieved to get to the warm and welcoming Station Hotel in Thurso. I found it hard to believe that after 10 hours travel I was still on the Scottish mainland. The unfortunate people going on to Wick still had a further half an hour journey to undertake.

Next day I met with Mark Norton, the North Line Action Group convenor, as well as local community councillors, a representative from the Caithness Transport Forum, and group members campaigning for a better rail service.

They described the service as being "totally run down" with 22 cancellations between June and September this year, cancellations which often did not have any rail replacement service.

Reasons for cancellations differed, from weather to lack of staff or signalling problems. There seemed to be a significant lack of engagement from ScotRail in listening to local concerns and in attempting to rectify the problems on the line.

Members also recounted the difficulties that local people had using the bus service to

Inverness where medical treatment for the north-east is now centred.

A three-hour bus journey was difficult to say the least, compared to the freedom of being able to move about on the train.

This was a particular problem for patients suffering from muscular injuries, cancer, neurological conditions or anyone with a walking aid.

"Not a suitable journey for sick people" was a comment made, although too often it was a journey they had to make.

After a thorough discussion of the issues, and agreement on ways to take matters forward, I made my way back to Thurso station, only to find that all trains on the line were cancelled because of "bad weather".

In vain did I point out that there was no bad weather in Thurso. It was actually quite a fine sunny day but it had been decided elsewhere that the weather necessitated cancellation of all services and that was that.

Bad weather was expected on the west coast, so trains on the east coast were cancelled as well.

I was directed to the service bus, along with many others who paid an extra £19 for this privilege with no information given how to reclaim the unused portion of their return ticket.

The three-hour bus journey encountered no bad weather, had a quick stop in Dornoch as it was ahead of time, and arrived in Inverness promptly. What a shame the train could not have done so as well.

The North Line Action Group is now gearing up to encourage more involvement from local politicians to highlight the inadequacies of the rail service.

I felt that this could only be a good thing. This is a very picturesque line which could be promoted through tourism as a scenic highlight, yet the frequent cancellations and reports of poor infrastructure need to be addressed.

I was reminded of the descriptions of the Waverley route in the Borders in the years before closure, when services were cancelled and withdrawn in order to make the line unsustainable and more suitable for closure.

I hope the same fate is not in store for the Far North Line as its beautiful scenery deserves more attention, as well as the essential service it provides to the small communities on its route.

## Site for another new station



Reston on the Edinburgh-Berwick section of the East Coast main line. See story left.

Picture: BARRIE FORREST



## North East

By Peter Kenyon  
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### ■ ■ Leaders of tomorrow

Railfuture North East chairman Trevor Watson met representatives from all six bidders for the Northern and TransPennine franchises as a preliminary to working with the winner of the contract. In January seven members of the branch committee attended a workshop session organised by New Rail at Newcastle University. After a lecture and discussion about possible baggage handling developments on long-distance trains, led by a representative of the Technical University of Vienna, students gave short presentations about their rail study projects. Railfuture members have been invited to act as mentors in the development of these studies.

### ■ ■ Manors station shows definite signs of improvement

Once a busy station with several platforms, Manors was served by infrequent Northern trains after the adjacent Metro service began. It is close to the Northumbria University campus and recent improvements in the calling pattern by the Newcastle-Morpeth services, accompanied by the provision of a waiting shelter, have resulted in a welcome rise in use.

### ■ ■ Morpeth matters and now its station is looking better

Following a meeting involving Railfuture, South East Northumberland Rail Users Group and Northern Rail management, Morpeth station has been partially painted and the leaky subway repaired.

### ■ ■ Mystery PA comes to life after two year's silence

Long-line public address announcements have at last been introduced at Morpeth station. South East Northumberland Rail Users Group has been asking for this for years, but has always been told "no". One day in December however the booking clerk at Morpeth was startled when a maintenance engineer turned up to service the system. "We don't have one," she said. "Oh yes you do," was the reply. The York operations centre was contacted where it was confirmed that PA announcements for Morpeth had been made for two years even though no one on the station had ever heard them! A flick of a few switches, a check of a few wires, and the system crackled into life.

### ■ ■ Students make an impact down the line at Westminster

Dennis Fancett of South East Northumberland Rail Users Group took a party of students from Hirst Park Middle School, Ashington to Westminster in December. The students won the competition to promote reopening the Blyth and Tyne line and were able to meet the local MP and present him with a copy of their winning video disc. After touring Parliament, the students visited Northern Rail's operations centre at York. This event took place soon after the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Blyth and Tyne service.

### ■ ■ 'Cuts' at East Coast change into service expansion

In a commons written answer, Rail Minister Claire Perry warned that the new franchise holders Stagecoach/Virgin would reduce services to Morpeth and other stations. However Stagecoach emailed South East Northumberland Rail Users Group and others saying it had no intention of cutting the service, but hopes to provide an additional southbound Sunday train from May.

### ■ ■ Teesside does not want to be left out of transport future

The Hartlepool Mail claimed recently that the newly launched Transport for the North body includes no representative from the five Tees Valley boroughs which are busy consulting about establishing a combined authority. Coastliners Users' Group is concerned about this and also future consultation about the future of rail transport in the area.



# No to a Crewe hub

By Graham Nalty

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In *Railwatch* 142, I gave several reasons why Stoke-on-Trent was a far better location for a High Speed Two northern interchange than the proposed Crewe hub.

Now I will explain why building an impressive looking new station two miles south of Crewe is a very bad idea for rail transport.

This has all the marks of the Grand Project that Sir Rod Eddington was advising the Government to avoid and it seems to be more about public relations hype than a serious attempt to meet the needs of rail travellers.

The Crewe "hub" is a parkway station which will attract fewer passengers than either the present Crewe station, or Stoke.

I estimate that in the first year of HS2 operation, the Crewe hub will attract three million station "entries and exits" compared to Crewe at five million and Stoke's ten million, largely as a result of the larger Stoke population.

The Crewe hub will not create many jobs and job creation will be very slow and much fewer than in city centre areas where there are the service industries to help businesses to grow.

The Crewe "hub" would also reduce connectivity.

■ There will be a temptation to terminate trains from Shrewsbury and Stoke at the new station and expect passengers to change for onward journeys.

■ Journeys from Cardiff to Manchester will be slowed by 10 minutes and the service may terminate at Crewe to avoid conflicts of movement as has happened at Nuneaton for through Coventry to Leicester and Nottingham services.

■ Stoke services to North Wales and Liverpool will be lengthened by 10 minutes. Track rationalisation at Crewe may even mean that through services from Stoke to Liverpool may no longer be possible.

Using the original Crewe station as an interchange would present problems for connections into HS2 trains going north.

Although it is very desirable to achieve this, the high cost of the Crewe hub cannot be justified.

It would be better for the number of passengers involved, to make a connection north of Crewe from the West Coast main line into HS2.

It is unclear what will happen to the existing Crewe station if the Crewe "hub" is built. The proposed station is a parkway station at a location remote from any centre of population.

If we look at the recently published station "entries and exits", we can find very few stations with 'parkway' in their name that attract large volumes of traffic.

Bristol Parkway is the most successful, but its passenger throughput is no greater than medium-size towns on the same line that would not be large enough to be considered for intermediate station stops on a genuine high speed line.

Luton Parkway has a large number of passengers, but many passengers are commuting a mere 30 miles to London, a journey too short to be relevant to high speed lines.

Warwick and East Midlands Parkways are modestly successful, but still have fewer passengers than nearby town centre stations.

In short, the proposed Crewe hub would have substantially fewer passengers than the present Crewe station would have because it would not attract as many local Crewe people.

Building a parkway station in green fields close to a main road will not create jobs in the manner that Lord Deighton's growth taskforce would wish.

Preceding the station by commercial development would make the location highly car dependent. Even with expensive grants and developer contributions, high-value knowledge-based industries will not be attracted because of a lack of the service industries, like banks, together with legal, marketing and design companies, which are readily available in city centres.

Property development near the "hub" station would be slow to bring any financial returns.

What's worse, the hub's location seriously disadvantages Stoke-on-Trent and its opportunities because it will reduce the quality and content of connections available from Stoke itself.

Like several other proposed HS2 stations, it is located at a place no passengers want to go.

The cost of building the new station would also be high. It does not appear to be included in the current HS2 budget.

However the promoters of the Crewe 'hub' are indicating that the building of the station might attract foreign investors who want to invest in HS2.

In such a situation, there is the danger that investors might be offered a deal that guarantees them a return and transfers the real risk to the UK Government – and us as taxpayers.

www.railfuture.org.uk



Picture: AV DAWSON

**The MV Lone Star at Middlesbrough's north sea supply base. The 12,500 tonne heavy lift ship is the longest and widest vessel to have used the facilities**

## Rail-ship freight terminal

A £3.2 million investment at Middlesbrough has cleared the way for large ships to use a freight terminal which includes an intermodal rail terminal.

The deepwater quay is one of several recent investments made by AV Dawson, including the £2.6 million intermodal rail terminal, which provides freight firms with a direct link to the East Coast mainline.

The company also opened a new state-of-the-art £6.5 million automotive steel distribution centre in February which will support the work of Tata Steel and car makers Nissan. Multi-

modal specialist AV Dawson has docked its largest ship to date on the North Sea Supply Base in Middlesbrough following a £3.2 million investment in its facilities last year. The facility's largest conventional cargo arrived in December when 9,300 tonnes of maize was unloaded. "Our investments are already paying off," said managing director Gary Dawson.

AV Dawson is the only British company in the north of England to offer multimodal distribution logistics by road, rail or sea from its own facilities. It is equipped to handle off-shore wind turbines.

## Action needed on rail freight

Planners need to unlock the potential for more rail freight by clearing the way for more rail-linked distribution centres. Railfuture's freight group issued a report in January calling for action.

"We need government, business, local enterprise partnerships, councils and the rail industry to sit round the table and plan a sensible way forward," said Railfuture freight group's Philip Bisatt.

"The knowledge is out there. We have identified a number of brown field sites and existing industrial complexes where rail freight could have been used had proper provision been made at the planning stage."

On a positive note, there are plans to expand rail freight through the Channel Tunnel by developing the Euro Hub at Barking into a terminal for car-carrying trains, Railfuture's freight group reported in January. But the continental loading gauge on High Speed One to Barking needs to be extended to reach other parts of Britain and the freight carried on lorries which use the Euro-tunnel shuttle trains should be switched to intermodal freight trains. The problem of the large

number of lorries using the shuttle was revealed in January when a fire in a lorry on a shuttle train caused disruption of the Channel Tunnel to both freight and passenger trains for several days.

Elsewhere in Britain, there are improvements to the freight loading gauge, albeit often piecemeal. Ian Jackson reported that Network Rail is planning to enlarge the loading gauge from the south on the Chase Line through Birmingham to Rugeley but only as far as the new rail-served Pentalva intermodal depot at Cannock. Centro is considering various other schemes for freight, including upgrading the Stourbridge-Walsall line, which will free up paths on other lines.

The Newport to Shrewsbury Marches line bypasses the West Midlands but long signal sections mean heavy freight trains and passenger services delay each other. Rowland Pittard called for more signalling, including bi-directional, for this important route, to clear the way for more freight and to eradicate delays for passenger and freight trains.

More info: [www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-download\\_file.php?fileId=873](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-download_file.php?fileId=873)

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

## Severnside

By Nigel Bray  
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### ■ ■ Gloucester improvements

Improvements have been implemented at Gloucester station, and more could follow at both Gloucester and elsewhere. Railfuture Severnside's meeting at Stroud on 8 November was addressed by Dan Button, one of First Great Western's Gloucester-based customer ambassadors, whose roles include advice to passengers who might have problems on the day, and increasing community involvement with the railway.

Examples of the latter included meetings with Gloucester Rugby Club to discuss promotion of Gloucester station as a gateway to tourist attractions, with Cheltenham racecourse to improve transfer of passengers, and with the Royal Agricultural University to maintain the garden at Kemble station. He emphasised that although customer ambassadors encouraged voluntary work at stations, they were in no way a substitute for ticket office or train despatch staff.

The conclusion of a two-year campaign by Railfuture saw a roof installed on the station footbridge at Gloucester in late November. This had been denied to the structure built under the Access for All scheme because the previous footbridge did not have one. It is gratifying that common sense arguments based on usage of the station (1.3 million recorded journeys in 2012/13), high local rainfall and the forthcoming Rugby World Cup events in the city, have prevailed.

### ■ ■ Metro West set to bring more rail services for Bristol area

A Metro West update meeting at Worle on 17 December, attended by representatives of Railfuture and local campaigning groups, heard James Willcock, project manager for Metro West phase 1, outline the procedures required to complete a development control order for the scheme. The earliest completion date for the order is autumn 2017, with construction starting in December 2017. Some preliminary work on the Portishead line was imminent, such as vegetation clearance and a topographical survey of the disused section west of Portbury Junction. While phase 1 did not include a station at Ashton Gate, provision was being made for a site. A Bristol City Council spokesman added that Ashton Gate did not yet have a business case or funding in place and was therefore unlikely to open until after the Portishead line itself in 2019. Use of the station for football specials could be examined when preparing the business case. An Ashton Gate campaign group was expected to be set up in January. Anyone interested in getting involved can contact Dan Bramwell by email at [dbramwell0724@outlook.com](mailto:dbramwell0724@outlook.com)



Ashton Gate station, left, was last used in 1984.  
Picture: [www.thedutchfamily.co.uk](http://www.thedutchfamily.co.uk)

Christina Biggs from Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways queried the size of operating subsidies (estimated between £0.7 million and £1.8 million per year) said to be required for Metro West, bearing in mind the dramatic growth in usage of Bristol suburban stations. Replies from two of the officers claimed that not all new stations had exceeded expectations, quoting one example from the South East of England where proposed housing development had not occurred. This is despite the evidence from Railfuture's *Britain's Growing Railway* that the overwhelming majority of rail reopenings have proved very successful and would suggest that the small number of disappointing cases is being given undue weight in official projections for rail schemes.

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## Devon and Cornwall

By Gerard Duddridge  
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### ■ ■ Possible Dartmoor station

Railfuture has stepped forward to call for the former station site at Ashburton in Dartmoor National Park to be protected for possible future reopening. We learnt in December that the park planning authority wishes to develop the site. The town is about two miles from the existing track of the South Devon heritage railway at Buckfastleigh. We said: "The growing use of the local railway network in Devon suggests that Ashburton with a population of just over 4,000 and Buckfastleigh around 3,600 together have future potential to support a daily rail service. This could be every two hours to Totnes, Ivybridge, Plympton (new station) and Plymouth. Assuming a 45 mph top speed between Ashburton and Totnes, the journey time to Plymouth could be 50 minutes." This would open up employment, educational and leisure opportunities for local residents going to Plymouth and also give them convenient access to London and northbound trains at Totnes.

### ■ ■ Bus links to station threatened by council cuts

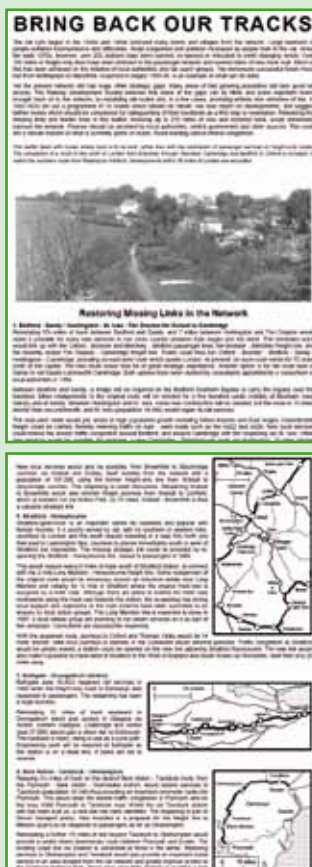
Bus services are at risk across Devon because the county urgently needs to save money. Buses connecting with the summer Sunday Exeter-Okehampton rail service are potentially threatened, as well as the summer weekend Transmoor link that connects rail passengers from Exeter St Davids with Moretonhampstead and Princetown across Dartmoor to Plymouth. Also at risk are evening buses on routes such as Plymouth-Tavistock, Exeter-Crediton and Exeter-Cullompton. Comments to Devon County Council can be made until 20 April 2015. Website: <https://www.toughchoices.co.uk>

### ■ ■ Exeter to Plymouth via Okehampton is a good start

Within days of the anniversary of the sea washing away the Exeter-Plymouth line at Dawlish in February 2014, another British main line was closed, this time by a landslip at Harbury Tunnel between Banbury and Leamington Spa. Both incidents could have been eased by rail reopenings, particularly if politicians and planners had followed the advice in the 1996 six-page RDS publication *Bring Back Our Tracks* (see right) which can be downloaded at <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/RDS+pamphlets>

At least now the Okehampton line reopening is looking stronger, while some voices still maintain that it would be a slow Exeter-Plymouth route. We consider it an excellent diversionary route and our modelling shows journey times equal to those of the Dawlish route. No major city should be reliant on a single route. The 2014 Dawlish rail closure cost the economy £1.2 billion, according to the Devon Maritime Forum.

■ ■ AGM at Plymouth in April  
Railfuture Devon and Cornwall's AGM is at the Unitarian Church, Notte Street, Plymouth PL1 2HG on Saturday 18 April 2015 at 13.30.



## Fast line to the future



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

**JAM BUSTER:** The first train heads over Network Rail's new £45 million Reading flyover on 4 January. It is part of the £950 million upgrade to ease congestion in the area including three extra lines through the rebuilt station

Chris Austin reviews Network Rail's Long Term Planning Process

Network Rail has published five draft long-term plans for Western, Sussex, Anglia, Wessex and East Midlands. Eventually there will be seven more. These are serious, thoughtful, long-term proposals to increase the capacity on our burgeoning railway, and to equip it to meet future needs over a 30-year period.

The work is transparent, with "options for funders" being shown, together with a price guide and evaluations to enable value for money to be judged.

Sensibly, the plans have been developed to build on renewals of track and signalling that will be required anyway.

They also aspire to meet the latest European Union standards as well as rising public expectations on safety and environmental protection.

For the members of Railfuture's infrastructure and networks group, it has been a relentless programme of report reading, consultation with branches, debate and writing responses.

Every opportunity is being taken to provide a critical appraisal of each study reflecting the views of the organisation so that we can influence the shape of the final reports.

This is important as these studies will form the basis of long-term planning, but also will inform the investment programme for control period 6, from 2019 to 2024.

They will also form the basis of the planning for both Government and the Office of Rail Regulation in looking ahead to 2043. Inevitably, much of the focus is on how the huge

growth in number of passengers is to be accommodated, particularly on routes to London, as well as the huge growth in freight on routes from the major container ports. There are some innovative ideas too, like reopening Portishead, Henbury and the Brentford and Cowley branches.

Regular services on the Trans Wilts (Melksham) line and hourly services between Bristol and Yeovil are welcome developments, as are the number of new stations planned. There is general welcome for increasing most East Anglia local services to two trains an hour.

Our responses have, of course, asked for more schemes to be considered. We have made a strong case for reopening the Okehampton route between Exeter and Plymouth as well as the Wealden Link extension between Uckfield and Lewes, both of which have strategic significance far beyond the restoration of the local passenger service. Similarly, we have pressed the case for putting Wisbech back on the rail network.

We have been critical where we believe the proposals are inadequate such as on the overcrowded and important Cardiff-Bristol-Southampton-Portsmouth line.

Similarly, we have criticised the proposal to reduce the space allowed for each standing passenger on the busy Thameslink route with its many lengthy journeys, and we have pressed for four tracking the Lea Valley line.

Our responses are on the Railfuture website and will be posted on the Network Rail website at a later date. Further progress will be reported in the next issue of *Railwatch*.



**Finalist:** Bystrup Architecture, Design & Engineering's High Speed T is designed to be placed between twin tracks



**Finalist:** COBE's Tomahawk design reduces overall height and uses modern materials and manufacturing techniques



**Finalist:** Moxon Architects with Mott MacDonald. The design aims to minimise the visual impact on the landscape

## Electrification looks good

*Electrification is one of the best ways to make the railway more efficient but the overhead infrastructure can look ugly.*

*In an attempt to devise more aesthetically pleasing designs for Britain, a competition was organised by FutureRailway, in conjunction with HS2 Ltd and the Royal Institute of British Architects. The finalists were Bystrup*

*Architecture, Design and Engineering of Denmark for its HST design, COBE of Denmark for its Tomahawk design and Moxon Architects with Mott MacDonald for their integrated OLS design.*

*The finalists were invited to use development funding to undertake detailed technical development of their designs and devise ways to market them.*

## London and South East

By Roger Blake  
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### ■ ■ Consultations a-plenty

Railfuture supported Transport for London's proposal for a new Old Oak station to link London Overground with HS2, but opposed its plan to extend the Bakerloo line as far out as Lewisham and Hayes, instead advocating a double-ended terminus station at the Peckham Rye hub. Network Rail were sent five responses to its route studies for Western, Sussex, Anglia, and Wessex, plus a case study of East Anglia titled *Improving Connectivity*, a Swiss-style approach to infrastructure enhancements driven by the needs of improved frequencies and connections. The Department for Transport heard from us on safeguarding the tunnelled route for Crossrail 2, and, in conjunction with East Anglia branch, on the franchise specification for the next Anglia franchise. We gave Govia Thameslink Railway and c2c feedback on their proposed timetables for December 2015, GTR attracting most comment on Brighton main line services. Our responses can be found in [www.railfuture.org.uk/Submissions](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Submissions)

### ■ ■ Campaigners fight on for link to Sussex coast

Local campaigners met in Crowborough on the Uckfield line on the final day for submitting responses to Network Rail's Sussex Area Route Study. The poor start to 2015, with many services delayed, cancelled, terminated short of Uckfield, or short-formed, only served to highlight the need for sustained investment in the route. As well as longer platforms for longer trains to give everyone a seat, the route's extension to Lewes for connections with Sussex coast towns will make far better use of the asset by opening up direct links especially with Brighton, a city about the same size as Edinburgh, Cardiff or Belfast. See [www.railfuture.org.uk/article1539-Wealden-Rail-Rally](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1539-Wealden-Rail-Rally)

### ■ ■ Transport minister boosts MP's rail summit at Hastings

Transport Minister Claire Perry headed Hastings and Rye MP Amber Rudd's second rail summit in January, following last March's visit by Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin. Both visits underscored the "absolute commitment" given to spark economic revival in Bexhill and Hastings by reducing journey times to London, by extending HS1 services from Ashford across an upgraded MarshLink. Earlier we had emphasised the benefits of the East Sussex Javelin in response to research commissioned by the county council. See [www.railfuture.org.uk/article1456-High-Speed-Hastings](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1456-High-Speed-Hastings)

### ■ ■ Transport for London shrinks Greater Anglia

Railfuture support for devolved control of local rail services bears fruit on West Anglia from 31 May. London Overground Rail Operations Ltd will operate services and most of the stations from Liverpool Street to Chingford, Enfield Town and Cheshunt via Seven Sisters. From the same date MTR Crossrail Ltd will take over the Liverpool Street-Shenfield local services, the first step towards Crossrail - long-championed by Railfuture.

### ■ ■ Officials undermine case for rail with skinny figures

The Office of Rail Regulation is still underestimating station use in urban areas. Passenger counts undertaken by Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail User Group point to annual footfall of about 650,000 at Cambridge Heath and over 1 million at London Fields. The latest ORR figures? About 360,000 and 620,000 respectively!

■ More local news in Railfuture London and South East's quarterly newsletter *raifse* at: [www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East+branch+news](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East+branch+news)





## East Midlands

By Anthony Kay  
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and Roger Bacon  
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### ■ ■ National Forest line

Railfuture has been in contact with Leicestershire County Council, Andrew Bridgen (MP for NW Leics), and transport minister Baroness Kramer regarding both High Speed Two and the proposed National Forest Line between Leicester and Burton upon Trent. Local politicians in Leicestershire have opposed HS2, which is seen as causing upheaval in the north west of the county without yielding benefits to local people. The county council has also considered the £50 million cost of reopening the National Forest line to passengers as too expensive. However, the possibility has now been raised that it might drop its opposition to HS2 in return for Government funding to reopen the line. We have also raised the possibility of new passenger services on the Lichfield-Burton route and the route from Willington to Trent Junction via Castle Donington.

### ■ ■ Center Parcs backs plan for reopening Ollerton line

Support for reopening the line that connects Ollerton and Edwinstowe to the Robin Hood line at Shirebrook has come from Center Parcs, whose Sherwood Forest holiday village is less than two miles from the line near Edwinstowe, while its head office is in Ollerton. Center Parcs CEO Martin Dalby pointed out that the company employs 1,750 people in the area, as well as the many guests arriving at the holiday village. Mark Spencer MP for Sherwood supports the plans and has asked the Chancellor for money for the project.

### ■ ■ New Northampton station opens as old faces demolition

Northampton's new £20 million station opened in January, three months late. Visitors on day one included Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin, two local MPs and the leaders of county and borough councils. The old building will be demolished, and a multi-storey car park built on its site, with a lift and bridge to give passengers access to the new station.

### ■ ■ Flood fears force planning changes at Ilkeston station

Derbyshire County Council has had to submit three new planning applications for revised plans for the new Ilkeston station. Changes include shorter platforms and a smaller car park, because costs have had to be cut due to the extra expense of flood-prevention works that are now required.

### ■ ■ Improved passenger links needed in north Notts

Railfuture is campaigning to improve connection times between Robin Hood line trains from north of Nottingham, including Mansfield, with Lincoln to Sheffield trains at Worksop. The typical wait at Worksop before travelling on to Sheffield is 41 minutes, and on the return around 30 minutes.

### ■ ■ Withdrawal date for Midland main line's IC-125 trains

The 10 IC-125 trains leased by East Midland Trains will not be modified to meet the Passengers of Reduced Mobility (Technical Specification for Interoperability) deadline of 1 January 2020, meaning that they are set for withdrawal. Spare parts for these VP185 engined units are becoming scarce and expensive and owners Porterbrook has no plans to undertake the necessary compliance work and expect them to be replaced by electric trains before the deadline.

### ■ ■ No news on main line electric trains

Transport Minister Claire Perry told the Commons no decisions have been taken regarding the procurement of electric trains for the Midland main line. She told Kettering MP Philip Hollobone in October: "This will be a matter for the train operator. An announcement will be made in due course."



# Government wins privatisation battle

The Government won its battle over rail franchising when Stagecoach/Virgin took over running the East Coast main line on 1 March from the publicly owned Directly Operated Railways.

Campaigners who wanted more public control over the railways had been fighting to delay the handover until after the general election when they hoped Labour might win – and allow a state-run operator to continue as a comparator with the private operators.

Some had been hoping Labour would bring back British Rail or an updated version. But the series of demonstrations backed by the RMT union were

ignored by the Government. East Coast Trains had surprised many commentators by running a successful railway, providing a good return to the Treasury, treating their workers well and running the best rail booking website.

Complaints that Stagecoach now has a near-monopoly position, controlling most trains going north from London, on the West, East and Midland main lines, have also been dismissed.

However, the French Keolis and Eurostar consortium that bid unsuccessfully for the East Coast franchise is planning to bid next year for the West Coast main line franchise which

changes in April 2017. Before the handover, Labour said it would introduce more public control of the railways but will not bring back the 1980s style British Rail. Railman's son Michael Dugher said Labour would abolish the rail delivery group and put the current franchising system "in the bin".

"It is time to rip up franchising as it stands today," said Mr Dugher who is MP for Barnsley East and also the party's transport spokesman.

"The only people who have no voice at the moment in the running of the railways are the passengers themselves."

He said there should be a passenger voice right at the

heart of the railways. He also criticised bus and rail company Stagecoach for opposing Labour plans for bus regulation. His remarks are a hardening of tone compared to his predecessor Mary Creagh who addressed Railfuture's AGM in Sheffield in 2014.

The Government is also selling off its share in Eurostar to a Canadian pension fund for £750 million.

The RMT union's Mick Cash said: "The French and Belgians think we are insane knocking off such a valuable and strategic infrastructure asset.

"It is another short sighted, pre-election act of public sector destruction."

## Devon is way ahead

In future issues of *Railwatch*, I will highlight where in Britain community rail is excelling.

I will highlight best practice to encourage members who may live in less enlightened parts of the country.

In Devon, the county council has adopted a proactive approach to rail development over many years.

It has an effective strategy for expansion, increasing rail's role in moving passengers in and out of Exeter and Plymouth and more recently, Torbay.

The Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership is based in the geography department of Plymouth University and benefits both from this link and the willing help of students in various volunteer projects.

First Great Western is an effective partnership member, and on each line the partnership is supported by a committed rail user group.

Last year marked a milestone in securing European funding for the development of the Exeter-Paignton Riviera line, while this year two new stations will open in the county, the first for 20 years. Two more are at an advanced stage of planning.

Newcourt, between Digby and Topsham on the Exeter-Exmouth Avocet line will serve a new housing development in an area where bus services are thin. The station also serves Sandy Park, the home of Exeter Chiefs rugby club. Unusually, the station is being built by

Devon County Council and will be transferred to Network Rail on completion.

Cranbrook, between Pinhoe and Whimble on the former Southern route to Exeter, will serve new housing and business developments and is close to Exeter Airport. It will also accommodate park and ride passengers. Both stations are expected to open around Easter this year.

A future station is being planned for Marsh Barton, between Exeter St Thomas and Starcross on the Bristol and Exeter main line. It will serve a sprawling retail and business development which is poorly served by existing public transport and in consequence local roads are gridlocked for most of the day.

Edginswell, between Newton Abbott and Torre on the Paignton line, near Kingskerswell closed in 1964 although it served a significant residential area.

Now though the line service is much more frequent, with a half hourly service between Newton Abbott and Paignton thanks to the Riviera Line Project. Additional trains were funded as part of a European Union project called Interreg.

Interreg embraces Lancashire, Pays de la Loire, Aachen and Limburg, and will test the benefits of a more frequent local service effectively marketed. The results will be shared among the Interreg partners and form an input

## COMMUNITY RAIL

By Chris Austin

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Picture: ROB COUSINS

**NEW STATION TAKES SHAPE:** The platform supports are constructed at Newcourt with a train to Exmouth passing in January. The platform surface is now in place

to EU transport policy. The next big step for Devon will be the move to Devon Metro, a branded network of good quality, frequent local services around Exeter. This would see a half hourly service from Paignton through Exeter to Exmouth and a half hourly service between Exeter St Davids and Axminster. One train each hour would run between Barnstaple and Axminster.

Longer term plans are being drawn up for an even more frequent service on the busy Avocet line which would require restoration of some double track to Topsham on the section singled in 1976, and probably a loop at Lymington. On the Exeter-Salisbury line, further doubling or loops will

be required in the longer term, and the prospect of a service to Okehampton remains a possibility while the county council is sponsoring the extension of the Tamar Valley line to Tavistock. Restoration of the entire route via Okehampton to Plymouth, as described last year in *Railwatch* by Gerard Duddridge is on the agenda. (See Gerard's latest article on page 14 of this issue).

Devon demonstrates the core Railfuture contention, that a well-planned and marketed service will be justified by increased ridership, and become an alternative to car. The Avocet line, for example, has doubled patronage over 10 years and now carries 1.7 million passengers each year.

Next time: Lancashire

## West Midlands

### ■ ■ CENTRO looks to future

At a meeting with CENTRO in January, the future shape of the London Midland franchise was discussed. The current franchise expires in April next year and it is expected that a direct award will be negotiate for the period to June 2017. CENTRO is considering what improvements should be included in the franchise extension which will include the opening of the new rail station for Kenilworth on the Coventry-Leamington line. Work has started on the £11 million station to be built on the site of the previous one which shut in the 1960s as part of the Beeching cuts. After years of campaigning, the station received Government support in December 2013. CENTRO will continue to work on plans to electrify the Chase line to Rugeley.

### ■ ■ Shrewsbury link suggestions

Railfuture West Midlands held useful talks in January with Virgin Trains. We welcomed the start of the London-Shrewsbury service but asked for a different operating pattern to generate more custom. We suggested that a fast Super Voyager from Euston could split at Stafford with one section running to Crewe, Chester, Wrexham and Shrewsbury and via the Oxley chord back to Stafford. At Stafford it could rejoin the other section which would run in the reverse direction round the loop.

### ■ ■ Cotswold line to be redoubled

Network Rail is preparing a detailed business plan to complete the long-awaited dualling of the Cotswold line. The Government has confirmed that the work will be carried out between 2019 and 2024 on the Oxford-Worcester stretch. The move follows intense lobbying by West Worcestershire MP Harriett Baldwin. Transport minister Baroness Kramer has written to Mrs Baldwin confirming that the Government is looking at how to fund the project. Mrs Baldwin said: "I am pleased that the Government is looking to develop critical projects such as this and it is crucial that we develop a long-term economic plan which will help to fund these major infrastructure plans."

### ■ ■ Tram lines possible but road building likely

Birmingham City Council wants to build three tram lines over the next 20 years as part of a £4 billion transport plan which would depend on grants from the Government, the European Union and local businesses. Sadly much of the plan involves road building and road tunnels.

### ■ ■ Light rail hub proposals for Dudley town centre

Proposals to reopen the rail line for a £20 million light rail link from Dudley to Dudley Port, on the West Coast main line, were

published in December. Dudley Council and Warwick Manufacturing Group (part of the University of Warwick) want to build a national centre for light rail innovation (artist's impression above) on the site of the old station in the town centre. Railfuture is worried the plan could jeopardise future heavy rail use of the line.

### ■ ■ Councillor Eric bids to preserve rail line for future

Councillor Eric Carter of Telford and Wrekin Council has met Staffordshire County Council officials to seek ways of preserving the track alignment of the 14-mile long former Stafford-Wellington which closed in 1966, after an application for housing development west of Stafford. The route is currently used as a cycle link. He said: "A lot of people in Newport would like to see that rail route reopened."

### ■ ■ Regional West Midlands contact:

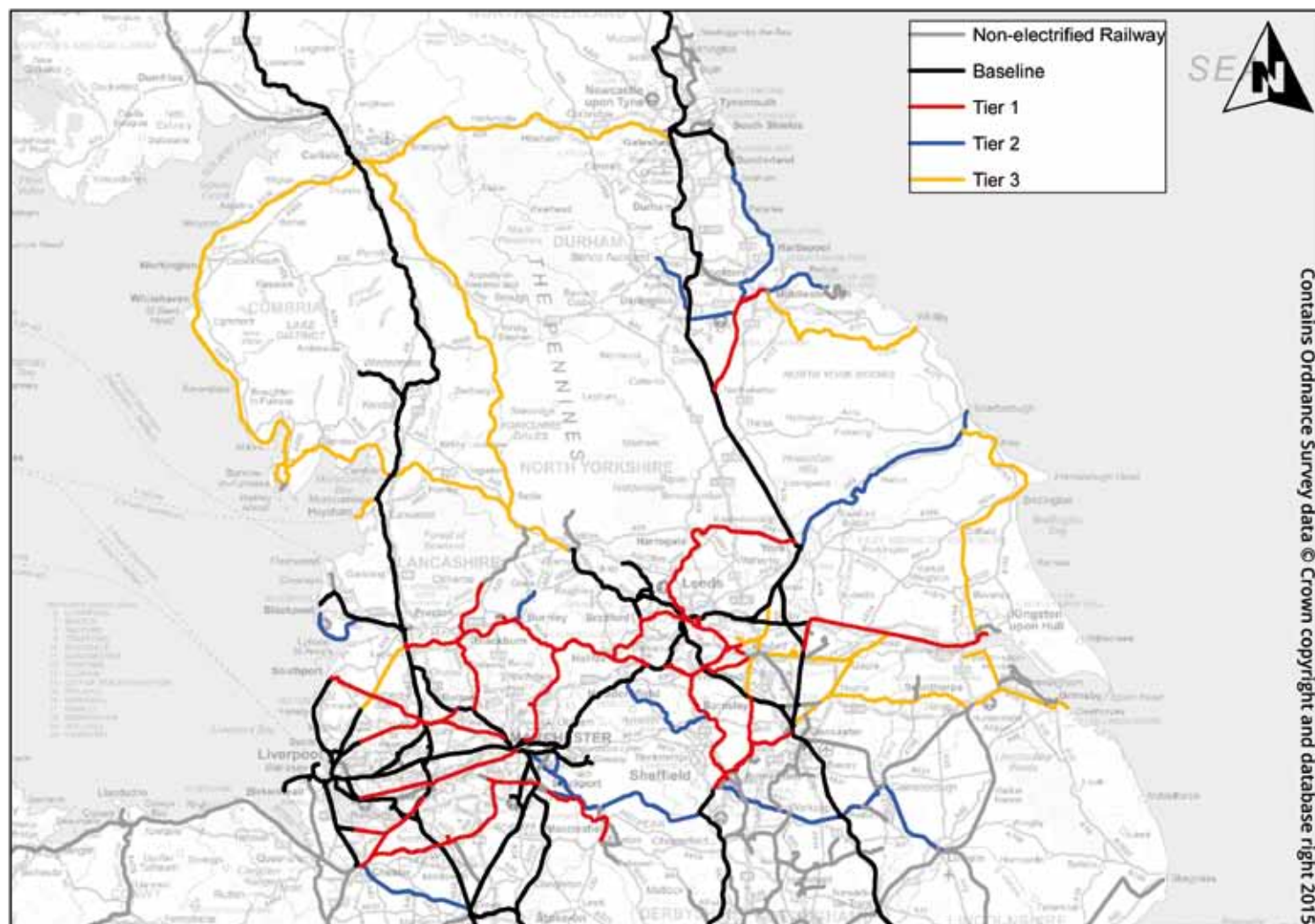
westmidlands@railfuture.org.uk











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**The Northern Sparks report to the Government from Rail North which called for all the lines in tiers 1, 2 and 3 (illustrated above) to be electrified in addition to those being electrified now or already agreed by the Government for electrification**

# Ever more demands for electrification

A total of 32 rail routes in the north of England were recommended to the Government in early March for electrification.

Design and business case development on the 12 routes in Tier 1 should begin at once, according to the *Northern Sparks* report by a Rail North task force. They should be considered for action in the period 2019-2024. The routes are:

## Tier 1

Calder Valley (Leeds-Manchester and Preston via Bradford and Brighouse), Liverpool to Manchester via Warrington Central, Southport/Kirkby to Salford Crescent, Chester-Stockport, Northallerton-Middlesbrough, Leeds-York via Harrogate, Selby-Hull, Sheffield (Meadowhall) to Leeds via Barnsley/Castleford & connections, Bolton-Clitheroe, Sheffield-Doncaster/Wakefield

Westgate (Dearne Valley), Hazel Grove-Buxton, Warrington-Chester.

## Tier 2

Manchester-Sheffield and south east Manchester local services, York-Scarborough, Bishop Auckland/Darlington to Saltburn and Sunderland, Barnsley-Huddersfield, Sheffield-Lincoln via Retford, Chester-Crewe, Burnley-Colne and Kirkham-Blackpool South, Knottingley-Goole.

## Tier 3

Barrow-Carnforth, Pontefract-Church Fenton, Hull-Scarborough, Ormskirk-Preston, Carlisle-Newcastle, Skipton-Carlisle, Barton on Humber, Cumbrian Coast, Doncaster-Gilberdyke, Cleethorpes-Thorne (Doncaster), Middlesbrough to Whitby.

The report was launched at Sheffield station by Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin.

It was handed to him by cross-party task force members MPs Andrew Jones (Harrogate), Julie Hilling (Bolton West) and Ian Swales (Redcar) together with Bradford Councillor Dave Green and Warrington Councillor Terry O'Neill. Mr McLoughlin said:

"I want to see a rolling plan for further electrification and this study will have a vital part to play in setting the agenda for 2019 and beyond. Network Rail will take the task force's findings into account as it develops its nationwide plan to improve the nation's railways."

The task force was set up in December 2013 to provide advice on the next steps for electrification in the North of England.

It was supported by experts from Rail North, the Department for Transport and Network Rail.

The report is so positive towards rail electrification that one cynical campaigner commented: "One wonders if there might be an election coming sometime soon!"

Full details can be found at [www.railnorth.org/electrification](http://www.railnorth.org/electrification).

A series of routes in the north of England are already being electrified and on the day the report was published (5 March), passengers made the first journey on an electric train between Liverpool Lime Street and Manchester Airport on Thursday. Demands for electrification elsewhere in Britain are coming thick and fast.

Electrification of the North Wales rail network is "vital" to reduce severe road congestion, Wrexham MP Ian Lucas told a parliamentary meeting in January.

Delyn MP David Hanson added: "There is a pressing need for a plan for rail to serve both North Wales and North West England."

Electrification of the North Wales line from Runcorn, Warrington and Crewe to Holyhead would bring benefits of £1.5 billion, and another £500 million in other economic benefits, according to a Greengauge 21 report in September last year.

Elsewhere in England, Chancellor George Osborne asked Network Rail in February to look at the case for electrification of the Bristol-Birmingham line.

The much-delayed Midland main line electrification is now expected to get started soon. Network Rail expects the overhead wires to be energised on the Bedford to Kettering and Corby section by the end of 2017, with Kettering to Market Harborough and Leicester following by 2018, and Derby/Nottingham at the end of 2018. Sheffield will have to wait until 2020.

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