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The new station at Blackfriars in London is beginning to take shape as the £5.5 billion Thameslink scheme makes progress.

It will be the first rail station to straddle the river Thames and will have an exit on the South Bank to allow access to the Globe theatre and the Tate Modern.

Track realignments through the station have been completed and work is continuing on roof, widening the bridge deck and extending the platforms to cope with 12-car trains.

Network Rail also has to reconfigure track between Blackfriars Metropolitan Junction and London Bridge, with a new viaduct at Borough Market.

Additional through platforms are being provided at London Bridge along with separation of services from Cannon Street and Charing Cross as well as Greater Thameslink. The

Shard development, designed by Renzo Piano, has provided funds for changes (via section 106 agreements) to London Bridge station itself.

The Shard will have 72 floors and will be the tallest building in the European Union when it is completed next year.

London Bridge station will gain a new front, a new glass roof and a remodelled bus station with a new escalator to the Underground.

Preparatory work at London Bridge has started, with initial works scheduled for completion by May next year.

Both bus and railway stations will remain in use while work continues.

Thameslink was created in the 1980s after Railfuture campaigned to reinstate a short section of track in Snow Hill tunnel. It cleared the way for a highly successful service though-London service.

railwatch

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Elections Board elections held annually. The deadline for 2011 elections has passed but nomination forms can be obtained from Returning Officer, PO Box 7690, Hinckley LE10 9WJ. You can also download a form from www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=Elections

Who's Who: Many other useful contact details can be found on the Railfuture website www.railfuture.org.uk

From Anglesey to Whitechapel

My 28 years of rail reopenings

By Ian Brown

I started my professional association with rail reopenings at Valley, near Holyhead, on the Isle of Anglesey where my parents spent some happy holidays.

The village station, known in Welsh as Y Fali, came back to life on 15 March 1982, with the help of a grant from Gwynedd County Council.

Valley, built in 1849, was closed in 1966, but its reopening was not without its problems for me, early in my career, when I admit to being a little innocent.

We had built the station for four-car diesel multiple units and I only realised the week before the station was expected to open that we had timed an eight-coach loco-hauled train to stop there on a Sunday evening!

The train was not fitted with equipment to allow selective door opening so I had to think up another solution.

The train started at Holyhead, only one stop away, so we arranged for the station staff to warn passengers that they had to sit in the correct coach. It was a better solution than making the Valley stop a pick-up only.

More recently, before retiring as managing director of London Rail at Transport for London in November, I was involved with a spate of reopenings on the Docklands Light Railway, the London Overground and in particular the East London Line project.

So I was delighted to have been invited to speak at Railfuture's well-attended Rail Reopenings Conference in November at Shoreditch, London.

At the conference I picked up Railfuture's book - *Britain's Growing Railway - An A to Z of Rail Reopenings (5th edition)*.

It is clear that many of the reopenings described in the book resulted from sustained and effective campaigning by local stakeholders.

One example was in my own back yard where the East London Line Group was consistent in its ambitions and effective in communication with potential stakeholders who were persuaded to "buy in" to the scheme.

The group was also willing to work with the delivery organisation - in this case my team, in providing a positive public view when negative forces showed. This was a big scheme and we knew how easy it was for stake-



SURE-FOOTED: Ian Brown

holders to be deflected from their support. It was a long haul and the key to it was taking a practical, step-by-step approach to the overall vision for an orbital railway for London which others shared.

Phase one was both realistic in terms of overall potential funding, yet large enough to create enough momentum to demonstrate success, so allowing further phases to be developed and approved.

With this London example, the opportunity was taken to integrate the scheme with other rail projects - and thus avoid wasted effort and resources.

Timing was important to avoid this, but we were able to ensure that we made provision for a major interchange with Crossrail at Whitechapel where the ELL connected with the Underground's District line.

Crossrail is all part of that bigger vision of allowing passengers to avoid the problems of getting to and through central London.

In the case of the ELL, as with many other schemes outside London sponsored by passenger transport executives, momentum has been achieved, both politically and financially, with huge ridership growth.

This is particularly the case where multimodal and rail interchanges are incorporated. Liverpool South Parkway, with its links to Liverpool John Lennon Airport, is a good example of this, with services added as the momentum of growth is established. Further, as yet unfunded, development can only be considered against such a background leading, eventually, to another "Whitechapel" in West London.

A major new hub station in the Old Oak Common area should be able to integrate London's orbital railway with both Cross-



CAPITAL CONNECTIONS: An East London Line train approaching Hoxton station in May 2010 with Shoreditch church and the high-rise city skyline in the background

rail and the proposed high-speed line to Birmingham and beyond.

Another major hub is Brixton which has enormous potential as both an interchange and to relieve congestion elsewhere. It is as yet unfunded but it is surely inconceivable that it should not be incorporated into the base cost of the Overground's South London Line scheme.

We will need to revisit this scheme in the future as momentum develops. The capital cost of around £50 million is less likely to scare the horses - or the politicians.

As with ballroom dancing, getting your timing right, especially with big projects, is everything, particularly if you are not too sure of the steps.

Successfully delivering such projects efficiently is important because it displays a capability to upgrade railways which is not Network Rail's core competence.

It is not an accident that the star performers in terms of opening stations and lines are Transport Scotland, Welsh Assembly Government, Transport for London, the English passenger transport executives and certain shire counties who have equipped

themselves as "client" to turn their ambitions into reality.

Neither Network Rail nor the train operating companies are really incentivised to build such facilities.

Of course, the short-term structural approach of short station leases is inappropriate for the expanding rail industry, conceived as it was at the time of privatisation when growth of the industry had not been factored in.

This needs to change to a long-lease arrangement where the people who invest, get the benefit of the capital investment in the asset.

■ Ian Brown was awarded a CBE in the Queen's New Year honours list after spending his working life on the railway. He was a graduate trainee with British Rail and retired last year after 10 years with Transport for London as head of London Rail. He expanded the Docklands Light Railway and oversaw the building of the East London Line.

During his career, Ian worked in the BR policy unit, as managing director of Railfreight Distribution, policy adviser to SNCF and chief passenger manager at London Midland region.

Picture: NETWORK RAIL

LOCAL ACTION

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes

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Expansionist vision needed for railway

Railfuture Yorkshire submitted a six-page response to Network Rail's draft Northern rail utilisation strategy in January. Railfuture said: "We are disappointed that high-speed rail appears to be the only long-term vision for rail.

"We need a radical, expansionist vision for the 'normal' railway. The railway should provide a much broader range of travel opportunities than at present through the reopening of old lines, the opening of new lines and the opening and reopening of stations.

"The railway should meet the challenge of encouraging modal shift from the roads for both environmental (climate change and pollution) reasons and to ease congestion and make road traffic easier for essential journeys. What is needed are major and significant enhancements to the rail network to improve both its scope and capacity."

The Railfuture document also called for new regional services, including "a second semi-fast service on the Calder Valley route, from Manchester to Hull via Rochdale, Hebden Bridge, Halifax, Bradford, Leeds and Selby, interleaved with the existing Blackpool to York service via Preston, Bradford and Leeds. This service could extend to Manchester Airport (using the slot vacated by the present Chester service) once the Ordsall curve is constructed."

We also called for the reopening of the Todmorden and Burscough chords, Skipton-Colne, Dewsbury-Bradford via Spen Valley for tram-trains, Menston-Otley-Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton, Clitheroe-Hellifield, Garsdale-Hawes, Skipton-Grassington, Skipton-Bolton Abbey, Malton to Pickering, Beverley to York, Crewe-Altrincham via Middlewich and Penrith-Keswick.

But we also warned: "We are concerned about the costing approach taken by government bodies which vastly inflates the cost of capital projects. Until a more commercial approach to costings for infrastructure development is taken, the necessary development of the rail network will continue to be jeopardised by excessive cost."

30th anniversary of campaign to save line

This year sees the 30th anniversary of the Huddersfield and Penistone Rail Users Association. The association was formed to fight the proposed closure of the route from Huddersfield to Sheffield via the towns of Penistone and Barnsley. It offers views of the most beautiful parts of the south Pennines. The HPSRUA now campaigns for a reliable rail service and better punctuality. It wants the line to have more modern trains and eventually double track throughout to achieve a half-hourly service. More info: <http://hpsrua.iccommunities.co.uk/>

The line is also now supported by the Penistone Line Partnership. More info: <http://www.penline.co.uk/>

Meeting with MP over Leeds-Goole line

Pontefract and District Rail Action Group has arranged a meeting with local MP Yvette Cooper to press for improved services on the Leeds-Goole Line.

Bradford cross-city plan considered

A cross-city rail link in Bradford, which is supported by Railfuture, is likely to be feasible but would cost at least £140 million, according to a report submitted to Bradford Council in February. Bradford Councillor John Pennington and property developer Andrew Mason are also calling for the link, according to the *Yorkshire Post*. Councillor Pennington, who represents the Bingley ward, said: "Bradford has the fastest-growing population of any city in the UK."

■ Railfuture meetings are scheduled for Saturday 18 June in Hull and Saturday 17 September in Doncaster.