

# Railway comeback

By Trevor Garrod

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The European Passengers' Federation, of which Railfuture is a founder member, held a meeting for the first time in Hungary on 8 January when the EPF council were guests of the transport authority in Budapest City Hall.

We were told about the decline in public transport usage, thanks to a lack of co-ordination and steadily rising fares, compared to parking fees which had remained static for 10 years.

One of our two Hungarian sister organisations, VEKE, had campaigned for an authority similar to Transport for London, to bring together all transport activities in the capital. The election of a sympathetic city mayor in October 2010 helped bring this idea to fruition.

There are now multi-pass tickets, new bus lanes and a bike-rental scheme, for example.

A single journey on the bus, tram and underground network costs about £1.10 and we were able to sample this facility during our stay. There are also two-day and three-day tickets.

Our VEKE friends showed us the Underground Museum – commemorating the opening of the second underground railway in Europe in 1896. London's was the first.

Budapest's pioneering cut-and-cover line was incorporated into a modern metro opened in stages from 1970 with deep-level

tunnels and large spacious stations. It serves the three main line rail stations and all lines come together under Deak Square in the city centre where a new stretch of tram line is being built and buses also call.

Budapest is well worth a visit for its cultural and historical attractions as well as its transport network – and if you have to fly (as three of us did), the airport is a cheap and convenient metro and then bus ride from the city centre.

For public transport information in English go to [www.bkv.hu](http://www.bkv.hu)

We also learned from our second Hungarian sister organisation, DERKE, based in the country's second city of Debrecen, of their campaign to improve train and bus services between eastern Hungary and western Romania.

This is an excellent project to fulfil the aims of EPF's *Journeys across Borders* – issued in October.

A year ago, the Hungarian Railways (MAV) withdrew passenger services on many rural lines and replaced them with buses. These were not generally successful.

In fact we sent copies of Railfuture's 1977 booklet *Can Bus Replace Train?* to colleagues in Hungary and several other continental countries.

It was good to learn that a dozen of these rail services have now been reinstated though our colleagues consider that some of them need more attractive services at even intervals.

## Be a Railfuture winner

THE Railfuture Lottery paid out almost £1,400 in prizes during 2010 and raised a similar amount for our campaigns.

You too could be part of this, with a top prize currently standing at £40 and five more prizes each month. Entries cost just £1 per month each and half of the money raised is returned in prizes while the remainder goes into Railfuture funds.

Having multiple lottery entries certainly helps your chances of winning. Join using PayPal at [www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery/](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery/) or, for more details, write 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:

**November:** Roger White, Mark Edgell, David Pring, Frank A Connolly, Graham D Smith, Alan P Koolman.

**December:** Peter J Jacobs, David A Stocks, Mike and Lesley Kneen, H R F Mills, Colin Rayner, P Sherwood.

**January:** Robert Burrows, David J Barr, Bill Berridge, James R Pattison, Mary Bosi, Brian F Houghton.

## Stamps for our funds

Help raise money for Railfuture by sending your used postage stamps to Stamps for Charity, Railfuture, 10 Bellamy Avenue, Hartcliffe, Bristol BS13 0HW. Please cut the stamps from their envelopes leaving a quarter of an

inch margin of paper around the stamp and the post mark. You can ask friends and relatives to help too. Please ensure that you include Railfuture in the address so that the correct funds can be allocated to Railfuture.

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

LOCAL ACTION

## Thames Valley

By Chris Wright

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### ■ ■ Expanding railway

Rail utilisation studies for the West Coast main line, Chiltern and London and South East raise questions of network capacity and recognise the potential of the East West rail link and also the possibility of introducing an Aylesbury to Milton Keynes service by extension of Chiltern services via High Wycombe. Milton Keynes rail users have been active in looking at the lack of capacity on the WCML, overcrowding on peak trains, a lack of fast commuter trains and a lack of links to the North West of England and Scotland. CrossRail extension to Milton Keynes is mooted in the London and South East rail utilisation strategy. Meanwhile, London Midland is seeking to extend some services which currently terminate at Coventry to Northampton and link these to services from London terminating at Northampton. The RUS support for EWRL and recognition of a major gap in the rail network is welcomed, together with the potential to ease congestion but it is unclear where the responsibility for progress lies in Network Rail. The responsibility for the EWRL continues to cross regional boundaries just as it did at closure in 1967. The East Midlands RUS completely ignored the potential of the EWRL but provoked significant protests as a result.

### ■ ■ Service improvements expected on the Cotswold line

The Cotswold line upgrade and re-doubling continues to progress and the Cotswold Line Promotion Group is in discussion on an improved September 2011 timetable for when the work has been completed. There are concerns that when electrification to Oxford is completed, passengers may be expected to transfer to diesel services. The CLPG has also expressed disappointment at the loss of Government funding for improvements to Oxford station to cut congestion and delays. The group has an impressive 1,744 members.

### ■ ■ Railfuture backs Chiltern expansion plans

The Evergreen 3 inquiry – for improvements to the Oxford-Bicester line which would allow for a new Marylebone-Oxford service – was expected to close at the end of January after 33 days of evidence and rebuttals by Chiltern Railways. Railfuture gave a supportive closing submission on the final day after various objectors sought planning conditions if the application is approved. The decision is due late in the year.

### ■ ■ Road grabs money that could have gone to rail

East West Rail Link planning work continues to progress with a regional growth fund bid and a search for GRIP5 funds. An update meeting is planned for March. Meanwhile, the Bedford to M1 Junction road opened in December and has cost £230 million for eight miles which is the equivalent of the cost of EWRL from Bedford to Oxford.

### ■ ■ Local councils are backing rail for the future

Local transport plans were being finalised in March and are supportive of our aspirations for enhanced rail services. All back East West Rail. Bucks County Council is seeking better rail links between Aylesbury and High Wycombe and has worked with Chiltern Railways to look at an extension to Milton Keynes. It is hoped to develop a community rail partnership for the Marlow-Maidenhead line. Oxfordshire County Council commits to improved rail provision including new stations and links with EWRL, Evergreen 3 and Great Western electrification. Milton Keynes Council meanwhile is concerned about the East West rail link, connectivity, overcrowding, improved stations, the possible reopening of Castlethorpe and supports High Speed 2.