

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

No 132

£2

July 2012

**Beccles victory
after 28 years
of campaigning
See Page 2**

Aerial photography by MIKE PAGE
www.mike-page.co.uk

Photographer Mike Page who took our Page One picture in May this year also recorded this scene at Beccles in 1960 where the extensive track layout (since 'rationalised' to save money) was able to cope with varied traffic requirements including this train of vans hauled by a class 31 diesel engine



Picture: MIKE PAGE

railwatch ISSN 0267-5943 www.railwatch.org.uk

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Printed by Print-Out, High Street, Histon, Cambridge CB4 4JD
Tel 01223 232709

Railfuture members receive *Railwatch* free

Non-members can subscribe by sending £8 (cheque payable to Railfuture) to: Alan Cocker, 11 Franklin Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 9DX
Copy deadlines: For the next issue, to be published in October, copy must be emailed to editor@railwatch.org.uk by 3 September. Paper copy can be sent to 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU but must be earlier.

Advertising: Full page: £190. Half page: £95. Quarter page: £45. Small ads: 30p per word. Free to members.

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

Page one picture

Work on the £4 million Beccles loop began in March this year after a ceremony attended by three MPs and the leader of Suffolk County Council.

It will clear the way for an hourly service between the two largest towns in the county, Ipswich and Lowestoft, starting in December.

The current service is restricted to every two hours.

The improved service is expected to give an economic boost to the market towns of Beccles and Halesworth.

Track and signalling work costing £21 million will be carried out in October as part of a wider project to upgrade the line.

"This is fantastic news for east Suffolk," said Dr Therese Coffey, MP for Suffolk Coastal.

Former Railfuture chairman and East Anglian branch chairman Steve Wilkinson commented: "We were campaigning for this 28 years ago. It's great that we have at last achieved our aim." The Railfuture-affiliated East Suffolk

Travellers Association plans to mount library exhibitions in November and December as part of a campaign to promote the improved service.

More than 100 of Mike Page's aerial pictures can also be seen in the book entitled Norfolk's Railway Heritage.

All the photographs in the book were taken by Mike between 2001 and 2009 and range from pictures of today's 100 mph electric trains and preserved steam locomotives in action, to fading traces of railways abandoned in the 1950s.

Authors Graham Kenworthy and Richard Adderson provide additional information about the historic significance of the locations shown in the images.

The book also occasionally strays briefly over the Norfolk border into adjacent counties.

It is published by Halsgrove (2009) and has 144 pages with 130 colour photographs. ISBN 978 1 84114 946 2

More information: www.mike-page.co.uk

www.railfuture.org.uk

Rights for passengers

By Trevor Garrod

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The European Commission regulation on rail passengers' rights is now in force in many countries, following a 2007 agreement.

In the UK rail passengers have had certain rights going back to the early 1990s, but we also now have rights concerning accessibility, information and compensation on many international train journeys as well.

In the spring the European Commission launched a review of the regulation, and Railfuture's International Committee submitted comments.

We urged better publicity for passengers' rights on international journeys. Passengers may be able to find out easily about their rights on a train journey from London to Edinburgh, thanks to leaflets issued by train operating companies, but for a comparable distance, such as London to Koln, they also need to know where they stand.

We also gave some good and bad examples of claim handling by operators in the event of delays.

Clarification is also needed on the definition of "force majeure" and "severe weather", which an operator sometimes cites to try to avoid paying compensation.

However, we must not lose sight of the broader picture. Not only should train operators recognise passenger rights but so should their competitors. In December

this year, EU rights for boat passengers will also come into force and, in March 2013, for bus and coach passengers on journeys over 125 miles.

Air passengers already have rights, and so the "playing field" between the different modes will become more level.

Now the European Parliament is debating common passenger rights across all modes. At the moment, for example, your flight has to be three hours late before you can claim compensation, whereas your train journey only has to be one hour late.

It can also become complicated if you are making a multi-modal journey, such as train and plane or train and ferry.

As chairman of the European Passengers Federation, I have been in contact with MEPs on these issues.

They will be considering and debating proposals in the summer and expect to vote on them in the autumn.

Railfuture members may like to write to their own MEP on the matter. I can provide some briefing notes.

I can also provide (in English) the report of EPF's 2012 conference in Salzburg, where this topic was dealt with by two speakers.

Please email me at trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk or send a large SAE to 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

Roger's lucky for lottery prizes!

It seems that, in February this year, having the first name Roger brought you luck . . . at least in the Railfuture Lottery.

Three Rogers won prizes in our February draw – including board member Roger Blake – but there are six chances to win every month, so members with other names can join in too!

Entries cost just £1 per month each and half of the money raised is returned in prizes while the remainder goes into Railfuture funds.

Join using PayPal at www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery/ or, for more details, write to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattlingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND, or email lottery@railfuture.org.uk.

Recent prize winners are: **February:** Graham Southon, Alan Koolman, Roger Blake, Roger White, Roger Webster and Michael Breslin. **March:** Bill Berridge, Lianne Woodman, Roger White, Graham Smith, Elaine Holland and Alexander Macfie. **April:** Alan and Hilary Everett, Mark Edgell, Ralph Coulson, Graham Smith, David Wells and Andrew Carr. **May:** Robert Dodd, Ian Clatworthy, Andrew Marsh, P J Rowland, Steve and Sue Boulding and Richard and Olive Hambly.

Appeal for strategic freight network

Railfuture members are asked to lobby their MPs to ensure that sufficient money (£350 million over five years) is allocated to the Strategic Freight Network when the Government publishes its High Level Output Specification for the railways this month. Please point out that an efficient rail freight network benefits energy policy, business and the economy generally. MPs could then convey this message to Chancellor George Osborne, Energy Secretary Ed Davey, Business Secretary Vince Cable as well as Transport Secretary Justine Greening. You can refer MPs to the Railfuture website at http://tinyurl.com/bsxe86b

◆◆◆◆ You can buy our book Britain's Growing Railway online at www.railfuture.org.uk

LOCAL ACTION

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes

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■■ Jockeys join campaign to boost train travel



Jockeys Amy Ryan and Julie Burke have given their support to the 2012 *Back a Winner by Train* campaign from First TransPennine Express and Northern Rail to encourage racegoers to travel by train. *Back a Winner by Train* features over 170 days of racing at Beverley, Carlisle, Cartmel, Doncaster, Haydock Park, Hexham, Newcastle, Pontefract, Redcar, Thirsk and York. Nearly 15,000 people took advantage of the promotion in 2011.

■■ Banish the Pacers and give us some clean toilets

Railfuture Yorkshire has called for the replacement of Pacer trains as part of the franchise requirements for the combined Northern/TransPennine franchise when it is re-let for another 15 years from 2014. Withdrawal of the Pacers is also called for by the Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Sustainable Transport Group. In addition, Railfuture is calling for stations, particularly on suburban routes, to be upgraded to match those on the London Overground, with heated waiting rooms, good lighting, clear signage, prominent timetable displays on all platforms, electronic departure indicators and clean toilets. Some of these points were also included in the branch response to the Department for Transport's consultation on devolving more power to local authorities and passenger transport executives.

■■ And what about some new trains too

The delivery of new Bombardier class 172 trains to the West Midlands has prompted rail users in Halifax, West Yorkshire to demand similar trains, which they say would be a "massive improvement" on the current class 150s which are used on local services, along with the more comfortable 158 trains. They say the 150s are reminiscent of the "down at heel" 1980s and have written to Transport Secretary Justine Greening calling for action on new trains.

■■ Fastest growing area deserves better train service

The importance of Hull, Selby and the East Riding should be recognised in the revised TransPennine timetable from 2014, Railfuture Yorkshire has advised. We joined Selby and District Rail Users Group to call for improvements. This will become possible after the release of class 185 diesel trains, following the North West electrification scheme which allows electric trains to be used for more Manchester-Scotland services. Selby meanwhile is forecast to be the fastest growing development area in Yorkshire and the Humber area.

■■ Millions earmarked to speed up trains in Yorkshire

Continued Railfuture campaigning paid off in March when £130 million extra funding for the Northern Hub was approved by the Chancellor in his budget speech. It will be used to increase capacity and line speed on the Sheffield-Manchester line. Line speeds will also be raised on the Manchester-Bradford via Rochdale line and the Manchester-Preston line via Bolton.

North West

By Arthur Thomson
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■ ■ Rochdale improvements

The rail user group on the Oldham Rochdale Manchester Line (STORM) has been pressing for improvements to Sunday services from Rochdale, particularly since removal of the services from Rochdale via Oldham to Manchester, pending conversion to Metrolink services. Now, commencing with the May timetable, Northern is running an improved Sunday timetable between Rochdale and Manchester Victoria, with

some trains running non stop. Overcrowding has been a big problem for some years with passengers often left behind. STORM continues to press for a later train from Manchester to Rochdale and beyond on a Sunday to cater for theatre and concert goers whose last train at the moment is at 22.08. With Metrolink expected to open very soon from Rochdale to Manchester, Richard S Greenwood reports that STORM has been trying to engage Transport for Greater Manchester to arrange for full inter-availability of return tickets between Rochdale and Manchester both via Northern Rail and Metrolink. So far, the officers at Transport for Greater Manchester do not seem to appreciate that this is an important issue. Although the fare structure for Metrolink has not yet been publicised, it would make sense for the fares between Rochdale and Manchester to be the same and if that is the case, such inter-availability is unlikely to cause either operator any serious problems.

■ ■ Rare chance to celebrate use of the Halton curve

North Cheshire Rail Users Group has managed to arrange for a rare and special opportunity to travel both over the Halton curve and the Mersey. For the third year in succession, Northern Rail kindly agreed to extend the 07.50 from Chester to Runcorn Main Line to Liverpool South Parkway on Saturday 21 July, with stops at Helsby and Frodsham. NCRUG has asked all its supporters to support the train. Cedric Green of NCRUG said the event would highlight the advantages for people living and working south of the Mersey to gain access to Liverpool John Lennon Airport if a regular two-way service along the line was available. A vintage Crosville bus was arranged to operate the return journey from Liverpool South Parkway to Chester via Runcorn, Frodsham and Helsby. Normally the "parliamentary" summer Saturdays only train runs just from Chester to Runcorn.



■ ■ Northern Hub prompts petition for Diggle reopening

When the Northern Hub plan was first published, it included the reopening of the two disused Standedge railway tunnels and since then, Saddleworth Parish Councillor Garth Harkness has collected over 200 signatures in less than two weeks in Diggle and Dobcross for his petition to support the reopening of Diggle rail station as part of the scheme. Councillor Harkness said: "This is the best opportunity for a generation to make the case for reopening Diggle Station, which closed in the 1960s as part of the Beeching cuts." Councillor Richard Knowles (Opposition Leader, Transport for Greater Manchester) presented the petition to TfGM and then to Network Rail. Diggle station is already included in Oldham Council's strategic plan but it is seen as important for the area that the reopening is included in the overall plan. A station in Diggle would also help visitors to the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, the Pennine Way, the South Pennines and the Peak District national park.

One year on from

By Ian Brown
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We can now celebrate the first birthday of Sir Roy McNulty's report *Realising the potential of GB rail – Report of the Value for Money Study* which was issued to an eager rail audience on 19 May 2011.

The report, as *Railwatch* readers know, said the railways in Britain are too expensive, to the tune of £2.5 to £3.5 billion per annum.

Almost a year after the establishment of the Rail Delivery Group, the Government issued the *Rail Reform* Command paper on 8 March 2012. This commands the industry as a whole to close the £3.5 billion efficiency gap, identified by McNulty.

King Canute knew a thing or two about issuing commands.

He was sitting on the seashore on his throne, so the legend goes, and had learnt that his flattering courtiers were claiming he was so great that he could order the tides of the sea to go back.

King Canute was a clever politician and issued the command: "The waves must come no further." The waves did not obey, but nor did Canute drown.

He used the incident to make the point that although the deeds of kings might appear great in the minds of men, they were nothing in the face of God's power.

So how does Transport Secretary Justine Greening compare with her Command paper?

Commanding efficiency savings is as unlikely to succeed as halting the tide. So why do it?

After a year of internal discussion by the RDG, perhaps we can reasonably expect to hear what the RDG has concluded. Or are we to assume it has not yet achieved a consensus on what to do?

Despite talk of reform, the traditional and most reliable way to cap costs is to invest for efficiency.

Just how that investment is to be achieved will be dictated by two documents to be published this



IAN BROWN

year. The *High Level Output Specification* is a list of what the Government wants to "buy" over a five-year period from 2014.

The *Statement of Funds Available*, or SOFA as it is comfortably called, is what the Government is willing to pay.

The Office of Rail Regulation exists to ensure that Network Rail complies with Government policy.

The ORR wants a wider role in the running and planning of the railways but train operators are resisting and want to keep it at arm's length.

So while reform is on hold, the Government can only Command: Reduce costs or reduce service.

The industry will be left to do the dirty work which the Government has demanded.

In *Railwatch* 131, I argued an alternative strategy.

Hold current costs down but at the same time, invest in expanding the business by 30%.

It provides us as taxpayers and the Government with a similar result in efficiency terms but provides more value in terms of the economy and the environment.

Network Rail has shown us what is possible by "saving" £1.2 billion in the period up to 2014 by investing in efficiency.

It has been done while the business has continued to grow despite the recession.

Passenger growth has continued, up 8.6% in the published 2010-11

Expected % growth in passenger miles from 2011			
	2020	2026	2030
London & South East	17-21	28-34	34-42
Long distance	22-26	39-49	50-63
Regional	8-10	16-20	19-24
Total (average)	17-21	29-36	36-46

SOURCE: Network Modelling Framework published in DfT's *Reforming our Railways Putting the Customer First* Command paper March 2012

McNulty, investment is still the key



A SUITABLE CASE FOR INVESTMENT: A diesel Pacer train on the electrified West Coast main line at Preston in April 2012 on a Northern Rail service. Passengers deserve something more suitable, like Bombardier's class 172, on the front page of *Railwatch* 129, below. And of course, more lines should be electrified so that, in future, there are fewer diesels – and more electric trains

figures with the trend continuing into this year.

The Command paper recognises this and indeed assumes healthy growth up to the year 2030, with long-distance trains capable of achieving more than 60% growth.

These are figures (see table below left) to plan for, and should be taken into account in the HLOS.

The real challenge is now therefore to accommodate growth efficiently, with the emphasis on prudent investment.

Electrification is at last recognised both by Government and sceptical observers as a key tool in achieving this.

Lord Adonis, who was transport secretary in the Labour government, and the new broom, Justine Greening, agree on this.

There is a good environmental case for replacing diesels, like for like, with electric trains but, with a Government none too fussed about environmental issues, it may prove a hard case to make on purely cost efficiency grounds.

However the case improves dramatically if the electric train carries a lot more people as, for example, with North West electrification, where four-car electric trains will replace Pacers and Sprinters.

An added bonus would be that the electrics can run a more intensive service.

If this is coupled with efficient procurement of electrification, involving a rolling programme



and a package deal which includes new trains, real efficiency gains start to emerge.

This is just one example and there are plenty of others of course. A modern diesel multiple unit to replace ancient Pacers and Sprinters will also be easier to justify when even the regional sector is expected to grow by as much as 23% up to 2030. The

Who is delivering the goods?

The Rail Delivery Group claims it brings together the owners of passenger and freight train operating companies and Network Rail "to provide leadership to Britain's rail industry". The chairman is Tim O'Toole, chief executive of First Group since 2010, and vice chairman is Sir David Higgins, chief executive of Network Rail. The RDG was set up in May 2011 and has had monthly meetings since then. Mr O'Toole, 56, was rewarded with a CBE in 2005 – a rare honour for an American. He was managing director of London Underground for six years until 2009. More information: www.raildeliverygroup.org

English passenger transport executives have, despite limited powers, punched well above their weight in developing local and regional services. Leeds-Sheffield-Nottingham is a good example.

The Command paper does not command much at all here. I earnestly hope that the accompanying consultation on rail devolution results in allowing local bodies to make decisions on, and fund investment in both local and regional services. This will encourage efficiency, as rail can be viewed in value-for-money terms against investment in light rail or other forms of transport, and taking into account the wider arguments such as the local economy and social regeneration issues.

It is all too easy, however, for planners and politicians to forget the passenger.

Passengers do not normally get a mention in the railway business which is too fixated on the matrix money-go-round, even though passengers are currently having to supply more of the industry's income via increased fares.

Passenger numbers are growing but it is already clear that "inflation plus 3%" fare increases are not sustainable politically for much longer.

Passengers also hate the cat-and-mouse game with train operators who offer cheaper fares but extort a high penalty fare if ticket restrictions are innocently breached. Too many passengers feel they are being "eaten" by the railway fat cats if they get on the wrong train, even mid journey.

I believe the dangers resulting from McNulty are mostly in the area of the social railway. But you obviously do not gain savings or efficiency by sawing off one of the wheels of the Pacers.

Efficiency is best achieved by sensible capital investment in fit-for-purpose equipment which allows for growth but also provides a better, integrated journey for the passenger.

Rail's contribution to jobs, to the economy, and to social inclusion needs to be taken into account when assessing value for money.

Passengers need to feel that they are the centre of this activity and indeed have a stake in its success.

■ Ian Brown retired as managing director of London Rail TfL in 2010 and was awarded a CBE for services to railways in the 2011 new year's honours list. He has recently joined the boards of Crossrail Ltd and Abellio UK Ltd. Views expressed are his own.

Wales

By Rowland Pittard
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■ Town regains its station

A station that has been out of use for 48 years reopened in May after a long campaign by passengers who say the existing station at Fishguard ferry terminal is too far from their homes and shops. More than £300,000 was spent to reopen the more convenient Fishguard and Goodwick station. The reopening ceremony was attended by Councillor David Pugh, chairman of Pembrokeshire County Council, who unveiled a commemorative plaque. There were speeches by Jamie Adams, deputy leader of the county council, Mark Langford of Network Rail, Ben Davies of ATW Wales and Sue Miles from the South-West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium. Mr Davies challenged residents to publicise the station and persuade more people to use it. Hatti Woakes of North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum said: "It is wonderful. One B&B owner says her business has doubled and the people who stay with her think the new services are wonderful. We feel we are now linked up with the rest of the world."

■ Railfuture calls for better cross-border links

Railfuture submitted a five-page national response to the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee on cross-border road and rail connectivity, jointly prepared by Railfuture Wales, Railfuture's policy committee, and with contributions from individual branches. More details at: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=Submissions>

■ Train will help people to be more 'active' when travelling

The Welsh Government is introducing an "active travel" Bill aimed at encouraging people to walk and cycle. Consultation began on 9 May and will continue until 14 August. The aim is to improve individual health, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport, and address poverty and disadvantage. It is also hoped that more people walking and cycling will reduce congestion, reduce the number of days lost through sickness and support tourism. The White Paper sets out proposals to require local authorities to map safe routes for walking and cycling.

■ Stena ferries return to re-link Wales to Dublin

Railfuture and other campaigners have welcomed the return of the once-daily Stena HSS ferry service from Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire from 30 March to 12 September. The terminals at Holyhead and Dun Laoghaire have been reopened but not the tourist office and cafe at Dun Laoghaire. The 15.23 Holyhead to Birmingham International train has been retimed to 15.44 to provide a connection with the daily crossing from Dun Laoghaire. But only one of the two return crossings from Holyhead to Dublin Port carries foot passengers. In Dublin the bus service between the port and Dublin was withdrawn from 1 April and passengers now have to pay an additional €2.50 to travel to the city centre and €4 to travel to Heuston station.

■ Rail hauls more scrap metal and timber

Scrap metal is now being transported by rail from Trostre tinplate mill at Llanelli to Margam steel works, and timber from the Glamorgan Forest is loaded at Briton Ferry for delivery to Chirk.

■ Revamp for trains based in Wales

The refurbishment of 24 Arriva Trains Wales class 158 units should be completed by October. The class 142 units are also being revamped and repainted at Cardiff.

■ Funding deals clear way for station information upgrade

Funding is now in place to complete the installation of digital information screens at most stations in Wales. This has been sourced from a number of funding streams and partnerships.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk



UK to Salzburg by rail, road or plane?

Three Railfuture members travelled to Salzburg for the European Passengers Federation conference in Salzburg in March. Their experiences may help other Railfuture members in their travel choices. Conference report: Page 14

Simon Hope went by coach

My journey from Norwich to Salzburg was determined entirely by ticket cost. By rail (off peak) via Paris and onward overnight couchette, the cheapest of three possible route options was £289, given to me in a written quotation from a well-known rail agent, six weeks before departure.

Then I went to the local bus station where a Eurolines leaflet showed all travel information necessary for the journey from London to Munich: £59 booked at least 10 days before departure plus £15 for the coach from Norwich. All was booked in five minutes.

I left London Victoria coach station at 14.00 and after a refreshment stop near Ashford, we entered the Folkestone Channel Tunnel terminal. Passports were inspected on the coach, but security and baggage checks were limited as we remained on board.

The Eurotunnel Shuttle train (30 minutes to Calais) provided by far the smoothest ride of the 900-mile journey.

By evening we had stopped at Lille and Brussels, where most passengers alighted and others boarded. It is a cheap alternative to travelling by Eurostar.

On the Belgian-German border, passports were collected, taken to an office, and then returned. No other checks were made. At a motorway service station north of Frankfurt, a police car drew up in front of the coach and passports were again examined. Soon, a passenger was escorted off the coach, not to return.

We stopped at Frankfurt bus station at 05.00, then Mannheim, Karlsruhe, Stuttgart and Ulm. There were significant rush-hour autobahn delays and we arrived

in Munich an hour late at 13.00. At the main railway station, 10 minutes walk from the less-than-user-friendly environment of the coach terminal, a helpful English-speaking Deutsche Bahn assistant in the ticket office sold me a £20 Bavaria Day Pass, the cheapest ticket to Salzburg.

Four days later I was well prepared for a second sleepless night on my return, but the journey was interesting as a transport experience.

There was a police check during the night but no long delays. There were a series of intermediate stops until we reached Brussels where a late-running connection caused a wait of two hours. We departed at 07.00.

At the Calais terminal, all passengers had to disembark with their luggage and file through three separate passport controls and full security screening in the UK Border Agency area.

After the Shuttle journey through the Channel Tunnel, we stopped for refreshments at a service station on the M20 and arrived in London at 13.00, on time.

Notably throughout the journeys, there was practically no communication between the four excellent Czech drivers and their passengers except for announcing times at stops, mostly in English. There was no apology for the late arrival in Munich nor explanation for delays en route. However, between Lille and Calais a pre-recorded voice in English informed us of seat-belt regulations and other travel comfort advice.

Simon's conclusion

Rail passengers need a much simpler rail booking and ticketing procedure, providing cheap turn-up-and-go national and international tickets without the need to book weeks in advance. This should become the standard to encourage more people to use rail as first choice transport mode. Eurolines coaches are probably best suited for shorter



A Bayerische Oberland Bahn train at Salzburg for a transport conference in 2007 attended by Railfuture delegates

routes. Perhaps passengers would prefer through-ticketing from co-ordinated multi-mode transport with high-speed rail and night trains linking with coaches for destinations off the rail network or not easily served by train.

David Smith went by air

For personal reasons we could not leave Britain until Friday morning so we had no option but to drive, stay at a hotel near the airport, and fly. We left Stansted on easyJet to Munich at 07.55. The return fare for one person was £81.50, which also covered one suitcase.

We arrived on schedule at 10.45 with time to have a coffee and then take the 12.04 S-bahn (suburban train) to the Ostbahnhof where we changed to the 12.50 Deutsche Bahn regional service to Salzburg, a crowded double decker with standing room only all the way to Salzburg.

It was not a comfortable trip and the return ticket was £48 (Bayern-Ticket) which we bought on line and printed at home. We made it to the conference start at 13.50, just in time.

We returned the same way on the 16.09 Austrian Railways train to Munich East and then to the airport. We spent an hour in the Club Lounge and then had a chaotic easyJet flight which should have left at 21.05. The pilot refused to take off because there was one passenger too many on board.

We got back to Stansted after midnight and faced a long queue at passport control, just what you need at that time of night!

By the time we got home to Wenhaston, near Halesworth, Suffolk, I could calmly conclude: We had had a good time and the conference was excellent.

Trevor Garrod went by train

Lowestoft to Munich in a day by train is possible and I have done it in the past. Salzburg in a day is just about feasible, but on this occasion I opted to spend the

night in Brussels where I met a Belgian colleague. We were able to discuss railway matters on the high speed train from Brussels to Frankfurt where I took a comfortable train via Stuttgart and Munich to Salzburg.

To keep costs down I booked an InterRail ticket. Introduced in 1972, it was for students and young people, but over the years it has been extended to the rest of us. Information about it is available on www.eurailgroup.com

I cannot buy this useful ticket from my local station but was able to do so from Trainseurope (www.trainseurope.co.uk). InterRail tickets are not valid on Eurostar, but you can obtain a special rate. They can be used on nearly all trains in most continental countries and Ireland and are valid for five or 10 days'



travel in one or more countries. You can pay extra for services which require reservations. My second reason for using InterRail was flexibility. From Salzburg I continued to Berlin for another conference, returning direct to Brussels and London.

A week later I was in north Germany again for the annual conference of Pro Bahn, one of Railfuture's German sister organisations. I only had to pay on the Harwich-Hoek van Holland ferry. The travel in the Netherlands and Germany was covered by my InterRail ticket and I had a good choice of trains and routes.

InterRail is not well publicised in the UK but is worth investigating if you are planning more than a simple out-and-back train journey in the rest of Europe.

Prices vary depending on how many days you want to use it. I found a 10-day Global Pass was most cost-effective for my requirements.

London and South East

By Roger Blake

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■ 'Bridge the gap' campaign aims to re-rail East Sussex

Sussex and Coastway division members have had a very active few months, spearheading Railfuture's local reopenings campaign to extend the Uckfield line to Lewes within a decade. In March leaflets were handed out at the county council's exhibition which launched its consultation on road traffic management measures for Uckfield town centre. Railfuture wants to see the proposed southern inner relief road up on a bridge over both the rail route and the adjacent flood-prone River Uck. Developers' contributions could be used to attract other funding for the road-over-rail-and-river bridge. Railfuture wants to help create a new 10-year project partnership to work towards the line reopening by the early 2020s to coincide with the beginning of the long Thameslink-Southern franchise.

In April the division also led Railfuture's response to Lewes District Council's consultation on its regeneration strategy, pointing out the advantages for the local economy and workforce of better local transport links through the reinstated rail line. Railfuture campaigners attended four local meetings, taking our message to the annual town meeting in Uckfield, the annual town conference in Crowborough, the annual parish assembly in Buxted, and the annual general meeting of the Railfuture-affiliated Edenbridge & District Rail Travellers Association in Kent. In July Railfuture's Sussex and Coastway division plans to have a stall at the Crowborough summer fair. The September meeting of the division will be in Uckfield, and invitations will be going to representatives of local organisations interested in the new partnership to *Bridge the gap: Link up Sussex*.

■ Greater Anglia and Network Rail are 'nearly there'

The Railfuture branch AGM was held at Greater Anglia's London Academy in Stratford with Olympic preparations as the theme. T J Noomen from Greater Anglia and Network Rail's Paul Ellis gave thorough presentations and responses to questions in the morning session, assuring us they are 'nearly there'. The well-attended meeting welcomed colleagues from our neighbouring East Anglia branch.

■ Campaigning through consultations

Eastern division members have been responsible for the branch response to the Department for Transport's consultation on the new 15-year Essex Thameside franchise, while Kent division members have dealt with the branch response to Southeastern's consultation on its December 2012 timetable. The Herts and Beds division is expecting to meet in July to help frame the joint London & South East-East Anglia response to the DfT consultation on the new Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise. Eastern division members have been formulating the Railfuture branch response to the DfT consultation on rail decentralisation, arising from the 8 March Command Paper *Reforming our Railways*. The Mayor's *Rail Vision - Investing in Rail Services in London* proposes to take over the West Anglia inner services and run them as a separate Transport for London Overground concession from the start of the long Greater Anglia franchise from July 2014. A rail industry review of Chiltern's timetable is under way, and boroughs and user representatives are strongly urging improvements for London area stations in the December timetable. The branch submitted a joint response with Thames Valley branch to Chiltern's consultation which closed in June.

■ £26,000 rail replacement bus to be axed

The DfT proposes to withdraw the token weekly Ghost Bus between Ealing Broadway and Wandsworth Road, put on in 2008 as a Parliamentary replacement for the twice-daily Birmingham-Brighton rail service at a cost to taxpayers of £26,000 a year. The closure proposal also includes the daily Southern rail service between Wandsworth Road and Kensington Olympia. More information at www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-17/

The €29 Bayern-Ticket allows up to five adults or a family travelling together on all regional trains, including RB, RE, IRE, ALX, S-Bahn, BOB. They cannot be used on IC, EC, ICE, D, RJ, TGV or overnight trains. It can also be used on the underground, trams, buses in Munich and other Bavarian cities and on most regional bus services.

The ticket also covers travel beyond Bavaria, to and from Salzburg, Kufstein, Reutte and Ulm. It is valid on weekdays from 09.00 to 03.00 the next day, and on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays from midnight to 03.00 the next day. The €21 ticket is for individual travellers. Both

tickets are available from ticket machines at stations and some tram stops. You pay €2 extra to buy from a ticket counter.





Get on with it!

Railwatch 131 underlines yet again the fact that in this country we are unable to achieve anything quickly – except moaning, as I am doing now!

There must always be a protracted period of waiting before the politicians get moving, then another endless pause while finance is sorted out, then another seemingly never-ending delay while planning takes place – all this before a spade is put in the ground.

Take for example the report on the East-West rail link from Oxford to Bedford. Having finally been given the go-ahead by Parliament, this now requires THREE more hurdles to be surmounted before planning can even start.

When these three have been overcome, then we must still wait TWO YEARS before work on site can start.....in 2015.

It is absolutely ridiculous. Years and years pass without anyone apparently worrying and trying to speed things up.

I have come to the conclusion that we British are mentally incapable of moving quickly; there is a culture of self-justifying slothfulness from Westminster – especially Westminster – downwards which makes anything like the speed with which projects are dealt with in France and elsewhere utterly impossible even to contemplate never mind achieve. How very, very pathetic.

There are occasional and so-tantalising flashes of what-could-be. Such as, for example, the speed with which the temporary station at Whitehaven was put into operation after the floods, or the speed with which the electrification of the eight miles from Kidsgrove to Crewe was completed – eight weeks for some eight miles. Astonishing anywhere, but especially here. I could add to that the two years

which are needed to electrify from Manchester to Newton-le-Willows, roughly twice the distance from Kidsgrove to Crewe, requires a period THIRTEEN times as long to achieve. Ye gods! One can but despair.

*John Gilbert, Pixiefield, Cradley, Herefordshire WR13 5ND
john@ejgilbert10.plus.com*

Where's my railcard?

As a now unemployed person, I can obtain a discount to travel on buses, trains and Tube operated by Transport for London. It would be helpful if this concession was extended to include National Rail operators, like Southern and First Capital Connect.

As work is so scarce now, people are having to travel further and at peak times to try to find it. I do not qualify for any railcard as a single person aged 59, although next year, I hope to qualify for a senior railcard and of course a Freedom Pass.

S P Vince, Meadow Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4NF

Editors' note: Railfuture has campaigned for a national railcard which would help people like Mr Vince.

Quiet please

It would be a good idea if the various train operating companies introduced "quiet coaches" or "quiet zones" on the trains that do not already have them.

I cannot be the only one to be annoyed by being subjected to other people's phone conversations, usually conducted with loud voices.

It also seems rather ironic that it is all right to have state-run railways in this country, as long as another state is running them. For example, Abellio is Dutch-owned.

None of the major political parties seems willing to grasp the nettle and admit that Britain's railways, under franchising, cost

three times as much in subsidies as when operated by British Rail.
Roger A Smith, The Street, Little Waltham, Chelmsford Essex CM3 3NT

Editors' note: Australia's Queensland Rail is trying to encourage passengers to follow a 15-point train etiquette code. Point number 8 is "Refrain from having loud conversations, talking on mobile phones or listening to loud musical devices when travelling in a quiet carriage, and keep noise to a minimum in all other carriages."

More delay

As an ardent supporter of HS2, I have been a little disappointed by Railfuture's less-than-enthusiastic approach to the project and fully agree with Michael Weinberg's view (*Railwatch* 131) that we should "just get on and build it". As a modern nation, we are brilliant at procrastination and hopeless at execution. No matter, we do at last seem to be going (very slowly) ahead.

*David Myles, Chartwell Avenue, Wingerworth, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S42 6SP
dwmyles@hotmail.com*

Railfuture and HS2

A majority of Railfuture members have backed the society's stance on High Speed Two. In the recent membership survey, I understand that 44% supported our position (or something similar) for a critical stance, compared to the 25% who were completely supportive of the Government scheme and 29% who were completely against it.

For more details of Railfuture's position which was explained in *Railwatch* 130, please check the Railfuture website at: <http://tinyurl.com/d5zzt3g>
Ian McDonald, Railfuture Network Development Committee, Douglas Road, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8ES

HS2 integration

Michael Weinberg and others, who take Government assurances at face value that HS2 will be "fully integrated with the classic network" (letters *Railwatch* 131) need only turn to the back page of the same issue and study the photograph of the model of the proposed Curzon Street station in Birmingham.

Where in that photo is there any link to the classic network? There is not one! Curzon Street is to be a totally self-contained

dead-end terminus. That means that not only London-Wolverhampton services but also (in the later stages) CrossCountry services between Newcastle or Manchester and Plymouth will be unable to use the high speed line, and these passengers will gain no benefit from it whatever. Hence our concern.

Mike Crowhurst, Railfuture chairman until 2012, Station Court, Aberford Road, Garforth, Leeds LS25 2QQ

Wrong option

If HS2 is the wrong option, it is better that Railfuture says so. We should have the courage of our convictions. At least if it is not built, billions of pounds will not have been wasted

Might I suggest the rebuilding of the Great Central? This would greatly ease the strain on both the East and West Coast main lines. The majority of the trackbed is still available, but a large amount of demolition and rebuilding would of course be needed in towns and cities such as Nottingham and Leicester. This would be very expensive, but would still be a fraction of the cost of a totally new HS2.

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

The big hitters

While it is encouraging that several so-called "big hitters" have joined Railfuture, it is perhaps regrettable that we have appointed as president someone who not only is antagonistic to HS2 but actually spearheads the campaign against it!

What does that tell the general public about our stance on this vital project?

Can you imagine how satisfying it would be if the president of the RAC Foundation was one who was leading a campaign against all new motorway building and advocating simply upgrading the roads we already have!

By all means welcome Mr Wolmar as a member, but as president surely Lord Adonis would have been more suitable!

*Michael Weinberg, Giffard Park, Milton Keynes MK14 5QL
michael.weinberg@byinternet.com*

Railfuture's new president Christian Wolmar writes: I am indeed opposed to the proposed HS2 as it stands. The project seems ill-conceived, expensive and crucially will

www.railfuture.org.uk

Your letters

suck investment out of the existing rail network. The membership of Railfuture is in fact divided on this issue just as many rail fans in the US are sceptical about California's plans for HSR. Just because I support the development and expansion of the railways, it does not mean I have to endorse every scheme. And, of course, I am not spearheading the anti-HS2 scheme, merely responding to occasional requests to comment on it.

Welcome, Christian

I was delighted to read that Christian Wolmar, Lord Adonis and other railway worthies have joined Railfuture and hope that this will encourage membership. However I think it is important to increase our visual image particularly with television.

My local astronomical society has recently tripled its membership and this is due in some degree to the high profile given to astronomy by Professor Brian Cox and his friends.

Could we get Michael Portillo on board I wonder? I also think that a series of television programmes showing the advances in railway engineering over the world would help.

*Thomas E Rookes, St Giles, Lincoln LN2 4DE
thomasrookes@btinternet.com*
See also centre pages

Fuel blow for buses

Chris Austin writes in *Railwatch* 131: "For those of us dedicated to rail development, it is important that the Government sticks with further fuel duty increases."

For those of us concerned with or reliant upon all forms of public transport, his prescription, thus baldly stated, is far from desirable, for it would affect bus users far worse than car and lorry drivers.

Bus operators no longer enjoy a fuel duty rebate but receive instead a variable government grant whose value is not correlated with changes to fuel duty. The value of their income

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



WELCOME: The new King's Cross concourse and, inset, as it appears from the air with King's Cross station, left and St Pancras, top right

King's Cross transformation

Passengers using London King's Cross now enter via this spectacular new semi-circular concourse which is part of a £550 million upgrade of the station.

The concourse, with a steel and glass lattice roof including a refurbished booking hall which closed in 1973 and a shopping area, was designed by architect John McAslan and Partners and Arup.

"It is the greatest station building ever," said Mr McAslan who was born in Glasgow. The new concourse opened in March and is just a road width away from the refurbished St Pancras station which is served by Eurostar, Javelin, East Midland and Thameslink

from that source is declining. Rail and bus are and should be complementary. Railfuture should promote collaboration between the two modes in, for example, planning interchange facilities, timetabling, ticketing and publicity.

M J Leppard, public transport co-ordinator for East Grinstead, St George's Court, East Grinstead, Sussex RH19 1QP

Despair over lorries

The article on rail freight (*Railwatch* 131) plunged me

into depression. Although I am now in my 94th year and no longer able to travel by rail, I joined Railfuture because I passionately believe freight should travel by rail and not on ever-bigger and heavier lorries which are ruining our countryside, its lanes and historic buildings.

I thought Railfuture had won the argument but the Government has reneged on its promises. We should disregard European Union directives which may emanate from their present proposals for member states



trains. The original roof of the grade I listed building has also been renovated. Together the two roofs and their 1,400 glass laminate photovoltaic solar panels will produce 10% of the electricity needs of the station.

In September the shabby 1973 buildings at the front of the station will be demolished to reveal the original 1852 Euston Road facade and allow the creation of a new public square. The project to renovate King's Cross station, which is used by 120,000 passengers a day, will be completed next year.

to take up to 60-tonne lorries on their roads. Our climate is changing and we do not need the extra damage from carbon dioxide emissions from such huge lorries.

I had hoped that the Channel Tunnel would increase the amount of rail freight between the south and the industrial cities of the midlands and north. But what hope is there now?
Mrs Peggy Gledhill MBE, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 5NB

More letters: Page 18

Big hitters join Railfuture

Railway author and journalist Christian Wolmar has agreed to be Railfuture president, the AGM was told.

New chairman David Berman said he was delighted that Christian had decided to become our president and the AGM agreed unanimously.

The AGM, held in Worcester Guildhall on 12 May 2012, heard that Christian was well known to most Railfuture members.

He chaired Railfuture's high-speed rail conference at Bletchley Park last year and was also involved with the Railway Children charity. There was also a unanimous vote to agree to seven new "big hitter" vice presidents:

Lord Andrew Adonis, as Transport Secretary in the last

Labour government, launched the plans for High Speed Two in August 2009.

Barry Doe writes *RAIL* magazine's Fare Dealer column. Born in Bournemouth, he studied mathematics at Cardiff University and was a maths teacher in Wimborne, Dorset. After 13 years, he left teaching to become a travel consultant specialising in fares and timetables.

Roger Ford is industry and technology editor for *Modern Railways* and, in his alter ego is also known as "Captain Deltic" on his Alycidon website.

Chris Green became famous when he launched Network SouthEast, and later became director of InterCity.

As chief executive of Virgin Trains, he introduced

Pendolinos to the West Coast main line.

Adrian Shooter, chairman of Chiltern Railways until last year, was awarded a CBE in 2009 for services to transport. He is now chairman of Moorland & City Railways.

Peter Lawrence was Railfuture chairman from 2000 to 2004 and president from 2004 to 2012.

Mike Crowhurst was chairman of Railfuture 2004-12. Mike has worked tirelessly for Railfuture and will be senior vice president with responsibility for links with both the board and the other vice presidents.

The AGM also welcomed David Berman who was elected unopposed as chairman, and three new board members, Chris Fribbins, Chris Page and Philip Shelton.



WELCOME: Railfuture's new president Christian Wolmar

City gears up to be ready for a rail future

People are flocking back to the railway, Birmingham councillor Timothy Huxtable told the Railfuture AGM.

The city of Birmingham has a vision for its transport future and is doing its best to increase capacity and improve rail links in the conurbation, which has a population of three million people.

He said the £600 million refurbishment of New Street station was very welcome but will not add to rail capacity.

However, the city is developing a one-station concept with a pedestrian link between New Street, Moor Street and the proposed High Speed Two station at Curzon Street.

He said both heavy and light rail have a critical role to play in regeneration.

HS2 should be seen in conjunction with the upgrade of Birmingham airport in 2014. Rail

and air travel are linked in continental Europe and "we need to do the same", especially as Birmingham will be at the heart of the high speed rail network.

He said he had been to Antwerp Central and Liege where the new railway stations are "absolutely fantastic" and puts what we are doing in Britain into perspective.

He admitted that the challenge for Birmingham was to link the two planned high speed stations into the region's existing rail network.

He was worried about plans by London Midland to close ticket offices and reports of a secret list.

He said Centro wants to be involved in the rail franchise again so that the local stations are run more efficiently and more user-friendly.

Centro's park-and-ride stations are "phenomenally successful".



SPEAKER: Timothy Huxtable

He added: "We want to create more of them. Yardley Wood and Longbridge are the next two."

The restoration of commuter trains on the Camp Hill to Tamworth line could lead to five new

stations and Chiltern is keen to run extra services on the line. It would need a new viaduct and new chords but would remove 1.5 million car journeys a year from the road. It has a positive benefit-cost ratio of 2.7.

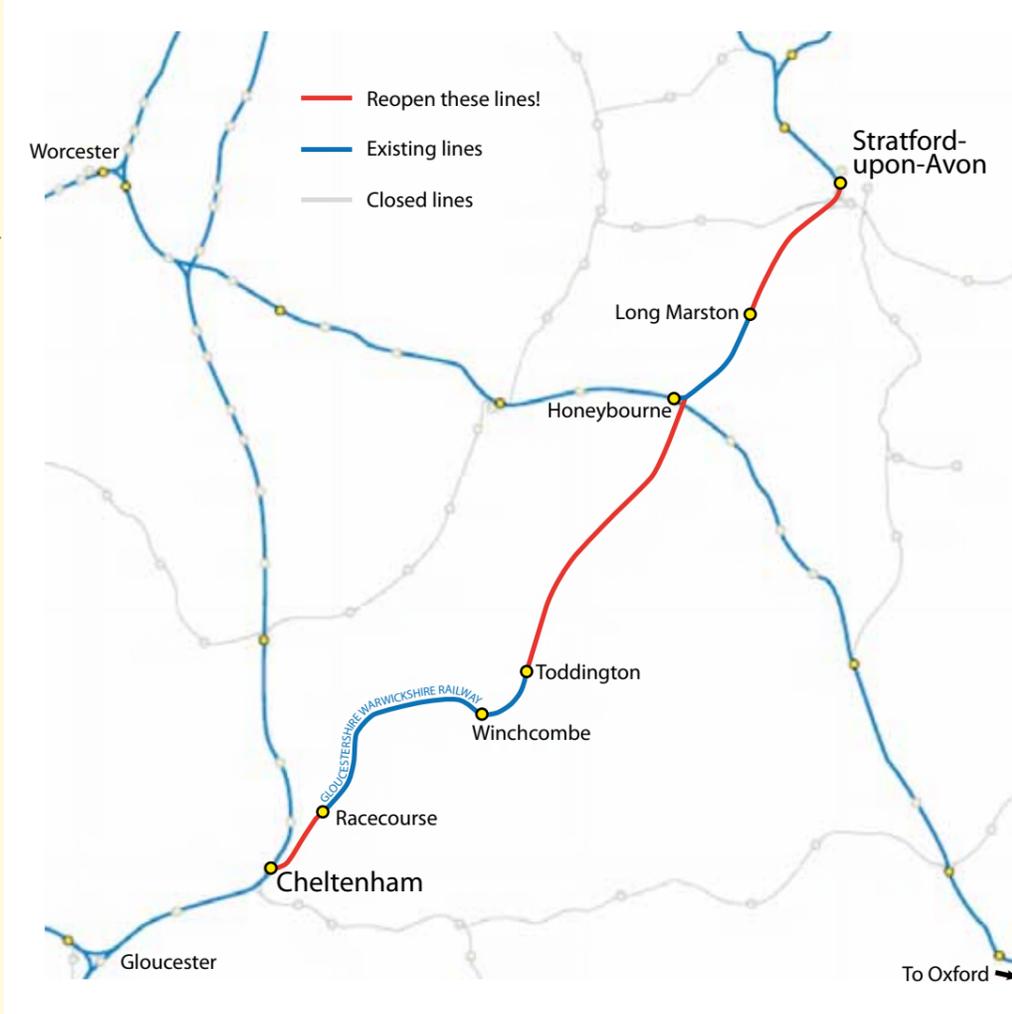
The Stourbridge to Walsall freight route should also be reopened and be used by tram trains.

Light rail is also being expanded with Metro extended from Snow Hill to New Street next year and more extensions to follow.

Mr Huxtable said that once 12,000 people were arriving on HS2 every day, East Birmingham would need better connectivity. A Metro route out to the airport would help this deprived area which has low car ownership and high unemployment.

HS2 and a new Metro line would be an example of integrated transport in a city which has some of the most congested road corridors in the country.

Map: GREENDAWN GRAPHICS



Reopen this crucial route

The case for reopening the railway from Cheltenham to Stratford-upon-Avon as a through route was presented by Hugh Roberts.

He said the cost could be around £3 million a mile but once completed would free up capacity on the Birmingham-Bristol route and provide an alternative rail route, for freight as well as passengers. He said: "For £150 million of anyone's money, it is well worth it."

Beeching actually recommended keeping the 29-mile line but it closed anyway in 1976 following the derailment of a coal train at Winchcombe which caused considerable damage to the track.

The Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway runs a steam service over part of the line but the Department for Transport has indicated that there would be no objection to a heritage railway sharing the Network Rail tracks.

Villages on the line are now much larger and commuters are looking for alternatives to car, and we are all looking for ways to reduce road traffic and pollution.

If the line reopened and a chord was provided at Honeybourne, it would be possible to travel between Cheltenham and Oxford by rail, which has been a difficult journey since the Cheltenham to Kington line closed in 1962. There is also tremendous tourist potential for a rail route from Oxford to Stratford.

Message from Mike Crowhurst

Only six months ago I fully expected to be continuing as chairman for perhaps another year or two, and I was much looking forward to visiting Worcester and the beautiful surrounding countryside for a weekend and hopefully a run on the Severn Valley Railway the next day.

Sadly it was not to be, and I was reminded of advancing years and declining health in a particularly stark fashion at the year end, as a result of which I have had to forego all but the most modest travel for the time being, which makes it impractical to continue not only as chairman but also as a director or an active member of several committees.

Before I step down I would like to pay tribute to Oliver Lovell and the Cotswold Line Promotion Group. Oliver's group is currently celebrating the realisation, in part at least, of their long-standing aim of restoring double track over enough of their line to operate a decent, reliable service. It gives me great pleasure to

award Oliver the last certificate of service to bear my name as chairman.

May I urge everyone to give their full support to the new board, the new chairman and president. We have three new faces on the board, Chris Fribbins and Chris Page from the South East and Philip Shelton from North Devon. Unfortunately the geographical balance of the board is now even more metropolitan than before, with half the 10 directors from the south east, two from East Anglia, two from the West Country and only one from

the north. There are special arrangements for Scotland and Wales, but volunteers from these areas or from the Midlands and North would be especially welcome in future. I want to welcome the new directors, and pay tribute to the other two retiring directors: Colin Elliff, whose professional expertise was very useful and Clara Zilahi who has been active in both Railfuture and our predecessors over more years than most of us can remember. Her retirement was marked at the last board meeting with a certificate of service.



Oh Mr Beeching you have a lot to answer for

The Mayor of Worcester, Dr David Tibbutt told Railfuture that he had fond memories of travelling by train to school, university and on family holidays.

Councillor Tibbutt, pictured left, welcomed Railfuture and said railways were still vital to the city although he was

worried that not enough freight was now going by rail.

He said: "If you want my support for the development of railways you have it. And not just for nostalgic reasons."

He welcomed the double-tracking of parts of the Cotswold line but said

Foregate Street station is long overdue for a revamp. He concluded his speech with the comment: "Oh, Mr Beeching, you have a lot to answer for!"

Mr Tibbutt revealed that the mayoral chain, probably worth about £1 million, had a connection with to the railways.

It was presented in the 1860s to Alexander Sherriff, a former Mayor of Worcester who was a director of the Metropolitan Railway and several other rail companies and helped to develop the railways in Worcester. It is designed to represent the links between rail carriages.

Young people turn to rail



Peter Lawrence, pictured left, who has been president of Railfuture for the past eight years spoke of how more young people are turning to trains as the price of petrol and car insurance soars. He said there had been a 60% increase in the use of Young Persons Railcards over the past five years. He said the rail scene was promising with continued growth but there had not been enough Government action on reopening railways as suggested in the Association of Train Operators *Connecting Communities* report. Peter is now a Railfuture vice president.



Scan this graphic with your smartphone to go straight to the website

North East

By Peter Kenyon
peter.kenyon@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ New line-up of leaders for Railfuture North East

We were pleased to welcome Trevor Watson as the new Railfuture North East chairman, and Gordon Barclay as treasurer at the branch AGM in February. Martin Murphy was appointed our branch's first president in recognition of his contribution to Railfuture NE. Afterwards Philip Meikle entertained and instructed us with his talk, *Operating Cross Country Trains*. In May Ken Monkman, chairman of the Wensleydale Railway Association, was the speaker at our branch meeting in Darlington. He told us about the work of the WRA and future prospects for the line. Branch committee member Malcolm Chainey has compiled on behalf of the North East Transport Combined Activists Round Table, a response to the Government consultation on Reform of the Railways. More information: www.ne-ctar.org.uk

■ ■ Progress on the ground at Aln Valley Railway

Work has started on a new Lionheart station (near the Alnwick bypass) which is expected to be opened in July. Trackwork is being assembled for installation and trains will run over part of the line "as soon as possible". See www.alnvalleyrailway.co.uk for the latest developments.

■ ■ Volunteers help Tyne Valley brew up a better lifestyle

The efforts of John Gillott of the Tyne Valley Line Community Rail Partnership came to fruition with the opening of the Whistle Stop kiosk at Hexham station. The refreshment kiosk is manned by volunteers and adds greatly to the life of the station. Thanks to the efforts of the Tyne Valley Users Group, Northern Rail's May timetable has a total of 16

more stops at Haydon Bridge, Bardon Mill, Brampton and Wetheral. After years of cajoling, the company has at last installed a ticket machine at Prudhoe station.

■ ■ Grubby trains await Tyne & Wear Metro refurbishment

The upgrading of the Metro's track and stations proceeds apace. West Jesmond and South Gosforth stations are scheduled for improvement this year. However, the refurbishment programme of the Metro cars had by the end of April only produced two units, making up one train, capable of regular service. Since there are 90 cars to rebuild, it is unlikely that the contract will be completed by 2015 as was originally envisaged. Meanwhile the condition of the fleet deteriorates, with weather-beaten exteriors, worn upholstery and grubby floors greeting the traveller. The condition of London Underground stock currently being withdrawn is much superior to that in service every day on the Metro.

■ ■ Arriva closes Grand Central's York control centre

Arriva, the owner of Grand Central since November, has closed GC's control centre at York, making the five staff redundant. The work has been transferred to Arriva's Birmingham base. Grand Central is said to provide 700,000 passenger journeys a year.

■ ■ Action by Coastliners and Saltburn line rail users

Northern Rail is now supporting new publicity leaflets for user groups. There are also plans in the pipeline to improve the platform levels at an increasingly well-used Seaton Carew station by means of "Harrington" humps. The proposed new TransPennine timetable for 2014, taking advantage of increased rolling-stock availability, has disappointed Coastliners. They are pleased to note the overall increase in train frequency, especially the plans to restore through Liverpool-Newcastle services. However, the timings now proposed for the Manchester Airport-Middlesbrough trains make connections at Thornaby to and from the Durham coast line almost impossible. Coastliners have asked for a re-think.

National planning – for rail

By John Stanford

john.stanford@railfuture.org.uk

The Government published its national planning policy framework in March.

The comparatively compact document replaces a range of other planning regulations and will be the basis on which all local planning authorities should base their published plans, many of which will have to be newly prepared over the next year or so.

In the lead-up to its publication, much of the public concern was over the extent to which, in the name of "sustainable development", building in the countryside would be given free rein.

At least some of the worst fears of bodies such as the National Trust and the CPRE were allayed by the final publication which largely maintains the principles of green belts and a presumption in favour of developments within existing towns and villages rather than outside them.

Of interest to Railfuture is section 4 – promoting sustainable transport. Indeed, the very existence of the subject and the space devoted to it is positive. In general this consists of statements that we would probably all agree with followed by a "but".

An example of this is in the opening paragraph of the section: "The transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how

they travel. However, the Government recognises that different policies and measures will be required in different communities."

There are two specific points that may be of particular interest. The first is that developments that "generate significant amounts of movement" will have to be supported by a transport statement, transport assessment or travel plan. The three terms appear to be used interchangeably.

Among other factors, this should cover improvements that can be made in the transport network that cost-effectively limit the impact of the development.

The second point to be highlighted is that local authorities should protect sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice "where there is robust evidence".

It should mean that routes that would be essential for reopened railway lines or station sites can be protected. As mentioned earlier, in many areas authorities will be preparing new local plans. This will provide the opportunity for rail campaigners to press for rail to be given due attention and for the practices for travel plans or assessments to be effective. It will certainly open up new areas of consultation.

National Planning Policy Framework can be downloaded from www.communities.gov.uk

By train to the airport

By Trevor Garrod

trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk

Enclosed with this issue of *Railwatch* is a questionnaire for you to give us your recent experience of using – or trying to use – public transport to and from a UK airport.

You may be going by train or bus to the airport to catch a flight, to meet somebody from a flight or because you work at or near the airport.

Some airports (such as Gatwick, Heathrow and Stansted) have also become transport hubs where you may be changing from a bus to a train without boarding an aeroplane at all!

The Railfuture international committee will welcome your experiences and plans to publish a report at the end of October.

We are also working with Bus Users UK on this project, and our final report will go to airport authorities, politicians, train operating companies and other stakeholders. International committee member Chris Brown has already trawled the internet to

see how easy – or difficult – it is to find out about train and/or bus or coach links to 33 different airports in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and how many of the 23 different train operators tell their customers about these links. We expect the results to be very variable.

Our report will highlight examples of good and bad practice as well as pressing for improvements in the light of our members' experiences.

Chris Brown has also carried out a case study on how to reach East Midlands Airport (for a flight to Limoges in France) from his home in Lincoln.

It can be achieved by combinations of taxi, train and bus but the trains and buses are not convenient for all flights. For a two-week holiday, the cost of the train and bus journey to the airport for two people is actually less than the cost of driving and parking there. Our member concludes: "It's cheaper by train, even for two, but almost impossible to do."



Portishead in pictures: Alexander James (2nd prize winner of the poster competition), Dr Liam Fox MP, Sue Ulyyott (3rd prize), mural artist Aili Purdy and Brian Evans (1st prize)

Reopening in the picture

By Wendy Thorne

accounts@wendythorne.co.uk

A mural was unveiled at the proposed Portishead station in April as part of the campaign to get the Bristol-Portishead rail line reopened.

The mural was commissioned by the Portishead Railway Group and has been designed and painted by local artist Aili Purdy.

Aili, a local artist who originates from China and was trained in traditional Chinese art in Beijing, produced a mural which depicts Portishead from 1867, when the first train came to Portishead, to 1954 when the last train left the station, through to the future where she has painted the proposed railway station.

It showcases what is possible if adequate investment is made.

The event, which also included a poster competition, was attended by local and North Somerset District councillors and community leaders, and the mural was unveiled by Dr Liam Fox MP. The

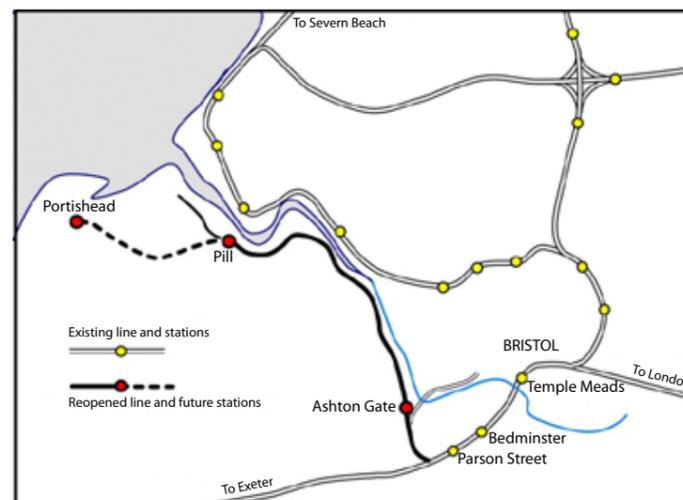
group collaborated on the project with PURE Offices, Crest Nicholson and Persimmon Homes.

It was once common for places like Clevedon, Minehead and Weston-super-Mare to have posters encouraging rail passengers to visit the towns but Portishead never had one. So the poster competition has helped to put that right and to highlight the railway.

Dr Richard Furness, the author of the *Poster to Poster* books launched a competition to get local people involved in designing a poster.

The winner, Brian Evans, will have his painting published in Volume 7 of the *Poster to Poster* series, due out next year.

A bid by North Somerset Council for £43 million to reopen a link between Bristol and Portishead was rejected by the Government in 2011. The council has said reopening is still a "high priority". Information from www.portisheadrailwaygroup.org.



Picture: PORTISHEAD RAILWAY GROUP

Map: PORTISHEAD RAILWAY GROUP

Sevenside

By Nigel Bray
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■ ■ Forward to new station

Hopes of reopening Saltford station have been boosted by a decision of Bath & North East Somerset Council to put the project in its Forward Plan. The council will identify the funding necessary to get the scheme to Network Rail's GRIP 4 stage of development as soon as possible, according to a press release on 23 April. Councillor Roger Symonds, Cabinet member for transport, said his administration had made it clear to Saltford residents it was serious about getting the station built. The Reopen Saltford Station Campaign has been wholeheartedly supported by Jacob Rees-Mogg, MP for North East Somerset. Saltford closed in 1970 but sits alongside the congested A4 road between Bath and Bristol. A reopened railway station could serve the villages of Saltford, Corston, Newton St Loe and would also be useful for the Newton Park Campus of Bath Spa University. The station might also be a hub for activities in the Avon valley. The West of England Transport Executive is already working with the Department for Transport to ensure "passive provision" for Saltford station when the electrification and resignalling of the Great Western main line takes place.



How a reopened Saltford station might look. Illustrator: Joe Ryan © Saltford Environment Group 2011. More information: www.saltfordenvironmentgroup.org.uk

■ ■ Better prospects for an expanding railway

Railfuture Severnside has welcomed the transport policy statements of Wiltshire Council's core strategy pre-submission document, which include priority for station reopenings at Corsham and Royal Wootton Bassett, an improved service on the Melksham line and protection against developments which would prevent realistic rail projects from reaching fruition. We also support the intention to develop a strategy for rail access to Devizes and have called for retention of the rail connection to the Westbury cement works site as the document appears to safeguard sidings at the former Imerys quarry in Salisbury.

■ ■ Electrification is the big opportunity for Wiltshire

Wiltshire Council's aspirations for its rail network were outlined at the Railfuture branch AGM in Trowbridge on 14 April by Councillor Richard Gamble, portfolio holder for public transport. Describing national rail policy as "a slow moving beast", he said that policies geared to commuter services in major conurbations were not necessarily appropriate for rural areas. He saw Great Western electrification as a big opportunity for the county, offering the chance to open new stations. The hub of the Wiltshire rail network was Westbury but its importance was at risk from pressure to run faster trains between Paddington and the far South West. He said a decision was expected in May on the council's Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid, which is supported by Railfuture. The TransWilts line had been chosen as the centrepiece of the LSTF bid, which proposed increasing the present Swindon-Westbury service from two trains each way to eight. Stations along the route through to Salisbury were intended to become transport hubs, with easier interchange with buses and better signage, cycling and walking routes. If successful, the bid would also restore a bus link from Warminster station to Longleat and create one from Salisbury station to Amesbury.

European Passengers Federation Conference in Salzburg

By Josef Schneider
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The European Passengers Federation welcomed nearly 100 representatives of European passenger organisations to its tenth annual general meeting and conference in Salzburg in March.

EPF chairman Trevor Garrod, who is also a Railfuture board member, opened the conference which included speakers from the European Parliament and the European Commission.

Delegates were impressed by Salzburg's efficient public transport which includes a local railway and trolley buses.

The city's public transport director Gunter Mackinger said the key to better services was involving the staff and considering the needs of potential passengers.

He said the environmentally friendly trolley bus was the most cost-effective solution for passenger frequency below the level suitable for a tramway.

Operating the Berchtesgaden Railway had involved protracted problem solving with DB Netz, the German equivalent of Network Rail.

Angelika Gasteiner explained how she had launched a project to improve travelling conditions for mobility-impaired passengers.

She said: "Technology is no substitute for intelligence."

With simple methods, such as always reserving the best placed seats for visual contact with the driver and the shortest way to the door for all passengers needing assistance, it was possible to attain a passenger-friendly climate. The bus drivers also needed regular training.

Manfred Mader of WESTbahn AG, who represented the company which, since December, has been operating long-distance trains on the Salzburg-Vienna route, was asked searching questions about passenger rights, possible extensions of the service and its economic prospects.

Another company, multinational Veolia, is to take over regional trains between Munich, Kufstein and Salzburg from December 2013. It will use the brand name Meridian, but manager Jorg Frank-Marquardt was not able to answer critical questions with regard to the fare integration of these services as negotiations were still under way.

Keir Fitch, deputy chief of cabinet of European Union transport commissioner Siim Kallas, spoke on current questions of European transport policy.

Passenger kilometres are expected to double by 2050, with freight increasing by 80%.

At the moment, transport as a whole is 96% dependent on oil but the EU has a target to reduce CO₂ emissions by 80% over the time span. Transferring traffic to rail is central to its plans but he said: "The railways must become more attractive for passengers while reliability and quality must also improve for freight."

Conference delegates agreed with German MEP Michael Cramer, that environmentally friendly rail transport carries a significantly greater tax burden than other modes of transport. Many taxes are applied only in small measure, if at all, for other modes of transport. Air transport is subsidised every year by around €30 billion because of exemption from kerosene and turnover taxes.

Christopher Irwin, vice chairman of EPF, said only a massive modal shift to public transport can succeed in meeting world-wide challenges like CO₂ reductions.

The 2013 EPF conference will be on 15-16 March in Basel.

Presentations from the Salzburg conference can be downloaded from www.epf.eu. A conference report is available from Trevor Garrod, trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.



Picture: CHRIS AUSTIN

BLOOMING: Settle station on the Settle-Carlisle line shows

Local train of thought

The Government has been consulting on decentralisation of decision making on rail passenger services in England.

It offers real opportunities and some worries for community rail partnerships as well as for the Association of Community Rail Partnerships.

The consultation paper itself is well written and gives a realistic assessment of the pros and cons of devolving responsibilities to passenger transport authorities and local authorities.

It is a genuine consultation, and no single solution is put forward, but rather a range of options from which local agencies can choose according to their needs and capability.

It is driven partly by the Government's localism agenda and partly by the McNulty report which suggested that local management of parts of the network might yield cost savings.

Where powers have already been devolved, such as in Scotland and London, the experience has been good for rail, with investment in new lines

and levels of support bringing high levels of customer service, including more station staffing, and, of course, the impressive list of new lines such as Airdrie-Bathgate and the East London line extension.

PTEs have created bigger and busier networks around our great cities than British Rail would have been able to sustain on its own.

However, in the rest of England the picture is not as rosy and it has been hard work to get funding together for a more limited range of projects, despite record growth.

Nevertheless change always brings challenges as well as opportunities. Greater local involvement must not lead to further fragmentation of what is a national rail network.

It would not be acceptable, for example, if funding cuts forced local authorities to switch devolved transport budgets to other priority areas such as education or care for the elderly, resulting in train service reductions. Restrictions

what decentralisation and community involvement can achieve



on public sector expenditure have also reduced the number of local authority staff involved in rail, and so the capability of some councils to handle devolution is limited and would take time to rebuild.

There are concerns too that PTEs, which are well resourced, might exercise strong influence over nearby rural lines and even seek to switch resources to the busier urban routes in their conurbations.

We can and must find a way to manage these issues because, for local lines and community rail partnerships, the proposals offer the best opportunity yet to involve local people more in the way their railway is run.

All of us involved in community rail development believe there is more to go for.

There are more passengers to be won, and we have only just started to identify the benefits local railways bring to the

economy and carbon reduction, with car free days out.

The track record is good. Community rail has delivered flexible ticketing, with local residents' railcards on the Settle and Carlisle line, flexible carnet tickets sold in local shops in Devon and Cornwall, and more accessible stations with the "Harrington hump", named after the Cumbrian Coast station where it was trialled.

Stations look brighter with well-tended gardens, many lines now see more trains, particularly on Sundays, and the volunteer involvement is massive, worth £27 million to the rail industry each year. More than anything, it has reconnected the railway with the communities it serves.

Railfuture has responded to the consultation which closed on 28 June 2012.

The consultation paper can be seen at www.dft.gov.uk

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright

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Support grows for East West Rail Link

East West Rail continues to make progress. Some branch members attended the Bedford-Bletchley Rail Users Association AGM and heard from Iain Stewart MP for Milton Keynes South. The business case is expected to be confirmed and the local contribution is expected to be identified. Regional services would enhance the business case. A delivery board has been formed so elected representatives have a higher profile in the planning. Winslow Town Council chair has been briefed and the town remains enthusiastic about being rail-linked again. In April, Business and Enterprise Minister Mark Prisk visited the Bicester Eco Town exhibition and was given details of the East West rail link and job creation. The newly created Bucks Local Enterprise partnership has confirmed support for the rail link.

Progress on open-access co-operative rail service



Representatives from GO-OP spoke at Railfuture Thames Valley's AGM and gave details of its proposed open access Westbury to Birmingham Moor Street service via Oxford and Banbury. They felt good progress was being made on gaining approval from the Office of Rail Regulation and Network Rail. The proposal was welcomed and a link to EWRL suggested. More info: <http://go-op.coop/train/>

Inquiry re-starts into Oxford's new rail link to London

The Evergreen3 Inquiry re-started in May to consider the bats issue and noise and vibration concerns if the Oxford-Bicester route is upgraded for the proposed Oxford-Marylebone service. Railfuture Thames Valley has sent in a letter of support urging that issues be resolved so an early start can be made on this major rail development.

Chiltern Railways stays ahead as rail pacemaker

Chiltern Railways continues to make news with the introduction at nine stations of free charging points for electric cars, the publication of a study showing that rail travel can reduce stress and improve work-life balance – and its acquisition of more Mark 3 coaches to strengthen its Mainline services as custom continues to grow. The Oxford to Bicester Rail Action Group welcomes the fact that Chiltern is maintaining the present service to Bicester Town even though the Oxfordshire County Council subsidy ended. The extra trains led to further growth, with Bicester Town seeing a 50% rise to 157,446 users and Islip 17% up at 27,836 users in 2010/11. Oxford station relocation to Oxpens has been proposed again by the Oxford Civic Society. The station sees continuing growth with 5,797,984 users (plus 189,341 interchange users) in 2010/11. EWRL and Evergreen3 will lead to further increases.

More stations benefit from growth

Wolverton station's new building is near completion. It is hoped that de-staffing of stations will not mean it is redundant! The £2.2 million cost has been met from council growth funds and community infrastructure funds. Wolverton registered 319,700 users in 2010/11, compared to 265,478 the previous year. Central Milton Keynes station attracted 5,202,824 users in 2010/11 plus 314,362 interchange users. Charlbury and Hanborough stations on the Cotswold Line have gained 83 and 197 extra parking spaces respectively. This should ease parking problems at the stations and had been campaigned for by the Cotswold Line Promotion Group.

110 mph trains will cut journey times on West Coast

Railfuture Thames Valley welcomes London Midland trains being upgraded to 110mph on the West Coast main line.

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
and Roger Bacon

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■ ■ Station is now a 'welcome gateway' after £8m upgrade
Loughborough railway station was unveiled on 4 May by MP Nicky Morgan after months of refurbishment costing £8 million. Ms Morgan is also proving to be a major campaigner seeking electrification and line-speed improvements for the Midland main line. East Midlands Trains was keen to complete the station refurbishment work in time as Loughborough University is to be used as an official preparation camp for Team GB and the Japanese team for the Olympic Games. Improvements include a new footbridge with lifts and extended platforms to accommodate 10-coach trains. There is also a larger car park, new covered cycle stands and a bus interchange with three shelters. New affordable housing, a new road and pavements and quality street furniture have improved the overall ambience. David Slater, leader of Charnwood Borough Council, said the work on the station had turned a "rundown part of town" into a modern and welcoming gateway to Loughborough and Charnwood.

■ ■ Midland main line campaign

After many years of little or no investment on the Midland main line infrastructure, the fastest train speed from London to Nottingham now averages 72mph, while that to Leeds and Manchester is 90mph. Twenty East Midlands MPs have now written to Transport minister Theresa Villiers asking for Network Rail's planned electrification and line-speed increases on the Midland main line to be approved as part of the overall railway investment plans expected to be announced this month. Railfuture East Midlands sent out around 200 letters to members urging them to write to their MPs asking for support. An adjournment debate on the Midland main line took place in the House of Commons on 16 April and for the first time a cross-party consensus, ably supported by many rail user groups, is putting on considerable pressure to secure the necessary funding.

■ ■ New trams for Nottingham's new lines

New designs (below) have been revealed for the Nottingham tram network. An extra 22 vehicles are being built by Alstom in Barcelona to cope with the additional number of passengers generated by the extensions to Chilwell and Clifton. When the extensions are complete in 2014, the Nottingham network will provide double the number of journeys.

Terence Watson, managing director of Alstom Transport UK and Ireland, said: "The vehicles will blend harmoniously with the existing fleet, while retaining a distinctive look." Work is already underway to build the first of three interconnecting tram bridges over Nottingham station, which is undergoing a £67 million upgrade.



Picture: NET

■ ■ Battle goes on for a new Ilkeston station

It has been estimated that a new station for Ilkeston would generate 150,000 passenger journeys per year but sources of funding for the £5 million project remain uncertain. £1 million could come from Government money set aside for transport for new housing projects in the greater Nottingham area. Erewash MP Jessica Lee has asked for £3 million from the Department for Transport, but has not yet had a reply, although Transport Secretary Justine Greening has expressed support for the project. Derbyshire County Council is talking to Network Rail about whether it could borrow money for the project. The station could be built near the site of the former Ilkeston Junction within a matter of a few months, according to Erewash Borough Council. However, even if funding is secured, the project may be delayed until a new franchise for the Nottingham-Sheffield service is awarded.

Awards are on the way for rail's unsung heroes

By Roger Blake

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Railfuture's mission statement is to be the number one advocate for the railway and rail users.

Now we want to recognise local campaign successes and reward those often unsung heroes and heroines of rail campaigning from the 300 rail user groups that are listed in Railfuture's Directory of Rail User Groups.

The directory is downloadable from the Railfuture website. At the national conference for

rail users, in Birmingham on 3 November, Railfuture will for the first time celebrate publicly the outstanding recent achievements of our affiliated rail user groups, and any exceptionally outstanding individual Railfuture member within them.

There will be award categories for most effective campaign, most effective new group, most outstanding individual campaigner and a special award, at the judges' discretion. The Railfuture RUG Awards will also

include a Golden and Silver RUG and a Golden and Silver Trumpet for the best newsletter and website.

Award winners will have their next affiliation or individual membership subscriptions waived.

Affiliated rail user groups will be invited to submit applications themselves or to nominate other groups.

The closing date will be some time in the autumn which we

hope will give groups time to set up their own website or launch a newsletter if they do not have them already.

The panel of judges is likely to be drawn from among Railfuture's President and vice presidents.

More information will be published in the emailed *Rail Users Express* which can also be downloaded from the Railfuture website. If you would like the RUX emailed to you direct, please contact its editor Tony Smale at ruglink@railfuture.org.uk

Olympic railways

During May, June and July, the Olympic torch was being carried by runners around Britain on an odyssey that included journeys on 14 of Britain's heritage railways and tramways.

Those planning the torch route chose an eclectic mix of lines including the horse trams in Douglas, the electric trams in Blackpool, the Manx Electric Railway and the Great Orme tramway.

The torch also got a lift from the Aberystwyth and Hastings cliff railways and a trip by train to the top of Snowdon. It was carried on a Ffestiniog Railway locomotive, and on a miniature gauge railway at Cleethorpes.

The longest journey was from Whitby to Pickering on the North York Moors Railway (24 miles), and it was also carried on the Severn Valley Railway. It was also expected to be carried on the Great Central and Nene Valley Railways in early July.

On the main line, the torch was carried from the National Railway Museum to Thirsk along the East Coast main line, behind Royal Scot class locomotive *Scots Guardsman*, which appeared in the classic 1936 film *Night Mail*.

The hope is that the media exposure given to the torch relay will attract the many overseas visitors coming to Britain this year to visit these lines or to use them to reach different tourist destinations.

Rail support for tourism

Tourism minister John Penrose addressed the new all party parliamentary group on heritage rail in April, acknowledging the importance



Picture: SNOWDON MOUNTAIN RAILWAY

TAKING THE TORCH ON HIGH:

of these lines to tourism, particularly in attracting visitors from overseas. Not many other countries could match us on heritage railways, he said. It was a unique selling point for Britain, where tourism was driven substantially, but not exclusively, by heritage.

The minister's words have since been graphically illustrated by the decision of the World Association of Tourist Trams and Trains to hold its annual congress in the UK between 29 September and 6 October this year.

The congress is based in Leeds and delegates from around the world will have the chance to see the Middleton Railway, the Keighley and Worth Valley and the National Tramway Museum at Crich, and will be taking a trip on the Penistone Line, not for the "heritage" Pacers, but to see a community rail line in action! Many will also take trips on other parts of the main line network during their stay.

The Heritage Railway Association was a founder

Snowdon Mountain Railway train on its way to the summit



member of both the European lobby group Fedecrai) and the worldwide group WATTRAIN and has taken a lead role in sharing best practice and problem solving with railway organisations overseas.

Stamping down on scrapperies

A major step forward was achieved when royal assent was given to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill on 30 April. The enabling orders are expected imminently and will outlaw cash sales of scrap metal except for itinerant buyers (the "Steptoe" amendment) and even here, itinerant dealers are barred from cash transactions when they sell on what they have bought door to door.

It also gives the police increased powers to search for stolen material. This followed

lobbying both by heritage railways and by Network Rail, which has also suffered from constant thefts of cables and other trackside components. Lord Faulkner, the president of HRA introduced an amendment to the Bill which triggered the Government's decision to legislate, an interesting example of heritage railways giving active support to the national network. British Transport Police report some improvement in the statistics following an increase in the number of visits to scrapyards.

Further legislation is proposed in a future parliamentary session to overhaul the outdated Scrap Metal Dealers Act 1964, but this is a first and important step in protecting the railway from thefts which are expensive, put safety at risk and cause huge delays.

Wessex

By John Friedberger

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■ ■ Network Rail in Wessex

Railfuture Wessex held its annual general meeting in Winchester on 26 March 2012 with John Salmon, Wessex region of Network Rail, as guest speaker. He explained Network Rail's new structure, which has improved coordination with train operators, leading to greater efficiency and cost-saving. Wessex Region and South West Trains now take joint decisions when, for example, there is a disruption to services. The new Railway Operating Centre, to be built at Basingstoke, will improve this process. In presenting a survey of recent train performance in the Wessex region, John explained the problems caused by unfortunate occurrences such as attempted suicides and thefts of signalling equipment. He then reviewed current major engineering projects – the Southampton to Midlands freight upgrade (including the diversionary route via Andover) and Salisbury to Exeter resignalling. It was a necessary but unfortunate by-product that old signal boxes and semaphore signals became redundant as a result. In future all signalling in the region will be controlled from Basingstoke. Other schemes include station improvements – for example lengthening platforms and reusing the international terminal at Waterloo, a new overbridge and lifts at Brockenhurst – and Poole to Wool resignalling which will connect the Swanage Railway to the main line.

Questions covered the state of track south of Yeovil, confirmation of track works at Wool to save freight services having to travel to Dorchester to turn, and management of lineside vegetation. We were also told that NR did not have any viable use for the Weymouth Tramway.



Network Rail's proposed Wessex headquarter building at Basingstoke, beside the main line. Up to 3,000 people may eventually work there

■ ■ South West Trains managers meet their passengers

Railfuture Wessex was represented at a stakeholder conference held by South West Trains at Woking in March. In his presentation the new managing director, Tim Shoveller, gave a summary of the company's latest performance, problems and plans. Subsequent speakers gave greater detail on the joint NR and SWT plan to recover from unforeseen incidents including cable theft, short-term measures to increase capacity, station improvements and preparations for the Olympic Games.

Future events will take account of the new 'deep alliance' of Network Rail Wessex Region and South West Trains and will involve both organisations.

■ ■ New chairman for Railfuture Wessex

At the Railfuture Wessex AGM, Mike Southgate was elected to replace John Friedberger, who has retired after five years as branch chairman. John remains on the committee.



Scotland

■ ■ Rail for St Andrews

Reconnecting the famous university town of St Andrews to the rail network would create strong demand for train travel and a profitable rail route, a feasibility study has found. Research by Tata Steel Projects recommended building a station and five-mile line to the East Coast main line at a cost of £76 million. This would enable rail passengers to travel to Dundee in under 20 minutes and Edinburgh in one hour 20 minutes – significantly quicker than the journey by road. Its report, published in May, found that profits of up to £1.6 million a year would outstrip the operating cost of the railway. The Scottish Government has asked for further research to be undertaken to see if it is viable. St Andrews is one of the largest towns in Scotland without direct access to rail travel since 1969 when its branch line was closed by British Rail, even though Beeching did not recommend St Andrews should lose its rail service. The nearest station is now five miles away at Leuchars and campaigners say bus connections are unreliable. The latest report, which was funded by the St Andrews Rail Link Campaign (StARLink), was welcomed by St Andrews University, whose 8,000 students are the only ones in Scotland who do not have a rail station. Jane Ann Liston of StARLink said: "After nigh-on 23 years of campaigning it is certainly welcome to see such significant progress being made." Railfuture and Railfuture Scotland made grants to StARLink to help pay for the report. www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/

■ ■ Dornoch cut-off would boost rail service to the north Railfuture Scotland has called on the SNP and other political parties to campaign for a 13-mile Dornoch Rail Link to speed up rail services to the north, to match the dynamic improvements which will be achieved by the Borders rail project which by 2014 will re-link Edinburgh to Galashiels and Tweedbank (and later could also be extended to Carlisle). Currently seven new stations are planned along the 35-mile Borders route. Ken Sutherland, Railfuture Scotland's research officer, said the proposed Dornoch cut-off would provide a route 27 miles shorter and 45 minutes faster to Inverness. The 2011 household survey carried out by the Dornoch Rail Action Group confirmed 92% support for "a direct rail crossing of the Dornoch Firth", and 90% indicated they would be more likely to travel by train between Caithness and Inverness if the journey was shortened. A more efficient Dornoch rail route would also see the transfer of much heavy bulk long-distance lorry traffic off the A9 road, and on to a more competitive railfreight service. <http://www.dorlag.co.uk/>

■ ■ Jewel in the crown would be Glasgow crossrail Railfuture has also renewed its call for action on the "final jewel in the crown" for Glasgow's rail network. The Glasgow crossrail scheme, using a freight-only route over the river Clyde, would build on improvements that will flow from the upgrade of the Glasgow subway which was approved in April.

■ ■ £30 million station reopening package Railfuture welcomed the announcement in April by Transport Minister Keith Brown of a £30 million programme of improvements for stations in Scotland. The package could see new stations built where there is demand, as well as improved access and better facilities at existing stations. Mr Brown visited Alloa station which opened in 2008 and has seen passenger numbers grow to around 400,000 per year. *The Scotsman* published a list of possible new stations: Reston, East Linton, Blackford, Wormit, Newtonhill, Kintore, Dalcross, Bannockburn, Woodilee, Westerhill, Allander, Robroyston, Abrohill, Dunragit, Beattock, Eastriggs, Thornhill and Mauchline. Railfuture pointed out that there were other suitable candidates for reopening.

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www.railfuturescotland.org.uk



Labour progress

Martin Smith's letter (*Railwatch* 131) repeats the accusation that the Labour Government "did nothing but talk" and simply ignores inconvenient facts. Labour gave us many improvements to the railways such as HS1 and St Pancras International, to give but two examples, and all of the schemes which the present Government has belatedly approved were developed by the previous government. Similarly, the Labour Government instigated and spent huge sums of money on Crossrail and, if I had time, I could list many more schemes delivered by the last government.

We must give credit where it is due to whichever party is in power.
Malcolm Clark, St James Drive Harrogate HG2 8HT

Choice for Railfuture

Dave Berman, in *Railwatch* 131 wants us to express our views on the "redefinition of the partnership" with branches. To do this we should have a clear idea of how a campaigning organisation such as Railfuture could be structured.

One such concept is a grass-roots, locally based organisation, linked in a national network that works from the bottom up.

Local groups are run by people who know their own lines, operators, local councils, other local groups, newspapers, local radio and so on.

Coastway division operated effectively for more than 10 years as such a group. It could respond quickly and respected the views of all members as well as national policies.

Alternatively, the organisation can be nationally controlled. A few people, sometimes very "high-profile", decide overall strategy and the nature of

national campaigns. Members sign up to provide their time and financial support but only have a limited input to policy. Such organisations can be effective, at least as long as they have simple and emotive messages.

Members could respond to Mr Berman's invitation to get involved by asking how a corporate governance review group with its programme strategy and business plan could "breathe new life and transparency" into the branches.
Ivor Huetting, Elm Grove Eastbourne BN22 9NN ivor@impax.org.uk

Holiday trains

I was pleased to see you mention (*Railwatch* 131) that in Britain "most train operators failed to provide any kind of service on Boxing Day 2011", whereas "elsewhere in Europe it is a busy day for rail travel."

Really, if we want to get people using public transport then the whole concept of days without trains or buses must be knocked on the head. That's especially important as big supermarkets are moving towards 365 days a year operation, and people need transport in order to get to work there.

Instead backwoods Britain makes people rely on taxis, and has higher tariffs at the times people most need them which says something about our car-dominated society.

Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby, DN31 2JP Tim Mickleburgh timmickleburgh2011@yahoo.co.uk

Thieves on the line

Following the report of stolen rails in South Africa (*Railwatch* 131), another Friends of the Rail steam train to Cullinan had to turn back at Rayton, nine kilometres before Cullinan because of the theft of rail parts or sleepers.

Apparently the Transnet diesel that overturned three weeks ago for the same [theft] reason was still lying on its side there too.

Railfuture draw tickets

Tickets for the Railfuture 2012 draw are enclosed with this issue, writes Chris Precey. While we are aware that some members do not wish to receive tickets, it is very expensive to separate them out during the despatch process. I apologise for the inconvenience this may cause. The proceeds of the draw are used to keep the Fighting Fund topped up. If you wish to buy additional tickets, please enclose an SAE. Many thanks to all those who do buy tickets.

Your letters extra

Passengers had to be bussed the final 9 kilometres at further expense and loss to the steam club.

Peter J Odell, PO Box 1104, Kimberley 8300, South Africa. rollbahn@vodamail.co.za

Remember Beeching

The significance of 2013 will not be lost on the rail community, for it marks a bleak, momentous and industry-shattering event for the railways with the 50th anniversary of the Reshaping of British Railways, which then became known as the Beeching Report. Railfuture could exploit the 50th anniversary opportunity by reviving Rail Development Fortnight through a programme of events at both national and branch level. Contributions from the pioneering campaigners of the 1960s would be especially welcome.

The savage approach attributable to Beeching from March 1963 must be highlighted along with the recovery action undertaken via route reopenings and new stations that have emerged following RDS and Railfuture initiatives since then. Beeching must be remembered so that Railfuture can remind politicians, who keep stressing that they need to re-connect with the electorate, that there are very many communities which would like to re-connect with the national rail network.

This is crucial because many politicians are only too keen to support HS2 presently, since they view it as being glamorous and sexy. The politicians need reminding that today's booming railway is still playing catch-up after decades of neglect, with many lines bearing the scars of various rationalisation measures, resulting in spartan routes having no scope for development and service enhancement without capital investment, with the Penistone Line being a classic example.

It is essential to log the successes over the years, noting that reopened routes and new stations have significantly outperformed projected forecasts.

From north to south, Alloa to Ivybridge, and east to west, Mansfield to Maesteg, much more still remains to be done to tap the vast potential that exists.

A 6% rise in passenger numbers recorded in 2011 has been announced by the Association of Train Operators. What would this figure have been though if the UK did not boast some of the highest rail fares in Europe?

Revisiting Beeching is necessary to highlight network capacity constraints. Do politicians have the capacity to recognise such?

Can they also understand the link between population, passengers, potential users and the price of petrol? Rail Development

Fortnight could be used to promote and raise the profile of Railfuture too, something which is vital to help recruitment and increase membership.

Interestingly, after many years of growth, data recently released indicated a reduction in the number of young people taking the driving test. Fertile ground for Railfuture, perhaps? The scope

for Rail Development Fortnight is huge, with reopening schemes such as Woodhead, Skipton-Colne, Leicester-Burton and Lewes-Uckfield to name but a few.

Rail Development Fortnight should be all about development, expansion, electrification and investment, particularly in England, the poor rail relation when compared with the steady flow of new schemes that have emerged in both Scotland and Wales in recent years.

The fiftieth anniversary of Beeching represents a unique platform for the future. It could be the only occasion when Beeching actually does something good for the railways. It is therefore a vital platform for Railfuture, and one which must be grasped.

Rail Development Fortnight - Reversing Beeching. What about that for a slogan?

Andrew Oldfield Long Lane, Worrall, Sheffield S35 0AF



East Anglia

By Nick Dibben and Trevor Garrod

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■ ■ Meeting the managers

Several members of Railfuture and rail user groups attended the first forum organised by the new train operating company, Greater Anglia, on 17 April 2012. In a cordial and upbeat atmosphere we were told about its strategy to improve revenue protection, increasing the channels through which customers could buy their tickets and employing more customer service staff. It was also stressed that major improvements to the timetable would depend on infrastructure investment.

Managing Director Ruud Haket said that in order to obtain such investment it was necessary to decide priorities (for example in capacity enhancements or electrification) rather than asking for a long list of schemes. We stressed the need for more effective consultation with users when timetables were being planned. This was especially important when we were pressing for better bus/train connections in rural areas. We were assured that there were no booking office closures planned in the two and a half years of this franchise. However, Mr Haket expected change to ticketing in the long term and added: "I cannot see paper tickets surviving another 15 years."

■ ■ Better bus-rail links at Halesworth lead to Southwold

The 520 bus service from Halesworth station to Southwold was greatly improved from 2 April 2012, not only to the benefit of local people but also making it possible again for visitors from a wide area to have a day out in Southwold by public transport. Railfuture and the East Suffolk Travellers' Association have both been promoting the new service, having protested when it was greatly reduced in 2011. Improved infrastructure at Halesworth rail station, extra shelters and a bus reversing bay had been provided at Suffolk County Council's expense and were then under-used.

There are now six connections to Southwold off the trains from Ipswich and five in the opposite direction. For details, go to www.anglianbus.co.uk or send a SAE to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ. The improved service should run until the end of March next year, by which time Halesworth should have hourly trains on the Ipswich-Lowestoft line, and we now need to campaign for a Sunday bus service and additional early morning and late evening buses. The more people who use the present improved service, the stronger our hand will be in that new campaign.

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Tram trains at last!



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

Tram trains have been operating in Germany for years but at last Britain is catching up.

Transport Secretary Justine Greening has approved a tram train trial from Sheffield along the Don Valley to her home town of Rotherham which should be up and running by 2015.

Railfuture has argued that as tram trains have been operating on continental Europe for so long, there is no need for a trial.

In April, Railfuture's Norman Bradbury told Network Rail: "We would question the need to conduct a tram train pilot project on the Sheffield-Rotherham route when surely the evidence needed is already available in Germany in the cities of Karlsruhe, Nordhausen and Zwickau."

A month later, the Government announced that £58 million would be invested in the Sheffield-Rotherham tram train service with a 20-minute frequency. The pilot will run for two years with a view to permanent operation.

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg is also said to have lobbied in favour of the service.

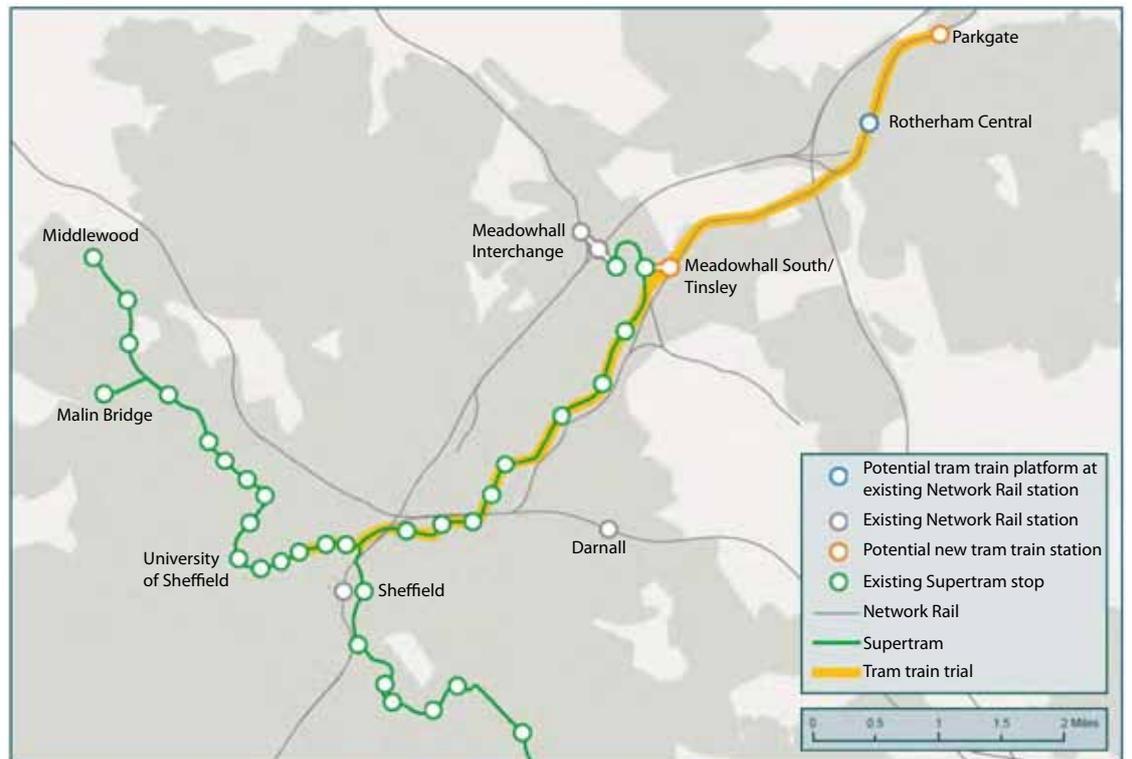
Sheffield council leader Julie Dore said: "It will be environmentally friendly and help reduce congestion."

Transport minister Norman Baker said: "This will help to reinvigorate the local economy. It will also encourage people to leave their cars at home."

"If tram train proves itself in South Yorkshire, I do not doubt that there will be others interested in introducing this technology elsewhere in the UK."

Ian Bevan, managing director at Northern Rail, said: "There are lessons to be learned here

A Manchester Metrolink tram and a Sprinter diesel train sharing Navigation Road station near Altrincham which is split into two single tracks, though both are controlled by Network Rail's Deansgate Junction signal box. Bosses at Transport for Greater Manchester have already said they would like Metrolink services to use the rail network to reach more towns and suburbs. One possibility is incorporating the Ashburys to Marple line into the Metrolink network



Based on NETWORK RAIL map

The Sheffield-Rotherham route which is to be used for a tram train trial

and Northern cities are among those well placed to benefit from them."

Railfuture is calling for similar projects in other cities but also for continued investment in heavy rail.

Unsuitable Pacer trains need replacing but heavy rail reopenings, such as Stirling-Alloa have proved highly successful.

The main advantage of tram trains, however, is that they can use the main line rail network but also penetrate into town centres and residential areas, providing door-to-door connectivity.

If tram trains had been accepted earlier, there would have been

no need for the ill-judged guided bus schemes that have been approved for Cambridge and Luton.

It could also mean that branch lines can be reopened at minimal expense.

New vehicles will be provided on the Sheffield-Rotherham route which can operate on both tram tracks and Network Rail lines, the track will be electrified and a short stretch of track will be laid to link the networks.

But one rail campaigner said: "This has been a long time a-coming. It certainly makes more sense than an earlier plan to take the tram train on the Penistone and Huddersfield line.

"But it is still only half a scheme. None of the sprawling residential areas of Rotherham are served and to do so would be fairly easy."

Another said: "This is a purely electric tram. It is not a Kassel-type solution with hybrid diesel/electric vehicles able to operate over non-electrified sections of route."

But it is still a step forward.

ISSN 0267-5943



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