

rail**watch**

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

No 147

£1.50

April 2016

Picture: STEVEN ROBERTSON

A photograph of a yellow and blue train (number 158710) traveling through a snowy landscape. The train is moving towards the viewer on a set of tracks. In the background, there is a concrete bridge and a brick building. The scene is heavily snowed out, with snow falling and covering the ground and rooftops.

**Success in
the snow**

See page 2

The statistics of success

Our cover picture by Steven Robertson shows the new Borders Railway bringing the convenience and comfort of trains to an area of Scotland which had been deprived of them for 40 years.

Everywhere the railway is chalking up success after success. More people are now travelling by rail than at any time since the 1920s, according to figures from the Office of Rail and Road.

Railfuture has every reason to be sceptical about ORR statistics, which we have shown are repeatedly under-counting passenger numbers at some stations.

The ORR says 1,393 million journeys were recorded in 2014-15, even bigger than the 1945 figure when returning troops at the end of the Second World War boosted the figures, and the biggest number since 1923 when the rail network was twice the size of its current post-Beeching truncated size.

Some sceptics have pointed out that because train operators sell their own tickets at the expense of long-distance through tickets, the journey figures might be exaggerated. In other words, some people now use two or even three tickets to complete one journey, mainly in a bid to keep costs down. But ORR says the 1,393 million journeys are genuine "end to end" trips.

An even higher figure of 1,654 million for 2014-15 is another record, but is based on the "Lennon" database which counts each leg and each train used for one journey. In theory,

these encouraging statistics should make arguing the case for rail easier but, as the Borders Railway shows, planners are hopeless at estimating future rail demand.

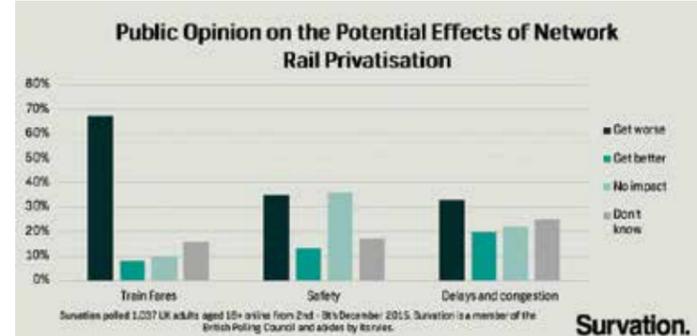
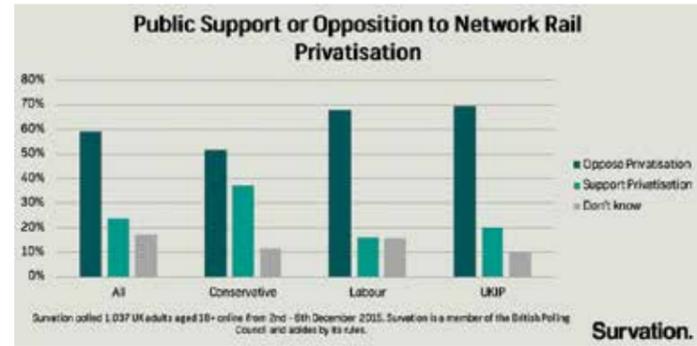
They said 650,000 would use the railway in its first year. In fact, the railway carried 500,000 after less than five months operation.

The fantastic news should clear the way for further station and line reopenings.

Instead, it seems the politicians are just as out of touch with the public on the question of privatisation, now being openly touted by some as a solution to Network Rail's problems. To try to undermine the public's memory of Railtrack's six-year appalling history, privatisation lovers at the Institute of Economic Affairs have been "exposing" the high cost of the railway, without mentioning the exorbitant subsidies enjoyed by the road lobby.

The RMT union, which has first-hand knowledge of both Railtrack and Network Rail, says privatisation of Network Rail would be disastrous, bad for passenger safety and would lead to even higher fares.

It points out that Railtrack paid out huge dividends even when it was failing to run the network properly. Trades Union Congress general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "Taxpayers and the travelling public deserve a modern, sustainable approach to upgrading our railways, not a repeat of past failures. More fragmentation and commercialisation would be the worst of both worlds."



These were the results of a Survation poll taken in December on behalf of the campaigning organisation We Own It

Win with Railfuture Lottery

The Railfuture Lottery has paid out over £12,000 in prizes over the past 11 years, and raised a further £12,000 for our campaigning. But the lottery needs you the members to help keep this fundraising continuing, so why not join? It costs only £1 a month! There are currently over 200 entries with six prizes every month and you can add to this by going to www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery/ where you can enter using PayPal, or send a cheque for a multiple of £12, payable to

Railfuture Lottery to: Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND.
Recent winners:
Nov 2015: Peter Pass, Christopher Hyomes, Garth Smith, David Stocks, A T Hill, Patrick Hughes.
Dec: Peter Moore, Judith Kitchiner, William Morton, John Barfield, Andrew Carr, John Henderson.
Jan: John Ward, David Brady, Walter Richardson, Ian Budd, Graham Smith, Peter Pass.

125 mph fast food delivery

By Lee Davies
lee.davies@railfuture.org.uk
Fresh seafood is being delivered by train from Cornwall direct to London. The first load of fish, live lobster and crab, was landed in Cornwall and loaded on the 10.00 InterCity 125 passenger train departure from Penzance to Paddington.

A new company called InterCity RailFreight has worked out a deal with Great Western Railway. ICRF's Jeff Screeton talked to Railfuture's freight committee a few years ago and it is good to see that his ideas are starting to make headway with the train operating companies.

In London WEGO Couriers, using cargo bikes and electric vehicles, delivered the seafood to restaurants.

Jeff said ICRF provided a 21st-century solution for time-sensitive fresh produce and e-commerce deliveries, which draws on long-lost practice established in the 19th and 20th centuries – using spare space on passenger trains – to achieve a high speed, high frequency, low carbon delivery service.

ICRF is building on four years of experience with East Midlands Trains between Sheffield, Derby, Nottingham, Leicester and St Pancras International, moving some of the most time-sensitive products, such as blood supplies and medical samples. ICRF wants to develop similar services across the GWR and other passenger train networks, using the experience of overnight trials into London Euston station in 2012 and 2014.

The last time parcels were regularly carried on passenger trains was in 1989, using British Rail's "Red Star" service although Royal Mail continues to use rail for letters.

ICRF started operating in 2011 as 5PL Ltd, moving parcels and other time-sensitive deliveries on scheduled passenger train services, with cargo bikes and electric vehicles used at either end for local collection and delivery by road.

Using scheduled passenger trains allows small volumes of



SUN SETS ON SIGNALS: The semaphore signals glinting in the late afternoon sun in this picture taken in North Lincolnshire on 23 December are no longer there. A new signalling system and York rail operating centre are now controlling trains through this junction, which for years was handled by Barnetby East signal box. The freight train is delivering oil from the Humber refinery to Kingsbury in Warwickshire. The Network Rail scheme involved renewing 16 level crossings and 60 miles of signalling between Immingham, Scunthorpe and Cleethorpes. This is the end of mechanical signal boxes in the area but creates greater reliability for both passenger and freight services as well as increasing the railway's capacity. Immingham is the gateway to Britain for a quarter of the country's rail freight, with imports of biomass fuel, coal, steel, oil and petroleum to support industry and airlines. Immingham is Britain's largest port (by tonnage) and handles up to 55 million tonnes a year. See also Lincolnshire Local Action: Page 14

freight (up to four tonnes per train) to be moved at speeds of up to 125mph (186mph on cross-Channel Eurostar trains).

<http://intercityrailfreight.com/>

Flood diversions

DB Schenker's nightly service for Royal Mail from Motherwell to London has been diverted to the East Coast main line along with various Intermodal services operated by Freightliner, following the flood damage to Lamington viaduct on the West Coast main line near Lockerbie. Three landslips on the Newcastle-Carlisle line prevented it from being used as a diversion.

A limited number of freight trains were able to be diverted via the Glasgow-Kilmarnock-Dumfries-Carlisle line, reconnecting to the West Coast main line at Carlisle, but the Dumfries route is not yet suitable for big containers and long trains.

Mega lorry threat

Sixty tonne lorries, as long as 25 metres, can now operate in Spain following a Spanish government decision in December. In the Netherlands and Denmark 60 tonne lorries are already allowed,

in Finland 76 tonnes and in Sweden 90 tonnes, allegedly for test purposes.

Road damage rises steeply with axle weight.

Doubling the axle weight increases road damage 16 times, and in the case of the heaviest British lorries (44-tonnes) – the main competition for rail freight – heavy goods vehicles are up to 160,000 times more damaging to road surfaces than small vehicles. The vehicle taxation system does not reflect this massive disparity, so big lorries are being cross-subsidised by cars.

We should all be campaigning to stop these mega menaces which are a threat to the future of rail freight.

Rail Forum Europe is also calling on both the European Union and member states to ensure that rail access charges for freight are simplified and harmonised so that there is a level playing field between road and rail.

RFE says only 1% of roads in Europe are tolled, but track access charging applies to every kilometre and component of the rail network, thus distorting

competition between road and rail. With the collapse of coal traffic in Britain this injustice and distortion of the market is critical.

East Midlands Gateway

The Government has given the go-ahead for a 250-acre rail freight hub and warehouse complex to be built on farmland at Castle Donington near East Midlands airport and junction 24 of the M1 motorway. A new rail link will be built to the depot which will be able to handle 16 trains 775-metre long each day, according to developer Roxhill.

An independent planning committee recommended that the depot should not be built because warehouses will be built and operational before the rail link and there are no long-term plans to increase rail connections.

Toni Harrington, chairman of Lockington cum Hemington parish council said: "We have read the small print and it could be that a rail connection will never go ahead, which is what we feared all along. Our biggest worry is that it just becomes a road freight yard."

Picture: ROBIN PATRICK

Farewell to Rail Action John, a modest 'friend to millions'

John Stanford, the founder of Railfuture's Rail Action email newsletter, died in November, aged 72. John made a great impact on Railfuture after retiring from a lifetime working on behalf of disabled people. "He helped millions of people," mourners at his funeral in December were told, "but few of them knew him. Many will never know the contribution he made to giving them the opportunity to live independent lives." John was a

modest, humorous and well-respected man who spent decades working for Radar, the Royal Association for Disability Rights, which since 2012 has been part of Disability Rights UK. He was influential from the 1970s onwards in setting up the national key scheme for accessible toilets and also edited RADAR's annual holiday guide. John also had a passion for railways, and travelled widely, always by rail, in Europe. Before he died, he almost achieved his

ambition of visiting every railway station in France. As a co-editor of Railwatch, he also wrote a series of authoritative articles for Railwatch, Rail Action and the Railfuture website. Like many Railfuture members, his flat in Dalston, London, was full of books and maps. Born in Rustington, West Sussex, John studied economics at Nottingham University, before working for the Port of London, Age Concern and as the warden of a hostel for ex-offenders in the Forest of Dean.



East Anglia

By Paul Hollinghurst
paul.hollinghurst@railfuture.org.uk

Cambridge South at Addenbrooke's

The *Case for Cambridge* has been launched by 11 of the city's leading organisations. They ask for development of a Cambridge regional transport plan with a series of specific rail projects including a new Cambridge South rail station at the Addenbrooke's biomedical campus and links between more affordable housing and jobs via better train services, including feeder towns such as Ely, Thetford, Haverhill, Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds. These reflect many of Railfuture's aspirations for Cambridge.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Cambridge+City+Deal#The_Case_for_Cambridge

Little things make a big difference



The state of Newmarket station has long been a big issue for Railfuture East Anglia and the Mid Anglia Rail Passengers Association. Our joint campaign for improvements included help in getting the train operator, town council,

the district and county councils, the horse-racing industry and the team planning the new National Horse Racing Museum together to talk about improvements. This was a first step in getting recognition of the importance of the train service to the town of over 20,000 people. The first fruits of the various parties working together has been the recent completion of two fully enclosed quality shelters, a new train departure board, a ticket machine and signs to show the town is the home of British horse racing. We hope this is just the start and that the new East Anglia franchise will deliver more improvements including a minimum half-hourly train service. In the meantime, well done Abellio Greater Anglia.

Greater Anglia train problems

Greater Anglia suffered serious widespread problems in mid-November caused by almost half of its diesel multiple unit fleet being out of service (10 out of 26 units at one point) mainly with wheel defects during the leaf fall season. Services on the Sudbury and Felixstowe branches were suspended for 12 consecutive days, and there were frequent cancellations between Ipswich and Cambridge. A shortage of local wheel-turning provision meant some units were sent to Derby for tyre turning. Even when the whole fleet is operational, East Anglia suffers from regular peak overcrowding as there is no spare rolling stock to lengthen services. Railfuture East Anglia has emphasised the importance of rolling stock for the new franchise so hope the franchise announcement in mid-2016 gives hope for the future.

Keep in touch at: www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia and Twitter: @RailfutureEA

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
anthony.kay@railfuture.org.uk

More trains needed at Radcliffe

Villagers at Radcliffe-on-Trent are campaigning to improve the service at their station on the Nottingham-Grantham line. Currently the

weekday service consists of only five trains one way and six trains the other way. The campaigners want the hourly Nottingham-Skegness trains all to stop at Radcliffe, pointing out that the low usage figures are because the low frequency of trains makes the service unattractive. The parish council has offered to adopt the station and give it a make-over.

Challenge for Midlands Connect

Graham Nalty from Railfuture East Midlands attended a conference organised by the East Midlands Chamber of Commerce in Nottingham, which included a session on transport with contributions from transport minister Andrew Jones and shadow transport secretary Lilian Greenwood. Ms Greenwood argued strongly for classic-compatible trains to Nottingham on High Speed Two, and also mentioned the need to improve connections between Leicester and Coventry. These two cities are less than 25 miles apart and have been put together to form one of the four hubs of the Midlands Connect partnership programme, yet a rail journey between the two requires a change of trains at Nuneaton.

Boxing day failure for Derby fans

At a meeting of the Friends of the Derwent Valley Line, attended by Ariadne Tampion from Railfuture East Midlands, frustration was expressed at the lack of a service along the line when Derby County football club were playing at home on Boxing Day. Why can there not be a service on those lines on which Network Rail are not doing maintenance over the Christmas period?

Trams or tram-trains for Nottingham



This tram is pictured in Nottingham city centre but Nottingham Express Transit is investigating the possibility of further extensions to the tram network, possibly as far as East Midlands Airport and Derby. The investigation was commissioned by the D2N2 Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire local enterprise partnership. However, transport expert John Disney from Nottingham Business School has said that tram-trains of the type to be introduced in Sheffield would be more suitable for an extension to Derby.

Loughborough venue for AGM

The East Midlands branch AGM will be held on Saturday 16 April from 12.30 to 15.30 at Loughborough library. Further details will be posted on the branch website www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch

Running Railways

Richard Brown, who is currently on the board of HS2 and has previously run Midland Mainline and Eurostar, will be speaking on *Running Railways* at Leicester Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate LE1 1WB at 18.30 on Sunday 10 April. The meeting is open to the public and admission is free.

Follow us on Twitter: @RailfutureEMids

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes
chris.hyomes@railfuture.org.uk

New franchises bring welcome benefits

Railfuture Yorkshire spent much of 2015 trying to influence the content of the new franchises for Northern Rail and TransPennine Express which start on 1 April 2016. We are pleased that the details of the new franchises announced in December include several of the improvements that we have campaigned for. We plan to seek further improvements by working with the new teams. Arriva is now running Northern, which had been run jointly by Serco and Abellio, while First is running TransPennine Express without its former partner Keolis. Arriva has signed a contract with CAF to build 281 carriages, which will replace the much-derided Pacers by the end of 2018.

Reopening priorities for Yorkshire

The reopening of the Skipton-Colne, Sheffield-Stocksbridge and Beverley-York routes, as well as new stations for Elland and Haxby, remain priorities for Railfuture Yorkshire.

Virgin boss visits Railfuture Yorkshire

Virgin Trains took over the East Coast franchise in June 2015 and managing director David Horne was a guest speaker at Railfuture Yorkshire's AGM in January, along with Transport Minister Andrew Jones.

Electrification campaign goes on

The past year was a turbulent one for Network Rail and we now expect the TransPennine electrification to be completed by end 2022, and the Midland main line by end 2023. The Electrification Task Force report published last year recommended a major programme of electrification across the North of England, but so far there has been no formal government response. Railfuture Yorkshire will be campaigning for a positive response in 2016.

New stations to help the railway grow

Railfuture Yorkshire welcomed the opening of a new station at Apperley Bridge in December and look forward to the opening of Kirkstall Forge and Low Moor this year. The *Doncaster Free Press* has reported that the Friends of Askern Station are campaigning to get their station reopened and have handed a petition to Doncaster's elected Mayor Ros Jones.

The case for an airport parkway station

Harrogate Line Supporters Group has produced a briefing paper outlining its case for a rail link to Leeds Bradford airport. It assesses that building an airport parkway station near Bramhope tunnel on the Leeds-Harrogate-York line will be the most cost-effective and economically viable option. From 2017, the line will benefit from a 15-minute train frequency under the terms of the new Northern franchise, and Virgin East Coast plans a direct service from London to Harrogate from 2019. Shuttle buses already serving the airport car parks could be extended to the new station.

Leeds could get a T-shaped station

Railfuture Yorkshire welcomes HS2's decision in December to abandon plans for a separate high speed station at Leeds New Lane in favour of a single, consolidated rail interchange. The new plan could include creating a T-shaped station with new high speed platforms built over the River Aire.



LONDON CROSSRAIL: Women working on Europe's largest construction project join Rail Minister Claire Perry (the only woman not in high-viz working gear in this picture). She praised Crossrail for helping to make construction an attractive career for women who make up nearly a third of the workforce compared to a rail industry average of 16%

Women line up to make the railway better

A new group, Women in Community Rail, has been formed with the support of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships.

The new group will complement the existing Women in Rail group.

Marion Atkinson, chair of WiCR, said: "We already have a lot of interest and backing from various industry colleagues but we are really keen to muster more support throughout the industry, with emphasis for male colleagues to come forward and join the group as well as female colleagues."

"Powerful and talented women can be found on the front line at our stations encouraging people to volunteer, making a difference at their local station and working with partners promoting the railway, in our community rail partnerships, leading on projects, lobbying for service improvements and working for train operators and local councils."

The first steering group meeting was held in Manchester in January where the following key aims were agreed:

- Sharing good practice across community rail and the railway generally
- Raising awareness of

◆◆◆◆ Railfuture AGM will be held in Milton Keynes on 21 May 2016



FRONT LINE: The WiCR steering group is hoping to attract both workers and volunteers to join

- Actively promoting equality, diversity inclusiveness and a cooperative approach throughout the community rail world and beyond
- Funding and other support will be sought to develop a website and forum for discussion along with generating social media pages
- Supporting women already active in community rail, working for train operators either as paid workers or volunteers
- Raising awareness of

careers for women and young people in community rail and the railway generally through career talks, aimed at young people who want a different career path to an apprenticeship

A launch event is planned for sometime after 1 April at Manchester Victoria station where there will be a tour of the station and entertainment.

Speakers will include Kathryn O'Brien, customer service director for TransPennine Express and Alex Hynes,

managing director of Northern Rail. He said: "It is fantastic to see women making their mark in the world of community rail and I am delighted to offer my support to WiCR as it starts to strengthen its position in the industry."

Anybody wishing to join the group or for further information please contact Hazel Bonner: hazel@acorp.uk.com Women in Rail was set up three years ago and has "shone a new light on the rail sector".

Scotland

By Jane Ann Liston
secretary@railfuture.scotland.org.uk

■ ■ Rail freight deserves fair treatment

Railfuture Scotland has put in a submission to Transport Scotland's freight consultation *Delivering the Goods*. The need for a level playing field between road and rail freight was emphasised, with the former benefiting from major road-building and the removal of road bridge tolls, while Network Rail is landed with the bill for strengthening road over rail bridges for heavier lorries. More should be made of the fact that rail freight reduces emissions, is safer and saves on costs of road damage caused by ever-heavier lorries.

■ ■ Glasgow Crossrail is essential

The forthcoming five-month closure of Glasgow Queen Street tunnel for improvements will have a serious impact on services, including the prime Edinburgh-Glasgow service. RailQwest campaigners point out that, had Glasgow Crossrail been built, the effect would have been greatly ameliorated. Proposals to provide a tram-train from Glasgow Central to the airport rather than a heavy rail link are being resisted, because the slower trams would impede heavy rail services on parts of the line and would mean special rolling-stock which could not be used anywhere else in Britain.

■ ■ Rail Action Group East of Scotland

RAGES met Virgin East Coast and welcomed proposals to refurbish trains, upgrade Craighentiny and introduce a new morning service from Stirling. RAGES suggested amendments to the stopping patterns of two trains to accommodate boarding and alighting at intermediate stations such as Newcastle and York, as not every passenger is travelling straight through from London to Edinburgh or vice-versa and a Saturday 21.00 last train from Edinburgh to Berwick, as on weekdays, rather than 19.00 which is too early. We also asked why a ticket from Dunbar to London cost £76.60 more than one from Edinburgh, when the journey was 30 miles shorter.

■ ■ Beattock Station Action Group

BSAG is now working in partnership with regional transport partnership SWESTRANS to commission a pre-appraisal report. Support for the venture was also received from First TransPennine Express.

■ ■ LevenMouth Rail Campaign

LMRC's second Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) was approved by Fife Council. It is now up to the Scottish Government and the regional transport partnership SESTRAN to take the project forward to enable reintroduction of Thornton-Leven rail services.

■ ■ Burst of activity at St Andrews

A burst of activity by StARLink at the turn of the year saw meetings with Transport Scotland, the University of St Andrews vice-principal, the head of economic development at ScotRail and the MSP and new MP for North East Fife, all of them positive. Not only would reconnecting St Andrews enable direct services to Edinburgh and Dundee, but should the Forth Rail Link (see below) come to pass, there is the potential also for direct St Andrews-Glasgow trains.

■ ■ Newburgh is now reopening favourite

Fife Council has agreed to support a STAG evaluation. A previous study, commissioned

by the two local authorities (Fife together with Perth & Kinross) and two transport partnerships (SESTRAN and TACTRAN) concluded that there were good cases for stations at both Oudenarde/Bridge of Earn and Newburgh. The argument for Newburgh was stronger.

■ ■ Forth Rail Link campaign launched

A new Forth Rail Link campaign has been launched to run passenger services from Dunfermline through Kincardine to Alloa, made possible by the imminent closure of Longannet power station. The campaign wants to see Fife and Clackmannanshire re-linked by rail. The plan is supported by Fife Council as well as members of the Scottish Youth Parliament who believe the link could offer better education opportunities for school leavers.

www.forthrailink.com

■ ■ MP backs Waverley to Carlisle

A Scottish MP has thrown his support behind the campaign to extend the newly reopened Borders Rail line to Carlisle. Calum Kerr, who represents Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk said the route's popularity mounts "an extremely strong case" to continue the link from Tweedbank on to Hawick and Carlisle. Mr Kerr acknowledged an extension would not be easy because the route crossed national borders, but said MPs on both sides are supportive. "It will be a third rail line between Scotland and England, improving our UK transport infrastructure, providing new linkages and creating real potential for economic and tourism benefits," he said. "It is a fantastic vision."

■ ■ Contacts

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES) www.rages.org.uk/
Beattock Station Action Group (BSAG) www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/
St Andrews Rail Link (StARLink) campaign www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/
www.facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign
twitter.com/starlinkrail #StarLinkRail
LevenMouth Rail Campaign www.lmrc-action.org.uk/
www.facebook.com/Levenmouth-Rail-Campaign-432832616900648/
Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG) www.capitalrail.org.uk/
Newburgh Train Station campaign newburghtrainstation.org.uk/
Forth Rail Link www.forthrailink.com
www.facebook.com/forthrailink/

London and South East

By Roger Blake
roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Dodgy data distort delivery

The Office of Rail and Road published its annual estimates of station usage in December, the same month that Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail Users Group carried out its own passenger counts. The ORR reckons, based on ticket sales, that 400,000 people used Cambridge Heath and 720,000 London Fields in 2014-15. Based on recorded observations, the users group estimates 750,000 users for Cambridge Heath and 1.5 million for London Fields. Is that why London Overground has no plan for additional station facilities for passengers, such as platform shelters and lifts? The ORR figures are seriously misleading and have widespread consequences. Elsewhere, the ORR estimates that the station at Ore in East Sussex has about 175,000 annual users, based

on ticket sales. How can the ORR possibly have any real idea, when the station has neither a ticket office nor a ticket machine? But the ORR says Pevensey Bay has leapt from less than 7,000 in one year to over 25,000 the next, when the service provision has not changed. The rail industry must find ways to produce station usage figures which command confidence.

■ ■ Turning south London orange

A Centre for London report highlights the impact of London's inexorable rise in population and employment on its Tube and rail networks, and the urgent need for main line rail to deliver more capacity to meet the pressure of rising travel demand. *Turning South London Orange* advocates spreading the London Overground model as the most cost-effective, passenger-satisfying response to such demands, devolving franchises from the Department for Transport to Transport for London as they become due for replacement.

www.railfuture.org.uk/article1643-Southern-orange

Railfuture continues to advocate the benefits of rail devolution. The popularity of the Overground is clear on the inner West Anglia routes taken over by TfL in May 2015, where latest passenger counts at stations across that network show an average annual increase of 25%, way above the London average of 6%. Railfuture supports those in the Southeastern Metro area for whom Overground standards of operation from June 2018, when the current franchise ends, cannot come soon enough.

■ ■ Influencing people and events

Responding to consultations is one of the many ways Railfuture makes its voice heard and influences the authorities. In recent months Railfuture has contributed to Hertfordshire's *Transport Vision* and East Sussex's *Local Transport Plan Implementation*, the DfT's new franchises in 2017 for South Western and West Midlands, and TfL's plans for Camden Town station, Crossrail 2, the Overground extension to Barking Riverside, and new river crossings in east and south-east London. More recently Railfuture has responded supportively to the DfT's devolution prospectus *New approach to rail passenger services in London and the south-east*. Railfuture nationally also responded to the new National Infrastructure Commission under former Transport Secretary Lord Adonis, the scope of the Shaw inquiry into Network Rail's future shape and financing, and more recently the Hendy report on replanning Network Rail's investment programme.

■ ■ Trains you can rely on

Network Rail assesses train punctuality and produces a "public performance measure" which can be used to compare train operators. But there are also statistics based on miles per technical incident. MTIN records the occasions a train is stopped for more than three minutes. With a widening gap between the amount of rolling stock available and the number of passengers, train reliability is increasingly important and is carefully analysed by experts such as Railfuture vice president Roger Ford to award "Golden Spanners" to operators each November. Although Southeastern is struggling in the National Rail Passenger Survey, it has seen its classic fleet improving their MTIN reliability scores. Most other operators in the London area show very mixed pictures of their train fleets' reliability.

■ ■ Railfuture London and South East's quarterly newsletter *raise* can be found at www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East+branch+news



A warm welcome

By Jerry Alderson

jerry.alderon@railfuture.org.uk
Railfuture is taken seriously as a campaigning organisation because of our in-depth understanding of the railway.

Our credibility is helped by the involvement of career railwaymen such as Chris Austin, Ian Brown and Stewart Palmer along with our vice presidents. However, much of our specialist knowledge is from retired people, and since the railway is a fast-changing and high-technology industry it is vital we welcome younger people.

To help this, Railfuture's board has signed a collaboration agreement with Young Rail Professionals whose members work in the industry and want to improve their career prospects. Unlike Railfuture, YRP does not have paying members but is funded by sponsorship from rail companies eager to attract the best talent.

YRP has over 3,500 members from human resources to operations, and engineering to project management. Railfuture hopes YRP members will join and take part in our campaigning. In return YRP will raise its profile and their members will learn more about rail users, both passengers and freight, and meet senior members of the industry at our conferences and meetings.

The rail industry has a skills crisis because after decades of decline, in which the average age of staff got older as fewer young people were attracted to it, there is now enormous growth and demand for people with modern skills.

YRP is organising a Rail Week across Britain from 27 June to 3 July to attract young people into a rail career. Railwatch readers may wish to encourage their children and grandchildren to attend events.

Details can be found at <http://www.railweek.com> and by following @railweek on Twitter.

YRP also hopes the events will help address the lack of diversity among rail staff, as attendees to Railfuture's November 2014 conference in London heard from Stefanie Browne of RAIL magazine. Railfuture looks forward to working with YRP for years to come.

Brightening up the railway

By Martin Yallop

martin.yallop@acorp.uk.com

Working for the Association of Community Rail Partnerships, my aim is to increase the involvement of community groups in their local railway.

I also want to help with conserving station buildings, identifying funding and finding new uses for redundant rooms and buildings.

ACoRP acts as an umbrella and support organisation for over 60 partnerships and a large number of station friends and adopters in England and Wales and to some extent Scotland. Partnerships help with marketing and promotions to encourage local communities to improve stations while aiming to be inclusive and diverse.

Comments and suggestions from Railfuture groups and members are welcomed at the community rail cafe website. ACoRP's success can be measured in growing passenger numbers on partnership routes but we want to get away from the era of vandalised shelters on bleak platforms.

Early days

Many communities formed pressure groups in the early 1960s in response to the Beeching Report, but the first community rail partnership was the Penistone Line Partnership (Huddersfield-Penistone-Barnsley-Sheffield). Formed in 1993, it sought to build on a trend apparent on the Cotswold Line (Oxford-Evesham-Worcester-Hereford), where volunteers at stations had a beneficial effect on the line as a whole. The partnerships brought positive environmental action by individuals to improve their locality and develop community spirit. Led by Dr Paul Salveson, the Penistone Line Partnership expanded this concept to on-train activities such as live music and Santa Specials on little used trains, guided walks between stations and making improvements such as community art and gardens, often through local schools.

Station adoptions

The first station adopters were in such diverse locations as Penmere in Cornwall, Dolau on the Heart of Wales line and Handforth, Cheshire. Station "friends" plant flower beds and clear litter. Many promote the train service by printing and distributing timetable leaflets, maintaining community noticeboards and websites.

Community stations

Often station rooms are not



COLOUR: A recycled rail carriage near Deptford station, London, was provided as a cafe and in 2008 was inspiration for a revamp of the area around the station, now under way

needed in the 21st century but the buildings are community assets. They have become faith centres, community day centres, children's nurseries and crèches, gyms, garden centres, tyre fitting depots and garages. Locating more than one activity in a station spreads the financial risk and provides income for maintenance. So has the wheel turned full circle? ACoRP's role is to create, improve or enhance the facilities at stations. One example has been the successful re-use of the southbound

platform buildings at Gobowen in the Welsh borders, where a small specialist travel company has occupied redundant space for the past 20 years and has now expanded into organising a café business that provides work experience for inclusive learner students from a nearby college. Other stations provide cycle hire facilities, tourist accommodation, heritage provision or even a local radio station. The only limit to more novel uses is our imagination.

ADVERTISEMENT

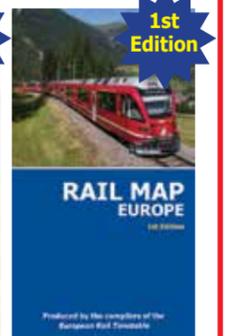
EUROPEAN RAIL TIMETABLE



£15.99 plus P&P
Published monthly



£17.99 plus P&P
Dispatched from June 2nd



£10.99 plus P&P
Available now

QUOTE RW20 TO RECEIVE 20% OFF

Produced by the former compilers of the
Thomas Cook European Rail Timetable



europeanrailtimetable.eu
01832 270198
28 Monson Way, Oundle
Northamptonshire, PE8 4QG



Your letters

Double vision?

In *Railwatch* 146, there was criticism of single lines. Lines on the continent are sometimes much busier than many of our double-track lines but manage perfectly well with single track, even a high-speed line in Spain.

Is this a lesson we need to learn? Good signalling is needed, with sufficient passing loops usable at reasonable speed of entry and exit. Longer loops are also needed where there is significant freight traffic, but long extensions of double track are often expensive in earthworks, and can cause disruption while being done. I would much rather the money was spent on more trains.

Take three examples mentioned. The Borders railway suffers not from too little double track, which is sufficient for the half-hourly service it needs, but from trains that are too short. Four or even six cars are needed.

The Highland main line could accommodate an hourly service each way using existing loops at Pitlochry, Aviemore, and between there and Inverness. This would need better timetabling and reliable running, although neither should be impossible in 2016!

Let us stop encouraging Network Rail or the Department for Transport to spend money unnecessarily.

David Dixon, Gaia Lane, Lichfield WS13 7LS
daviddixon21@virginmedia.com

A question of pay

What is the basis for the comments in J M Berry's letter in *Railwatch* 146 regarding "the excessive pay rail staff have received since privatisation"? It would appear to be a comment without qualification. I am a driver. Yes, we are well paid but not excessively so. All the pay increases since privatisation have been a result of huge increases in productivity

and changes to terms and conditions. The job requires getting up at any time of the day or night, travelling to work and working a shift that varies between seven and ten hours. A high level of concentration has to be maintained in order to keep passengers safe.

To reinforce this, drivers are examined every two years on route knowledge, traction knowledge and all the rules. This is in addition to regular monitoring by driver team managers, who assess them by doing "black-box" downloads and riding with them. Conductors/train managers are also examined on rules and regularly assessed by their managers.

High rail fares are more the result of track access charges, the hire costs for the rolling stock and the profit for the shareholders or the state owned company that uses the profits to subsidise rail services in their own country. Hardly the fault of the staff, who try to deliver a safe, reliable service, often in very difficult circumstances.

J P Hampson, Stockport
jphampo@gmail.com

Upbeat Railwatch

I was delighted to read *Railwatch* 146. I feel it is one of the most upbeat I have ever had. I am looking forward to receiving the Railfuture Wessex newsletter when it becomes available.

Kathleen Joy Rabbetts
townsendh@mypostoffice.co.uk

Good practice?

In "Ticket for Europe" (*Railwatch* 145), the Eurostar add-on ticket from London to "any Belgian station" is mentioned as an example of good ticketing practice. However, it is valid only when changing at Brussels, even though there are many destinations in Belgium for which it is quicker and more logical to change at Lille (for example Tournai, Courtrai/Kortrijk). This

is presumably because they are not valid on French local trains to the border. On the UK side, the lack of a proper inter-regional cross-Channel passenger train service (the so-called "Transmanche Metro") leads to the illogical situation of travellers from Kent and Sussex having, at most times of the day, to double-back to central London to board the train taking them to mainland Europe. Genuinely flexible through ticketing, with local connections and the ability to use the most logical interchange station, is a must for international train travel, but the airline mentality of certain operators, especially Eurostar, means it is often not done properly.

Alex Macfie, Kingston KT2 7QQ
alex@cgce.net

'Divisive' Nicola

I was disappointed to see the front page *Railwatch* 146 picture of Nicola Sturgeon unveiling a new Flying Scotsman. As leader of the SNP, she's one of the most divisive politicians in Britain today.

Tim Mickleburgh, Grimsby, Lincolnshire DN31 2JP
Tim.Mickleburgh@Nelincs.gov.uk

'Bonnie wee lassie'

What a wonderful front page picture of Nicola Sturgeon on *Railwatch* 146. As my old Scottish granny would have said: "Aye, she's a bonnie wee lassie". A truly memorable picture indeed. What was the name of the train again?

Roger White, Headstone Lane, Harrow HA2 6JN
101535.510@compuserve.com

Names and trains

In *Railwatch* 146, John Stretton makes a valid point regarding the use of the extremely irritating Americanism "train station". In response to the equally irritating editors' note, you do however catch a train at a railway station!

John Thompson, Harcourt Road, London E15 3DX
john4480@gmail.com

Stations are part of the complete entity, the railway, as are the trains, so railway station is the correct description. We must ensure rail terms are used correctly. Pandering to sloppy usage or slang invariably undermines any argument and weakens our cause.

David Bosomworth
dabos16@btinternet.com

We should continue to use the term we have always used and not rush to ape America. I seem to remember waking up

one day in 2002 or thereabouts to find that our noble and so-patriotic media had decided almost overnight that we were to be brain-washed into using the American term, "train station." Why, I cannot imagine. Shame on you, *Railwatch*, for defending the use of a foreign term.

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

I object to "train station". I think it is a human right to go to a railway station to catch a train and I will not give it up! After all where do you catch a plane, at a plane station? Hardly. Or a ship, at a ship station? Not likely!

Peter Holmes, Lavendon Road, Birmingham B42 1QG
holmesnet@yahoo.co.uk

As railway travel is by trains to the exclusion of other methods of transport, the terminals for trains should correctly be called railway stations because railway travel is the form of transport unique to them. Use of "train station" is a misunderstanding of English rather than a term imported from the USA.

D G M Young, Aspley Court, Bedford MK40 2UH
d.g.young11@btinternet.com

I share John Stretton's dislike of the phrase train station, but note your editorial comment. Also odd is "railway replacement service" when it is surely the trains that are being replaced, not the railway.

David Pearson, Windermere Avenue, Wembley HA9 8RY
pearsonwinder@waitrose.com

East West zig-zag

The difficulties of reinstating the Bedford-Cambridge section of the East West Rail route are well known. The trackbed has been built on in some places while various solutions have been proposed. But I feel Nigel Watt's proposal in *Railwatch* 146 has fallen into the trap of joining points on a map without taking account of the local topography.

His new link from Ridgmont or Lidlington to the Midland main line would require four or two miles respectively of new line requiring a substantial tunnel under the Greensand Hills.

That would be followed by a zig-zag route south down the main line and eight miles of new track east through pristine Hertfordshire countryside to Stevenage, probably provoking howls of protest and damaging Railfuture's reputation. The route would then go north-east to Cambridge. This would all add many miles to the rail route and make it uncompetitive with the express road the Department for Transport is contemplating. By

contrast, the Bedford-Shefford-Hitchin-Cambridge route on mainly existing trackbed would be shorter.

John Davis, Fairmead Avenue, Harpenden AL5 5UD
davis.john@mypostoffice.co.uk

Bedford protests

I was annoyed by Nigel Watt's idea in *Railwatch* 146 that East West Rail should miss Bedford in favour of a route from either Lidlington or Ridgmont to Luton Airport and Stevenage. His route would make journey times longer between Oxford and Cambridge and there are no guarantees of extra paths on the Midland main line to facilitate additional services, as well as the added construction costs they entail. Bedford has a vibrant economy and a rising population and to deny it this important rail link would be scandalous. Taking the shortest possible route through Bedford would produce the best journey times and reduce construction costs. So what if Luton has an airport or Stevenage has a bigger population? Bedford deserves all the benefits of East West Rail.

Colin Franklin, Curlew Crescent, Brickhill, Bedford MK41 7HY
colin_franklin1@hotmail.co.uk

Discount idea

May I offer a way of increasing Railfuture's membership? There may be several ways to attract more to our ranks and many of our members, like myself, are over 60. Should we offer a discounted membership to new members and those who have lapsed for over three months? Perhaps £10 per year would produce a good response.

Are we also able to secure sponsorship from a popular publisher which may wish to offer a voucher against annual magazine subscription or book sales? Are rail companies able or willing to accept a voucher offered to all members as many of us do quite long hours promoting the rail system, receive little reward and then pay rail fares?

I am also a member of the Campaign for Real Ale, whose members receive vouchers from a major pub group almost equal to their CAMRA subscription.

Graham Lund, Rydal, Cumbria LA22 9RL
graham.lund@hotmail.co.uk

All-electric railway

I am unhappy that Railfuture seems to accept bi-mode trains and that Southern is investigating conversion of some of its three-car Electrostars to



Picture: KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION

India's new high line in the Himalayas

This 1,351 metre long steel-arched bridge over the Chenab river is expected to be completed this month and will be the highest rail bridge in the world, according to India's rail ministry. It is 359 metres above the river. The project links Jammu and Kashmir to the rest of India and has involved the construction of several other bridges and tunnels. The £64 million bridge will be crucial in completing a 214 mile long rail route through the Himalayan mountains from Jammu to Baramulla, via Udhampur and Srinagar. It will also carry a road. The project

was first conceived in 2003 but re-started in 2012. It is not yet clear when the whole project will be completed although it has been reported that the date could have slipped to 2020. The river valley is prone to high winds so Norway-based Force Technology Laboratory conducted wind tunnel tests to ensure the bridge can resist wind speeds of up to 160 mph and temperatures of minus 20C. Special precautions are being taken against the threat of terrorism and the area is also susceptible to earthquakes.

bi-mode, which you seem to be in support of. I believe all railways should be electric and that Southern would be wasting money if it went ahead with this stupid idea. I am against diesel power full stop and urge Railfuture to support an all-electric railway network.

James Knight, Church Road, Basildon, Essex SS14 2LD

Old Oak opportunity

Given that there are plans for a new interchange station at Old Oak Common and proposals for a station at Old Oak Common Lane on the North London line, a very useful enhancement to the suburban railways in West London would be to divert some Richmond trains on the North London line at South

Acton Junction to terminate at a reinstated platform at Kew Bridge Station. This would require only a reconstructed platform linked to the existing platform 1 at Kew Bridge and a new cross-over and associated signalling to bring southbound trains into the northbound platform. This proposal depends on how many non-passenger trains use the northbound spur at Kew Bridge. The scheme would provide further destinations on the London Overground avoiding changes at Waterloo and provide a connection to River Thames services from Kew Pier.

This surely would be one of the cheapest schemes on the network to provide real additional connectivity.

John G Groves, Dursley, Glos
john@groves.eclipse.co.uk

Mission impossible

I was delighted to read about the success of the Hackney Interchange, linking Hackney Central and Hackney Downs stations. I suggested this very facility to the then WAGN in 1996 and was told that it was impossible to provide. I now

intend to write to the Mayor of London to propose a similar scheme between Seven Sisters and South Tottenham Overground which is even closer and would boost usage on the GOBLIN, the Barking to Gospel Oak line. This line would also benefit from an Underground link to Harringay on the Piccadilly line if a new station could be built in Green Lanes, but this may be too ambitious. The single freight line from the GOBLIN to the London-Hertford line should also be upgraded and passenger services introduced.

A mini-crossrail could also be provided if the link between Finsbury Park and Highgate (low level) was reinstated. Crouch End is desperate for a proper rail link, as is Stroud Green, and the former's platform is still in situ as is most of the trackbed. The icing on the cake would be to run passenger services from Finsbury Park to Highbury as part of the Overground, using the line now used for freight.

Rod Enderby, London N14
sps9y@yahoo.co.uk

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

◆◆◆◆ Opinions do not necessarily reflect Railfuture policies. Letters may be edited

Tram-train comes to Sheffield and could breathe life into axed lines



UNVEILING: Complete with commemorative bow, a Vossloh Citylink tram-train emerges from the Supertram Nunnery depot

Words and pictures by Paul Abell
paul.abell@pobroadband.co.uk

The arrival of Britain's first tram-train in December could herald a transport revolution in Britain. If successful, the tram-trains could be used in other areas and could even clear the way for former branch lines to be reopened. The pilot scheme will operate between Sheffield and Rotherham from next year.

Seven new Vossloh units will run on existing tram lines from Sheffield to Meadowhall and Tinsley, then, thanks to a new 400-metre connection, will continue on heavy track to Rotherham.

The pilot scheme moved a step closer in December when Transport Minister Andrew Jones officially unveiled the first Vossloh Citylink tram-train at the Stagecoach Supertram depot in Sheffield.

This step forward occurred nearly a decade after the tram-train pilot was first announced (at that time it was planned for the Penistone line), though such arrangements have been in use in Germany for more than three decades, but it is encouraging to see concrete progress at last.

At Tinsley the tram-train will dive under the M1 motorway viaduct to join the predominantly freight line from Woodburn Junction to Rotherham.

In Rotherham it joins the existing passenger services of Northern Rail through Rotherham Central station, then continues along the line towards Aldwarke Junction and Swinton to reach a

terminus by the Parkgate retail park. The expected journey time for the whole nine-mile journey is around 25 minutes, but the need to avoid existing paths on the National Rail network means that the three tram-trains per hour will not always offer passengers an exact 20-minute service frequency.

Officials in Britain have spent years discussing the idea of tram-trains. Now things are moving. In the words of the Transport and Works Act Order approved in November 2015 to permit the construction of the 400-metre Tinsley Chord linking the Supertram tracks to Network Rail metals: "The aim of the pilot scheme is to demonstrate the costs and benefits of operating a standard continental design of tram-train on the National Rail network, including the potential for lower infrastructure capital and maintenance costs and the level of passenger demand and satisfaction."

In particular there are considered to be enough differences between German and British main line track for the lessons learned in German tram-train practice to be checked in British conditions.

"If the pilot is successful, it opens the way for tram-trains to be introduced in other parts of the country," said Steve Edwards, executive director of the South Yorkshire passenger transport executive.

Procurement for the pilot includes the seven Vossloh Citylinks, of which the first three are provisionally earmarked for



CRITICAL CONNECTION: Tinsley will become the link between tram and train. The pole beyond Sheffield Supertram 120 in our picture marks the point where the newly constructed Tinsley Chord will take the tram-train under the M1 motorway and on to Rotherham

strengthening current Supertram services, and the other four for the tram-train service.

A programme of widespread rail replacement on the Supertram street-running sections has given compatibility with the expected tram-train wheel profile, but having four cars dedicated to the Parkgate service will simplify any modifications to the profile that may be found to be desirable.

The seven new trams are fitted for dual voltage operation, using both the 750V DC of Supertram and the 25kV AC standard for main line overhead electrification, which may be extended to the lines through Rotherham in the next few years.

Meanwhile the 25kV capability of each vehicle is being tested in Spain before it is despatched

from the works at Valencia. The unveiling on 10 December revealed 399201 to be a smart three-section vehicle, slightly longer than the existing Supertrams at 37.2m, with 88 seats, eight tip-ups and room for around 150 standing passengers. It weighs in at 64 tonnes, and in mid-January was making trial trips around the depot yard at Nunnery, pending the completion of the last work on the track to enable it to run trials, initially between the depot and Meadowhall.

The second vehicle is not planned to be despatched from Spain until March, giving time for any immediate modifications that might be found necessary, then it is intended to send one car a month to Sheffield. The first three Citylinks should be in service on the Sheffield city

routes by this summer, while the completion of the Tinsley Chord, planned for Easter, electrification through Rotherham and the new facilities at Rotherham Central and Parkgate by the winter is expected to pave the way for public services to Parkgate to start early next year, marking the commencement of the two-year pilot period.

The present chaotic lack of co-ordination of local public transport outside London is borne out graphically by the spectacular new bridge at Tinsley carrying the parallel bus rapid transit route over the tram-train route.

However the tram-train route gives the possibility of extensions to serve communities past Rotherham such as Kilnhurst, Swinton and Mexborough.

Poor road links in the area mean that such a rail service into the centre of Sheffield would have an advantage over buses.

At the unveiling of 399201 Mr Jones was impressed by the vehicle. While pointing out that problems were likely to arise during the pilot, he did not rule out other tram-train schemes being authorised before the end of the two-year pilot once any problems that may arise have been resolved.

This raises the question of what other routes might be suitable for tram-train operation.

The need to make the vehicles compatible with both main line and tramway operation means that they are more expensive than conventional trams, but they offer the attractive option

of street running into a city centre. This option is particularly attractive where the main line station is a little way out of the city centre, especially if there is the opportunity for tram-trains to run on to an existing tramway network, or where there are capacity problems.

The Harrogate-Leeds City and Marple-Manchester Piccadilly services have been suggested for tram-train operation in such circumstances, with a relatively inexpensive rail connection to Leeds Bradford Airport from the Harrogate line being strongly supported locally.

Another circumstance in which tram-train might replace a cancelled railway link to an airport would be as a substitute for the erstwhile Glasgow Airport Rail Link.

The line from Glasgow and Paisley to Gourock and Wemyss Bay could hardly be any closer to the end of the runway, while the flexibility of a tramway route through the airport site would avoid the cost of infrastructure relocations which was said to be a major factor in the cancellation of the GARL scheme.

The German experience of the past three decades suggests that successful adoption of tram-trains can give significant improvements in connectivity at relatively low cost. The potential in Britain is significant.

■ Paul Abell is a Railfuture vice president and recently retired as editor of Sheffield-based *Today's Railways UK*.

TRAMS TO TACKLE POLLUTION

Railfuture president Christian Wolmar told MPs that trams had made slow progress in Britain because both the Department for Transport and the Treasury had a very limited view of their advantages.

They did not fully consider the wider benefits of schemes. Christian made his remarks at a February meeting of the all-party parliamentary light rail group at the House of Commons.

He said that as a result, bus-based systems are often chosen because of their initial low cost without any understanding of the transformational nature of trams. Christian said his London mayoral campaign had shown

him the importance the public attached to clean air.

He warned MPs that the clean air issue is not going away and measures will have to be taken to reduce car use in central London and other cities.

Trams are clearly a way forward as they can both replace large numbers of buses on heavily trafficked routes and attract people away from their cars.

Manchester and Nottingham, with its workplace parking levy, have shown that tram schemes can be funded and successfully introduced. Now is the opportunity for other cities and city regions to follow suit.

MEANWHILE IN DENMARK



Picture: ERLAND EGEFORS

ON TRACK: Aarhus gets its trams back after a 45-year gap

Track laying is under way in Aarhus to create the first modern light rail route in Denmark, reports Erland Egefors

Most of the work has taken place in the countryside but now the area around the rail station is seeing construction work.

In the city, Denmark's second largest, water pipes and cables have been diverted.

The £280 million light rail project will create approximately 66 miles of light rail line, serving 51 stops in the Aarhus area. Eight-metre high poles for the overhead wires are placed between the tracks every 24 metres.

Track laying started in January with a steel frame and steel trestles to carry the tracks, embedded in concrete so buses can also run over the tram tracks.

Phase 1 is expected to open in spring next year.

Two existing single-track heavy rail lines running into the



The 60 mph Stadler Tango which will operate on the planned extension to Grenaa

city's main rail station Aarhus Hovedbanegård will be used with seven miles of new double-track light rail line passing through the most densely populated part of Aarhus.

Two existing local lines are being converted for LRT operation without changing their alignment include the 43 mile line stretching north to Grenaa and the 18 mile line running south to Odder. Both the lines will be upgraded and electrified.

The German-Italian consortium of Stadler Pankow and Ansaldo STS was awarded the contract to build and equip the first stage.



INTERIOR: Plenty of handrails for standing passengers

Severnside

By Nigel Bray nigel.bray@railfuture.org.uk

At last, a link between Yeovil's stations

For 47 years, Yeovil's two railways had no regular connecting trains. Then on 14 December 2015, South West Trains introduced an experimental Monday-Friday service, linking Yeovil Junction on the Exeter-Waterloo line with Yeovil Pen Mill on the Bristol-Weymouth route. Trains which SWT had up to then run to maintain diversionary route knowledge have become passenger services, while some Waterloo-Yeovil Junction services have been extended to or from Pen Mill. As a result, Bruton now has a direct London service (one each way) for the first time since the early 1960s which also calls at Castle Cary, Frome and Westbury. Unfortunately, trains cannot combine at Yeovil Junction, so the scope for connections from Pen Mill and beyond is limited. In many cases, a faster journey between Weymouth and Exeter is possible via Castle Cary, although a missed connection there could leave a passenger stranded for hours because of irregular stopping patterns. By contrast, if a train connection across Yeovil is missed, there is the option of the inter-station bus. The reopened 1.5 mile line is also the first in Somerset to regain a regular, all-year passenger service. A very positive report in the *Western Daily Press* for 15 December, headed "Joined up rail thinking arrives at last," included calls from Railfuture for morning and weekend trains to be added to the afternoon and evening trains. The same article quoted an SWT spokesman as saying that further improvements depended on more infrastructure.

Three services should be coordinated

Railfuture Severnside was represented at a meeting in January hosted by Railfuture Wessex to coordinate the unified Railfuture response to the South Western franchise consultation. Input from Severnside favoured integration of Great Western's Swindon-Westbury and Westbury-Salisbury services with SWT's Salisbury-Eastleigh-Romsey loop. A precedent for through services involving two train operators was the Penzance-Waterloo/Brighton service which was a joint venture between SWT and the former Wessex Trains earlier this century. The proposal to combine three existing services into one has been developed by our corporate member TransWilts Community Interest Company in conjunction with Swindon & Wiltshire local enterprise partnership. Benefits would include direct trains between Wiltshire and Southampton Airport, reduced occupation of platforms at Westbury and Salisbury and better rolling stock utilisation, taking advantage of the planned cascade of class 158 trains to the Swindon-Westbury route in 2017.

Station reopening plan gets air time

In a Radio Bristol interview on 19 January, Railfuture's Bruce Williamson and Bristol's Assistant Mayor Councillor Simon Cook discussed the recent petition calling for the reopening of Ashton Gate station on the Portishead line. A site has been identified at Barons Close, near the Bristol City football stadium. Bruce said money was always an obstacle to rail reopenings but could somehow be found for schemes of little benefit such as MetroBus. Mr Cook said there was currently no business case for the station because consultants had predicted only 67,000 passengers per year, excluding football traffic. To serve football matches, the station

would require a 200-metre platform, which he claimed would cost £10 million. Bruce replied that recent experience of reopenings, particularly in Scotland, had shown official forecasts of passenger numbers to be woefully underestimated, resulting in additional and longer trains having to be put on almost as soon as lines had opened. He agreed it was important not to delay MetroWest Phase 1, which included Portishead reopening scheduled for 2019. The recorded interview is available on the Railfuture website at: www.railfuture.org.uk/Railfuture+in+the+news.

West Midlands

Walsall-Wolverhampton reopening

Railfuture West Midlands met officials in November from Walsall transport department who want to see improved rail services. Like Railfuture, Walsall Council makes its top priority a regular, frequent service on a reopened Wolverhampton-Walsall line. With stations at Willenhall and Darlaston, the line would probably produce enough passengers to cover running costs. We also met Wolverhampton officials who see this as important as well though not their top priority. We will be contacting MPs and councillors to seek support for the rail reopening. We urge Railfuture members to contact their MPs and councillors to ask them to support reopening Walsall-Wolverhampton.

Waiting for Bromsgrove

After delays because of land contamination problems and high winds preventing installation of a footbridge, the rebuilt Bromsgrove station is expected to open this spring. A formal opening is expected in July. Electrification is now scheduled for completion in April 2017 when the train service to Bromsgrove will jump from one an hour to four an hour in each direction.

New stations but few trains

A single-car class 153 is serving the new station at Coventry Arena which opened in January 2016 along with Bermuda Park, although London Midland has managed to double this up on event days. Kenilworth station is expected to open later in the year. Centro believes a station could be built for £25 million at Aldridge on the Walsall-Sutton Coldfield line.

Rugby Parkway station

The *Rugby Advertiser* has reported that a new station could be built in Hillmorton on the Northampton loop of the West Coast main line. It has been given the green light by Warwickshire County Council. The scheme could cost nearly £11 million and could be completed in December 2019. The station will serve 6,200 homes which could add 15,000 people to Rugby's population.

Free wi-fi in franchise extension

The Government agreed in December that Govia could continue to run the London Midland franchise until October 2017 with some enhanced services. By the end of the franchise, free wi-fi should be provided on all services from London to Northampton, Birmingham, Crewe, Stoke and Liverpool. Smart ticketing, based on Centro's existing Swift scheme, must be developed.

Out with toilets on local trains

Trains across Birmingham and the West Midlands could have seats and toilets removed

to reduce overcrowding. The Department for Transport believes problems caused by a dramatic increase in passenger numbers could be eased by providing fewer seats and toilets to allow wider aisles and more space to stand. The ideas are included in a consultation document about the future of the West Midlands rail franchise after 2017. Rail companies will be asked to look at options for adapting the current train fleet on some shorter distance services. Railfuture West Midlands and Centro oppose this measure and think there are other modifications that could give more space for commuters.

Coventry rail action group

The new Coventry rail action group is up and running, the inspiration of branch committee member Michael Tombs. Members can contact the group at info@covrag.org.uk.

Railfuture West Midlands contact:

westmidlands@railfuture.org.uk

Wessex

By David Brace david.brace@railfuture.org.uk

Railfuture input for Wessex franchise

Railfuture Wessex has taken the lead role in coordinating the Railfuture response to the Department for Transport consultation on the South Western franchise that is expected to go out to tender in April this year. Railfuture Wessex staged a meeting to bring together the specific views of each branch and these were submitted to Railfuture's policy group at the end of January.

Station adopters join forces

Bruce Duncan, our West of England representative, has been very successful in bringing together the various station adopters between Tisbury and Crewkerne to form a user group as a prelude to an application for community rail partnership status. If this is successful, it gives recognition by the current operator South West Trains and possible access to funding for further development.

ORR statistics are put to good use

As many *Railwatch* readers know, the Office of Rail and Road publishes statistics for station usage each year. The findings are based on ticket sales recorded in the Lennon system. This is suspected of under-representing actual usage, but short of carrying out surveys on trains and at stations, it is often the only estimate we have. In the long term, trains are being built which will be able to produce statistics of people carried, based on the varying weight of the train as it proceeds. For several years, Railfuture Wessex analysed ORR information and compared it nationally and with previous years. For 2014-15, our area has shown an average annual growth of 2.2%, less than half the national figure. Of the 105 stations in our area, the top ten represent nearly 50% of total usage. The bottom ten account for only 1.5%. There is a big difference between our busiest and quietest stations. Southampton Central is busiest station and busiest interchange. One anomaly is that Portsmouth is represented by three stations - Harbour, Portsmouth & Southsea and Fratton. Portsmouth's annual total is 6 million passengers, putting the city as a whole in second place to Southampton with 6.4 million. www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+Branch

500,000 and rising on the Borders success railway

By Chris Austin

christopher.austin@railfuture.org.uk
The Borders Railway passed the milestone of carrying half a million passengers at the end of January, after less than five months operation, against a first year total forecast of 650,000.

Significantly, the 500,000th passenger was from Selkirk, which is six miles from the current terminus of the Borders Railway at Tweedbank.

It illustrates the importance of the line to other Borders towns and villages which use Tweedbank as their railhead.

Indeed reports from Melrose, just two miles beyond the Tweedbank buffer stops, are of a 40% increase in guests at local hotels and restaurants, while the numbers visiting Sir Walter Scott's home at Abbotsford by train have led to extended opening hours at this popular attraction.

Similar stories from Galashiels also point to more trade in local shops. All this is so important in demonstrating very directly and powerfully the impact of the railway on the local economy.

We really need more evidence of this beneficial impact of new stations and lines on the regions they serve. If you have collected evidence of this recently, do let us know.

Initial evidence seems to be that the demand on Scotland's new railway is well balanced, with many passengers travelling in from the Borders being matched by those from the capital travelling out for sightseeing, walking or touring in areas previously much more difficult to access by public transport.

Anecdotal evidence suggests more passengers are travelling the length of the line and rather fewer than forecast from the Edinburgh suburban stations, but demand from



REOPENING DELAY: Vegetation clearance was under way on Bristol's Portishead line in December, in preparation for reopening. But work now been delayed following the Hendy review which has also rescheduled all the electrification schemes around the network

the latter will grow. At present, there is not much room on these very busy trains to shoehorn more passengers in anyway. More rolling stock is going to be required sooner rather than later, and these stunning figures are proving powerful in strengthening the case for extending the line south to Melrose, St Boswells and Hawick and perhaps beyond.

After the pause in some Network Rail investment schemes last year and the Hendy report in December, their problems were multiplied in January by the very severe damage to the national network with the onset of the winter storms.

The extended closure of the West Coast Main Line south of Carstairs (oh, if only we had the Waverley route as an alternative!) has taken up scarce resources. So has the breach of the South Eastern Main Line between Folkestone and Dover where the sea wall has been extensively damaged by tidal scour and



DAM: Engineers built a temporary dam in January round two piers of Lamington viaduct on the West Coast main line in Scotland after the line was undermined by floods. The line through Lamington was closed for seven weeks

beach lowering. There were other temporary line closures as well. So we are just about to enter a period of slowdown, with extended timescales for existing schemes and some reluctance to initiate new schemes until the current backlog of infrastructure

work has been sorted out. The Hendy report is a sobering but realistic reminder that Network Rail's resources are limited, and not just by money but by capability and the very specialist skills required for major projects. There is no easy fix for this, and for Railfuture this means continuing to raise the profile of our priority schemes to make sure they are not overlooked as work programmes are revised to match what is actually achievable.

On the plus side, the route studies programme has at last resumed with the publication of the draft Scotland study for consultation before Christmas, and it was good to see such a big programme of new work successfully completed over the Christmas/New Year period.

The line should go at least as far as Hawick because that's the biggest town in the area, and travelling south to England isn't very easy so it would be great if it went all the way through to Carlisle

Andy Swales from Selkirk who, with Sarah Eno, took the total number of passengers on the new line to over 500,000

Picture: DAVID GRADWELL

Picture: NETWORK RAIL

North East

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

■ ■ Railfuture makes fresh connections

Encouraged by the example of our chair Trevor Watson, Railfuture North East representatives attend meetings and presentations throughout the area. The most recent was a meeting with a representative of the rolling stock leasing company Eversholt Rail, which was expected to be taken over by C K Investments of Hong Kong in January 2016. Railfuture representatives also expect productive liaison with the new franchise holders Arriva (Northern Rail) and First Group (TransPennine). The new franchises start on 1 April 2016, shortly after Railfuture North East's AGM in March.

■ ■ Morpeth benefits from new franchises

Morpeth will benefit from both new franchises, a reward for the campaigners of the South East Northumberland Rail User Group (SENUG). From 2019, the town should have direct TransPennine trains to Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool and an improved service to Edinburgh. The added bonus will be direct trains to Manchester Airport. From 2017, Arriva will introduce an evening and Sunday service on Northern's Cramlington-Morpeth line. Arriva will also work with Northumberland County Council to reintroduce passenger services to Ashington. Arriva will also modernise its train fleet. By October 2018, train maker CAF should have delivered 281 carriages (artist's impression below) to enable outdated and unpopular Pacer trains to be replaced in a deal financed by Eversholt Rail.



Picture: CAF

With Arriva operating both train and bus services in Northumberland, rail users want to see co-ordination of services at Morpeth and Cramlington. Dennis Fancett, chair of SENUG, has pointed out that of the three companies which bid for Northern and the three which bid for TransPennine, only Arriva and First took the opportunity to meet SENUG. Intensive discussions with First about the market for semi-fast services at Morpeth were appreciated by the company and have proved fruitful. SENUG has now set its sights on improving main line services to the town. The Mayor of Morpeth joined SENUG at a meeting with the Department for Transport about the proposed CrossCountry direct award.

www.senrug.co.uk

■ ■ Station improvements

Cramlington has new information displays and Morpeth has nine new seats, but has no toilets when the booking office is closed. Trevor Watson reports that the Greater Morpeth Development Trust has completed a survey of rail users' views on the proposed £1.5 million

upgrade scheme to provide space for small businesses, a café and a remodelled booking office – 90% are in favour. www.gmdt.net

■ ■ Rails along the coast

Coastliners and other rail users on Teesside welcome the Northern Connect idea to link Middlesbrough to Carlisle with faster trains. They want it to revive the direct route via Stillington and Ferryhill.

■ ■ Airport connections

A prominent member of the North East local enterprise partnership is complaining about the long time taken by train from Middlesbrough to Newcastle Airport, which involves a change on to the Metro at Newcastle Central. The current refurbishment of that station ought to improve access for people with luggage. At present there is one staircase with no down escalator to the concourse and only one lift from the National Rail level to Metro platforms. There is a frequent Metro service but little space for luggage and the journey with 12 stops takes 24 minutes. It is unlikely main line trains will ever provide a service to the airport over existing tracks so Railfuture North East advocates a surface rail link between main line and airport.

■ ■ Tyne Valley line suffers from the deluge

The flooding in December caused a landslide at Haydon Bridge. No sooner was the line reopened in January than rain caused a further landslide of mud, rocks, shale and trees on to the line at Farnley, Corbridge. The line had to be closed for weeks. Carlisle services terminated at Hexham and trains from Newcastle at Prudhoe. Extra buses were provided.

Thames Valley

By Martin Smith
martin.smith@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Electrification changes

Great Western plans for Thames Valley are being revised, following delays to electrification. GWR regional development manager Tom Pierpoint explained the background to Railfuture Thames Valley in November. Priorities and completion dates are having to be revised. The top priority now is to complete electrification from London to Swindon or Bristol Parkway, so the new Hitachi bi-mode trains can take over from diesel inter-city 125s, while electric units can take over local services to Didcot. By 2019 Crossrail should be running four trains per hour terminating at Maidenhead and two trains to Reading. GWR will run two trains each hour between Reading and Paddington calling at Twyford, Maidenhead, Slough and Ealing Broadway. The Reading-Basingstoke electrification will be re-phased so electric trains can operate, serving new stations at Reading Green Park and Chineham and still keep to the same overall timings. It is intended that the Henley and Windsor branches will be electrified, but not the Marlow and Greenford lines, because four-car electric trains will be too long. A scissors crossover at Bourne End will enable a half-hourly service to run on the Marlow line, without the need for passengers to change at Bourne End.

■ ■ Oxford relegation and rebuild

Didcot-Oxford electrification has been demoted to the lowest priority, and we are told it will be completed in 2019 or 2020. Rebuilding of Oxford station with two through island platforms, widening the bridge over Botley

Road, possible quadrupling to Kennington and re-signalling, is now pencilled in for 2024. It would not make sense to electrify the existing layout and then reconstruct it a few years later. We should not be surprised if electrification is postponed to 2024. Nothing is said about services in the interim period. Fast services to Oxford and the North Cotswold line can be operated with bi-modes, but will there be a diesel shuttle service between Oxford and Didcot connecting with electric services?

■ ■ Hanborough railhead for Witney

The number of passenger trips at Hanborough exceeded 243,000 in the year 2014-15. The numbers have doubled in four years and trebled in the past seven years. Hanborough is effectively the railhead for Witney and the car park is always full, with many cars parked in the road. We expect some people will switch to Oxford Parkway for trains to London, but the volume of car traffic on the narrow and bendy A4095 road is a problem. An hourly bus service between Hanborough and Witney is not an attractive option if the connecting train is running late. The last train from London with a bus connection is the 17.22 from Paddington. Oxford Bus Users UK is calling for a half-hourly bus service throughout the day and a later bus connection in the evening.

■ ■ East-West Rail contract awarded

Railfuture Thames Valley welcomed the award in December of the contract for designing and building East-West Rail to the consortium of Atkins, Laing O'Rourke and VolkerRail. Construction is supposed to be completed in 2019, but there are fears that the date may slip by three to seven years. Phase 1, Bicester to Milton Keynes, may be completed in 2019, but Phase 2, Bletchley to Bedford, and Phase 3, Claydon Junction to Princes Risborough, may not be finished until the 2020s.

■ ■ Railfuture at Oxford Green Fair

Railfuture Thames Valley had a stall at the Oxford Green Fair where we presented the case for rail to a largely sympathetic audience. Some Greens opposed to railways because of alleged harm to wildlife still need to be persuaded.

Lincolnshire

By Don Peacock don.peacock@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ In memory of campaigner Brian

Railfuture Lincolnshire has had a bench installed at Crowle station, in memory of Brian Hastings, Railfuture Lincolnshire's chairman for 20 years. Dedicated to a "renowned local public transport campaigner", the bench was unveiled in a ceremony in February was attended by Northern Rail stakeholder manager Pete Myers.

■ ■ Diesel trains shortage unresolved

The transfer of four class 170 trains to Chiltern Railways, which would have exacerbated a critical shortage of diesel units in Lincolnshire and the north of England, has been delayed until July. It is not clear how First TransPennine will cope with the shortage after that.

■ ■ Buses take strain during resignalling

Railfuture Lincolnshire has been monitoring the bus service that replaced trains during the rail resignalling programme in the north of the county. In general the bus substitution worked, although in some areas, the signs were not adequate. The scheme involved signals and level crossings over 60 miles of track between Scunthorpe and Cleethorpes.

Unrepentant road lobby back in driving seat

Car and lorry companies which for years have been delivering danger and pollution are back in the driving seat of transport policy. Despite public concerns of pollution and road safety, lobbyists have cosied up to politicians to get them to subsidise their inefficient form of transport.

London Mayor Boris Johnson is promoting one of the worst road plans, tunnels under the river Thames to the east of London, when what is needed is better public transport links in the area.

He wants to build the longest road tunnel in the world "to combat traffic congestion" even though we all know road building worsens traffic problems by encouraging vehicles use.

He seems determined to clear the way for a predicted 60% increase in traffic, instead of making public transport improvements to cope with a growing population.

Mr Johnson's northern tunnel would run from the A40 at Park Royal in west London to the A12 at Hackney Wick, already a polluted traffic horror spot.

His southern tunnel would run from the A4 at Chiswick in the west to the A13 at Beckton in the east. He also wants a series of small tunnels.

Meanwhile the Department for Transport plans to build a lower Thames tunnel linking Essex and Kent to relieve the existing road bridge and tunnel at Dartford and to add to its £15 billion road building programme.

This is a "back from the dead" version of the British Road Federation's plan of 30 years ago, which if implemented will burn fuel and spew out pollution.

It will also undermine rail freight's chances of carrying loads through to the Channel Tunnel. A rail crossing from Barking to Thamesmead would be a more reasonable approach.

But of course, a temporary return to "cheap" oil has allowed the road builders to dream about an unsustainable future again.

The DfT is peddling the old myth that roads are "key to prosperity", rather than degrading quality of life and failing to regenerate economies in the way public transport investment does.

The short public consultation on the lower Thames crossing closes on 28 March giving many people little time to respond. The Government should be taking more action to reduce road traffic. Already 500,000 foreign vehicles have failed to pay their Dartford Crossing tolls in one year.

Scrapping car tax discs has led to a loss of £80 million in unpaid tax to the Treasury and doubling



Cartoon: MAX SPRING

Road tunnel threat to the Alps

SWISS HELLHOLE: The new 35-mile £6.5 billion Gotthard base rail tunnel through the Alps (NEAT) opens in June with the stated aim of reducing German-Italian lorry traffic through Switzerland. It is now being undermined by plans to build a second Gotthard road tunnel which campaigners say is absurd, will make Switzerland a European transit hell, attract two million extra lorries and undermine rail freight through the new Gotthard tunnel. The Swiss public were voting on the scheme in a referendum on 28 February as Railwatch went to press.

of the numbers of untaxed cars. Government encouragement of car makers has also led to an increase of 600,000 cars on England's roads in one year.

It is also spending £500,000 to study building an express road to compete with the not-yet-built East West Rail link.

Housing dependent on new roads are being encouraged, with work starting in Northamptonshire on the £36 million A45 Flore and Weedon bypass.

Weedon once had a rail station and there are proposals for a Northampton Parkway station. Could Northampton County Council, Daventry District Council or the local enterprise partnership be persuaded of the merits of a Weedon Parkway?

Road charging, implemented in some more enlightened countries, is virtually dead in Britain and lorries continue to fail to pay their proper track costs. Road hauliers are even claiming compensation from the Scottish Government for the closure of the Forth Road bridge. The Government is almost certain to ignore research by the Royal Academy

of Engineering which reported in December that road charging was the "best instrument at the disposal of policymakers" and could be promoted to achieve an "efficient level of road use" by encouraging drivers to choose alternative modes of transport, share vehicles or travel at off-peak periods.

The academy also suggested more parking controls at pinch-points, near road junctions and schools. However, the Government has banned local councils making profits from parking charges, meaning that surpluses are used to manage traffic.

The use of CCTV "spy cars" to catch motorists on double yellow lines has also been banned other than in areas where cars cause a safety risk, such as by schools.

Highways England has also reported that its "smart" motorway scheme has led to a 10% increase in traffic in one year on London's M25 road. Very smart!

To increase the number of vehicles on the road even more, Mr Johnson's deputy mayor for transport Isabel Dedring is said to be "keen" on driverless vehi-

cles, good news for Google which has failed to get them accepted in California, but dubious news for the rest of us. Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin announced in February that the British Government will invest £20 million in driverless car projects in Britain. Even with electric cars, without toxic fumes at the point of use and "invisible" climate damaging emissions, more cars bring noise, disturbance, danger, sacrifice of open space for parking, unnecessarily longer and more inconvenient walking detours at junctions, intrusive fencing and corraling of pedestrians around crossings and junctions, hostile high over-bridges or underground tunnels, together with pedestrian crossing times reduced to suit the "needs" of the motorist rather than those on foot.

Road promoters wriggle out of considering the impact of mass motoring in urbanised areas and politicians fail to penalise the perpetrators of such policies.

The Government's reaction to being found guilty of breaching European Union pollution limits has been to spend £20 million to cut bus emissions in 18 areas.

The same Government is allowing massive cuts to rural buses throughout Britain and encouraging lorries and private motoring. Some "experts" are suggesting that to cope with the health scandal of diesel cars, people should switch to petrol cars!

Who is paying the piper?

The Institute of Economic Affairs, which refuses to say where it obtains its funds, produced an anti-rail report in February. The IEA has been described as composed of "fanatical market groupies" and has called for rail closures and total deregulation. To see another view, it is worth reading Philip Mirowski's book *Never Let a Serious Crisis go to Waste*, published by Verso in London in 2014.

◆◆◆◆ Rail User Express can be downloaded from www.railfuture.org.uk

Wales

By Rowland Pittard
rowland.pittard@railfuturewales.org.uk

Great Western Railway withdrawals

Great Western has withdrawn two Saturday services serving South Wales, the 07.58 Swansea to Paddington and the 19.15 Paddington to Swansea. West Wales passengers are concerned that they have lost their first service to Reading and Paddington and now have to wait at Swansea for the later 08.28 service. Passengers from South Wales have also lost a direct connection at Bristol Parkway into the hourly CrossCountry service to Scotland and the North East of England. South Wales continues to be served by an hourly service from London on Saturday evenings until 20.45 (22.00 to Cardiff) but passengers are concerned that fewer advance purchase tickets will be available.

Fishguard Harbour

Stena has applied for planning permission for the redevelopment of facilities at Fishguard Harbour including improved access for articulated lorries. At present Fishguard Harbour station gives direct access for pedestrians from train to ferry, the only remaining ferry port in Wales to have such facilities. The development proposals involve the closure of the line from Fishguard and Goodwick to Fishguard Harbour. A bus would replace the train for rail passengers.

Rugby World Cup inquiry falls flat

The Welsh Assembly's enterprise and business committee carried out an inquiry into transport planning for the 2015 Rugby World Cup matches in Cardiff. There was significant queueing and train overcrowding. The effectiveness of public transport, including buses and taxis, and information provision was under examination. The inquiry, however, did not take evidence from passengers about delays and inconvenience but concentrated on transport operators and event organisers. The committee's report was published on 26 October 2015 and is deficient in many respects.

Future of Welsh rail infrastructure

Railfuture has responded to another inquiry by the Welsh Assembly's enterprise and business committee, which is also looking at the priorities for the future of Welsh rail infrastructure from 2019. There were eight questions to be answered by respondents by 14 January. Railfuture submitted a response to the questions (available on the Railfuture Wales website) and was asked to attend the public hearings in February. Unlike Scotland, planning and delivery of rail infrastructure in Wales is not devolved. The Welsh Government has powers to fund infrastructure but the UK Government retains the primary responsibility for funding Network Rail, and the development of the Welsh network. There are currently no plans to devolve these powers to the Welsh Government. Network Rail is preparing proposals and seeking funders before producing an initial industry plan which sets out priorities for the next five-year control period beginning in 2019. The Department for Transport then produces a high level output specification together with a statement of funds available. The committee is considering the effectiveness of the existing rail infrastructure to cope with both passengers and freight. The relationship between the

Welsh and English rail networks will be critical. Upgrades need to be co-ordinated to benefit users on both sides of the border.

Rail upgrades needed in Cardiff

The Welsh Government's planning inspector has approved Cardiff city's proposals for 41,400 more homes by 2026, including developments north of the M4 motorway. Llanishen and Thornhill stations will be essential in improving public transport in the north-east of the city and there are calls for the present 15 minute interval train service to be improved. An alternative would be to develop light rail in the area compatible with the suggestions in Railfuture's Development Plan for the Railways of Wales and the Borders.

Chester-Wrexham improvements

The new double track section between Saltney Junction and Rossett did not open in November 2015 as anticipated because of component problems. When trains were diverted via Wrexham while the Shrewsbury to Crewe line was subsequently closed for a week there were inevitably delays to the diverted services.

Cardiff crossovers aid train access

Major track work took place at Cardiff at Christmas and the New Year including re-laying the track in platform 2 and the installation of three crossovers east of the station. The three crossovers will add to the flexibility of train operation, including access from platform 2 to the up relief line, and would have solved many problems if they had been in use during the 2015 Rugby World Cup matches in Cardiff.

North West

By Arthur Thomson
arthur.thomson@railfuture.org.uk

Victoria station needs escalators

Railfuture North West shares the concerns of a number of rail user groups in the North West on the refurbishment at Manchester Victoria station. We welcome the overall enhancements, which have greatly improved the ambience for passengers, with much more natural light and more of all the platforms under cover, and the better access to the Arena and platforms via separate stairs and walkways. However there are criticisms in that passengers still have to negotiate a lot of steps to gain access to the through platforms. There are lifts but they are not easy to locate on crowded platforms and escalators would move passengers quicker. It is also noticeable that there is very little seating outside the retail outlets, so Railfuture has written to Northern, which manages the station, expressing our concerns and we understand more seats will be installed. Further discussions with Network Rail are expected.

Campaigners challenge storm effect

The storms over 5-6 December wreaked havoc in several parts of Cumbria, with the route of the old Keswick-Penrith railway taking a battering. On the section between Keswick and Threlkeld, which is maintained as a foot and cycle path by the Lake District National Park Authority and Sustrans, three key bridges were damaged or destroyed by the swollen river Greta. CKP Railways, which is campaigning for the reopening of the line, is providing advice and guidance on ways to restore the path quickly, which are sympathetic to the long-term reinstatement of the railway. Although the damage is severe, it is concentrated in one relatively short section of the 18-mile route and can be repaired. The park authority wants

to reopen the path as soon as possible with good reason. Both Keswick and Threlkeld have noticeably fewer visitors to their shops, pubs, cafes and other attractions. Meanwhile a North Lakes rail action group is being formed after meetings hosted by Keswick Town Council. The new group expects to be more effective lobbying than individual voices. The group brings together community and business organisations with an interest in seeing the line across the North Lakes reopened to support economic, environmental and social goals.

North Wales to Manchester Airport

Arriva Trains Wales appears to have taken a step towards its aspiration to run to Manchester Airport. The timings for a number of services appear (shaded) in the consultation timetable for May 2016. Turn-round times for the trains at the airport would be approximately 16 minutes, reducing the time spent in a siding outside Manchester Piccadilly station.

Franchise boost for campaigners

The Ormskirk-Preston-Southport Travellers Association welcomed the announcement in the new Northern franchise that Arriva intends to run 17 services daily on the Ormskirk-Preston route, up from the present 13. The association feels that the evidence-based case they submitted to the bidders has been taken seriously. However the loss of through services to Manchester Piccadilly and the airport from Southport will have a serious economic impact on the area and train operator income. OPSTA is pursuing this issue with Southport MP John Pugh, and has already had a meeting with Merseytravel, which agreed to work collaboratively on retaining train paths from Southport to the south side of Manchester.

Devon and Cornwall

The Government may be backing away from action to strengthen rail links to Devon and Cornwall, following the 2014 storm damage at Dawlish. Funding was announced in February for a Network Rail/Great Western Railway study to examine how the existing infrastructure can be improved. The announcement came after the leader of Plymouth Council Tudor Evans said in January he was upset that money did not seem to be available for South West rail improvements, despite Government pledges. Reports that Network Rail lacked the funds for detailed rail studies emerged in early January during a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group on South West. The Peninsular Rail Task Force had been expected to produce a bid this summer for funding one of the proposals, but it needed cash to pay for two detailed studies into the various options. Exeter MP Ben Bradshaw told the *Plymouth Herald* that the development was proof that Government pledges to invest in the South West's infrastructure were worthless. Professor Gerd Masselink, professor of coastal geomorphology at Plymouth University, said estimates of the economic damage caused by the two-month loss of the main line at Dawlish in 2014 ranged from £60 million to £1.2 billion. He told the *Western Morning News*: "The cost of moving the rail line might not be as huge if you put it in the context of potential economic damage."

Railfuture Devon and Cornwall AGM

The Railfuture Devon and Cornwall AGM is on Saturday 16 April 2016 at the Unitarian Church, Notte Street, Plymouth PL1 2AQ. 13.30 to 16.15.

Railfuture Devon and Cornwall contact:
gerard.duddridge@railfuture.org.uk

Network growing as axed lines return to the fold

The Railway Development Society and its predecessor campaigned against the closure of a number of lines in the 1960s.

Sadly, many of these campaigns were unsuccessful, but after closure, a number of lines were preserved by groups of enthusiasts.

Over many years, these have grown and expanded and now some could form useful links to the national network again.

Today's Railfuture supports this view, and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail recommended this in its 2013 report on the Value of Heritage Railways,

Now the Government has indicated that it wants to see some links taken forward in conjunction with franchised train operators.

At the end of last year, preliminary meetings between the Heritage Railway Association and the Department for Transport identified some ways in which this might be encouraged through future franchise agreements and work on this is continuing.

As secretary of the All-Party Group, and also as an HRA adviser, I have been involved in these discussions and so can



EXTENDED NETWORK: A South West Trains class 159 diesel unit about to leave Corfe Castle (Swanage Railway) for Bournemouth (National Rail) with a special train in 2013



HERITAGE RAIL

By Chris Austin

christopher.austin@railfuture.org.uk

keep Railfuture colleagues up to date with development of the policy. As I have outlined before (*Railwatch* 142 in December 2014), this may not be straightforward, as the business models for heritage and community railways are very different, but where there is a common objective of encouraging more people to use rail, there is no doubt that many of these difficulties can be overcome.

The Swanage Railway certainly believes so, as they work through the tough process of the legal and regulatory hurdles to be overcome to allow them to extend services to Wareham.

The North York Moors Railway certainly believes so, and its successful operation over part of the Esk Valley line has led to the provision of more capacity

with a second platform at Whitby. In some cases, the extension may be modest and focused on tourism, but in other cases, I have no doubt that there will be a business case for a regular public service designed to avoid degrading the important tourist attractions that the heritage lines themselves have become.

It is always going to be easier for main line trains to run on to heritage railway tracks, rather than for heritage trains, and especially steam locomotives, to run on to the national network where the technology is now so very different.

My own heritage railway is keen to see more trains running through from Taunton to connect with its own trains to Minehead, and other railways that have similar ambitions

include the Skipton & Embsay Railway. It is keen to run over the freight line from Rylstone quarry when paths are available, to connect into the West Yorkshire electrified network at Skipton, allowing easy car-free trips from Leeds and Bradford to Bolton Abbey.

Other extensions might provide through running on to the East Lancashire Railway via Castleton or the Mid Norfolk Railway via Wymondham.

Promoting the through journey can also encourage greater use of heritage rail lines and credit goes to Great Western here, where through ticketing has already been introduced to and from the Bodmin & Wenford Railway and plans are in hand for the West Somerset as well.

The positive attitude of the DfT is very welcome, and will, I hope, lead to some imaginative proposals coming forward in the franchise bids that will be formulated later this year. I am looking forward to reporting on some positive developments through *Railwatch*.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ The winners of the Railfuture 2015 draw were as follows: £500 J A Drake, Newmarket; £200 Peter Hutchinson, Watford; £100 Phil Malcolm, Harpenden; £50 J L Johnson, Bromborough; £20 Mrs B A Burfoot, Alton, E E Nice, London N22, S Wright, Birmingham, G Forse, Leicester; £10 A Birt, Gourock, D R Edwards, York, M L Thorne, Solihull, Mr & Mrs P I Mackness, Sulgrave, D J Potter, Eckington, D L Morgan, Winchester, L Woodman, Rochester, J P Green, Bletchley.

■ Bookings are now open for a four-day group travel trip to the tramway city of Nantes, in

western France, from 26-29 September 2016 using Eurostar and TGV trains. For more details contact Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ. Email: trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk

■ At the same time as buses are being cut back around the country, the Government announced in February that its long-awaited Buses Bill will clear the way for "voluntary partnerships" between local councils and bus companies, as well as franchising some services.

Stagecoach and other big bus companies have been lobbying against any return to regulation.

■ The Dutch railway network aims to run its train fleet entirely on electricity generated from wind power within two years. At present, 50% of its power supplies are from wind.

■ Sian Berry, the Green party candidate in the London mayoral election in May, is calling for London City Airport, which brings pollution and noise to a vast area of east London, to be closed once Crossrail opens in 2018 and used

for new homes and businesses. The plan would contribute £400 million to the economy while Crossrail and the expanded Thameslink network would allow the current users of City airport to get to Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton and Stansted by train.

■ MPs on the House of Commons public accounts committee have questioned the way the Government sold its share of Eurostar for £585 million, just when it was starting to pay dividends from years of investment. The National Audit Office said the sale left taxpayers £2 billion out of pocket.



Plea for democracy

As the proposer of an emergency motion, which was passed by an overwhelming majority, I would like to put the record straight concerning "the alleged shambles of the 2015 AGM". Back in February, the board made a decision in secret to abolish the international group and cancel Railfuture's membership of the European Passenger Federation. This decision was then communicated informally five days before the AGM when it was too late to submit any motion in the normal way for debate at the AGM.

The board exceeded its own powers under section 55 of the articles of association, which lay down the procedure to be followed before abolishing a group or branch. Having consulted other members of the international group, we decided it was imperative to stop this abuse of power and procedure by proposing an emergency motion, requesting the board to reconsider.

Since the motion was passed, the board seemed reluctant to re-consider its decisions. I managed to obtain the support of more than 50 members calling for a special general meeting, in the hope that the board would again reconsider. As a result, the board was persuaded to continue Railfuture's membership of the

European Passenger Federation and indicated that it might compromise on its intention to abolish the international group. Unfortunately, it has not listened to us and abolished the international group in November under the auspices of a so-called "policy review".

Members were told at the 2015 AGM that we would get "more international work for less". Now we are actually getting "less for less". Railfuture's international work has been disrupted over the past year and is now unnecessarily, inefficiently and unevenly fragmented between three other groups.

As Railfuture is a voluntary organisation relying on the goodwill of its members, we must make sure we are more democratic and less authoritarian in future.

*Nigel Perkins, Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY
nigel.perkins@btinternet.com*

No fuss for women

Mr Larkbey in *Railwatch* 146 regrets the small number of women and young people at Railfuture meetings. Women use the railway but few have an in-depth interest in the machinery. What matters is getting safely from A to B. I am a curiosity among my female friends in having such an interest.

Railfuture meetings are usually held when most women are otherwise occupied but it is important women attend meetings – and are welcomed, not made a fuss of. Their contributions and insights should be actively sought, especially from the human point of view, for example, security (or lack of it), facilities and staff attitudes. I am



Pictures: BILL DAVIES

BEDFORD ELECTRIFICATION: Orange jackets were obviously required as technicians connected the wiring

Train driver Bill Davies found these two photographs which reminded him of the way lines were electrified 30 years ago. Perhaps this "Can do" approach when the Bedford-St Pancras line was electrified might have sped up the Great Western electrification programme which in 2016 is bogged down in delay and escalating costs. Bill, who is now retired and writes for the Locomotive Club of Great Britain newsletter, said: "Looking back at

lucky enough to belong to the East Anglian branch, and while certainly in a minority, I have always felt to be among friends.

Shirley Dex, Trumpington Road, Cambridge CB2 8AY

Transport manifesto

Regarding Graham Larkbey's letter in *Railwatch* 146, I think the problem is that many people see transport as unimportant, when in fact it is the one issue that links everything together.

Transport activists are seen as a niche group. We need to change this by making ourselves heard at meetings of groups campaigning on other issues to get transport on to their agendas.

Such issues include climate change where transport emissions need to be seen as a priority, access to the countryside and neighbourhood improvement.

We need to divert money from road schemes to people's everyday transport needs and build housing which is accessible as well as affordable. Our health policies should involve traffic reduction to cut noxious pollution, and making walking and cycling more pleasant as well as safer.

Railfuture's 2011 AGM approved my proposal for a Swiss-style integrated and comprehensive transport network, to include links to places not served by rail.

How about transforming this into a manifesto, putting motions to campaign groups to unite behind

it, and attending their meetings in sufficient numbers to argue for the motions so they are voted through?

*Simon Norton, Hertford Street, Cambridge CB4 3AG
simon@maths.cam.ac.uk*

Potential members

Graham Larkbey complains that "the active membership consists almost entirely of white middle-class males of mature years". This seems to me a typical London-centred view. Although my local branch consists mainly of "white males of mature years" I would find it difficult to identify people with middle-class accents.

Younger people in working class jobs do not have the time or the interest in volunteering because they usually have family and work commitments or are pursuing them. Considering the pressure that working people are under today this is even more likely to be a problem.

People who join Railfuture are, in my experience, those who have grown up with railways either professionally or as amateurs. As there are more women and ethnic minorities being recruited into the rail industry both in senior and junior positions I suggest that this is an area for groundwork to be made.

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

Scots missing link

I agree with Paul Salvesson in *Railwatch* 146 when he says:



UNORTHODOX WORKING PLATFORM: A technician uses the roof of a diesel locomotive to gain access to the new wires

my early days at Bedford as a driver, I came across these pictures. Both of them depict the state of play regarding 'elf n safetee' in the very early 1980s. As the driver of 25054, I suppose I should have remonstrated with the gent walking all over my loco roof! As for the other lot, they seemed quite happy to cling to the wires while dirty diesels passed underneath to warm their cockles. Well I think that's what they were called."

"I think in future years we need to...be more imaginative, looking at what connectivity is required...so building completely new railways should be on the agenda."

One example I would like to see come to fruition is another contender for the status of "Scotland's Missing Link", a new line linking Tulloch on the West Highland line and Newtonmore on the Perth-Inverness line.

At the moment Fort William and Inverness are both served by rail, but travelling from one to the other by rail is (and has always been) unrealistic because there is no sensible route linking the two. By joining Tulloch with Newtonmore, only 25 miles of new track would be required and a service linking Inverness, Aviemore and Fort William possible for the first time.

Not only would this boost tourism and encourage more journeys by train instead of car, but by having more services on the existing railways to Fort William and Inverness, it would make their future more secure and strengthen Scotland's rail network overall.

*Toby Harling, Denton Mill Close, Carlisle CA2 5NF
TA.Harling15@sky.com*

Lewes to London

The *Railwatch* 146 article about a new rail route from Brighton to London's Canary Wharf referred to Railfuture's campaign for Thameslink 2. We are hopeful that some such scheme could be included in Network Rail's

plans for the future, once the recommendations of the Department for Transport's London and South Coast Rail Corridor Study is published.

Railfuture is keen that the Sussex Community Rail partnership will include the reopened Uckfield-Lewes line which can become part of Sussex's strategic transport network.

The Uckfield-Lewes line is featured in *Disconnected! Broken links in Britain's Rail Policy*, the latest book by Chris Austin and Richard Faulkner. The book relies on Railfuture material in making the case for an Uckfield-Lewes reopened line as a way of creating an additional electrified railway between London and Brighton.

I hope *Railwatch* readers will register their support for Uckfield-Lewes at www.railfuture.org.uk/Uckfield-Lewes to ensure that it is included in Network Rail's 2019 delivery programme, control period 6.

*Roger Blake, Dynevor Road, Stoke Newington N16 0DX
roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk*

HS2 and Stoke

It was part of HS2's brief for its second phase to design a route between Birmingham and Manchester, but it took a long time for them to decide which route to take, longer than it took them to decide on the route on the east side of the Pennines. HS2 decided on a route past Crewe with a station just outside Crewe, not the classic station

railwatch

ISSN 0267-5943 www.railwatch.org.uk

is edited by Robert Stevens and Ray

King, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU Tel: 020 8985 8548 editor@railwatch.org.uk robert.stevens@railwatch.org.uk Printed by Print-Out, High Street, Histon, Cambridge CB4 4JD Tel: 01223 232709. **Railfuture members receive Railwatch free.**

Non-members can subscribe online at www.railfuture.org.uk/shop or by sending £8 (cheque payable to Railfuture) to: Alan Cocker, 11 Derwent Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 0QR.

Copy deadlines: For the next issue, published in July, copy must be emailed to editor@railwatch.org.uk by 9 May. Paper copy can be sent to 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU but must arrive earlier.

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

Please report any problems with the delivery or condition of your copy of *Railwatch* to editor@railwatch.org.uk or to the E9 7HU address above.

Railfuture

is independent and voluntary. It is the campaigning name of the Railway Development Society Ltd, a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No 5011634. Registered Office: 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND.

Media enquiries

Bruce Williamson, 29 Granby Hill, Clifton, Bristol BS8 4LT. Tel: 0117 9272954 Mobile: 07759 557389 Email: media@railfuture.org.uk

JOIN RAILFUTURE Membership £18 per year (special offer). Family: £23. Pensioners, students and unemployed: £14. Family membership (for 2 over 65) £16. User groups, community and parish councils: Please apply for rates. You can join using PayPal via www.railfuture.org.uk or by post, please contact Railfuture Membership, 1 Queens Road, Barnetby le Wold, North Lincolnshire DN38 6JH. Email: membership@railfuture.org.uk

RENEW MEMBERSHIP Renewals and other membership queries: Use PayPal on the website or send a cheque to Railfuture Renewals, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND. Email: renewals@railfuture.org.uk

Elections Board elections held annually. Nomination forms can be obtained from www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=Elections

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

in Crewe itself, rather than the much bigger Stoke. Stoke badly wants the station for itself. What guided HS2 in that decision?

Various possibilities have been discussed, including the idea of running HS2 trains through Stoke without stopping.

Some advocates of an HS2 service to Stoke see a route breaking out of the valley alongside the A500 road as a possibility for taking the route northwards, but a route out that way must be curvaceous to get past various towns on the way to Manchester.

Miles away, on the A505 past Baldock in Hertfordshire, the road goes through a range of hills, with a "cut and cover" or "green" tunnel.

Doing something similar with HS2 could make an impossibly big job look easier. The new

route would have to be kept clear of the existing rail line at Kidsgrove and the canal on the way to Stoke.

My route would have a station at the west end of Manchester airport runway before forking near Lymm to run west towards Liverpool and east round the west side of Manchester to go through Manchester Victoria to continue as "HS3" alongside the M62 to Leeds.

Manchester tramlink can be extended from Manchester Airport to the HS2 station and on to Moberley. The route from North Wales via Chester could then go to Moberley, which will be a very attractive station, because it gives access to HS2, Manchester Airport and of course Manchester itself.

*Michael Bell, Forest Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
michael@beaverbell.co.uk*

Join Railfuture

You get four copies of *Railwatch* magazine a year and the chance to help make Britain's railways great again

Membership is £18 per year for an individual (special offer price)
■ Family: From £23 ■ Pensioners, students and unemployed £14
■ Family membership (for 2 over 65) £16 ■ User groups, community and parish councils: Please use this form to ask for group rates

Name

Address

Postcode

Email

Send to Railfuture, 1 Queens Road, Barnetby le Wold, North Lincolnshire DN38 6JH

Please make cheques payable to Railfuture
Email: membership@railfuture.org.uk

OR JOIN ONLINE USING PAYPAL AT www.railfuture.org.uk

Banks in scramble for rail cash

Banks and investors are reportedly lining up for a share of the action as the Government prepares to split up Network Rail.

Years of talk from politicians about the railways being subsidised are giving way to the reality that a new railway age is dawning and there is big money to be made.

Train operating companies now pay more in premium payments to the Government than they receive in subsidies. Every year subsidies to train operators have been going down, while premium payments have been increasing because of the boom in rail use.

Figures released by the Office of Rail and Road show that in the past financial year (2014/15), 11 train operators paid a total of £1,529 million in premium payments while the subsidy received by eight train operators was less, a total of £729 million.

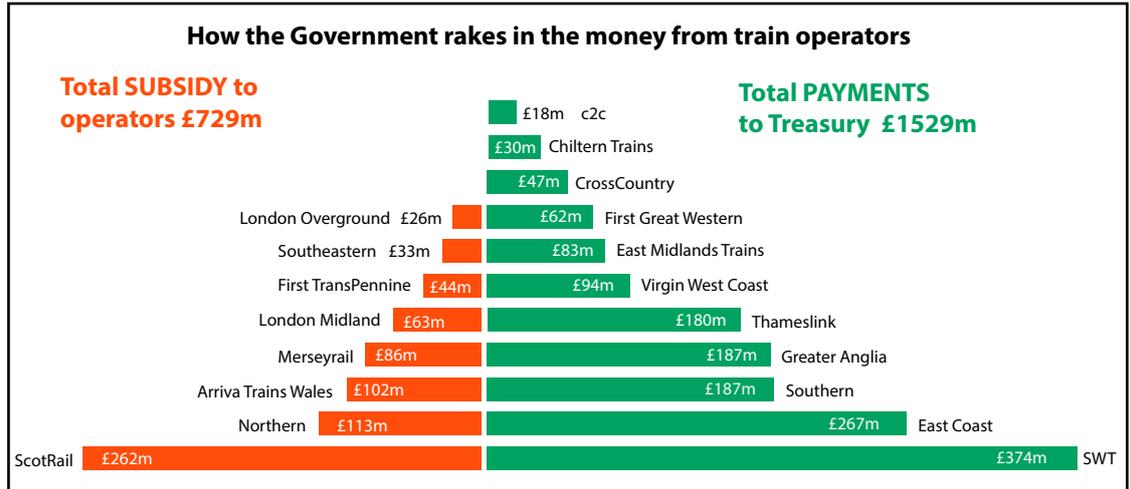
Train operators left the Government with a net surplus of £802 million.

It is the fifth successive year in which premiums have exceeded train operator subsidies and takes into account the subsidy figures from local passenger transport executives and "cap and collar revenue support".

The biggest beneficiaries of subsidy were ScotRail with £262 million, Northern with £113 million, Arriva Trains Wales with £102 million and Merseyrail with £86 million.

The operators paying the highest premiums were South West Trains (£374 million), East Coast (£267 million), Southern (£187 million), Greater Anglia (£187 million), Thameslink (£180 million) and Virgin West Coast (£94 million).

Of course Network Rail spends large amounts of money maintaining and upgrading the network and has debts of £38 billion.



But rail delivers major benefits for the Government, including offsetting the enormous danger and pollution created by roads which of course have been funded directly by the Government for years.

Rail campaigners have long called for rail and road to be treated fairly, taking into account their real costs and benefits.

The banks' bonanza however will result from Nicola Shaw's report on Network Rail. She made it clear from early on that privatisation was likely. Her report is set to recommend the creation of a new agency at arm's length from the Government to be responsible for strategic rail matters. The new body, similar to the Strategic Rail Authority that was axed in 2006, will handle franchising, big upgrades, railway standards and long-term planning.

The responsibilities are currently shared between the Department for Transport and Network Rail.

While Network Rail awaits the chop, the franchising system remains under constant criticism. The Government's direct award in December to London Midland to operate West Midlands rail services has been condemned by rail union RMT. It says the £130 million subsidy

will help underpin rail operations in France because LM is part-owned by French railways through its subsidiary Keolis.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said: "This Government is against state ownership of our railways unless it is the French, German or Dutch state looking for a bung from the British taxpayer to prop up their own operations."

One of the franchise requirements is "clean toilets". It should not be necessary to specify, but this is exactly the area where disreputable operators try to save money. Labour called it outrageous that David Brown, chief executive of the Go-Ahead group which operates the Govia Thameslink franchise, earned £2.1 million in one year.

At East Midlands Trains, services have been cancelled because of a shortage of drivers.

By contrast, the promise of new trains to replace the dreaded Pacers in the north of England has meant a welcome for the Northern franchise. The Urban Transport Group said: "The new franchises are a big moment for the North's rail services. We have moved from a standstill Northern franchise to one based on new trains, new services

and new aspirations for a high growth and higher quality rail network."

Campaigner Paul Salveson who now works for Arriva, said: "It is really good stuff, lots of new trains, additional services and investment in stations. There is additional funding for community rail partnerships and support for station adoption. Congratulations should also be offered to First who have been awarded the TransPennine Express franchise. They are getting more trains, a new Liverpool-Glasgow service and extension of some of the Newcastle services to Edinburgh."

But a report on rail franchising by the House of Commons public accounts committee has been dismissed as inadequate. The RMT's Cash said: "The report attempts to create the impression that the Great Rail Rip-off can be halted by a bit of tinkering with the franchising process, and encouraging more bidders, when it is privatisation itself that has reduced our railways to a chaotic, money-making racket."

"The situation is actually far worse than it was in 2012 and the committee has chosen to ignore that in this half-baked report. With rumours that some key franchises are in deep financial trouble, the safety net has been ripped away leaving the taxpayer dangerously exposed and leaving the private companies in complete control."

"The answer is not fiddling around the edges of the system. The answer is to rip it up and return the whole rail network to direct, public ownership."

European allies in battle for passenger rights

The European Passengers' Federation, bringing together over 30 organisations like Railfuture throughout Europe, will hold its annual conference and AGM in Berlin on Friday and Saturday 8-9 April. There will be presentations by two MEPs, a European Commission official and transport professionals. Topics this year include passenger rights, international ticketing and cross-border rail services. On the Sunday there

will be the choice of a tour of the city by public transport or a rail excursion to Kostrzyn in Poland. Conference participants receive a complimentary public transport ticket for their stay in the city. For information and booking, please visit the EPF website www.epf.eu. In recent months EPF has concerned itself with train security at borders to deal with the flow of migrants. EPF has also co-signed a letter

by EPF's German member associations to Deutsche Bahn concerning proposals to withdraw night trains which are used by many British travellers. EPF wants to hear Railfuture members' comments on international train journeys. A new short questionnaire has therefore been posted on the EPF website for you to complete. This applies to Eurostar and journeys by conventional trains.