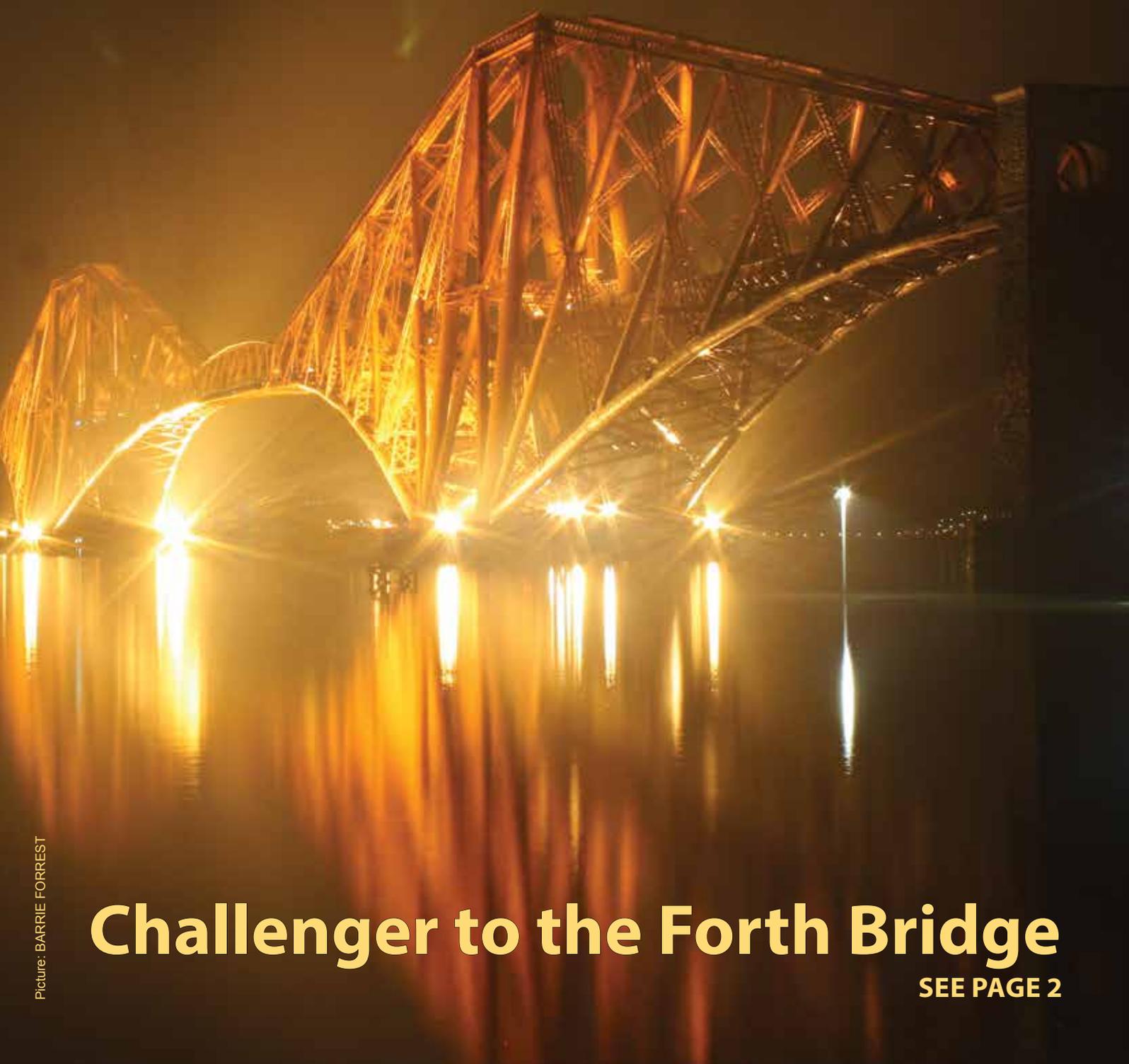


*rail*watch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

No 151 £2

April 2017



Picture: BARRIE FORREST

Challenger to the Forth Bridge

SEE PAGE 2

By Ray King

The Forth rail bridge has been doing sterling service for 127 years. Now it has another upstream rival.

The first Forth road bridge was opened in 1964 but structural problems became apparent in 2005.

Construction of the new Queensferry bridge began in 2011 and it will open in May 2017 to carry the M90 motorway.

The 1.7 mile structure is the longest three-tower cable-stayed bridge in the world and has cost £1.35 billion.

About 2.5 miles of new connecting roads have been built, including new and upgraded junctions at Ferrytoll in Fife, South Queensferry and Junction 1A on the M9. However the new road bridge is unlikely to solve Scotland's transport problems, reduce air pollution, even though the 1964 bridge is being retained as a public transport link and for cyclists and pedestrians.

Although ScotRail does a good job in Glasgow, the city is a long way from having a good, integrated, public transport system. While the Forth road bridge is



The new Queensferry road bridge over the Firth of Forth

costing £1.35 billion, £200 million cannot be found for the Glasgow Crossrail project.

Crossrail would be a significant addition to rail services in Glasgow by linking the north and south of the city, as well as benefiting the rest of Scotland. It would also provide a new station at Glasgow Cross, on the eastern edge of the city centre, and allow integration with the Argyle line and the Subway. A new station

in the Gorbals could serve new housing, Glasgow College's southern campus and could even interchange with the Subway. A more vigorous promotion of the powerful economic, social, environmental and accessibility benefits of Crossrail is essential.

One newcomer to the city accustomed to the good public transport in London was scathing about Glasgow's public transport. She said the buses were

expensive, infrequent and did not go near where she wanted to travel. They do not run closely to their printed timetables and there is no "next bus" app to check real-time running. The 30-minute Sunday frequency is inadequate, the one door for entry and exit causes delay and frustration.

Most people pay by cash and the £2.35 basic ticket (more expensive than the Subway) means passengers are fumbling for the right money.

Day tickets are not interchangeable between First Bus and McGill even though they run virtually the same routes.

Some good news for Scotland

■ Work started in January on electrifying the Shotts line between Holytown and Midcalder junctions, which will allow another Edinburgh-Glasgow electrified service in 2019.

■ Kilmarnock Station Railway Heritage Trust received funding from the Railway Heritage Trust and the East Ayrshire Council's Renewable Energy Fund, allowing it to invest around £500,000 in the station's restoration.

See also pages 6 and 13

Picture: BARRIE FORREST

Expanding the railway at last

By Chris Austin

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Campaigners for new stations and lines have seen it all over the years – frustration, heartache and some successes.

Indeed, some campaigns have been running for almost half a century, such as East West Rail.

Over time, reactions from the rail industry and Government have been mixed, with active co-operation from local authorities or passenger transport executives in the good times, but an outright refusal to contemplate any expansion in bad.

The problems have been many, but over all there has been uncertainty, and moving goal posts.

Now, we are doing something about it, and doing so in conjunction with the Campaign for Better Transport and the Department for Transport as well.

Initial meetings last year recognised that a number of schemes for new or reopened stations and lines were likely to be worthwhile. The problem for Government and the industry was that there was a multitude of ideas and no chance of having the time or the resources to evaluate all of them.

It was agreed that a guide to reopening schemes would be helpful in providing advice for campaigners and for sponsors such as local authorities and developers.

Expanding the Railway; how to develop and deliver a proposal is the result, and is available to download from the Railfuture website.

This practical guide gives advice on identifying a project, how to develop a business case, and how



MANCHESTER: A crucial step in improving northern England's rail network was achieved in February when this structure for the Ordsall Curve was lifted into place. It will link Manchester's main stations. Network Rail said it is also Britain's first asymmetrical network arch railway bridge

to build support for it. Then there are some valuable tips on sources of funding, and how projects can be delivered.

We all know that just because a railway or station used to exist is no good reason to seek its reopening as part of the national network.

There has to be a strong business case to justify it and, more than that, we have to be able to demonstrate that the problem or opportunity is best met by a rail solution, given the cost of railway infrastructure and rolling stock.

Increasingly, we have to think of the issue not so much from a rail point of view, but in terms of overall economic benefit. The local enterprise partnership,

for example, will want to know what the project does to support or expand the local economy.

For example, the objective may be to support National Health Service policy by providing reasonable access to a regional hospital, or to enable housing development in an area where the road network is already at capacity.

Of particular value is that the guide has been compiled by experienced campaigners working alongside the Department.

This implies support from Government for well thought-out projects for which there is a business case and where funding can be raised.

The commitment it shows to a continuously developing railway with more access points to

the network is welcome and it should help us in defining the worthwhile cases to get behind and push.

Case studies are included, both of projects that succeeded and those that did not, with reasons why they could not go forward.

Advice is available to Railfuture branches via the infrastructure and networks group along with the new guidance, and workshops can be arranged for branches if required.

Railfuture members and branches will find it both useful as a campaigning checklist, and also in terms of the sort of data required and the way to demonstrate the value of the project to those with the financial or political ability to make it happen.

Picture: NETWORK RAIL and AERIAL VIDEO TV

Rail revolt in Pontefract

The Yorkshire town of Pontefract has three rail stations but there is growing dissatisfaction that it is not adequately served.

Following a public meeting in the autumn, Pontefract Civic Society formed the dedicated Pontefract and District Rail sub-group to focus on the opportunities for improving both stations and services which run through the district.

"Of all the principal towns of West Yorkshire, Pontefract is the most irrationally served by rail," said Peter Cookson, president of the civic society and chair of the rail sub-group.

"Connectivity is poor and there are no fully usable services passing through the town. Pontefract is truly the Achilles Heel of West Yorkshire rail services. In the context of the Northern Powerhouse and the Leeds City Region, this makes no sense at all and this group has the rationalisation of the rail service patterns as one of its key campaigning objectives."

Rail campaigners blame decades of poor local government and rail authority decision-making. Carol Reeves, secretary of the sub-

group, said: "I have been a daily commuter for 30 years in London and Bedfordshire as well as West Yorkshire.

"I often travel by train to business meetings around the country as well as using them for fun activities and day trips. I hope to bring my experiences of rail use to this group and I am looking forward to engaging with others and the local community to bring better accessibility, infrastructure and rail services to Pontefract.

"The society believes it is not ideal that people of the area cannot directly connect by rail more frequently to places such as Huddersfield, Lincoln, Scarborough and the Peak District.

"Pontefract and its surrounding towns and villages deserve better quality services, rolling stock and stations.

"Pontefract can be at the Yorkshire heart of the rail network, as opposed to feeling like we are at the end of line."

Railfuture Yorkshire chair Nina Smith said: "We were very disappointed that major improvements to Pontefract services were not written in to the new Northern franchise. We look to Transport for



Pontefract Monkhill station with two Grand Central trains

the North to put such improvements into its strategic transport plan. We also hope that the successful bid for the East Midlands franchise will include an hourly Leicester or Nottingham-Sheffield-Pontefract-York service."

Pontefract Monkhill is the town's busiest station. Passenger use increased from 191,000 in 2011 to 250,000 in 2016. There is an hourly service to Leeds and Wakefield Kirkgate and two trains an hour to Knottingley.

Monkhill also has a direct service to London by Grand Central, and this service is the only train connecting

Pontefract with Doncaster. There are only two trains a day to Goole and none to Hull.

Pontefract Tanshelf use has gone down from 48,000 in 2011 to 32,000 in 2016. It has an hourly service to Wakefield Kirkgate and Knottingley.

Pontefract Baghill use has gone up from 5,000 in 2011 to 6,000 in 2016. There are only two trains a day to York and two to Sheffield. Neither Leeds nor Wakefield can be reached by direct train.

If you would like to get involved in the campaign, please email: rail@pontefractcivicsociety.org.uk

Picture: PETER COOKSON

Cheshire towns and villages fight to get the benefits of rail again

By Stephen Dent

stephen@ndent.freeserve.co.uk

The long-running battle to reopen the Sandbach-Northwich line to passengers has taken a new turn.

A new organisation called the Mid Cheshire Rail Link Campaign has emerged. I am its chairman. It is assuming responsibility for getting improvements for rail travellers to and from Crewe, including those who use Altrincham, Hale, Knutsford, Northwich and Sandbach plus Middlewich, and all the villages between those towns. The new set-up has grown out of the Middlewich Station Campaign.

In a 40-page business case, the Railway Consultancy identified a very high 5:1 benefit to cost ratio for the Sandbach-Northwich line. Reopening the line to passengers will create a massive boost to the economy of Cheshire and will also improve travel opportunities to and from Manchester city centre and south

Trafford. The biggest change from previous thinking is the inclusion of a new station at Gadbroom Park. This is in addition to the long-standing proposal to reopen Middlewich station. Middlewich, with a population of 13,600, is the largest town in Cheshire without a railway station. More than 50% of the working population of the town commute out of Middlewich by car and most work in Greater Manchester.

Both Middlewich and Gadbroom Park are in areas where there is severe traffic congestion, and reopening the railway will make life much easier for people travelling to and from work. The reopening campaign is now strongly supported by Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Borough Councils and the town councils of Knutsford, Northwich, Middlewich and Sandbach. Several MPs have backed the campaign, which has also been raised with the Rail Minister in the House of Commons. The intention is that people

from Altrincham, Hale, Knutsford and Northwich will get a direct rail link to Crewe, enabling them to connect to services which reach all parts of the country and in future to connect to High Speed Two. People from Middlewich should be able to travel to Crewe, Manchester and any of the towns on the mid-Cheshire line, including Chester, and leave their cars at home. The business case emphasises the importance of the scheme in supporting the proposals for the Northern Powerhouse and HS2, and in helping to relieve the traffic chaos on the A54, A556, A56, M6 and M56.

It will also improve connectivity between our Cheshire towns and villages and Manchester city centre, and south towards the Midlands. If you would like to lend your support, you can contact me at Mid Cheshire Rail Link Campaign, 77 Sutton Lane, Middlewich, Cheshire CW10 0DA, by telephoning 01606 834575 or by emailing me at stephen@ndent.freeserve.co.uk

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

Electrification date is still elusive
Rail Minister Paul Maynard refused to commit the Government to a completion date for Midland main line electrification. He confirmed that the route to Corby would be completed by 2019, but would not commit to the date of 2023, which was announced after the electrification was “unpaused”, for completion to Sheffield. He was responding during an adjournment debate called by Loughborough MP Nicky Morgan on 7 November 2016.

Good ideas for the next franchise
The Department for Transport has issued a prospectus for the next East Midlands rail franchise, which is expected to start in July 2018. There is a welcome emphasis on “putting the passenger first”, together with an insistence on improvements to local and regional services as well as on the Midland main line. One interesting objective is “to develop coastal, leisure and high value tourist services, including working collaboratively with heritage railways”. The prospectus includes an extract from a *Strategic Statement from East Midlands Councils* (representing local authorities in the region). The statement’s suggestions for improving connectivity include the transfer of the Birmingham-Nottingham and Birmingham-Standed services to the East Midlands franchise, with the former possibly extended to Lincoln, new services from Leicester and Derby to Manchester via the Dore South curve, more services to Leeds from the region and restoration of the half-hourly off-peak service between Kettering and Leicester. Frequency and capacity improvements on many local and regional lines are sought, and there is an emphasis on a seven-day railway, with departures at least from 06.00 to 22.00 on all lines.

EMT promises customer improvements
Railfuture East Midlands was represented by Ariadne Tampion at the East Midlands Trains stakeholder conference in November. EMT managing director Jake Kelly supported electrification because “it unlocks better long term economics”. EMT also gave details of its programme to improve the customer experience, including refurbishing the class 158 fleet, providing cycle “hubs”, in-transit cleaning to deal rapidly with reports of unsavoury toilets, and a development programme for frontline staff. Network Rail’s Spencer Gibbens spoke about the remodelling of the track in and around Derby station, programmed for summer 2018. There will be major disruption to services, but NR will not be imposing a complete blockade and are aiming to keep as many services running as possible during the three months of work. Ariadne also attended a Festive Tea arranged by EMT for stakeholders on the regional and local lines in the Nottingham area. Revenue protection, especially on the Robin Hood Line (now being made a penalty fares zone) was a main focus of discussion.

Market Harborough improvements
Harborough Rail Users have responded to the Network Rail consultation on plans to upgrade the line through the town and improve the

station. They support the scheme with its new, full-length platforms, new and larger car park, accessibility improvements and retention of the main building, but they would like to see platform canopies provided and hope that there is a proper lift from the booking office to the platforms. Final designs are expected in late spring this year. The latest usage figures for the station show an increase of 4.6% over the past year, with the total being nearly three times the usage in 1998.

More HS2 benefits needed for East Midlands
Several members of the Railfuture East Midlands committee attended HS2’s phase 2 route consultation events in the region during January. We want to ensure that HS2 really does benefit the region, for example with classic compatible services from Leicester, Nottingham and Derby to Leeds and beyond, and also from Nottingham Midland to Birmingham as proposed by the East Midlands Councils. We are surprised there are no proposals for direct services over HS2 from Nottingham to London for the 1.2 million annual passengers, which could rise to 2 million when HS2 opens.

MP welcomes Ilkeston station reopening
A firm date has at last been given for the opening of Ilkeston station, 50 years after the town’s old station was closed following the Beeching report. After the details were confirmed to her by Network Rail, local MP Maggie Throup announced: “Sunday April 2 will be a historic day in the life of our town as we finally cast off the dubious title ‘the largest town in Britain without a station’, and I for one cannot wait to be on that first passenger train as it pulls into Ilkeston Junction after an interval of over 50 years.” There will be a 90-space car park and new bus shelters on Coronation Road, next to the station. Two-thirds of the £10 million cost of the station came through the Government’s New Stations Fund, with the remainder from local authorities. www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch [Twitter: @RailfutureEMids](https://twitter.com/RailfutureEMids)

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

Trolleybus funds for new rail stations
Three new railway stations, including one for Leeds Bradford Airport, could be built using money previously allocated for the trolleybus scheme which was dropped in May 2016. Leeds City Council has announced a £270 million transport strategy following a public consultation which found widespread support for public transport improvements. Rail stations are also proposed at White Rose shopping centre and Thorpe Park. The airport station decision was welcomed by Brian Dunsby of Harrogate Line Supporters Group as a cost-effective way forward.

£9 billion East Coast main line payback
Investing £3 billion in the East Coast main line would deliver up to £9 billion worth of economic regeneration, according to the Consortium of East Coast Main Line Authorities in a report delivered to the Government. www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch [Twitter: @RailfutureYorks](https://twitter.com/RailfutureYorks)

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

East West Rail heads for East Anglia
Railfuture East Anglia welcomed the announcement in the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement of £110 million for East West Rail, including £10 million for continued development work for the section between Bedford and East Anglia. This came after the National Infrastructure Commission, to whom Railfuture had submitted evidence, described the project as “urgently needed”. Transport Secretary Chris Grayling announced a new “delivery mechanism” for EWR, similar to the approach taken with HS1, HS2 and London’s Crossrail. This has been a long time coming, but it demonstrates the value of Railfuture’s consistent campaigning over many years. www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+East+West+Rail

Sizewell C consultation
Following the Government decision to build the Sizewell C nuclear power station, Railfuture East Anglia responded to the consultation on rail options including the carriage of construction materials and spoil removal, and a commitment to provide a connecting bus service at Saxmundham and Darsham stations. We proposed a plan to double the line from Woodbridge to Saxmundham to permit additional passenger services from Ipswich without compromising the operation of freight trains to the construction site. Our response also covers issues such as making the best use of the improved performance of the new rolling stock ordered by Greater Anglia, and how the “paused” Ely North junction upgrade is restricting freight traffic on this route. Committee members have since met the Sizewell team to explore rail possibilities in detail. The team is keen to leave a legacy and can see the rail option would achieve this rather than the maritime alternative which would be used only during construction. www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+East+Suffolk

Jamie Burles talks to Railfuture East Anglia
Greater Anglia managing director Jamie Burles promised big improvements when he spoke to Railfuture East Anglia members in Cambridge. The Greater Anglia nine-year franchise will bring 1,043 new vehicles by 2019-2020 to replace the whole train fleet, with over 150 extra trains per day delivering a 55% increase in peak hour seats into London. There are demanding punctuality targets with a public performance measure of 93% by the end of the franchise. Greater Anglia will be working with Network Rail to achieve this. Greater Anglia has produced a list of infrastructure enhancements needed, including Ely capacity, West Anglia route capacity, a better service between Cambridge and Ipswich/Norwich, East West Rail and Wisbech reopening. Questions from the public included the coordination of rail activity with new development in Cambridge, improved service to Newmarket, extra toilets needed on the new trains, Ely station improvements, cycles on trains and improved services to Clacton. We look forward to hearing from Jamie Burles again at the Railfuture national AGM in Peterborough on 20 May.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Greater+Anglia www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia [Twitter: @RailfutureEA](https://twitter.com/RailfutureEA)

Regional rail for growing towns and cities

By Peter Wakefield

peter.wakefield@railfuture.org.uk
Cambridge has long been an economic centre for a distinct region, hence the large number of local railways that historically centre on it.

Over the past 30 years, in common with other university towns, this regional centre has grown into something more nationally important because of the rise of “knowledge-based industry”.

A well-educated population is reliant on “knowledge” that promotes innovation and dynamic entrepreneurship for the benefit of the overall national economy.

Its continual success depends on a well-educated population gathering together from the four corners of the world as well as from all over Britain.

People work in several distinct hubs throughout the Greater Cambridge area. These hubs need a constantly replenishing workforce that tends to be dispersed over a wide travel-to-work area. The hubs are often poorly interconnected within the city and with the railway station.

Cambridge and many historic cities were not built for modern road-borne traffic. The local road network operates at perpetual over-capacity. Movement is slow, air quality poor. Yet the historic centre is valued for a good quality of life by the workforce as much as the millions who travel to it from all over the world.

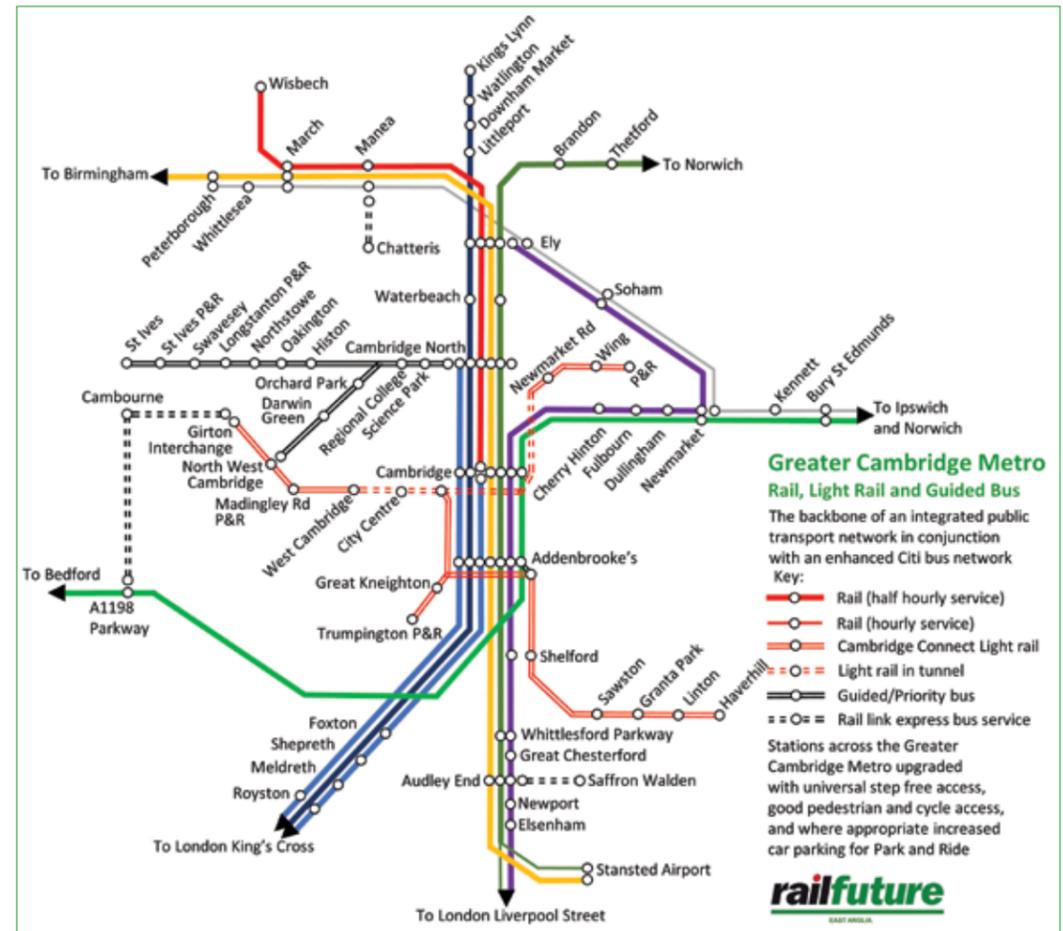
Thousands use it each day for shopping, entertainment and the night economy as well as the important higher educational role that has developed over 800 years. Preserving this dynamic piece of history with its multiple modern functions is where the railway is crucial.

300 buses an hour!

In an effort to alleviate some of the chronic congestion problems, a bus-based solution has been proposed. This would see about 300 buses an hour entering the centre. This is clearly impossible.

There is a pressing need to keep road-borne traffic out of the city and off the radial roads approaching it. These are at gridlock during ever-lengthening peaks.

The local railway network works hard but Railfuture believes it can do more. It needs to be improved to do so. The Thames-link upgrades will bring four local trains per hour from the Royston line and deliver longer, more frequent services to Ely. The metro-like peak hour services between Cambridge and Ely now bring two million rail



RAIL WAY TO THE FUTURE: Diagrammatic map showing how the regional railway network based on Cambridge could be enhanced by developing light rail and existing bus-based fixed links

users a year from Ely alone, with more commuters using rail rather than the parallel A10 road. The Newmarket line needs a considerable upgrade to enable rail to work for the economy on that corridor in a similar way. We want minimum half-hourly services on all routes beyond Ely and Newmarket, which of course need considerable capacity improvements around Ely.

The route from London Liverpool Street and from Stratford via Audley End also needs better services. This already busy network delivers 11 million passengers a year to and from Cambridge station. But to get workers to areas further from the existing station, more effort is needed.

Dependable timetable

We believe a Cambridge light rail network can link into the regional railway network and enable the highly skilled regionally dispersed workforce to travel with confidence on public transport to all the major centres of employment that are distant from a station and currently easily accessible only by car.

The nature of the railway and light rail means that the mode is

long term and today’s motorists can confidently shift modes for the long term and plan their lives accordingly. In addition, those who work at the further-flung employment centres from Cambridge station will gain access in minutes, to take a train to London or the airports. The phased light rail network will eventually restore rail to fast-growing generators of much road-based traffic such as Haverhill.

Sadly, bus routes provide no such long-term confidence for many potential users who currently use cars. Bus routes can be and are cut because of council crises or the bus operator’s bottom line. Rail operators generally provide a dependable timetable as laid down in their franchise commitments that is available for about 18 hours each day.

With a combination of light rail and the regional railway network an attractive alternative to road-based commuting can be provided.

Cambridge Connect is the name for the planned light rail network for Cambridge and district. It envisages a phased introduction of light rail, coupled with an upgrade of the regional rail

network, to enable road users to make the modal shift at a station closest to their home, rather than pushing on in hope to the gridlocked radial road or a bus-based park-and-ride near the city edge. Light rail is not just for big cities. It works in medium-sized and fast-growing cities like Cambridge, with a population of 300,000 within Greater Cambridge.

Cambridge North

Light rail and new regional stations such as Cambridge North, which opens this year, will unify all the disparate centres of employment in the Greater Cambridge area into one.

We believe it is absolutely essential for regional rail and light rail to be planned as one, to enable light rail to deliver “the last mile” and rail to develop as the true alternative to the car.

Regional rail could help other growth areas. In East Anglia alone, Norwich, Ipswich and Colchester could benefit from well-planned rail-based networks of train, light rail and bus. More information at www.cambridge-connect.uk/background/

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

Mayor loses battle for more rail devolution
Railfuture was dismayed by the Government's abandonment of further rail devolution, especially after seeing the benefits of London Overground. We expected further devolution but new Transport Secretary Chris Grayling decided not to hand over any more rail services to Transport for London and Mayor Sadiq Khan. Now, as each new franchise is renewed, train operators, not Network Rail, will be responsible for infrastructure maintenance.

Which? magazine samples the mood of passengers
Twice a year the official national watchdog Transport Focus publishes surveys which are used by the industry and the Department for Transport to monitor performance. The National Rail Passenger Survey is based on returns from over 50,000 passengers across 30 journey aspects. A week before the January 2017 survey was published, *Which?* magazine attracted headlines with its own survey based on a sample of just over 8,000 passenger experiences and covering eight journey aspects.

Millions added to station usage estimates
Adjustments have been made to how the Office of Rail and Road estimates station usage, which makes Railfuture more confident of their accuracy. The figures for 2015/16 (published in December) included "Estimated absolute change in usage due to 2015/16 London Travelcard Methodology". We and many others have long had to disregard the estimates within London, as regular passenger counts at Cambridge Heath and London Fields and other West Anglia stations have consistently exposed errors. Of 19 stations now adjusted upwards by over 1 million, all but two are served by London Overground, and of the 16 stations adjusted downwards by over 1 million, half are London terminals. See the orr.gov.uk website for more information.

Railfuture's input into local transport plans
Railfuture's response to Kent and Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plans and to the proposed 2018 Thameslink timetable are on the Railfuture website. We welcomed proposed Thameslink services into Kent, to Maidstone and the Medway towns, but opposed splitting the through Ashford-Brighton service.

Bi-modes cover up electrification gap
The Barking-Gospel Oak line reopened at the end of February after being closed for months for electrification work, but Network Rail has warned that there will be more disruption this year as work to remedy design faults will continue. An electric service is expected to start next year. On the diesel-operated Oxted-Uckfield line extra diesel trains now allow longer trains to run, and for the Reading-Redhill line extra diesel trains are sought for a more frequent service. For the planned H51 services between Ashford and the East Sussex coast, new electro-diesel bi-mode trains are now the favoured option. Also, in order to maintain the Ashford-Brighton through service and increase its capacity, electro-diesel bi-mode trains are needed and Southern could copy Northern's example of converting former Thameslink trains. We support both initiatives.

Heathrow speakers at Railfuture AGM
Speakers dealing with the Heathrow Airport southern and western access projects will address Railfuture LSE's AGM on Saturday 29 April 2017
See the Railfuture website for latest news
Twitter: @RailfutureLSE



Barrie Forrest, the vice-chairman of Rail Action Group East of Scotland, was recognised in the New Year's Honours List. Barrie was awarded a British Empire Medal for services to the community of Reston and Auchencrow. He has been a member of the Community Council for almost 40 years, acting as chairman and vice-chairman during that time. Railfuture campaigners recognise his tremendous contribution to RAGES. He has been a member since 1999, the Reston representative from 2001, and RAGES vice-chairman since 2003.

By Jane Ann Liston secretary@railfuturescotland.org.uk

Glasgow Crossrail battle
RailQwest stalwarts Ken Sutherland and Roddy McDougall continue to lobby Glasgow MSPs and councillors to rebuild the 1.8 miles of track which would create Crossrail, and link the lines using Queen Street and Central with a station at Glasgow Cross. Pro-Crossrail letters have been published in *The Herald*. Ken and Roddy continue to point out the shortcomings of linking the city centre with the airport using a tram-train, because the relatively slow tram-trains will have to use a very busy stretch of line and also the special rolling stock will be restricted to that service.

Reopening talks with transport chief
Rail Action Group East of Scotland has attended meetings of both Scottish Borders and East Lothian councils. In return, representatives of both councils attended a rail meeting at Haddington. Thanks to the efforts of MSPs John Lamont, Rachel Hamilton and Iain Gray, a meeting with Scottish Transport Minister Humza Yousaf was arranged for February to discuss the next steps and dates for the reopening of Reston and East Linton stations.

Music comes to the aid of Beattock
Beattock Station Action Group will learn the outcome of the level 1 STAG (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance) by the end of March, and which options will be taken forward to level 2. The group will hold a musical event in Beattock Village Hall in May to raise much-needed funds.

Forth Rail Link campaign
The Forth Rail Link campaign was boosted by Fife Council's granting £30,000 for Capita to carry out the STAG pre-assessment, which will investigate the possibilities of using the former Longannet power station line to enable a Dunfermline-Glasgow service.

Fife protest over CrossCountry decision
Campaigners in north-east Fife were dismayed that CrossCountry has decided to terminate a service from south-west England

to Aberdeen at Edinburgh, thus removing the 18.10, the first post-peak evening train. As CrossCountry is the only alternative to local ScotRail trains which stop at Cupar, it will have a significant effect on its residents using off-peak tickets, who will now get home 45 minutes later at nearly 20.00. Losing a stop at Leuchars will also cut the service to St Andrews, as it has been observed that a large number of passengers use both the Virgin East Coast and CrossCountry trains when they stop at Leuchars. Station usage has increased significantly over the years, going up by nearly 10% last year.

St Andrews fights back
StARLink (St Andrews Rail Link) has welcomed the inclusion of a new St Andrews railway which would provide a "significant economic development benefit" in the recently published Tay Cities Deal. It was dismayed, though not surprised, when a St Andrews line was omitted from the latest Fife Plan. The reason given was that no STAG evaluation had been undertaken. However, StARLink is finalising arrangements to commission a STAG pre-evaluation, which will be harder for the authorities to ignore. StARLink is also arranging to meet MSPs at Holyrood to present the case and is confident that they will be impressed.

Contacts:
Rail Action Group, East of Scotland: www.rages.org.uk/
Beattock Station Action Group: www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/
St Andrews Rail Link campaign: www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/
www.facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign
[twitter@StARLinkRail](https://twitter.com/StARLinkRail)
LevenMouth Rail Campaign: www.lmrc-action.org.uk/
www.facebook.com/Levenmouth-Rail-Campaign-432832616900648/
Capital Rail Action Group: www.capitalrail.org.uk/
Newburgh Train Station campaign: <http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/>
Forth Rail Link: <https://www.facebook.com/forthraillink/>
[twitter@forthraillink](https://twitter.com/forthraillink)

Railfuture team meets the Rail Minister

By Chris Page

chris.page@railfuture.org.uk

My article in *Railwatch* 149 mentioned that following the European Union referendum I had written to the Transport Secretary setting out our top ten recommendations for rail.

At the time it was important for the Government to re-affirm its commitment to rail investment – which it has since done, not least in the Autumn Statement, which identified additional funding for rail initiatives, including a digital signalling trial, smart ticketing for season tickets, development of Midlands Rail Hub proposals, refurbishing and possibly extending Sheffield Supertram, and a National Productivity Investment Fund, which is available for local transport (including rail) enhancements to be defined.

As a result of the letter, Allison Cosgrove, Chris Austin and I were invited to a meeting with Rail Minister Paul Maynard in November. Our discussion focused on the three key areas which must be addressed for rail investment to be effective and efficient:

1 Create a customer service culture. Successful businesses have excellent customer service woven into their culture, gaining the trust of customers and so ensuring that growth continues. Currently the rail companies are not there yet.

They just try to deal with the existing demand, but growth is tailing off. Railfuture aims to publicise examples of excellent customer service and to help operators to give passengers an easy journey, with best practice over fares, ticketing, performance, communications, connectivity, onward travel and information. The minister was concerned that passengers felt disempowered and intended to



CHRIS GRAYLING
Transport Secretary

◆◆◆◆ You can join the Railfuture lottery at www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery



CHRIS PAGE



ALLISON COSGROVE



CHRIS AUSTIN

address this as a priority, noting that train operators would welcome this as well. The minister agreed that changes to fares and ticketing, implemented in stages, were needed to provide good customer service and to maintain trust between the railway and its customers. His approach to proposals brought to him is to ask "What is in it for the passenger?" and to approve only if the benefit to passengers was demonstrable.

2 We are concerned that Network Rail does not have the capability to deliver the expansion programme in the timescale needed. This is having serious effects on the reputation of the rail industry as a whole and is impacting on the rolling stock cascade and on opportunities for smaller schemes with significant local benefits.

Railfuture supports the approach of prioritising schemes on the basis of maximising passenger benefit, and is happy to help as a stakeholder to identify ways to increase delivery capability and to define priorities in the interim. The minister commented that not all of the Shaw Report had been implemented, nor had devolution within Network Rail.

He would welcome ideas for smaller projects that would meet a rail need, for areas currently unserved, or to meet the demand for growing capacity and provide tangible benefits for passengers.

3 Forecasts of passenger usage for new lines and stations have been very inaccurate, with for example up to three times predicted passenger usage at some new stations on the Borders Railway, leading to inadequate services and station facilities. Forecasts which do not recognise that people change their travel patterns when new journey opportunities are offered also

affect the business case, making opportunities which could promote local economic growth or regeneration seem unviable.

Railfuture recommends that travel to work census information be used in future business cases, and that 2021 census information be made available sooner. The minister supported better forecasting as a step towards more realistic assessment of projects. It was an enjoyable and productive meeting, and we appreciated the minister's interest in and responses to the points that we made.

The following day, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling spoke to the Civil Engineering Contractors Association on the skills and infrastructure needed to sustain transport investment in the UK, saying that companies must invest in training thousands more engineers and skilled workers.

In a speech three days after our meeting Rail Minister Paul Maynard expressed his vision for the future of rail:

"I want to see passengers receiving exemplary customer service from the moment they decide to make a journey. I want to see a reliable, punctual, timely train service, where the passenger has



PAUL MAYNARD
Rail Minister

a decent chance of getting a seat. "My radical vision for our future railway is one where the passengers always come first, and are never just an inconvenient afterthought in the process of moving pieces of metal along other pieces of metal. Is this really radical? Do you think that's what customers get already?"

"I am concerned that, far too often, and despite the best efforts of committed rail staff, it remains undeniable that they don't get it, day in and day out."

The following week, Mr Grayling spoke on the need for the railways to change to deliver the best possible passenger experience, and changes in the way that the railway is managed and financed – including implementing the changes recommended in the Shaw Report, setting up East West Rail as a separate organisation to develop, fund, build and operate the route, requiring new franchises to have integrated operating teams with Network Rail, and giving rail workers a financial stake in the success of the railway.

While our views alone may not have triggered these announcements, we have shown the minister and the Department for Transport that our thinking is in tune with current policy direction, which brings us credibility and influence.

This creates opportunities, which we can exploit only if we are active. The first was the ideas for smaller projects meeting a rail need, which our branches provided and which I have forwarded to the Minister. The next step is for our branches to work with stakeholders to promote these ideas. There will be more!

■ Chris Page is chair of Railfuture

Political views

If Railfuture wishes to be seen as politically neutral, you should refrain from reporting individual politicians' views in isolation, even if the politician happens to be Christian Wolmar (*Railwatch* 150).

*Mike Bond, Westmead Avenue, Studley, Warwickshire B80 7NB
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Rail and Europe

I felt it was irrelevant to give Christian Wolmar's view that the Brexit referendum "was conducted on such dishonest terms that Parliament, or the electorate, needs to vote on the issue before a decision to leave the EU" (*Railwatch* 150).

This is a matter outside the scope of Railfuture, on which members will have widely differing views. By all means state the fact that he was Labour's candidate at the Richmond Park by-election, even that he opposed Heathrow expansion, as do many pro-rail activists. But let us not see opinionated European Union articles that do not even mention rail.

*Clr Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby, DN31 2JP
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Sensible East Anglia

For some time I have been ambivalent about continuing my Railfuture membership. I receive my East Anglia magazine and think yes, what a sensible, practical body to belong to, then along comes *Railwatch* and I think what am I doing associating with these people.

How unfortunate the green energy policies so assiduously supported by at least the editorial team have resulted in substantial job losses at DB Cargo UK.

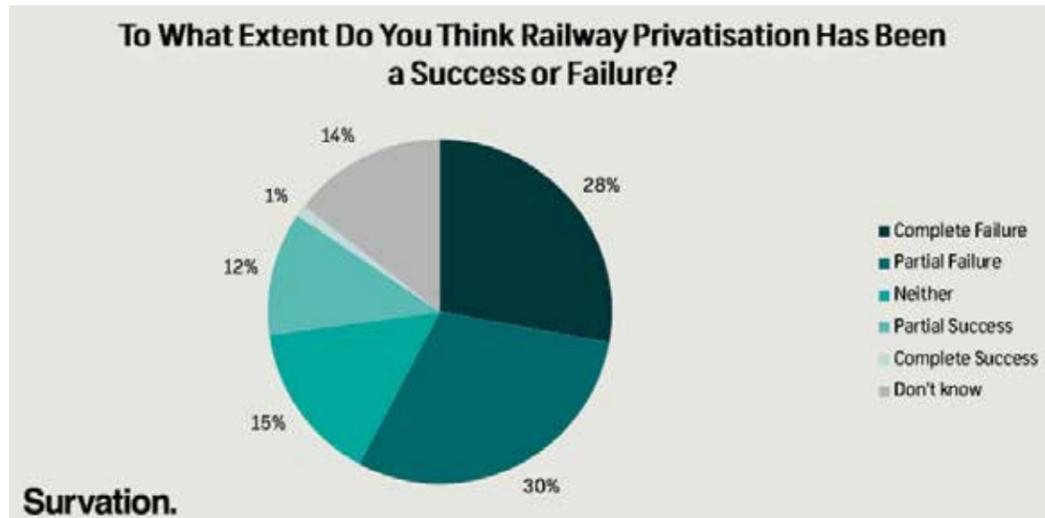
*G P Brown, Bowthorpe Road, Norwich NR5 8AQ
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Off-peak tickets

Congratulations on your headline article in *Railwatch* 150.

I have long felt that by far the biggest problem with our railway charging system is the designation of early morning trains as peak even if they are going away from the local metropolis.

I suspect that this contributes heavily to road congestion as people take to the motorways to avoid morning peak fares, and it is disastrous for people who want to enjoy a day in the countryside who cannot



A Survation poll published in December showed only 1% of the public believes rail privatisation has been a complete success. The poll was conducted for the campaign group We Own It

start later or go on Saturdays because they have to fit in with bus times, opening times of attractions, and/or daylight hours.

It would be useful to have some kind of database to tell people where they can go to avoid this overcharging, for example, Chiltern charge super off peak rates for passengers leaving Marylebone before 06.30.

Some years ago when Great Western participated in the Club 55 scheme, which allowed travel on counterpeak services, I was making day trips from London once a week or more. This autumn they restored the scheme for people over 60, but as it was poorly publicised and (according to a staff memo shown to me) terminated a couple of days before the announced date, I made far fewer trips than I had hoped.

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Empty seats

I refer to the eye-catching photograph on the front cover of *Railwatch* 150 and the accompanying article. I am sure the general public would like to see all empty train seats filled in order to get cars off the road but train operators only want to fill seats using a pricing structure that maximises their revenue. This means that on services with low demand, such as the one in question, a lot of empty seats are more or less inevitable.

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Absurdities galore

Railwatch 150 rightly draws attention to the absurdity of

applying peak travel restrictions to "counter peak" services out of London. What is just as baffling is the inconsistency between stations. A print-out given to me at my local station lists the times after which "off peak" travel is permitted at the following stations:

Paddington 08.10, Waterloo 08.15, Marylebone 09.00, Euston 09.26, Liverpool Street 09.31, yet no restriction is given for Victoria.

Perhaps the most absurd example is St Pancras International at 10.26. One wonders if this anomaly will survive the introduction of Thameslink services. "Off peak ticket to Cambridge? Certainly madam, just go through the subway to King's Cross (restriction lifted at 09.06) and change at Finsbury Park".

*Phil Smart, Ipswich, Suffolk
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Joined-up thinking

How interesting, I thought, reading Philip Bisatt's report on the reopening to tram-trains of the Chateaubriant to Nantes railway (*Railwatch* 150). So I put Chateaubriant-Nantes into the Voyages-SNCF fare-finder, and it came up with a three-hour journey by bus to Angers St Laud, then TGV to Nantes. It is nice to know a lack of joined-up thinking is not an entirely British illness!

Crossing the Channel to Devon, I agree with Gerard Duddridge's suggestion that a tunnel is the only long-term solution to the Dawlish issue. But the immediate answer is Okehampton-Bere Alston. Whatever the discredited Network Rail might claim, the Okehampton route is a relatively quick and cheap solution, giving

a breathing space while the more expensive coastal options are argued over. Forget the rumours about Meldon Viaduct being unfit for purpose. British Rail said the same about Ribbleshead until our political masters reprieved the line, after which a cost-effective solution was mysteriously found. With flooding clearly still a problem at Cowley Bridge north of Exeter, a short and slightly higher west-north link would enable trains to reach Plymouth without traversing Cowley Bridge Junction.

I am not a natural supporter of privatisation and outsourcing, but I would be interested to see what sort of responses the big civil engineering companies came up with for a design and rebuild contract for the whole route from Yeoford to Bere Alston. Significantly less than Network Rail, I am sure.

*David Henshaw, West Park, Castle Cary, Somerset BA7 7DB
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Toilets are essential

Like many people, I was upset by recent stories in the press and on television about those with disabilities who have found disabled toilets unavailable on trains. Watching a YouTube video of the interior of the new South West Trains class 707 electric trains, it appears that these trains do not have ANY toilets – disabled or otherwise. How can this be in the 21st century?

I understand these trains are to be used on Waterloo-Windsor (54 minutes) and Waterloo-Weybridge via Hounslow (75 minutes) services. As someone with a disability which means I cannot journey from Egham to

London (41 minutes) without using the toilet, I find these new class 707s unacceptable. At a stroke, SWT is downgrading both of these routes by replacing outer-suburban stock (class 450s and class 458/5s) with inner-suburban Metro stock depriving passengers on these routes of disabled toilets which they have had on trains for many years. Is this another example of SWT keeping costs down at the expense of disabled facilities on trains?

I am sure that SWT's answer will be along the lines of "most passengers only use these two routes for short journeys" which is completely wrong if you commute from Windsor to London!

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Crossrail electrics

I was surprised to read Paul Abell's article on the back page of *Railwatch* 150. He referred to Crossrail electrification as far as Maidenhead, but this was extended to Reading a couple of years ago. Then he said that 165s and 166s will all remain on Thames Valley services until CP6, but in fact this will only be the handful of diesel units needed for the branches to Windsor, Marlow and Henley. The rest will be replaced by 387s and 365s.

*Tim Burford
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Paul Abell writes: Maidenhead still seems to be regarded as the boundary between the Crossrail and Great Western electrification projects, even though Crossrail services are now expected to run through to Reading rather than terminate at Maidenhead. Certainly it was Maidenhead that was quoted in the revised electrification programme in the National Audit Office report rather than Reading. With regard to the Turbos I am afraid my wording in the article is ambiguous, but there will naturally need to be wires up before 365s and 387s can take over services. I hope this clarifies matters.

Send your letters and emails 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 but include your postal address

By Ian Brown

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Quite a few Railfuture members have expressed an interest in light rail, enquiring whether light rail is preferable or otherwise to traditional main line rail either generally or in the case of particular alternative schemes such as in Leeds.

The answer is that this all depends on the potential application, including whether heavy rail routes can be set aside for light rail and whether the system is to be essentially a city-based system.

Manchester, for example, has converted heavy rail routes and provided new on-street construction and so has Birmingham. Manchester has been a big success, although Birmingham is only now starting to increase ridership following extension through the city centre.

To facilitate members' interest, two documents concerning light rail have been added to the Railfuture website for member reference, both produced by UK Tram, the body responsible for light rail standards.

These are:

1. Advice note for promoters considering a light rail scheme.
2. An investigation into the economic impacts of cities of investment in light rail schemes.

Separate systems

Whether you choose to support light or heavy rail for any city, it soon becomes clear that both have disadvantages as, irrespective of what infrastructure is used, new light rail systems become separate systems requiring passenger interchange with the national network.

Against this, light rail can be far cheaper and easier to construct free from Network Rail standards which can inflate cost. Light rail can penetrate city centres better than main line rail which has an interchange penalty and in many cases terminal congestion.

The advent of tram train

These rather stark choices make every scheme controversial. Additionally a light rail scheme tends to be promoted locally, while heavy rail is usually delivered by Network Rail and funded by national government.

The concept of tram train is a light rail vehicle that can run on the existing main line system which can also leave it and run on-street into or through a city centre, such as in Manchester, but running on the main line network outside the city centre. We have made heavy weather of tram train in the UK, the only example being



Tango tram train vehicle under test in Aarhus in December

Aarhus takes Denmark forward

Denmark will get its first tram train system in June when part of the Aarhus system opens after four years of construction work in which the existing 53 mile Odder-Aarhus-Grenaa rail line is being adapted for tram train services.

Twelve new 60 mph Tango vehicles are being supplied by Stadler from Switzerland and will operate from Aarhus, 40 miles north to Grenaa. The three-car units can carry 108 seated passengers, plus 148 people standing

A batch of 50 mph Stadler Variobahn vehicles are being built in Germany and will run 13 miles from Odder, through Aarhus and another seven miles north to Lystrup, via Skejby and Lisbjerg. The Variobahn vehicles have 84 seats and can carry a maximum of 132 people standing. There will be street running in Aarhus and also between Aarhus and Skejby and a short section in Lisbjerg. The livery for the vehicles has been designed by British-born Stephen Willacy who is the Aarhus city architect.

Aarhus resident Erland Egefors who took the picture above, visited Mulhouse in 2016 to see a French tram train system with a section of street running which has been operating for 10 years.

the Rotherham extension of the Supertram network which will run on the national network through Rotherham Central station alongside and in between freight trains and main line passenger trains.

The two successful tram train systems that are now taken as reference systems are both in Germany, in and around Karlsruhe and at Kassel. Light rail trains here are equally happy running on-street through the city centre and sharing the Deutsche Bahn main line with Inter City Express high speed trains, although it does take a little getting used to.

Tram train can potentially solve the dilemma of choosing between a separate, dedicated light rail system and a traditional main line suburban system which often requires onward travel to the final destination. It

is more expensive at the moment than either of these approaches but can generate greater passenger flows and economic and regeneration benefits.

So you take your choice. Railfuture's position on these options is to inform members to assist with informed choices, not to advocate a particular solution.

One size certainly does not fit all although it is clear that, given careful integrated planning, tram train can have a significant role in urban transport development in Britain

■ Ian Brown CBE FCILT is Railfuture's director of policy



Ian Brown nameplate on an Overground class 378 train

Trenitalia and Mitsui take their share of East Anglian trains

By Christian Wolmar
christian.wolmar@gmail.com

The future of franchising is in doubt following the departure of National Express, which once ran nine contracts, from the rail industry.

This high-profile departure has highlighted a number of problems for the franchising process, which is beset by a paucity of bidders and a lack of clarity about the precise purpose of the system.

While British companies are leaving the industry, foreign-based businesses are taking over. The entry of the Italian state-owned Trenitalia, which has taken over the c2c franchise from National Express, means that four European state railways are now involved in running UK railways.

Trenitalia joins Arriva (owned by Deutsche Bahn), Govia (35 per cent owned by Keolis which in turn is 70 per cent owned by SNCF) and Abellio (owned by Dutch state railways).

Even the Japanese have joined in as the huge private Mitsui company has just taken a 40 per cent stake in the new Abellio Greater Anglia franchise.

This foreign takeover is becoming increasingly embarrassing to the Department for Transport in the light of the Brexit vote, especially since a British government company would not be able to take on a franchise.

There is also the further nonsense that Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has refused to hand over any more routes to Transport for London as franchiser, even though its London Overground services have been universally recognised as a great success.

Indeed, devolution throws a further spanner in the works. Former Prime Minister David Cameron's government seemed keener on the idea of devolving power away from Westminster than the current PM Theresa May, who has been silent on the issue. However, any attempt to pass on franchising powers to regional government is bound to

But where does that leave the franchising process?

be fraught with difficulties over who precisely should be given responsibility.

Rail North, for example, which was originally envisaged to have a measure of control over the Northern and TransPennine Express franchise, seems to have been largely sidelined, having had only a consultative role. Its website has no entry since April 2016! The Southern debacle only adds to the uncertainty over the future of franchising. In fact the huge Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern deal was a management contract, which means Govia, the company running it

has been a short list of just two, instead of the normal four.

Moreover, because of the lack of capacity in the cuts-hit Department for Transport, extensions without any competition are being handed out to incumbents, simply because there is not enough expertise in Marsham Street to process more than two or three deals in a year.

The loss of National Express, which is not going to bid for any new deals in the near future, highlights the depth of the franchising crisis. Its departure, with the sale of c2c to Trenitalia, was motivated by the company's

likely to win contracts will be those backed by state-run enterprises. While FirstGroup, Stagecoach and Virgin remain in the industry, it will only take another franchise or two to go wrong for them to decide, like National Express, that it is not worth the candle.

The complexity and cost of bidding is another deterrent. Bids now cost up to £10 million as the paperwork and the detail required have increased exponentially.

So as I have often asked: "What is franchising for?"

Equally pertinently: "Where is it going?" Chris Grayling clearly does not like the present structure and has intimated that he would like to see vertically integrated deals, with parts of Network Rail being parcelled out to operators. That would require a change in legislation which is not likely to be forthcoming given other imperatives for Parliament at the moment.

The Labour party's policy is to renationalise the railways, but that is not likely to happen in the near future either. On current form, Labour would appear to have little chance of winning the next election, whether that is this year or, more likely at the scheduled time of 2020.

Renationalisation is also more difficult than Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has intimated since, even if Labour won, the new government would have to wait for existing deals to run their course.

Trying to end the franchises would be a costly exercise. Therefore it would not be until probably the late 2020s that Labour would be able to gain control of the whole industry.

In the absence of any radical solution there is only one option for the Department, which is to muddle through.

As different franchises come up, the civil servants running the show will look for bespoke solutions in the hope that deals can

Deutsche Bahn owns Arriva which runs Chiltern and Arriva Trains Wales. Dutch Railways owns Abellio which has a stake in Greater Anglia and ScotRail. French Railways (SNCF) owns Keolis which has a stake in Govia. Mitsui has taken a share in Greater Anglia.

does not take the revenue risk. This was a sensible arrangement given that the deal encompassed a time of great uncertainty with the redevelopment of London Bridge station and the upgrading of Thameslink services, including the introduction of new rolling stock.

It also meant that it is the Department (and the taxpayer), not Govia, which has lost out as a result of the disruption caused by the ongoing dispute affecting Southern services. The real crisis is the shortage of bidders. In several recent competitions there

assessment that there was no money to be made in them that hills any more.

National Express felt their rivals were putting in impossible bids which made no financial sense and that the DfT was ready to accept them even if there was a risk the deals would collapse.

The company pointed to the Greater Anglia franchise where, despite putting in a bid that its boss, Dean Finch, thought was optimistic, it was outbid by 40 per cent by Abellio. This suggests that in future the only bidders

European owned, with a further seven partly in foreign hands through joint deals with British firms. Private train operators have creamed off £3.5 billion from running our railways over the past 10 years, according to an investigation by the *Daily Mirror* which is campaigning for the rail network to be renationalised.



This c2c train at Limehouse in East London on 26 February was still in the National Express livery, once a common sight on the British rail network. Now Trenitalia has taken over the franchise and National Express is departing the scene

Picture: MAGGIE KING

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ The website of the European Passengers' Federation links Railfuture with 35 other pro-public transport organisations in 20 European countries. The website contains a 10-question survey form in English on the experiences of long-distance rail travellers. If you are making an international journey of more than 200 kilometres, please complete the questionnaire. EPF holds its 2017 annual conference on 17-18 March in Rotterdam.

■ The Interrail pass is 45 years old this year. It was originally introduced to encourage young people to travel abroad by rail and was gradually extended to all age groups. Interrail has also been enhanced so that it can be used from your home station, not just from when you arrive on foreign soil. You can buy Interrail tickets on line. There is a 15% discount offer until 31 March 2017.

■ After consulting with our sister organisation Rail Users Ireland, Railfuture has written to the National Transport Authority to object to plans to withdraw passenger services on two lines. The Gorey-Wexford-Rosslare line is of international significance because of the ferries to Fishguard, Pembroke

and Cherbourg. The Rosslare-Waterford rail service was suspended a few years ago and replaced by a bus. This made cross-country journeys from the ferry port towards the west of Ireland more difficult and the current threat to Waterford-Limerick Junction would be a further backward step. These two routes should be promoted in co-operation with Irish Ferries and Stena Line.

■ Respected rail campaigner Bill Forbes, aged 60, died in December after a long battle with cancer. His funeral took place in January. Bill, a retired surveyor, worked with RailQwest and Railfuture to promote Glasgow Crossrail and a proper rail link to Glasgow Airport.

■ Railfuture campaigner Geoffrey Penn (aged 94 and living in a care home) received the Legion d'Honneur in November from a French Consulate Representative for his part in the liberation of France.

Jordan Sargent of Transport User Executive (Northern/TransPennine) and Transport Focus, David Hoggarth, director, Rail North, and Catherine Huddleston, community rail partnership officer, Leeds-Lancaster-Morecambe CRP. The Mayor of Leeds is expected to open the conference. £25 early bird prices are available until 30 April. For further details, email leeds2017@railfuture.org.uk or book online at www.railfuture.org.uk

■ Trevor Garrod has raised the issue of customer-facing staff with Greater Anglia. He said that in a 75-minute presentation by the company very little was said about staffing. Even with the increasing number of ticket machines, staff are still needed, especially for queries and complex journeys. Railfuture has argued against cuts in customer-facing staff, on trains or at stations. We also want them to be well-trained, well-informed, well-equipped and well-motivated.

■ Imperial College London has partnered with climate change charity 10:10 to investigate the use of track-side solar panels to power trains. The aim is to bypass the electricity grid and "more efficiently manage power demand from trains".

Franchises 'not fit for purpose' but they do make money

Britain's rail franchising model is "no longer fit for purpose", MPs on the Commons Transport Committee have warned. The committee said in February that there were "serious deficiencies" in the way the Department for Transport awarded contracts, leading to higher fares and poor performance. Ministers were advised

to launch an independent review of the system. Committee chairman Louise Ellman said: "Passenger satisfaction with the railways is falling. Potential benefits are being lost and the passenger is suffering through higher fares and continued underperformance." Ten out of 27 main rail companies in Britain are now wholly

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

Community rail company delivers progress

The TransWilts service between Swindon and Westbury, which received community rail designation in September, is probably the fastest growing community rail service in Britain. At Railfuture Severnside's Bath meeting in November, Paul Johnson, chairman of the TransWilts community interest company, said the three-year trial of an enhanced service had been remarkably successful with an estimated 235,000 passengers carried in the most recent year.

"We have smashed our targets," he said, adding that it was more effective to demonstrate passenger growth than to ask for subsidies. The enhanced Swindon-Westbury service, recently increased to nine trains each way on weekdays, is now incorporated in the Great Western franchise.

The formation of the TransWilts company in 2015 included the community rail partnership led by Graham Ellis and represented a change from being just a campaigning organisation to one of delivery. Community Rail designation gave the company powers to vary non-regulated fares and it will be promoting the Melksham route as cheaper for through journeys than via Bath.

Mr Johnson said: "We are negotiating with GWR to provide more services by attracting more passengers. We plan to introduce services after 21.00 in both directions through the farebox, not through subsidy."

He outlined the company's proposal to enlarge Melksham station to accommodate longer trains when diesel multiple units are cascaded from the Thames Valley. The company's goals for 2020 include hourly services over the line, with improved connections at Chippenham and Swindon, while its vision for 2025 envisages extending the TransWilts route to serve Southampton Airport, where the station is a short walk from the check-in.

His advice to rail campaigners was to ensure their message is easily understood by local authorities, MPs and the Department for Transport, as well as to ensure that schemes proceed to Network Rail's GRIP 3 stage (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) so that they are near completion when funds become available, often in the run-up to a general election. Asked how campaigners should fight pessimistic forecasts from consultants, he said the massive growth in rail use had raised the baseline for predictions but much of that success, as with TransWilts, was down to marketing. He warned: "Don't be stuck at the charity end of a queue when money is tight."

Station bus link needs improvement

At the same meeting David Smith of Cam & Dursley Transportation Group said it was campaigning for a more regular bus link to the station to relieve pressure on car parking spaces. GWR had promised an earlier morning train to Gloucester and Cheltenham from December 2018 following the intervention of Neil Carmichael, MP for Stroud, who is also calling for the reopening of Stonehouse Bristol Road station.

Bike, walk and car-share to the train

GWR has commissioned Atkins Rail to produce station travel plans for 20 principal stations. The STPs aim to increase the number of people

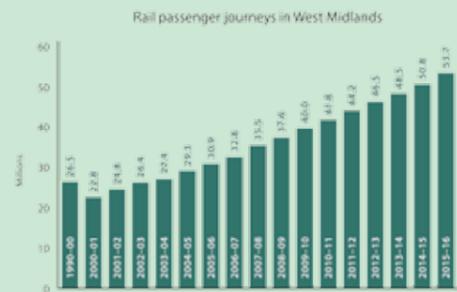
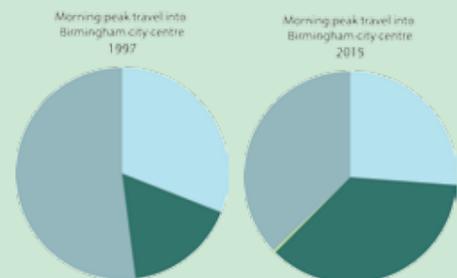
going to rail stations by encouraging better bus links, cycle and pedestrian facilities as well as by encouraging car sharing, particularly among people travelling to school and work. Some of these issues were also discussed when Railfuture Severnside attended stakeholder meetings in Taunton in late October and Bristol in early December. Other issues raised included crowding, information systems and signs.

Ticket office hours extended at busy station

At the November meeting of Friends of Bridgwater Station, GWR offered to extend ticket office hours to 18.00 for an experimental period in 2017. It is the second busiest station in Somerset, with 312,000 recorded journeys in 2015-16, and needs better facilities. Railfuture Severnside suggested improvements at Bridgwater and six other stations for consideration by Chris Page and Chris Austin before their meeting with the Rail Minister which took place in January.

www.railfuture.org.uk/SevernsideBranch
Twitter @RailfutureSSide

WEST MIDLANDS
RAILFUTURE



Healthy trends in West Midlands statistics

There is good news in the 2016 West Midlands Travel Trends statistical review. It shows increasing numbers of people using rail in the period from 1999 to 2016 and even more important, more people using rail to travel in the morning peak. Rail's share has gone up from 17% in 1997 to 30% in 2016 while car use down from 52% to 37%. The bad news is that a smaller percentage of people are using buses.

Question Time debate on transport

Railfuture West Midlands is organising a Question Time-style debate about transport in the Banqueting Suite of Birmingham Council House on Thursday 6 April 2017 from 18.00 to 21.00. Four of the five main candidates for Mayor of the West Midlands have agreed to take part in the debate, which will be open to the public. The mayoral election is on 4 May, along with other local government elections in England, Wales and Scotland.

Wolmar for Railfuture West Midlands AGM

Railfuture president Christian Wolmar will be guest speaker at Railfuture West Midlands AGM

on 22 April 2017 at the Priory Rooms, 40 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AF. 14.00-17.00

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WESSEX
RAILFUTURE

By Tony Smale tony.smale@railfuture.org.uk

New station for garden village

One of 14 new "garden villages" announced by the Government in early 2017 is to be at Welborne on the northern edge of Fareham, an area already earmarked for housebuilding. To the west of Welborne is the new village of Knowle, built 20 years ago on the site of a closed mental hospital. At the planning stage for Knowle Village, Railfuture unsuccessfully argued for a new station on land once occupied by a halt on the Fareham-Eastleigh line serving Knowle Hospital. That station would be very useful now that a further 6,000 homes are planned for the area! Network Rail has now told Fareham Borough Council it is studying options for a new two-platform station. Bryan Jezeph of Hampshire Chamber of Commerce said: "The station at Funtley/Knowle closed in the 1960s and it should be reopened to serve the new development. Welborne should have the objective of minimising the use of the car and a new station would provide effective links." The council's planning document for Welborne stresses the need for a "high-quality, sustainable public transport system" yet commits only to safeguarding the site for a new railway station while assessing its viability. This is not good enough. If the station is to have a significant impact, it needs to be ready with the first phase of housebuilding.

Waterloo upgrade warning for summer

As the £800million scheme to transform Britain's busiest station (Waterloo) gets under way, travellers from Wessex will need to be aware that from 5-28 August, there will be restricted services into and out of Waterloo to allow the lengthening of platforms 1-4. Passengers will need to check before they travel by looking at the latest updates on the South West Trains website or picking up a leaflet at their local station. New timetables will operate on the Windsor lines from December 2017 and a big timetable change for all services is expected in December 2018. Once the draft timetables are published, we will be analysing their impact and submitting comments as necessary.

Southern's customer care lesson for SWT

We have all experienced journeys where the train divides or another unit is attached. At present the South West Trains method of attaching units is to keep the doors closed until the operation has been completed, even at terminus stations such as Waterloo and Portsmouth Harbour. This leads to passenger frustration and has sometimes been known to result in missed connections. We believe consideration should be given to the Southern and Great Northern method of attaching units, where the doors are opened for passengers to leave the train, they are then closed, the units attached and the doors reopened. This introduces only a minimal delay and is far more passenger friendly. You are less likely to miss your connection if the train is running late.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+Branch
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Rail is vital for better Midlands links

By Graham Nalty

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It is great to see so many local government organisations promoting rail growth. Midlands Connect wishes to recreate the direct rail link between Leicester and Coventry on the basis that better transport between the cities will deliver economic growth.

The Department for Transport West Midlands rail franchise briefing document mentions stakeholders' aspirations for reopening lines including:

- Walsall-Stourbridge
- Lichfield-Burton/Derby
- The line from Walsall to Birmingham via Sutton Park
- Walsall to Lichfield

The East Midlands Councils strategic statement for the East Midlands rail franchise prepared by SCP Transport represents an ambitious but achievable series of service improvements.

But most interesting is the key ambition for 60 mph average train speeds between the East Midlands' four largest cities (Derby, Nottingham, Leicester and Lincoln) and Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle and Scotland.

So what are the opportunities for Railfuture?

If the benefits of job creation justify re-connection between Leicester and Coventry (23 miles), then there is a very strong case for improving links between other large centres close to each other:

- Leicester-Northampton 29 miles
- Derby-Stoke 31 miles
- Derby-Walsall 32 miles
- Leicester-Walsall 36 miles
- Stoke-Liverpool 42 miles
- Nottingham-Stoke 43 miles

Many of the aspirations for new services in the West Midlands involve Walsall. While these improvements might not have a strong business case individually, the additional journeys between two new links would prove much more profitable.

The East Midlands Councils' aspiration for 60 mph average journey times will require ambitious upgrading that needs to be taken seriously by the National Infrastructure Commission, including a new and more direct link between Stoke and Crewe.

Case studies – the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Walsall-Wolverhampton

When a service frequency reaches 15 minute intervals, passenger use has a step increase due to the "turn up and go" opportunities. For a Wolverhampton-Walsall service to attract traffic it needs not only a frequent service, but

also as many longer distance through passengers as can be achieved by a mix of new services centred on Walsall:

- Rugeley-Cannock-Walsall-Wolverhampton
- Wolverhampton-Walsall-Sutton Park-Birmingham New Street
- Shrewsbury-Wolverhampton-Walsall-Sutton Park-Nuneaton-Leicester-Peterborough
- Nottingham-Derby-Burton-Lichfield-Walsall-Wolverhampton
- Nottingham-Derby-Burton-Lichfield-Walsall-Stourbridge-Worcester
- Burton-Lichfield-Walsall-Wolverhampton

Derby to Stoke

Journey times from Derby towns in the NW generally are an hour slower than to a town in the NE at a similar distance.

Delivering a 60 mph service between Derby and Liverpool would require not only a significant increase in line speeds between Derby and Stoke, with removal of level crossings, but also a new faster route from Stoke to Crewe that avoids speed

restrictions and grade crossing conflicts at Kidsgrove. If built, Glasgow to London trains could travel via Stoke with the same overall journey times as via Stafford. Stoke is a better interchange for people travelling to Scotland from the East Midlands than Crewe. The service pattern between Derby and Stoke might read:

- Nottingham-Derby-Stoke-Crewe-Liverpool (fast)
- Nottingham-Derby-Utttoxeter-Stoke-Crewe-Chester-Hooton/Llandudno
- Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough-Leicester-Nottingham-Derby (stations to Stoke)-Stoke-Kidsgrove-Alsager-Crewe-Wilmslow-Manchester Airport
- Derby-(stations to Stoke)-Stoke (stations to Macclesfield)-Stockport-Manchester. This train would serve people commuting into Stoke.

Leicester to Coventry

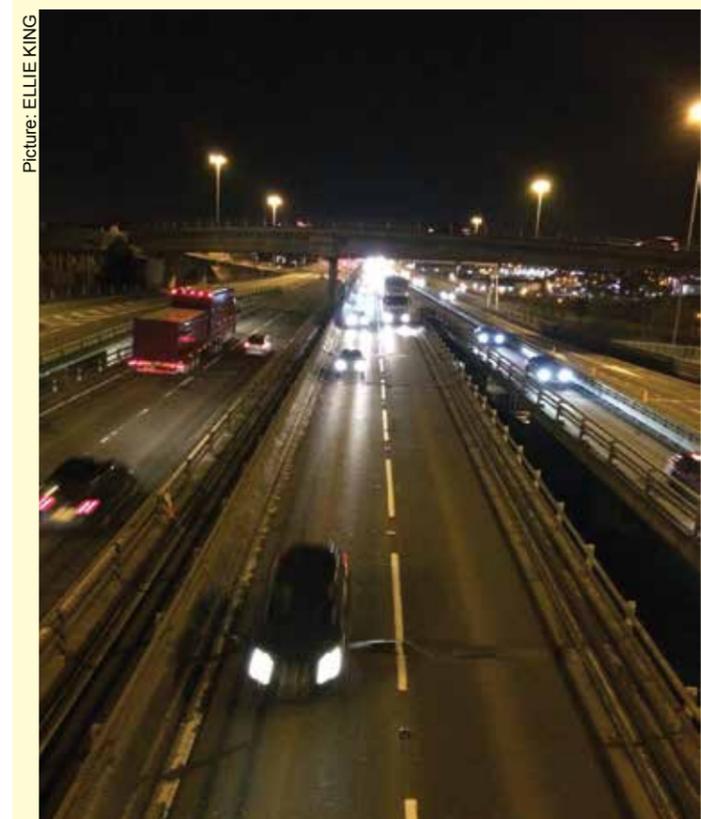
While dependent on new infrastructure, patronage can be built up by increasing the number of services between Nuneaton and Coventry with a new bay platform at the north end of Coventry station. With the new

link, we could see through services between Nottingham and Oxford via Coventry. The full service might be:

- Nottingham-Loughborough-Leicester-Nuneaton-Coventry-Leamington-Banbury-Oxford
- Leicester-(stations to Nuneaton)-Nuneaton-Bedworth-Coventry-Kenilworth-Leamington-Warwick-Stratford on Avon
- Nuneaton-(all stations)-Leamington twice hourly.

These examples show the future for rail campaigning. We have to recognize that connectivity is now accepted as the key to economic growth and that when a number of inter-related services are added together the whole is much greater than the sum of the parts.

What is also important is that Railfuture branches take every opportunity to praise all good local government initiatives to improve rail services by supporting them publicly. And then upsell them by suggesting further improvements argued in a convincing manner.



This is the M8 motorway which carves through Glasgow and separates the city centre from the West End. If you are a cyclist or a pedestrian, this road is not only the source of pollution but is also a substantial physical impediment to travelling round the city.

This picture is taken from a cyclist/pedestrian bridge which is accessible only via a massive spiral ramp on one side or a long, straight ramp on the other. As one cyclist commented: "This is a hideous way to cross the motorway but all the other options are worse."

Rail is the answer to pollution in our cities

People are at last waking up to the failure of transport planners to deal with pollution in our cities.

A dozen British cities face the prospect of having to impose charges on owners of diesel vehicles under government plans to tackle air pollution. But diesel is only part of the problem of noxious gases from car and lorry exhausts.

Both freight and passenger trains have vast environmental advantages over road transport.

The Government has at last set out plans for Birmingham, Derby, Leeds, Nottingham and Southampton to introduce clean air zones by 2020.

Walk round any British town or city though and the problem of pollution from road transport is obvious.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan is introducing a £10 daily "toxicity charge" for cars made before 2005. Diesel scrappage and a switch to electric vehicles may be a step forward but the problems of land use and traffic remain. There must be a shift away from road transport. Train services have to be expanded and rail lines reopened.

North East Combined Authority

The item about the North East Combined Authority in *Railwatch* 150 was slightly misleading. The NECA remains in place and its status is unchanged, but plans to replace it with a mayoral combined authority have been abandoned for the time being.

High hopes for Horden

A new station at Horden is planned for the Durham Coast line that would break the 13-mile gap between Hartlepool and Seaham. Rail user group Coastliners and Durham County Council are hoping for a quick decision to allocate resources from the Government's New Stations Fund. Horden will be a park-and-ride station, but is also within easy reach of 42,000 people nearby, many of whom are keen to use it regularly as soon as it opens. The station is near the end of stage 3 in Network Rail's Governance for Railway Investment Projects process.

Much more for Morpeth

The South East Northumberland Rail User Group is pleased to welcome 26 extra calls at Morpeth each week since last December's timetable came into force, although some of the new trains are not in Virgin's printed timetable. It is hoped the May edition will rectify this. There could be more. CrossCountry proposes 29 more Morpeth departures from December 2017. SENRUG wants to ensure they are distributed evenly during the day on Sunday. The present nine northbound calls (six by Virgin Trains East Coast and three by CrossCountry) include two just six minutes apart, followed by a gap of nearly three hours.

Getting to GRIPs

Full reopening of the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line by 2021 is hoped for. Northumberland County Council's cabinet is on the point of commissioning the GRIP (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) study from Network Rail. However, residents of Seghill have petitioned the council to reinstate a station for their community. SENRUG believes it might be cheaper to build a Seghill station than to exclude it, because of the need for an extra passing loop on a currently single-track section.

National Infrastructure and Connect 2026

Members of Coastliners and of the Saltburn Line User Group have responded to several simultaneous consultations – local transport plans in Stockton and Hartlepool, a wider-ranging Tees Valley *Connect 2026* consultation, and the National Infrastructure Commission. The response to the NIC involved virtually every rail group in the region. Railfuture is calling for restoration of the Leamside line, upgrading of the (Stockton-) Norton-Ferryhill line to passenger standards and running regular passenger services, building stations at Team Valley on the East Coast main line, Ferryhill (straddling the ECML and the Stockton branch junction) and Horden (see above) as well as reopening the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line.

The consultations reminded us of the importance of local connections within the area bounded by Bishop Auckland, Darlington, Thornaby (with TransPennine services to Manchester Airport), Middlesbrough, Nunthorpe and Saltburn. The present pattern

has glaring defects. Railfuture also believes *Northern Connect* services need to link Saltburn via Redcar, Middlesbrough, Stockton, the Stillington line and Durham en route to Newcastle and Carlisle, rather than trying to cram them on to the coast line. Stockton should also have a far greater role as a more convenient railhead for over 300,000 Tees-siders. Darlington has 110,000 local residents. We reminded the Tees Valley powers-that-be that, eight years from now, the Stockton and Darlington Railway will be celebrating its 200th anniversary. There is no better time to aim for an overall transformation of passenger services through Stockton. The Tees Valley *Connect 2026* consultation document, anticipating capacity problems at Darlington, has nothing better to suggest than enlarging it, despite its remoteness from most of Tees-side residents. Develop Stockton instead.

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Witney-Oxford news

Two contrasting views on improving Witney's public transport links to Oxford were outlined at an Oxford public meeting in November, organised by the Witney-Oxford Transport Group which is supported by Railfuture. Architect and planner Raymond Hall proposed a futuristic scheme for an elevated light rail line, similar to the Docklands Light Railway, with feeder bus services connecting with transport hubs along the line. Railfuture director Roger Blake brought us down to earth, proposing an incremental approach to rail reopening, citing the successful Borders Rail reopening to Tweedbank where campaigners are now calling for an extension to Hawick. He warned against underestimating future traffic growth. Stephen Joseph, from the Campaign for Better Transport, highlighted the British failure to connect development planning with transport planning. Funding is the main problem in opening new lines, but two potential sources are development charges and workplace parking levies, as in Nottingham. The population of Witney and Carterton is growing rapidly and Eynsham, a proposed "garden village", will have Hanborough as its nearest railhead.

Vertical integration for East-West Rail

After 30 years of campaigning, Railfuture welcomes the Government's go-ahead for rebuilding the line between Bicester and Bedford. However, the grant of £100 million from the Government is in fact just for the flyover across HS2 at Calvert, and really ought to be included in the HS2 budget. £10 million is granted for further planning of the Bedford-Cambridge route. Chris Grayling's plan is that East-West Rail should be designed, financed, constructed and operated by a single state-owned organisation. Former Chiltern Railways managing director Rob Brighthouse has been appointed chairman of the new organisation, so we can be sure that East-West Rail is in good hands, as he will know to avoid all the legal pitfalls which beset Chiltern's rebuilding of the Oxford-Bicester line.

Buckinghamshire sees the light

We are very pleased that Buckinghamshire County Council has appointed a strategic transport officer, after 10 years without anyone to deal with rail matters. The council was

not even aware of the plan to construct an additional chord at Bourne End to permit a half-hourly through service between Marlow and Maidenhead. There is a shortfall of only £50,000 in the funding for the new chord, which Railfuture hopes could be met by the county council. Council leader Martin Tett is also chairman of the Heartland Strategic Alliance, and so will be aware of the need for a north-south rail link, via a reopened High Wycombe-Bourne End line, connecting with East West Rail. The planned expansion of Aylesbury reinforces the case for a South Aylesbury station to serve new homes and Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

Oxford electrification deferred

A detailed presentation on current and planned works in the Oxford area was made to Railfuture Thames Valley in Oxford in November by Rob Mashford and Amy Harland of Network Rail. Despite the deferment of electrification to Oxford, Rob confirmed that it is funded in control period 6 (2019-24), together with the rebuilding of Oxford station and a new through platform on the down side. Network Rail would like to extend four tracks between Didcot and Oxford, although with two bridges over the Thames at Appleford and Culham this might not be possible all the way. Platform lengthening will be undertaken at Radley, Culham and Appleford to take class 387 electric trains. In anticipation of doubling the Cotswold line to Hanborough, Wolvercote Junction will be future-proofed for a two-track junction.

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[Twitter @RailfutureTV](https://twitter.com/RailfutureTV)

Okehampton line need for Cornish resilience

Reopening the Okehampton route from Exeter to Plymouth with 90mph capability is necessary, according to Greengauge 21 in its response to the Peninsula Rail Task Force's report *Closing the Gap*. More capacity is essential because of continued disruption on the Dawlish route and the need for more freight train paths. We also believe more InterCity125 trains should be used because they are more resilient to sea spray at Dawlish than the CrossCountry Voyagers. Greengauge 21 also recommends a north-to-west chord north of Cowley Bridge to allow direct running from the Taunton direction to Plymouth via Okehampton. These recommendations are almost identical to Railfuture's long-held policy.

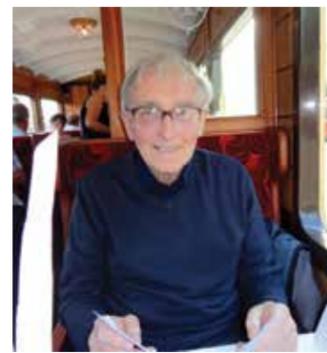
Barnstaple-Braunton tramway

The charity organisation Combe Rail is proposing TawLink – a modern tramway on a former rail route between Barnstaple and Braunton which is still 98% intact. It would run alongside the Tarka Trail cycle path. The idea was presented to Devon County Council's ExeRail working party on 17 February, with a view to commissioning a pre-feasibility study. See www.taw-link.org.uk/

Railfuture Devon & Cornwall AGM

The 2017 Railfuture Devon & Cornwall AGM will be on Saturday 22 April at the Unitarian Church, Notte Street, Plymouth PL1 2AQ, at 13.30.

www.railfuture.org.uk/DevonandCornwallBranch
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Peter makes his own history

Readers may have noticed a new name at the head of the North East report in this edition of *Railwatch* (see left)

Peter Kenyon, who has contributed for many years, has handed over to Peter Walker.

Peter Kenyon, seen above on board an Isle of Man train, originally joined the then Railway Development Society in response to an advert in the *Guardian* newspaper.

Having had a lifelong interest in railways, he hoped to be more active in contributing to the survival and rejuvenation of the railway system.

He had been active at local and national level in the Historical Association and thought this experience would be relevant, so for a while joined the RDS board.

Unfortunately this did not prove fruitful as at this time. He felt that the board did not pull together, so he did not seek re-election.

Peter resolved to concentrate on the North East branch. Members proved a most welcoming and companionable group.

The branch committee had a high opinion of *Railwatch*, and when the job of compiling the regional column became vacant he took on the task.

This proved to be enjoyable, as it gave him an overview of the rail scene and provided contact with interesting groups and individuals.

Thanks to the co-operation of the editors, Peter has been able to reflect the total picture of main line, regional, local and preserved services, as well as chronicling branch activities.

In retirement he hopes to continue to monitor the Tyne-Wear Metro, while maintaining his interest in the Isle of Man Steam and Manx Electric Railways, together with facing the new challenge provided by the threats to the future of the unique Douglas Bay Horse Tramway.

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

Double benefit for freight and passengers

By Phil Smart

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Rail freight must benefit from the construction of a nuclear power station in Suffolk but there should be improvements for passengers as well.

This was the message Railfuture delivered to the Sizewell C Stage 2 consultation which closed in February.

EDF Energy proposes a £15 billion project to construct the plant on the Suffolk coast, north of Leiston, requiring up to 10 million tonnes of construction materials.

Two strategies have been developed to minimise the impact of road haulage on local roads – dubbed Marine Max and Rail Max.

Marine Max, bringing materials by sea, requires construction of an expensive landing jetty, so

Rail Max is favoured. The convenient branch to Leiston, off the East Suffolk line, is capable of modification but the line itself is not capable of sustaining up to 10 freight movements per day in addition to the hourly passenger service.

This is because the 12 miles of line between Woodbridge and Saxmundham was reduced to single track in the 1980s.

Railfuture advocates restoring these 12 miles to double track, providing a legacy of benefit to passengers as well as freight.

Doubling the line would achieve the following:

■ Meeting future growth in population and travel demand by doubling service frequency and restoring services to Leiston

■ Offering reliable train paths for Sizewell C as an alternative to expensive

transportation of materials by sea

■ Offering sustainable travel opportunities for both construction workers and operating staff for the new power station

■ Improving reliability for passenger services, particularly through trains to and from London

■ Unlocking the potential of new passenger rolling stock to reduce journey times to Lowestoft

We have shared these proposals with the line's user group, the community rail partnership, Network Rail, Greater Anglia and the Rail Freight Group, and have been interviewed on local radio.

Double-tracking offers a unique opportunity for Sizewell C to leave a positive lasting legacy of benefits both for the local community and the environment.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR RAIL FREIGHT



It was on the back of a lorry in January but this new locomotive will soon be providing superior traction for freight trains on Britain's rail network. The new class 88 is dual mode, so it can haul freight trains with power from 25kV electric overhead lines or by firing up its Caterpillar diesel engine to continue over the "last mile" on an unelectrified line.

It is shown at Allelys Heavy Haulage Yard at Studley near Redditch en route from Southampton Docks to the Direct Rail Services depot at Carlisle.

Nine more locos, built in Valencia, Spain, are being shipped to Workington in a joint deal involving Stadler Rail and Beacon Rail Leasing.

Rail freight fights for a place in post-Brexit world

By Lee Davies

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In the wake of the British vote to leave the European Union, the rail freight community is demanding its voice is heard in the negotiations.

Rail movements between Britain and our mainland Europe partners require continuity and conditions that allow proper operation. If there is any doubt, customer confidence will be damaged.

The Channel Tunnel forms a vital infrastructure artery, linking producers, suppliers and consumers. Rail is already integral to a number of large European customer supply chains. Car parts, semi and finished steel, aluminium, and industrial minerals are hauled by train, along with fast-

moving consumer goods, such as mineral water, beverages and foodstuffs. Rail freight is integrated at key sea ports to provide hinterland connections from and to industrial plants, terminals and distribution centres.

Railfuture's freight group will be liaising with trade bodies to push the Government for guarantees. For logistical access to European markets, it must remain "business as usual".

Geodis Logistics relaunched its rail service for unaccompanied road trailers in February between the French Pyrenees and Calais, with on-forwarding to the UK.

Picture: PETER MUNTON

By Rowland Pittard
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Inquiry into devolved franchise

An inquiry into the delivery of a future Wales and Borders franchise is being conducted by the National Assembly's economy, infrastructure and skills committee. The Welsh Government aims to award an integrated contract this year for both the franchise and the South Wales Metro infrastructure. The new franchise starts in October 2018, although the necessary devolution of executive powers from Westminster to the Welsh Government is still awaited.

It will be the Welsh Government, rather than the National Assembly, which takes the decision on priorities and which awards the contracts. The public consultation on the plans is also still awaited.

The current committee inquiry has called for evidence on how risks in the development, procurement and delivery process can be mitigated. It will also consider priorities for the franchise specification and how value for money for both passengers and the taxpayer can be achieved. The Welsh Government has set out its ambitions for the Metro but it will be up to the bidders to propose how it will be built and operated. Railfuture Cymru/Wales has provided evidence for both issues.

Changing face of the South Wales Metro

This project is being called the Cardiff Capital Region Metro and is moving away from the initial concept of providing heavy rail electrified lines in south-east Wales including all the Valley lines from Ebbw Vale Town to Maesteg and the Vale of Glamorgan line. It is now a hybrid scheme which involves only the electrification of the core Valley lines and the possibility of using light and not heavy rail for these lines. Railfuture responded to the consultation *Setting the Direction for Wales and the Borders Rail* which did not indicate this change of direction. Consequently there has been no public consultation on the change even though it has been included in the specification for the new Wales and Borders franchise.

The four bidders had until 19 December 2016 to present proposals including detailed outline solutions for the next phase of the Metro, with electrification of the core Valley lines. They were also expected to specify what mode of transport - whether tram or heavy rail.

The bidders have been investing millions in their detailed bids, which will also include plans of how they would deliver proposed future phases of the Metro network beyond the Valley lines including a North Wales Metro.

These proposals are now being considered by the not-for-profit Transport for Wales, which is wholly owned by the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government aims to deliver a quality and reliable railway service which will be at the heart of an integrated transport system.

Another stage of the Metro has begun, including upgrading and extending car parks at Llandaf and Radyr and the provision of improved booking office facilities. However the capacity enhancement for the Ebbw Vale branch has not yet been completed.

New stations for South Wales

Railfuture was credited with helping to fund part of the GRIP3 study (Network Rail's Governance for Railway Investment Projects) for Magor Walkway station in the January 2017 edition of *Modern Railways*. Railfuture Wales helped Magor Action Group On Rail apply for funding from Railfuture in 2015. Another contributor is Monmouthshire County Council, which has also applied to the New Stations Fund 2 for Magor Walkway construction. It is planned that the station will serve walkers and cyclists but will not have access for cars.

Cardiff Parkway station

Cardiff Parkway Developments Ltd has applied to the New Stations Fund 2 for the construction of a Cardiff Parkway station at St Mellons in the eastern part of the city. This proposal could however reduce the capacity of the lines between Cardiff and Newport.

North Wales upgrades under way

Work has started on resignalling and track rationalisation of the North Wales coast line. The scope of the first stage has been reduced to Chester to Colwyn Bay. The Llandudno branch line has been excluded and Railfuture Cymru/Wales has objected to this omission because the anticipated improvement to services on the branch will now be delayed.

The down loop at Abergale has been decommissioned and work is currently in progress on extending the down platform outwards (not an increase in length) to serve the through line. Down trains have not been able to stop while the work is in progress, and westbound passengers are being bussed from Rhyl or to Colwyn Bay. The up platform is also being upgraded. The signal box is still in use but will eventually be replaced by further intermediate block signals.

Track work is also taking place at Mostyn Docks. The delayed redoubling of the track between Rossett and Saltley Junction between Wrexham and Chester will be commissioned on 1 April following a week-long closure of the line.

Good news from Arriva Trains Wales

Train operator Arriva Trains Wales continues to provide a reliable service with good time-keeping on many lines, but has received a considerable amount of publicity because of its overcrowded trains. However, the Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association is still complaining in January of frequent cancellations and unreliability.

Rail use generally increased before Christmas and has continued to grow in the New Year with higher fuel prices for motorists stimulating most of the growth. Most station car parks are now full on weekdays.

ATW has started fitting class 175 and 150 units with wifi using a Government grant. The work will be officially launched when more units are fitted. Electrical power points for charging laptops and phones are being fitted to class 158 units but will not be fitted to class 175 units which are owned by Alstom.

Toilets and seating are being upgraded in class 142 units and improvement work on class 150 units continues to the extent of murals in the toilet on one unit.

A new station shelter is planned for the up platform at Machynlleth together with new steel railings along both platforms to replace the old wooden ones.

Plans for a new disability compliant footbridge at Abergavenny are on hold. A contributory factor is the listing of the existing footbridge.

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By Arthur Thomson
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Electrification delay fallout

Railfuture North West and user groups in our area are concerned about the delay in the Great Western electrification programme announced in November by the Government. Parts of the original electrification plan have been shelved, with no stated completion date, other than a vague "in control period 6". This means the planned cascade of diesel multiple unit trains from GWR to Northern routes will also face major delays even though the trains are desperately needed right now.

Northern claims the delay in introducing service improvements will be only six months (to May 2018) but Railfuture North West believes this is not realistic. It seems unlikely that commitments for new and enhanced services in the Northern franchise can be met. Some of these enhancements will indeed go ahead. Northern has said that from December 2017, the Clitheroe-Manchester service will be extended to the newly opened bay at Rochdale station. Northern is also exploring the possibility of extending the Blackburn-Todmorden-Manchester service to Manchester Airport at the same time, though this would depend on completion of the Ordsall curve. Even when electrification of Manchester Victoria-Euxton Junction is completed, electric trains will have to wait for the delayed Preston-Blackpool section to be completed before they can run to Blackpool North. The new diesel train depot at Blackburn is planned for completion in September 2017 which will allow Blackpool North depot to be closed and converted to stabling for electric units. Northern and Porterbrook have announced plans to develop electro-diesels from the class 319 electric units but this may have resulted from fears of further delays to electrification in the North West.

Stations wanted for 'Garden Villages'

Under new Government plans to expand affordable housing, money has been allocated for "Garden Villages". Four are in the North West region - Bailrigg in Lancaster, St Cuthberts near Carlisle, Handforth in Cheshire and Halsnead in Knowsley. All four are close enough to rail lines to allow good connections with existing stations or have plans for new ones. At the moment it seems the planners are prioritising road connections, but Railfuture North West wants to make sure that railway connections are included in local plans, if only to reduce pollution from road traffic. These newly built communities will vary in size from 1,500 to 10,000 properties and will get £6 million in Government funding over two years.

Southport-Manchester South services

There was some good news after the meeting between the Ormskirk, Preston and Southport Travellers' Association, Northern and Rail North in November. Services on the line will not be changed before May 2018, deferred from the original December 2017 change which would have resulted in all services from Southport to Manchester being diverted to terminate at Manchester Victoria. The plan remains however. OPSTA representatives report that the meeting was constructive and is hopeful Rail North and Northern can devise alternative options.

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Home truths for rail expansion

By Chris Austin

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With a growing population, England needs more homes, so Government policy is to encourage new housebuilding, and not just in the south east.

For example, over the next 25 years the number of households in the West Midlands is expected to increase by 264,000 and in Greater Manchester by 228,000, although the big increase is going to be in Cambridgeshire, Essex and Hertfordshire, where the requirement is for a massive 2.4 million new homes.

One of the ways to encourage new building was announced by the Government on 2 January, in relation to three "garden towns" and 14 new "garden villages".

Governments in Scotland and Wales have their own devolved powers, while in England the policy and some of the funding originate in Whitehall.

All this brings new opportunities for Railfuture, and we have analysed the proposals to identify those where trains could play a significant role in moving the residents of these new developments.

Branches are invited to campaign with their local authorities to make sure that where a new or improved station may be required, it is built into the development plans at the start, along



AYLESBURY VALE PARKWAY: This station was opened by Chiltern Railways in 2008. It has good connections and plenty of room to expand. Both buses and trains are run by Arriva which is now Chiltern Railways' parent company

with the access roads and public facilities such as schools and shops. The garden town expansions proposed at Taunton and Harlow will certainly increase demand at their existing stations, but the development sites are not positioned to benefit from any new stations.

At Aylesbury, however, some of the expansion is close to Aylesbury Vale Parkway where Chiltern has already created the

station and the capacity. Some is around Stoke Mandeville and some to the south of the town straddling the line to Princes Risborough, near the site of South Aylesbury Halt, closed in 1967. Of the garden villages, two are reasonably well served by existing stations which may require investment - at Longcross, Berkshire, and near Hanborough in Oxfordshire. Four may strengthen the case for new stations, and these are at:

Rail options at 14 garden villages and three garden towns

By Andrew Long

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The 14 new garden villages will be in:

- Long Marston near Stratford-upon-Avon (between Stratford-upon-Avon and Honeybourne). Vital that Stratford-upon-Avon to Honeybourne reopening is progressed with a railway station at Long Marston. The scheme could be in conjunction with the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway which has longer-term proposals for reopening Broadway to Honeybourne. Long Marston closed in January 1966 when the Stratford-upon-Avon to Worcester local train service was withdrawn. It is not impossible, given reopening, to extend Bromsgrove/Kidderminster-Worcester services to Worcester Parkway and Honeybourne, returning to Birmingham via Stratford-upon-Avon and the North Warwickshire line. Requires co-operation between Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Transport for the West Midlands.
- Oxfordshire Cotswolds (Eynsham, outside Oxford in West Oxfordshire District Council). Proposed to be served by bus "park and ride". Nearest railway station is Hanborough (Cotswold line) or Oxford Parkway.
- Deenethorpe in Northamptonshire (east of and outside Corby on a disused airfield site). Re-doubling of Kettering-Corby and electrification of Bedford-Kettering-Corby. Nearest

station may have been Gretton (north of Corby), closed April 1966.

- Culm (east of Cullompton in Mid Devon District Council). Cullompton reopening and "Devon Metro" enhanced rail services.
- Welborne in Hampshire (near Wickham/Knowle, outside Fareham, South Hants). Reopening of Knowle (closed April 1964, on Fareham-Botley-Eastleigh line). Wickham was on the Meon Valley line, closed February 1955, between Knowle Junction and Alton.
- West Carclaze in Cornwall (near St Austell). Improvements at St Austell rail station.
- Dunton Hills in Essex (near Brentwood). Improvements at Brentwood railway station, Abellio Greater Anglia/Crossrail.
- Spitalgate Heath in Lincolnshire (southern edge of Grantham). Improvements at Grantham station (VTEC/EMT)
- Halsnead in Merseyside (Whiston, Knowsley outside Liverpool). Whiston railway station on Liverpool-Manchester line, Merseytravel PTE.
- Longcross in Surrey (former Defence Evaluation and Research Agency site near Chertsey). Improvements at Longcross railway station, Ascot/Reading line of SWT.
- Bailrigg in Lancaster (near Lancaster University). Improvements at Lancaster Castle railway station.

■ Culm, Devon, next to Cullompton where station plans are already being developed by the County Council.

■ Infinity (South Derby) on the Castle Donnington freight line.

■ Long Marston (Warwickshire) would add weight to the case for Stratford-Honeybourne (-Worcester/Oxford) reopening.

■ Welborne (Hants) a larger development between Fareham and Botley.

At Lancaster, the proposal at Bailrigg would be next to the West Coast main line and Lancaster University, but would be quite close to Lancaster station, so access to the network will be well worth further evaluation.

The other sites may need bus links as they are some way from existing (or former) railways.

The Government's announcement does not guarantee these villages will be built, or that they will be of the size forecast. These are matters for local authority and developers, but the Government encouragement is backed by money for detailed planning, including transport links.

It is important for branches to make the case for good connectivity with the railhead right at the start - before options are closed off. Further details can be found on the relevant local authority website or on the Government website.

■ Infinity Garden Village in Derbyshire (Stenson Fields on southern edge of Derby; near Stenson Junction). New station at or near Stenson Junction.

■ St Cuthberts in Cumbria (south of Carlisle). Improvements at Carlisle Citadel station (VWC, Northern, TPE).

■ Handforth in Cheshire (Handforth, near Wilmslow). Handforth and Wilmslow railway station improvements.

The three new garden towns will be in:

■ Buckinghamshire (Aylesbury Vale area). Aylesbury Vale Parkway. Proposed reopening of Aylesbury Vale Parkway-Claydon Junction, as part of East West Rail.

■ Somerset (Taunton area). Devon Metro local train service proposed from Taunton-Exeter, including reopening of Wellington and Cullompton stations. Extension of West Somerset Railway service from Bishops Lydeard/Norton Fitzwarren into Taunton.

■ Essex-Hertfordshire border (Harlow and Gilston). Lea Valley/Stansted Express/Cambridge West Anglia Line improvements - four-tracking/loops, higher line speeds, etc.

The key to station reopenings and new stations to serve housing areas is the ability of local authorities to extract Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) from developers - and not just to spend it on new roads!

Construction of High Speed Two is expected to begin this year, following the High Speed Rail (London-West Midlands) Bill gaining royal assent in February. The Bill was passed 399 to 42 at its third reading in the Commons while the Lords voted 386 in favour to 26. The line to Birmingham should be operational in 2026.

Only 40% of the British rail network is electrified, compared to 60% in Germany, 100% Switzerland, 85% Belgium, 76% Netherlands and Sweden, 71% Italy and 70% Austria.

Rail passengers are paying 50 pence per mile for tickets, compared to 15p in Italy, 24p in Belgium, 33p in Austria, with France, Holland and Ireland at 30p, according to research carried out by Vouchercould for the *Daily Mirror* in February.

Train fares went up by an average of 2.3% in January, according to a BBC report which estimated that 70% of the total cost of the network is now met by rail passengers. Virgin Trains East Coast said its average fare price rise was 4.9%. Railfuture said that increases should be based on the

Consumer Prices Index which rose by only 0.6%.

Britain's most expensive fare is £501, an anytime return from Shanklin (Isle of Wight) to Buxton (Derbyshire), according to a report in January in the *Boston Standard*.

Chiltern Railways is to pilot an app which will allow passengers to use their mobile phone as a ticket. The phone will open ticket gates using bluetooth technology, which is being developed by SilverRail.

About 20% of people buy the wrong ticket when they use station ticket machines. While 7% under pay, 13% are paying too much.

Rail companies' average dividends increased by 8.7 per cent last year while tax bills dropped by 36.8 per cent year-on-year, according to an analysis of Go-Ahead, National Express, Virgin and Stagecoach company returns, carried out by researchers for the RMT union. The findings were published by *The Times* in December.

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If your name is Smith, you should join the Railfuture Lottery! Three different Smiths have won prizes up to the top award of £40 in the last three draws.

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Recent winners: November: Graham Smith, Francis Thomas, David Stocks, David Smith, Roger Blake, John Henderson. December: M Robinson, Mark Edgell, Garth Smith, Martin Adams, David Bailey, Terence Sheppard. January: Graham Smith, John Bissett, Ian Clatworthy, Paul Krebs, Gerald Chandler, John Barfield.

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Picture: Lincolnshire County Council

Rupert joins welcome team

Report by Don Peacock

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Our picture shows Rupert the dog at Skegness station alongside the Jolly Fisherman statue. Rupert and another dog called Charlie, who both belong to Railfuture member Carolyn Sharpe, have been officially recognised as station mascots by East Midlands Trains. The dogs meet and greet passengers at the station.

Carolyn is a committee member for Railfuture Lincolnshire which held its AGM at St Swithins Community Centre at Lincoln on 11 March. One of the speakers was Peter Harrold of Lincoln Colonia Rotary Club, which is a station adopter for Lincoln station and which has interesting plans for improving the station environment, including the currently disused platform.

Railfuture policy director Ian Brown and Sergeant Ian Wright of British Transport Police were also guest speakers. Railfuture member Chris Brown attended the opening of the cycle hub, with parking



for 192 cycles monitored by CCTV and with an electronic entry-exit system, at Lincoln Central station.

The cycle hub is part of a larger project to provide a new integrated transport hub, with a bus station outside the railway station and a large station car park. The station buildings have already been renovated, and work began in February on building the bus station and pedestrian plaza to link the station to the city centre. The work is expected to take a year to complete.

I hope that by the time Railwatch 152 is published, there may be some positive results to report from my meeting with the leader of North Lincolnshire Council on 21 February to discuss the use of section 106 money to enhance the provision of public transport in general and rail in particular in the region.

Shropshire shows the way ahead

By Chris Austin

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Station staffing works! Gobowen station on the Chester-Shrewsbury line is already a success story and a classic example of community rail in action.

The station serves a Shropshire village with a population of 3,270 but the station pulls above its weight, with 213,900 passenger journeys recorded for 2015/16.

This is four times the usage of the next station, Chirk, and two and a half times that of the other local station on the line at Ruabon. It is a striking example of the benefits of a staffed station, properly promoted and embedded in the community it serves.

Tickets are available from local agent Severn-Dee Travel in a comfortable room on the up platform, which also serves as a popular local cafe.

Refreshments are provided by the local Derwen College, which works with young people with learning difficulties as part of one of their courses. The station has won a number of awards for its enterprise and initiative.

The original two-storey station building of Italianate design dating from 1846 stands on the down side and is grade II listed. Now empty, it needs repairs estimated to cost around £200,000. The CRP, together with the local authorities and the community have launched "SOS Gobowen" to raise funding to restore the station for community use.

The perils of fragmentation

Illustrating the practical problems caused by the fragmentation of land ownership following privatisation, the station buildings on both sides of the line are not owned by the railway, but by the John Lewis Partnership Pension Trust. The platforms are owned by Network Rail and form part of the station lease to Arriva Trains Wales.

On the down side, the tracks connecting to the former line to Oswestry belonged to BRB (Residuary) and have recently been transferred to Cambrian Heritage Railways. A confusing patchwork indeed.

Connecting communities

The heritage railway is an active partner in the development of the station and the restoration of the line to their base at Oswestry with 30,000 people living within the catchment area. The initial plan is to reopen the first half



GOBOWEN: A train for Holyhead calls at the station. Soon, a connecting train for the hospital could be leaving from the bay platform on the right

mile with a frequent service to the Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital, with an estimated 5,000 staff, visitors and patients arriving each day.

Patients are referred from all over the country and many have to make long journeys, best made by rail. The heritage railway has taken ownership of the line from Network Rail and applied for a Transport & Works Act order.

The railway would undertake the refurbishment of the line and construct the station at a lower cost than could be delivered by Network Rail, and the heritage railway will operate the service with a class 139 Parry People Mover vehicle or something similar. It was not surprising then that we chose this package of interlinked projects to be one of our top ten "small" schemes to send to transport minister Paul Maynard MP following our meeting with him.

A rail link to a major hospital, a restored station linked with a successful ticket agency and cafe, all with the support of the community, adding value and providing employment as well as a better experience for passengers, and a reduction in car use. It sounds like a winner to me!

Railwatch welcomes articles and pictures from rail users and rail user groups

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



Picture: BRIAN MORRISON

HIGH SPEED POTENTIAL: East Midlands Parkway station could be a better choice for HS2 than Toton, the current candidate

A better high speed station for the East Midlands?

By Terry Holt

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A new split-level station should be built at East Midlands Parkway to provide a hub station for High Speed Two and the Midland main line.

Railfuture East Midlands believes this is a much better option than the Government's proposal for an HS2 hub at Toton.

East Midlands Parkway would allow easy transfer between new services on HS2 and improved existing services which would serve Nottingham, Leicester and Derby better than Toton.

We welcomed changes to the planned route for High Speed Two that were announced by the Government in November.

We were pleased that tunnelling under East Midlands Airport has been abandoned, reducing both cost and enhancing the passenger experience.

But we believe the changes enhance the prospects for an HS2 Hub at East Midlands Parkway station, rather than Toton.

We believe EMP has far better connectivity to the existing road and rail network than Toton, giving better access to the three cities of Nottingham, Leicester and Derby, and very significantly East Midlands Airport.

The newly dualled A453 road runs close to EMP and provides quick access to the A50 and M1 roads. But road access to Toton would be primarily via the A52,

which is already exceeding peak capacity at the Pentagon island in Derby and Wollaton approaching Nottingham.

Existing rail connections to Toton from both Derby and Nottingham are very slow, and the limitations of Trent Junction provide little scope for improvement.

Shuttle services from the three cities will require the construction of bay platforms and upgraded signalling. Rail access to EMP could easily be improved by enhancing existing services without major significant alteration to the existing classic rail network. Currently Nottingham is 10 minutes away, Derby 13

minutes, Leicester 18 minutes and Loughborough eight minutes. These journey times are expected to improve when current programmed rail enhancement is completed.

The only new dedicated shuttle service needed would be from Mansfield and North Nottinghamshire, with a new smaller station in Long Eaton town, in order to optimise the economic regeneration of the region.

It remains important that the total journey time to London, including interchange time, should not exceed the current fastest times or the High Speed project will become discredited.

Existing journey times to London are 91 minutes for Nottingham, 89 minutes for Derby, 82 minutes for EMP, and 78 minutes for Loughborough.

A significant additional issue is Ratcliffe Power Station which is next to East Midlands Parkway station. The power station is expected to be decommissioned in 2025, leaving a large brown-field site.

Rushcliffe Borough Council has indicated that the HS2 station could be at EMP. There are no Green Belt or flood plain issues, and EMP gives better accessibility and regeneration benefits to north west Leicestershire without detracting from the wider regional benefits.

A new spur from HS2 could be built from north of EMP, avoiding Trent Junction and joining the line to Nottingham near Attenborough. This could be used for a Javelin-style high speed service from Nottingham to Birmingham and possibly Bristol.

We would still support the proposal for a tram extension to Toton on regeneration grounds.

■ Terry Holt is chairman of Railfuture East Midlands



Picture: FRANCIS TAYLOR

RAIL IN THE DALES: This picture of Ribbleshead viaduct by Francis Taylor is one of the exceptional pictures in the Landscape Photographer of the Year contest. The exhibition has been to London's Waterloo and London Bridge stations. It is at Glasgow Central until 25 March, at Liverpool Lime Street 27 March-8 April, Manchester Piccadilly 10 April-22 April, Leeds 24 April-13 May, Birmingham New Street 15 May-27 May, Charing Cross 29 May-10 June and Paddington 12 June-24 June

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