

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS No 130 £2 December 2011

Picture: CROSSRAIL

**Crossrail's gateway
to London: Page 2**

Page one picture

Our cover picture is evidence of a major milestone reached by Crossrail in November.

Engineers have completed the Royal Oak portal and the tunnel "eyes", just west of Paddington station.

From there, tunnelling machines will start their work next spring.

The 850-tonne boring machines will head under Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road towards Farringdon. Four other sections of twin-bore tunnel will be constructed to create a new east-west rail route through London.

The half-mile long portal approach was squeezed into a 23-yard wide gap next to the main lines out of Paddington and the Hammersmith & City Tube line. Crossrail will open in 2018, a year later than planned because of coalition

government cuts. The £1 billion train procurement process has also been delayed following the row over Siemens being chosen for Thameslink which disregarded the effect on jobs in this country.

Crossrail and Thameslink will connect at Farringdon where a new station is being built. The business-backed London First organisation is now calling for action on Crossrail 2, the Chelsea to Hackney line.

The spoil from the Crossrail tunnels will help to create a new bird sanctuary in the Thames estuary.

Crossrail has been awarded £2.5 million from the European Social Fund to help unemployed local people obtain jobs on the project.

More information: www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=1248



READY TO GO: A Crossrail boring machine, right, and the Royal Oak "eyes", above, where the tunnelling will begin



Pictures: CROSSRAIL

RAIL USERS CONFERENCE

MANCHESTER 2011

A 'mad' way to run our railway

The current structure of the railways in which passengers and taxpayers are paying eye-watering amounts of money cannot be sustained, Lilian Greenwood told the rail users conference in Manchester on 5 November.

She said we had to end the madness of taking millions out of the industry while the cost of rail travel is soaring.

Ms Greenwood, a shadow transport minister, who is involved in a policy review of the industry, said McNulty had identified some of the problems but she said there are glaring problems with his suggested solutions.

She said fares were so high that significant sectors of the population were suffering from transport poverty.

"We should not be taxing people off the railway," said Ms Greenwood. "The people worst hit are those without an alternative means of transport. They cannot choose."

Ms Greenwood said it would be a retrograde step to let train operators take control of rail infrastructure.

"That would take us back to the worst days of Railtrack," she warned.

Labour believed privatisation was responsible for the high cost of the railway so there needed to be a new set-up, not just tinkering at the edges of the industry.

McNulty's idea of closing station ticket offices was wrong.

"Someone should be at the station," she said. "Women particularly feel more comfortable if staff are available."



REVIEW: Lilian Greenwood

She said Labour was considering all options, including private, public and mutual, for the future structure of the industry.

But she said the coalition Government needed to take action now.

"Companies should not be rewarded when they walk away from franchises. They should not be widening the peak periods so they can charge more."

Although high speed rail is important, other issues were crucial, including electrification of the Midland main line and the Great Western as far as Swansea.

She called on the Government to think again about the route of HS2 which is vital to increase capacity on the rail network.

She said European high speed lines link up to airports and HS2 should go to Heathrow airport.

She said the new line could avoid the Chilterns by following an existing motorway corridor.

The conference got under way with a presentation by Trevor



HELSEBY: NCRUG members with MP Graham Evans, third left

Garrod who said the East Suffolk Travellers Association, one of the oldest rail user groups in Britain, was founded when the Ipswich-Lowestoft line was threatened with closure in the 1960s.

He advised: "Get talking with all reasonable politicians even if you don't necessarily agree with them."

Cedric Green and Janet Briggs told the conference how the North Cheshire Rail Users Group had transformed the stations, including Helsby, on their line. Rail user groups are an important part of the community, said Barry Graham, business devel-

opment director of Northern Rail. "We need feedback on our service and products," he said. "We appreciate the objective view that RUGs provide us with."

Richard Watts of Lancashire County Council said rail was doing well as young people are preferring to own smart phones, rather than cars.

"And even with a teetering economy rail is still doing well," he said.

But the problem of Pacers remains and even electrification would not release enough diesels to get rid of the Pacers.

Railfuture 2011 draw winners

£500 A MacFie, Brea Court KT2 7QQ. £200 Tom Smith, Brownins Walk, Newton Abbot TQ12 6YR. £100 J Ellis, Millers Croft, Macclesfield SK10 1BD. £50 David Hughes, Conway Road, London N14 7BG.

£20 C J Perry, Auburn Avenue, Bristol BS30 9YU, J Cuff, Tatton Road North, Stockport SK4 4QX, W A Emmerson, Marlborough Gate, Belfast BT9 6GB, Roger Blake, Dynevor Road, London N16 0DX.

£10 Philip Warren, High Street, Maxey, Cambridgeshire PE6 9EE, Mrs M Parker, Brook Furlong, Bembridge PO35 5QR, C Worrall, Willow Road, Solihull B91 1UF, M J Woollan, Manor Road, Trimley St Mary IP11 0TU, G Thomas, Queens Crescent, London NW5 4ES, D Eastoe, Denison Road, Pocklington, York YO42 2LH, Mrs Johnston, Drumossie Avenue, Inverness IV2 3SQ, Matt Blackburn, Alexandra Road, Malvern WR14 1HF

Yorkshire

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

£4 billion rail benefits

Two big projects that will have an impact on Yorkshire were backed in Network Rail's provisional five-year spending plan. The Northern Hub – the £580 million scheme to deliver more than 700 extra services a day between Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle and Sheffield – has been submitted to the Government as part of NR's industry vision for 2014 to 2019. The hub is said to be a priority project because it has the potential to boost the regional economy by more than £4 billion. The initial industry plan also includes electrification of the Midland main line to Sheffield as well as the lines from York and Hull to Manchester via Leeds and Huddersfield.

"The Northern Hub will significantly improve connectivity between the Leeds and Manchester city regions, further enhancing the North's position as an economic powerhouse to counterweight the South-East," said Ian Williams, the director of Leeds, York and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce. He told the Yorkshire Post: "The electrification of local West Yorkshire routes will make it easier for local businesses to move goods and people around the region. The chamber will work with Metro and other partner organisations to demonstrate to the Department for Transport the significance of these projects in driving growth and job creation and secure the necessary investment." Network Rail's Paul Plummer said: "The railways are booming, with more and more people choosing rail. Closer collaboration within the industry will deliver even more efficiencies."

Alliance Rail spells out its plans for East Coast main line

Alliance Rail Holdings has submitted an application to the Office of Rail Regulation for rights to run new train services from Skipton, Bradford and Ilkley to London via the East Coast main line. It wants to operate four trains a day from Skipton, two trains from Bradford and one train from Ilkley. All the services will call at Leeds and provide Garforth with a frequent daily service to and from King's Cross.

The ORR is consulting the industry on the proposals, which "aim to provide important parts of West Yorkshire with an improved service while also providing a limited amount of competition for Leeds passengers".

More information: www.alliancerail.co.uk

Wakefield shows off its good and bad sides

Rail campaigner Paul Salveson visited Wakefield recently and reported that while Kirkgate station was "a surrealist nightmare worthy of Hieronymus Bosch", the new Hepworth Gallery, four minutes away, was the "best thing to have happened in Wakefield for a long time". You can read a Weekly Salvo from Paul at www.paulsalveson.org.uk/

LOCAL ACTION



railwatch

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You can also download a form from

www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=Elections

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

North West

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

■ ■ Northern revenue protection
Following concerns raised by a number of members, Railfuture North West has written to Northern Trains over the train operator's inconsistent approach to revenue collection.

The branch is worried that some passengers wanting to travel on off-peak tickets are being harassed while revenue is being lost elsewhere because there are no checks on tickets at certain times of the day. Some ticket machines at main stations fail to offer off-peak tickets, unlike the more efficient Fasticket machines. Northern's ticket machines do not offer the cheap evening returns which are available within the Greater Manchester area. Coupled with excessive queues at Manchester Piccadilly booking office, this leads some people to try to buy tickets on the train – often resulting in arguments with staff over the availability of cheap off-peak tickets for sale on the train.

Some of Northern's on-train staff are happy to sell the cheaper tickets, while others are definitely not, even when passengers board at unstaffed stations. There also appears to be an issue with conductors' portable ticket machines not accepting certain card types. The branch asked for better publicity, as finding out on the train could be too late for some passengers who may not have either the correct debit/credit card or enough cash.

It has also been noted that on very crowded services, it is all but impossible for conductors to get through the train, and on many journeys where distances between stations are very short, there is little time for them to issue tickets between stops and then operate the doors. At the moment, it is clear that some services are delayed at intermediate stations because conductors have to conclude particular ticket sales before they move back along the train to open the doors.

■ ■ Northern goes hot and cold over passenger care

The branch also raised the issue of train turn-round at terminal stations where, after arriving, passengers have got off, train doors are locked leaving would-be passengers on the platform in the cold. This could be because drivers and conductors need to take their breaks.

The branch asked what Northern's policy actually is, whether passengers can sit in unmanned trains that are awaiting train crews, or is it a necessity for either the driver or conductor to be present. Alternatively, at major stations where this happens, do platform staff have the authority to open the doors of waiting trains to allow passengers to board?

The final issue raised by members was train heating. Some members have reported that some trains have their heating on full during the warmest summer days. Requests to turn it off are met with the response from some train crews of "sorry, we have no control over it". We are worried that in the autumn and winter months, passengers will be given the same reason for not having train heating. At present the branch has not received a response from Northern.

■ ■ Chronic overcrowding on Cumbrian coast line

Northern added an extra carriage to the 14.54 Barrow to Carlisle "Sellafield train" after some workers failed to get on board. Lee Wasnidge of Northern said: "Overcrowding on the Cumbrian line has been a concern of ours and passengers for some time." Copeland Rail Users Group has been campaigning for improvements but in October commuters from Sellafield travelling in the opposite direction were complaining that they were finding it difficult to find a seat or to get on board because their train had been reduced from three carriages to two.

Rail to boost jobs



Graphic: ELEANOR KING

railwatch

EXPANDING THE NETWORK: How the new lines connect

Two rail projects have been awarded grants from the Government's regional growth fund.

Nearly £9 million will go to reinstate the Todmorden curve which will allow direct trains to run from Burnley to Manchester, cutting journey times in half.

The Todmorden curve (north to west) closed in the 1960s. The rail plan will also allow adjoining land, former mill buildings known as the Weavers' Triangle, to be developed.

Meanwhile in Staffordshire, £1.65 million has been awarded to a private-volunteer operation to restore a 30-mile network of mothballed and closed lines.

Moorland & City Railways is planning to use the money to reopen a line between Leekbrook and Stoke-on-Trent to freight and passenger services. MCR has already reopened the line between Leekbrook Junction and Caudon Lowe, connected it to the Churnet Valley Railway, and started to run heritage trips.

The RGF grant could also go towards rail links between MCR's 20-mile stretch of line and schemes at Moneystone Quarry, near Whiston, and Cornhill, at Leek.

At Moneystone, Laver Leisure has drawn up a £50 million scheme to turn the site into a leisure complex featuring a hotel and lodges.

Plans for the Cornhill area include a marina and business park, while MCR also wants to open a line between Leek and Alton Towers.

It is hoping to make a start on the Leekbrook to Stoke line by Christmas and make it suitable for freight by the end of 2012. As well as employing about 50 people, the

railway will pave the way for 1,000 jobs in the area. It is planned to have the line open as far as Endon by early 2012. The first phase of development for the MCR network is the freight line from Stoke to Caudon Lowe.

The two main Caudon quarries are now operated by Lafarge Cement (bulk and bagged cement products) and Tarmac Aggregates (stone, stone aggregate and coated materials). Also, three further limestone quarries are located within 1½ miles of the railhead and could take advantage of the line.

Limestone reserves at the quarries are sufficient for at least a further 100 years of production. As all this is currently transported by road, the scope for a substantial shift to rail and the related environmental benefits this would bring is substantial. Both quarry operators are committed to the use of sustainable transport and have published policies confirming this.

The second phase will be the reintroduction of rail access to the Alton Towers Theme Park. An access agreement between MCR and CVR has been negotiated, providing the necessary rights by which MCR will use the heritage line for access to Alton Towers.

The award was announced by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg as part of a £1.4 billion initiative to create new jobs and attract business investment.

Sadly there are unconfirmed reports that the Government was considering pumping more money into road building as a way of stimulating the economy. Rail schemes should come first.

McNulty is the biggest threat to rail

This will be my 66th – and last regular column for *Railwatch*. After 16 years without missing an issue I believe it is time to stop my regular reviews of an industry I have served in one capacity or another for 60 years.

That is not to say I will cease to be active on matters that concern me and contribute, where I have the knowledge and experience, to discussions on railway planning and operations.

I had hoped before my last Review that I would be able to say that at least we had the Diggle route from Manchester to Leeds electrified, the Woodhead route from Manchester to Sheffield (Wath) reopened and the direct route between Manchester and Preston via Euxton Junction electrified.

It was announced in 2009 that Manchester to Preston will be electrified, but we are still waiting for a more positive approach to Diggle and Woodhead.

Of course I would also have liked to see more infill electrification in Yorkshire and the plans to electrify Manchester to Liverpool completed.

It is self evident that the Midland main line north of Bedford and the Great Western main line electrification schemes should also go ahead if Britain is ever to gain any realistic "green" credentials.

Such major engineering tasks have the extra benefit of providing work for many small organisations struggling to stay afloat, thus restarting the economy in a time-honoured way. But will the Government see sense? Well I doubt it.

Many times I have written about the need for a network strategy, for east-west links and for alternative routes to be available for diversions and to relieve pinch points.

Instead of that, we have two controversial busway schemes taking some of those strategic opportunities away.

The Cambridge guided busway, which I cannot resist calling the Farceway, is now open and is fulfilling all the doubts I had on numbers carried, safety and timetable adequacy. It fails to recognise how many people



RAYNER'S REVIEW
By Peter Rayner

work in a large hospital. The buses do not cover any of the sensible shift patterns, or for that matter visiting hours.

Unless there is a sudden injection of common sense from somewhere, I expect the Luton to Dunstable route to go the same way.

The greatest danger to the railway today comes from the McNulty report, which threatens safety like nothing since Railtrack's worst excesses prior to Paddington, Hatfield and Potters Bar.

McNulty says: "Driver-only operation is a safe method of operation and improves

performance because there are fewer human interactions." He also urges train operating companies to review station staffing. Well we are all going to feel really safe late at night with no one on the train or on the station to inform and reassure travellers.

McNulty says Network Rail maintenance staff should be cut to 1,400, based no doubt on his vast knowledge of the railway.

He says this along with clichés such as "human interfaces should only be deployed for complex transactions."

What he means is a 40% cut in ticket office staff. To make us feel

really grateful for his concern for our safety he also recommends a cutback in the BT Police.

McNulty supports more franchising and suggests track and operating should be franchised together.

This would be a further serious threat to the industry, one which is still a complete shambles because of the franchising system.

Some day someone in authority will accept that the system of franchising railways is flawed and that the Department for Transport is manifestly not competent to judge and allocate complicated operations as if they were selling meat pies.

The bureaucrats completely misjudged the Great Western Franchise a few years ago and caused massive overcrowding.

The East Coast franchise collapsed twice and Virgin has been massively rewarded, wrongly in my view, on the West Coast or that would have collapsed as well.

I do now even get some perverse pleasure from the fact that the three ex London North Eastern Railway terminus stations have a state railway operating out of them.

The British Government's Directly Operated Railways now runs the inter-city service out of the former Great Northern station of King's Cross. I only hope it can continue to run in this fashion, rather than being franchised again as the Government plans.

The train service out of the former Great Central station of Marylebone is operated by Chiltern Railways, a subsidiary of the German state railway, Deutsche Bahn.

The service out of the former Great Eastern terminus of Liverpool Street will soon be operated by Abellio – a new face for the national railway of the Netherlands.

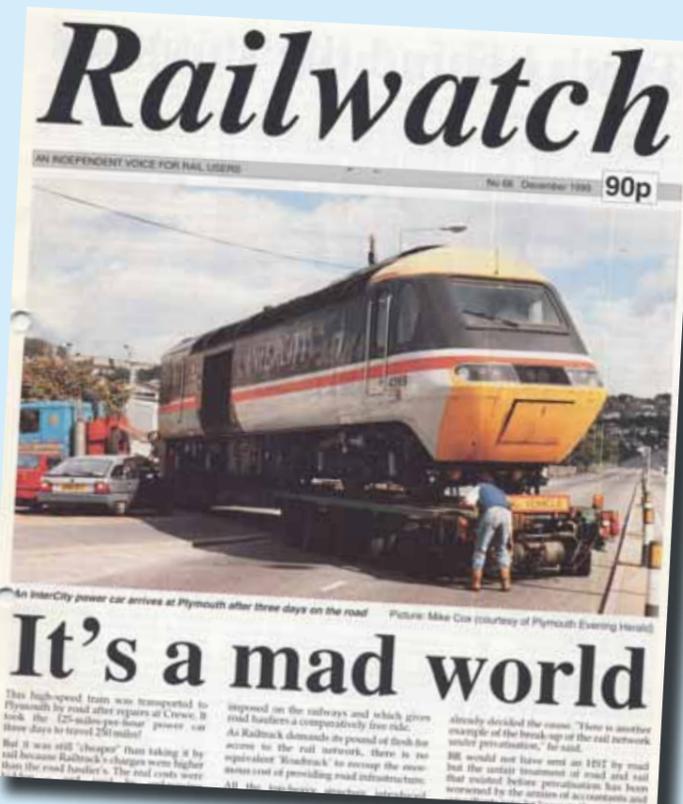
You could almost believe the railways were being nationalised by stealth, but in truth it is just my little joke.

To keep me amused in future, I am thinking of writing another book on the years since privatisation.

I could do worse than start each chapter with one of the old *Railwatch* articles I have written over the years.

Or I might put my feet up and snooze! Best of luck to you all. Keep fighting. I will.

■ Peter Rayner is a former British Rail operations and safety manager.



Remember this? The Railwatch issue in which Peter Rayner's first article was published in December 1995

Below: In the following issue, Peter identified the depressing reality of Railtrack, which was replaced by Network Rail in 2002



Wales

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

■ ■ Stena sells a fast ferry

The Stena Sea Lynx III which operated between Fishguard and Rosslare in high season and Dun Laoghaire and Holyhead low season has been sold. There will now be only two sailings per day, all year round, using the conventional ferry between Fishguard and Rosslare from 2012.

■ ■ Fares relief for rail passengers in Wales

The Welsh Government followed Scotland's example by authorising a 1% instead of a 3% RPI increase in rail fares from January 2012, which will apply to fares set by Arriva Trains Wales. The Welsh Government has also retained the 50% reduction on National Express coach fares for holders of Welsh bus passes, but only for journeys wholly within Wales.

■ ■ National Transport Plan being updated

This is being refreshed by the Welsh Government and an announcement of the reprioritisation of the plan will be made before Christmas. It is anticipated that priority will be given to west to east links over north to south links.

■ ■ Harrington humps will help passengers at 20 stations

Arriva Trains Wales and the Welsh Government have been commended by the Association of Rail Partnerships for their outstanding teamwork for the "easier access to stations" programme which will provide 25 Harrington humps at 20 stations in Wales with low platforms. The first of the prefabricated humps – which raise the level of the platform by 16 inches to match the train – were successfully installed at Tywyn.

■ ■ High speed record run has a downside

A shortened formation First Great Western IC125 set a new record in October with a non-stop run from Paddington to Cardiff, beating the previous record set by a standard length train in 1988. However many customers are concerned that in the future South Wales trains will no longer stop at Bristol Parkway, thus removing connective opportunities with many parts of England and also through services to Scotland.

■ ■ Llandoverly station wins prize

Heart of Wales line station Llandoverly was awarded the Association of Community Rail Partnerships' first prize in the station development category for the redevelopment of the station. Managed by the Friends of Llandoverly Station, the old station waiting room has been substantially refurbished to create a new waiting room and refreshment facility, which was officially opened in June by Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall.

■ ■ Newport station complaints go on

Complaints are still being received about facilities at Newport station and increased difficulties in making connections. The National Rail Enquiry Service still advises connections at Newport for travel to and from West Wales, instead of a more convenient cross-platform interchange at Cardiff. One improvement is the relocation of the W H Smith shop to the island platform, but some areas are still fenced off because of problems with the glass roof.

■ ■ Upgrade plan for Port Talbot Parkway

Neath Port Talbot council, Arriva Trains Wales and Network Rail will submit a joint bid for £7.5 million of European funding in December through the Government's station improvement programme. It is hoped work at Port Talbot Parkway, which would take 18 months, will start next autumn. About 500,000 passengers use the station every year. The station will have an enclosed footbridge and lifts providing step-free access to the platform will be installed. There will also be a new ticket office and waiting areas as well as a cafe and retail area, new toilets and improvements to customer information and CCTV. However there is concern locally about the high cost and the specification for the works.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk

Bavaria shows us the way forward

By Philip Bisatt

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The annual Railfuture visit to the continent this year was to Munich, capital of the German Land of Bavaria and a major commercial, cultural and railway centre.

We travelled on the 14.34 from St Pancras International to Brussels, en route to Frankfurt, our initial destination, which we reached by changing to a German high speed train at Brussels Midi.

This provided an opportunity, near Köln, to have a reasonably priced meal on board, something not usually available to standard class passengers in Britain.

After a comfortable night in a hotel close to Frankfurt's vast Hauptbahnhof, we continued our journey to Munich at 09.54, via the Main valley and the picturesque hills of the Spessart, Würzburg and Nuremberg.

Interesting things to see en route included numerous wind turbines, a new rail-served distribution complex, and a regional bus station next to the railway station at Aschaffenburg, such a contrast to the lack of co-ordination in much of Britain. We arrived in Munich at 13.15.

Munich, the capital of Bavaria, has a post-1945 Hauptbahnhof even larger than Frankfurt, with over 30 platforms.

There are plans for further rebuilding and enlargement of the station, which as well as being served by an extensive regional rail system, is also the hub of the city's S-Bahn, U-Bahn and tram networks.

Both trams and buses are superbly integrated in the German fashion.

From the station, it was a short tram ride to the group's hotel at Sendlinger Tor, a tram interchange on the southern edge of the city centre.

As in previous years, we received excellent hospitality from our German friends. Dr Bernd Rosenbusch, regional marketing manager for DB in Bavaria, gave us an interesting presentation, as well providing a lunch of traditional white sausages at DB's regional offices.

Dr Rosenbusch showed how the publicly owned DB regional network carries considerably more passengers than railways in the UK, yet costs less in cash terms to operate.

Passenger kilometres on regional services have increased by 27% since 1994 and freight tonne kilometres by over 50%, while at the same time, employment on DB has nearly halved. Also, there is



Presentation: Jim Walker thanks Dr Rosenbusch

a national fare tariff in Germany, something that might help to simplify matters for prospective rail travellers in the UK.

Dr Rosenbusch accompanied the group on a trip to Augsburg in one of DB's new class 440 emus, which included an opportunity to ride in the cab.

Augsburg itself is a fine city – complete with its own tram system – and was one of a range of optional places to visit.

Travel around Bavaria is made easy by the Bayern Ticket, which for £25 provides unlimited travel after 09.00 on regional trains, buses and trams within Bavaria.

Munich is renowned for its "beer halls", so it was fitting that we enjoyed an evening meal in one of them as guests of rail campaign group Pro Bahn, led by Matthias Wiegner.

There is much of historic interest to see in the centre of Munich, and walking is made easy by extensive pedestrian-only areas.

Some group members also ventured outside the city centre to the Olympic park, built for the 1972 games. It will be interesting to see if Stratford also proves popular with future tourists!

Other places visited by the group included Salzburg in Austria – which as well as its historic centre has an impressive network of bendy trolleybuses – Ulm, Nuremberg and the national railway museum

There was also an ascent by rack railway and cable car of the Zugspitze, Germany's highest mountain, which for some was disrupted by substitution on the return journey – proof that even in Germany, not everything goes according to plan.

Nonetheless, Bavaria showed the group just how far public transport has to go in the UK before it can match the best continental standards of integration, efficiency and indeed, economy.

Thanks are due to Trevor Garrod for making the arrangements for our visit and to Jim Walker for leading the group in Germany.

www.railfuture.org.uk



BEST OF EUROPE: Superb accessible trams in Frankfurt



BUCHLOE: The key interchange station, south west of Munich. Regional Express trains are worked by push-pull sets, but even with these the popularity of the trains can lead to overcrowding. The local service to Augsburg (far right) is worked by a two-car diesel multiple unit. Train departures are timed to the second!



ZUGSPITZE: Take the train to Germany's highest mountain



ULM STATION: A bendy bus pulls up at the tram stop. Both bus and tram services are on the real time information screens

◆◆◆◆ Rail freight grew by 2% over the past five years despite the economic gloom

Sevenside

By Nigel Bray
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■ ■ Shops back rail promotion



A cheap ticket to encourage tourists to travel from London and

Reading to Stroud was launched in September at a ceremony at the House of Commons attended by Rail Minister Theresa Villiers, Stroud MP Neil Carmichael and representatives of local business and tourist interests. The idea was suggested to First Great Western by Mr Max Comfort of the civic group Stroud Commonwealth, who realised that filling empty seats on off-peak trains could boost the local economy. The "Stroud Special" ticket is available for the 09.48 IC 125 train from Paddington, returning on the 17.05 from Stroud, and those taking advantage of it have been offered vouchers to spend in some of the independent shops and restaurants in the town. Town guides welcomed the off-peak trains, offering visitors free maps and pointing out landmarks. More information at: www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk/Content.aspx?id=5318

■ ■ Station improvement plan boosts Gloucester

Railfuture has welcomed the recent £500,000 improvements at Gloucester station, including new waiting rooms on platforms 1 and 4, plus a canopy extending along most of platforms 1 and 2, which together claim to be the UK's longest railway platform. Our response to the Gloucester City Plan consultation asked for the station and its pedestrian access to be improved and for additional stations to be considered to meet predicted growth in the city's population.

■ ■ Rail could help clear-up at Energy Park

Sedgemoor District Council has consulted the public on its plan for an Energy Park, which will include what will become the West Country's biggest solar farm, on the site of a former Second World War ordnance factory at Puriton, north of Bridgwater. We welcomed the council's efforts to progress the feasibility of reopening the short branch from the main line. The route is largely intact and Sedgemoor District Council responded to a Railfuture suggestion that it should approach Network Rail to ask whether its plans to resignal the main line between Bristol and Bridgwater could be combined with installation of new points and signals for the Puriton spur. We added that if the line were rebuilt before the opening of Energy Park – which it is hoped will become a hub for green energy, technology and industry – it could transport contaminated material from the site.

■ ■ Backing for Railfuture campaign to improve station

Our campaign to upgrade Keynsham station is supported by David Wood, who writes a weekly pro-rail column in the *Bristol Evening Post*. He contacted Railfuture in October to confirm that Councillor Paul Crossley, leader of Bath & North East Somerset Council, had written to FGW to seek improvements to the station premises.

■ ■ Bristol rail conference committed to Portishead line

Although North Somerset Council's regional growth fund bid for the Portishead line reopening was unsuccessful, the project is still ranked as a high priority, along with the Greater Bristol Metro and additional rolling stock. That was the consensus reached at the West of England Partnership's rail conference in Bristol on 4 November. The partnership convened the event, which was attended by Railfuture representatives and other stakeholders. The conference was followed by a special train trip taking participants and First Great Western directors over the Portishead branch. The train went over freight-only tracks as far as Portbury Junction and into Portbury Dock, and then over the Henbury Loop.



Your letters

Integrate high speed

Why are the British so obsessed with having a high speed rail network which is totally isolated from the traditional lines?

High Speed One shares not one inch of rail with the rest of the network, and the HS2 plans are also for a completely separate structure, adding enormously to the cost.

Have we not learned from our European neighbours, whose TGV, ICE, Thalys and AVE trains all run on shared corridors for part of their journey? Indeed, our Eurostar trains ran on traditional lines before the full opening of HS1 and other sets still work traditional lines in France.

Why not build sections of high speed route which diverge from and merge with traditional lines, gradually extending these sections until they become a whole? A journey from Brussels to Cologne will illustrate how effective this strategy can be.

I can only imagine that the British plan is to build a vertically integrated railway line that can be flogged off at the earliest sign of profitability. Does this mean that political dogma will once again see the railways suffer enormously inflated costs compared to what they once were and could be in future?

Lloyd Butler, Suffolk IP9 2ND
lloyd@deltic.net

Wrong route?

Michael Weinberg in *Railwatch* 129 sees the current proposed HS2 route as a black and white issue, and as the only acceptable plan. Environmental concerns mean that all possible options must be given the widest possible public debate. It could even mean routing HS2 along the M1 corridor, or even the M40 corridor as recently suggested.

Can further upgrading of the West Coast main line be ruled out in the interests of economy and the environment? A series of well-costed route options for HS2 would be a whole lot better

than being told the route must go somewhere near Heathrow Airport and under the Chilterns. If Old Oak Common is the proposed interchange, then why does HS2 not follow the old Wolverhampton route to Ruislip and then link to the former Great Central Railway route via the former Ashendon junction?

If the high speed was reduced (from 250 to 185 mph) surely trains could take the curvature that would involve, reducing costs all round.

Of course, Old Oak has the now disused Eurostar terminal which seems to be a white elephant like its Waterloo terminal. Is that the reason Euston was chosen as the terminus of HS2, rather than the (too) obvious need to link it with HS1 at St Pancras?

Perhaps these questions have already been answered, but as a Railfuture member, I should like to see more well-conducted public debate on the issue, backed up by extensive and costed detailed route and network options.

As to defeatist talk about allowing more motorways, I should leave that to the dinosaur brigade.

David Eldridge, Berinsfield, Wallingford, Oxon OX10 7PR
david7pr@btinternet.com

Swiss way forward

With a limited pot to spend, I am firmly in the "nice idea, but not necessary" camp on HS2. I would rather vast sums be spent on improvements, small and not so small, to the existing network to provide maximum bang for the buck for the maximum number of people.

The pages of *Railwatch* seem to contain endless examples in every edition of such potential improvements.

Our aim should not be to emulate the French, whose land area and population spread mean that they are only now catching up with the UK for percentage of population

within a three-hour journey of the capital (my interpretation of a reasonable day return journey), but rather the Swiss, where regularity, reliability and maximum journey opportunity by stops and connections is paramount.

Please note that I do not live in Buckinghamshire!

G. P. Brown, Bowthorpe Road, Norwich NR5 8AQ

St Pancras option

I have just joined Railfuture and am very pleased to find people of the same ilk! *Railwatch* is an excellent magazine. Keep it up!

But I am worried that St Pancras may end up as another white elephant of modern railways, like Waterloo International. Why oh why was not HS1 brought through the tunnels at King's Cross to a joint King's Cross/St Pancras International station where people could change on to the East and West Coast and Midland main lines?

HS2 should start at St Pancras and go north via Leicester and Nottingham to Leeds where it could bifurcate, left on to the Settle-Carlisle line, and right through Northallerton to the East Coast main line.

When money is available, the line north from Leeds could be developed via Galashiels to Edinburgh.

What do other members think?
A J B Browne, High Street, Amble, Morpeth NE65 0LS

Editors' note: Railfuture chairman Mike Crowhurst writes about how Railfuture developed its approach to HS2 on pages 10-11.

Let's be grateful

Like Michael Weinberg (*Railwatch* 129), I cannot understand why any Railfuture member would not approve of a new high speed rail link. I mean, this is coming from a government which is wanting to increase the motorway speed limit to 80mph. So we should be grateful for any kind of pro-rail investment commitment, rather than naively think that the money could be invested elsewhere on the rail network on less prestigious projects.

Tim Mickleburgh, Grimsby DN31 2JP
timmickleburgh2002@googlegmail.com

Be fair to Labour

I agree with Michael Weinberg that the Government is to be congratulated on the rail

schemes which are going ahead (*Railwatch* 129) but he is less than fair to the previous government which he accuses of "doing nothing but talk".

The Conservatives have not come up with any new schemes, but merely accepted schemes developed and commissioned by Labour. In fact, they delayed every scheme while they reviewed them and cancelled or cut back several schemes already approved.

If Labour had won the election, all the current schemes would be going ahead and would be at least six months closer to delivery. And what about HS1, St Pancras International and the Welsh Highland Railway, to name but three of the schemes delivered by Labour?

They were not perfect but they did a lot more than just talk!

Malcolm Clark, St James Drive, Harrogate HG2 8HT

Congestion buster

In *Railwatch* 129, Peter Yates suggests that HS2 money could be better spent on new stations. While it would be wonderful to build up to 4,000 new stations, each with about 100,000 passengers, the truth is that when these passengers choose the journeys they wish to make, the main lines would become even more congested, and the need for a new high speed line would become even more urgent.

Let us assume that six new stations are built in the densely populated areas of Leeds that he has mentioned in his letter. If we assume that 100,000 journeys are made from each new station, the local journeys into Leeds could probably be accommodated using longer trains. But a number of those new rail passengers will decide they like to avoid the stresses of driving, and plan new journeys to London, Birmingham and Glasgow and other distant places by rail. To do this they will have to travel on the already congested inter-city main lines. The congestion on the main lines would then grow even faster than is being considered by the Government as necessary to justify building HS2.

We cannot build HS2 without expanding the existing railway. High-capacity high speed rail needs efficient local dispersal of its long distance passengers and our current railway network

is the best means of primary dispersal of large numbers. Conversely we can only expand our existing railway if we plan effectively to provide for high volume long-distance passenger flows that result. A new high speed rail network is the only way to avoid the congestion that will arise from the increased popularity of rail travel.

Graham Nalty, Colwell Drive, Derby DE24 5AA
graham@grahamnalty.co.uk

Uckfield campaign

I read with interest the report of the society's annual general meeting in Brighton in the July issue of *Railwatch*.

I particularly noticed that the meeting was addressed by Ms Sam Bryant, development officer for the Sussex Community Rail Partnership.

She is reported as saying: "The partnership had a whole series of other successes to chalk up, including better services at Winchelsea, late-night trains on the Uckfield line and station adoptions."

For the record, the campaign for improvements in the late-night service on the Uckfield line was led by the Edenbridge and District Rail Travellers' Association of which I was the hon. secretary from 1984 to 2010. The campaign led by E&DRTA was supported by the Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee.

E&DRTA has led the campaign for improved services on the Uckfield line for over 25 years and continues to do so.

John Bigny MBE, Plough Walk, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 6DU

Competition

I welcome Chiltern's new "Mainline" service between Birmingham and London. But the demise of Wrexham & Shropshire is to be regretted.

However if proper competition were allowed on the railway, a revived Wrexham & Shropshire service to Marylebone could stand a chance, especially if it

Send your letters to:

The Editors, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU
Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk
Railwatch also welcomes articles and pictures
Please use email if possible



Picture: SOUTH WEST TRAINS

Trains and bikes encouraged to get together

Rail professionals are often guilty of neglect or worse when it comes to cycling so it is good to see this picture of cycles parked at South West Trains' Farnborough station in Hampshire.

Train operators usually spend a lot of time and money providing space and a welcome for car drivers but leave cyclists out in the cold both on trains and at stations. But SWT impressed judges in the steps it has taken to encourage cyclists on to the rail network to win three National Cycling Awards, which are supported by the Association of Train Operators.

SWT won Operator of the Year and, with Eastleigh Borough Council, won the Local Government Partnership award. SWT was also highly commended for work with Richmond Council. In addition, SWT's Phil Dominey was a chosen as joint Cycle Champion of the Year.

SWT was commended for innovative projects designed to make a positive difference to cyclists, such as the launch of the UK's first self-service Brompton Bicycle rental scheme

in Guildford, featured in *Railwatch* 129. In partnership with local councils, SWT has delivered around 1,500 additional bike spaces, introduced three cycle hire schemes and installed six new secure cycle compounds. Other schemes involved security tagging, bike breakfasts and bike surgeries.

Jake Kelly of SWT said: "We have consistently championed the needs of cyclists, taking steps to make travel by train easier for those using their bikes in the South West."

ScotRail wants more cycle hire operators to join its discounted hire scheme which is already working at Blair Atholl (with Basecamp Bikes) and at Inverness (with Ticket to Ride). Passengers get a special price on bike hire if they have a rail ticket.

Des Bradley, ScotRail transport integration manager, said: "It can take time to introduce new agreements, so we want to hear from cycle hirers now so that schemes will be up and running in the spring."

could call at Wolverhampton, Birmingham New Street and Solihull.

It would be even more useful if it was extended to Chester and even Manchester Victoria.

Peter A. Moore
Moorepa@aol.com

Cotswold line

I read the *Railwatch* article about the Cotswold line upgrade, but so far the benefits of redoubling on the Cotswold line have passed me by!

The Hereford-Paddington train which used to leave Malvern Link around 09.00 no longer exists, although it was a well-patronised service, usually pretty full by Oxford. In order to get to

Oxford by 11.00 now, the only train is the 08.08 from Malvern Link, and it is necessary to change at Worcester Foregate Street.

The 14.20 from Oxford to Malvern has also been abandoned so the choices are between the 13.20 (inconveniently early) or 15.20, which involves a 90-minute wait at Oxford. The new trains are quite a bit slower than the old ones. Travel to Oxford is now just under two hours (if on time - some hope!) instead of 90 minutes. The return journey is 110 minutes, previously 100 minutes. I will increase my

carbon emissions and reluctantly travel by car, which should reduce my travelling time by three hours.

Robin Lee, Bramble Close, Malvern WR14 2UW
robinmodorg@phonecoop.coop

Editors' note: It is sad that there have been downsides to the £67 million upgrade which was welcomed by Prime Minister David Cameron. He told the Oxford Mail: "We are going to have a better, faster service as part of the improvements on the line and this is a real boost for West Oxfordshire." Mr Cameron, who is MP for Witney, congratulated the Cotswold Line Promotion Group for playing their part in campaigning for the scheme.

More letters: Page 18

Weighing up the arguments for a high speed Britain

By Mike Crowhurst
Railfuture chairman

Members have expressed concern recently about our policy on High Speed Two and how the recent consultation was handled. The board has therefore decided that we should explain our position and, we hope, clear up some misunderstandings.

Our starting point is that there is a clear and urgent need for more capacity, especially on the main routes north from London. It makes sense for any new capacity to take the form of fast tracks for the long-distance passenger trains, freeing up existing routes for local and regional services and freight. That is common ground.

What is much more debatable is how high a speed we should design for in this country. Most comparable European countries have adopted design speeds of around 185 mph. The British Government is planning for speeds up to 250 mph. We are not convinced of the case for such a high speed. While "future proofing" may well be desirable, there are several downsides in this case, such as vastly higher energy consumption and the need to maintain a much straighter alignment, which severely restricts route options. Only the Chinese have adopted such a high speed, but were already backing off it even before the recent Wenzhou disaster. China is of course a vastly bigger country than Britain by any measure. Unfortunately in Britain the Government insists on a choice between 125 and 250 mph, refusing to consider anything in between.

Another key point in our view is that the high-speed network must be fully integrated with the classic network. Trains should be able to move seamlessly between the two networks, as they do in other countries, so that places off the high speed routes can also enjoy the benefits of faster services, and cross-country services can join and leave the fast routes for certain parts of their journey. We feel this is essential to spread the benefits as widely as possible, and to ensure sufficient political support nationally. It is notable that even in Japan and Spain, where the two systems have different track gauges, through working is still practised.

Unfortunately it is becoming clear that the proposals on the table are the opposite of what we want. We are being offered a high-cost, high speed, high-fare network almost completely seg-



MORE ON WAY: High speed trains are already operating all over Europe and in several other countries throughout the world

regated from the classic network, and only serving a very limited number of the largest cities. The trains will be too long for most stations and have no tilt capability. They will not even serve the established city centre stations in most cases. Only in London will an existing terminus (Euston) be used, and only at the far end will there be any link with the existing route – for the time being, at Lichfield. Plans for Manchester and Leeds termini have yet to emerge, and may prove rather less acceptable than that in Birmingham. Any other locations, if they are served at all, will get out-of-town parkway stations on the model of Birmingham "Interchange", accessible only by car or by an extended transit link. Everywhere else (Coventry, Wolverhampton, Leicester, Nottingham, Stoke) will have to make do with "improved" services on the classic lines. Not exactly an encouraging prospect.

The route

The choice of a route through the Chilterns rather than the M1 corridor seems to have been governed by two factors: first, the need to find an alignment suitable for 250 mph, and second, the need to serve a proposed interchange at Old Oak Common. The purpose of this is supposed to be to assist distribution by linking directly with Crossrail, and to provide a substitute for a branch to Heathrow. There is considerable dispute about the need for any link to Heathrow, and the pathing implications of stopping all services at Old Oak do not seem to have been addressed. There is a possible third motive. If Great Western can be persuaded to stop its services here too

(more pathing problems) then almost all the biggest cities outside London currently connected by cross-country services could ultimately be reached directly from this one station. Therefore there would be no need for high speed cross country services. The cry would be: "Change at Old Oak."

There is arguably a case for a Chiltern route, but at the price of greater damage to the environment and therefore greater (possibly crucial) opposition. We want to see a more open debate between this option and an M1 option at a more modest speed and with branches to Coventry, Nuneaton and Leicester at its initial northern end.

We also have some concern about the link with HS1 at the southern end: if few through services are run, a second tunnel from Old Oak would be an extravagance. Conversely, if many services run, there will be conflicts with local and freight services for limited capacity through Camden Road.



ASHFORD INTERNATIONAL: High speed Javelin trains kept running when snow halted traffic on the M2 motorway in 2009

In the absence of details about northern branches of the Government's planned Y-shaped network, it is difficult to comment, but we note that even Network Rail's studies in 2009 suggested that one two-track route would be insufficient to handle all potential services over both branches, which indicates that either the southern part should be designed for four-tracking or a second parallel line will be needed.

Funding

It is not clear how the whole project is to be funded. An all-reservation premium fare regime can be expected. But there is a danger that much of the cost will be covered by cancelling a whole range of other infrastructure schemes on the existing railway network, most of which are urgently needed anyway and some of which have nothing whatever to do with the proposed network and can in no sense be seen as alternatives. These range from redoubling Corby to reopening Leamside, but most outrageous of all is electrification of the Midland main line. Under no circumstances should we accept this trade-off.

In his appearance before the House of Commons transport select committee, the then Secretary of State Philip Hammond argued that the benefits of greater speed increased faster than costs, which seems at odds with energy consumption, never mind anything else. He did however concede that the largest economic benefits were likely to be realised in London, and that premium fares on HS2 were likely to be unaffordable for many, but then railways in this country are already "a rich man's toy" – a remark which commentators seized on. Nobody asked why he is making it worse by imposing



MADRID ATOCHA: A station full of high speed trains in July is clear evidence that Spain has left road-clogged Britain far behind

an RPI +3% fare increase for the next three years.

In the light of all these considerations we have, with regret, come to the conclusion that we cannot give uncritical support to the proposals on offer. That conclusion is shared by a number of other environmental organisations which are not opposed to the principle of a new high speed line but are critical of the scheme as proposed. They have come together in a group known as the Right Lines Charter, and the board has agreed to Railfuture joining them.

Consultation

Railfuture's network development committee, chaired by Ian McDonald, was asked by the board to draw up a single comprehensive response for Railfuture. It was made clear from the outset that there should

be only one response from Railfuture. Individual members who wished to submit a differing view were at liberty to do so as an individual or on behalf of other organisations such as user groups, but not using the Railfuture name or logo. It was decided that disciplinary action would be taken against anyone disregarding this instruction. The instruction is necessary because we have been told that when differing views are presented by one organisation, all are disregarded.

The network development committee held two meetings during the spring and summer of 2011 to hear various views. The committee was faced with an almost irreconcilable conflict of views between those who wanted to back the scheme on offer as it stood, on the grounds that "it is the only game in town" and those equally firmly committed to var-

ious versions of an M1 corridor route at least as far as Rugby or thereabouts. Finding common ground between these two was not easy.

Various drafts were considered, and the task of drawing up a middle of the road response was undertaken by a member of the board with a railway engineering background.

It was agreed by the board that the draft, favouring the M1 corridor route, required a heavy edit and this task fell to Ian McDonald as committee chairman. It was a difficult task considering that by then time was so short.

Not only that, some of the more serious (and unstated) implications of the Government's proposals did not emerge clearly until the National Rail Conference on 28 June or our own conference in Bletchley on 9 July. In the limited time available, it was not

possible to consult as fully as we would have wished with branches, but an early circulated draft produced very few responses. We were aware however that one branch held particularly strong views in favour of the official option, and planned to submit its own response.

Despite being reminded that if the Railfuture name was used, the board would have to take disciplinary action, this warning regrettably appears to have been disregarded.

Conclusion

In short the whole affair was not well handled, and demonstrated yet again the difficulty of a voluntary organisation putting together a professional response that will be taken seriously, not to mention reconciling the irreconcilable when it concerns lines on the ground.

Europe points out the fast forward route for rail

The importance of creating an integrated high-speed network for Europe that is properly linked into the existing railway was stressed at a meeting of European rail experts in October.

"The high-speed railway networks should be connected, but they should also be consistent with and complementary to a well-functioning conventional railway network," said Libor Lochman, of the Community

for European Railways which brings together 70 European rail organisations.

The meeting in Brussels heard that a 1997-built freight railway in Poland can be upgraded to allow passenger trains to run along it at 155 mph. Poland's infrastructure minister Andrzej Massel said his country is keen to see high speed railways providing better east-west connections across Europe. But Poland's conventional network needed

modernising too. Poland is examining a Y-shaped project for high speed lines linking Warsaw, Wroclaw, Poznan and Krakow.

MEP Bogdan Marcinkiewicz reminded Europe of the need to develop railways to reduce its need for imported energy supplies.

The European Commission's official policy is to promote high speed rail between cities and also to airports.



North East

By Peter Kenyon

peterkenyon@yahoo.com

■ ■ Metro transformed

A Metro train returned in October in a new livery after refurbishment at Doncaster by Wabtec. The interior has been transformed with improved seating, lighting and better wheelchair access. It has been named Harry Cowsans after the former Gateshead councillor and MP who was one of the founding fathers of the system. All 90 Metro trains are to be refurbished during the next five years as part of the £385 million upgrade to the Metro. All staff have been issued with grey uniforms to fit in with the new colour scheme.

However, for over a year the existing trains have been running with blank visual information screens at the end of each carriage and no accompanying pre-recorded announcements. Some have now been activated, while others show a static message, or remain blank.

Since most of the drivers have ceased to make announcements, passengers unfamiliar with the system are at a disadvantage particularly at bus or mainline rail interchanges. Trains and stations are operated on behalf of Nexus by DB Regio Tyne and Wear Ltd. DB was awarded the contract for seven years in April 2010.

■ ■ Police approval for facilities to improve unstaffed stations

Eleven unstaffed stations on the Sunderland extension have received the "Safer Tram Stop" award, promoted by the police. Passengers using these stations have to rely on the help points, alarms and CCTV for human contact so signs, good lighting, up-to-date timetables, ticket machines, and monitoring bad behaviour are more important than usual. Railfuture is keen to see older stations improved in these ways.

■ ■ Not-for-profit route to better rail services

As previewed in *Railwatch* 129, David Masterman and his colleague from Tees Trains told Coastliners members more about their long-term plans for open access local trains. The not-for-profit company believes current rail services do not reflect local travel needs. Tees Trains wishes to revive passenger rail links to Loftus, Brotton, Skelton, and Guisborough, as well as the Stockton, Ferryhill and Chester-le-Street route to Newcastle. It also promises more stations on the existing line through and north of Hartlepool, specifically at Hart and Blackhall. Its main aim now is to gather expressions of local support before putting detailed ideas to Network Rail and the Office of the Rail Regulator. More info: www.teestrainscic.com

■ ■ Weardale forges ahead with railcard, and youth backing

To improve passenger services on the Weardale Railway, a turn-out loop is being installed at Bishop Auckland to cater for steam workings. A new permanent platform is being constructed. The railway has introduced a railcard to cater for Weardale residents who have lost their weekend bus service. This, together with the freight contract, extends the viability of the railway. The Weardale Railway Youth Team now incorporates youngsters in the 10 to 18 age range. Members of the 16-plus age group are now taking on responsible roles such as crossing attendants and second man on diesel units. More info: www.weardale-railway.org.uk



The first refurbished Metro vehicle with Mr Cowsans' family and friends, above, and showing the new livery, below



Pictures: NEXUS

Railfuture AGM notice

Notice is hereby given that the annual general meeting of the Railway Development Society Ltd will be held at Worcester Guildhall, High Street, Worcester WR1 2EY on 12 May 2012.

There will be a morning session with one or more guest speakers followed by a break for lunch. The formal AGM will commence at 13.30.

Nominations for election for chairman and to the board of directors must be sent to Railfuture Returning Officer, PO Box 7690, Hinckley, Leicestershire LE10 9WJ to arrive by 31 January 2012. Nomination forms can be obtained from the same address or from the Railfuture website at www.railfuture.org.uk

Motions for discussion at the AGM must be sent to: M Crowhurst, 33 Station Court, Aberford Road, Garforth, Leeds LS25 2QQ to arrive by 28 April 2012. They should be posted in typed format or emailed to chairman@railfuture.org.uk

Further details and a booking form for the buffet lunch will be sent to members later.

By order of the board, L Butler, Company Secretary, 15 November 2011. Railfuture is the campaigning name of the Railway Development Society Ltd.

Railfuture summer conference

The summer conference will be staged at the Golden Lion Hotel, Stirling, on 16 June with speakers on rail development in Scotland and elsewhere. The conference fee (including lunch, drinks and report) will be £25 for Railfuture members or £30 for non-members. More information will be available later. Booking will be available via email to stirling@railfuture.org.uk

Get your Rail User Express

Rail User Express is a regular email bulletin intended for rail user groups and Railfuture branches, but any member of Railfuture can ask to be included in the circulation list. The bulletins consist of selected highlights from user-group newsletters from around Britain, followed by news items likely to be of interest to user-group members. The three most recent bulletins can be accessed from the home page of Railfuture's website. To subscribe to Rail User Express, simply send an email to ruglink@railfuture.org.uk

EPF conference in Austria

The conference and annual general meeting of the European Passengers Federation will be held in Salzburg on Saturday 10 March at Best Western Parkhotel, near Salzburg's main station.

The conference will be preceded on Friday afternoon by a seminar on public transport in and around Salzburg.

The cost for Railfuture members is 65 Euros, which includes documents, drinks and lunch on Saturday. There are extra charges for the Friday evening meal and Sunday excursions. Full details will be available from December at www.epf.eu Alternatively you can write to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

Asperger Rail Club

The Asperger Rail Club is inviting Railfuture members to consider joining. Members can take part in rail-related excursions and attend lectures and talks. More information from Edward Ronayne, The Lighthouse, Reed Vale, Teignmouth, Devon TQ14 9EH or www.asprail.co.uk/

Goodbye to Top Gear?

By John Stanford

john.stanford@railfuture.org.uk

I was struck by an article in *The Guardian* by Alex Rayner (On the Road to Nowhere, 26 September) that took as its starting point the decline in the number of young people with driving licences.

Since then I have become aware of reports, usually in parts of publications that I normally skip, discussing the concept and implications of Peak Car, the fact that the apparently inexorable rise in the number of private cars has, or will in the foreseeable future, come to a halt.

The opening statistics in Rayner's article include the fact that the percentage of 17-20 year olds with a driving licence has fallen from 48% in the early 1990s to 35% in 2010. The road traffic figures for cars and taxis have been falling since 2007.

The fact that rail passenger numbers have increased in that period is reflected in the National Travel Survey figures indicating that the number of journeys made per capita has remained broadly level for the last 40 years. The reasons for this change are varied. Obviously the state of the economy and the rising cost of motoring, including fuel, insurance and parking charges, has had an effect. Rayner also highlights an attitudinal shift towards wanting, and using, the latest communications such as smartphones rather than larger investments such as a car.

Other lifestyle changes include the growth of living in city centres, where a greater range of public transport options exist, and the later age at which people start families. Congestion is a problem not only on the road but also at filling stations as the number of locations has declined.

At the other end of the age scale, some older people have given up driving either completely or for longer journeys.

In many cases this has been voluntary because of minor ailments or for economic reasons. If you have a bus pass (or even better provision in some areas) you tend to use it and the same applies once you have bought a senior railcard. The number of those aged over 70 will increase markedly in the second half of this decade, thus increasing the

proportion of the population moving away from private car use.

There are signs that parts of the motoring industry have recognised that changes to their market are afoot. Peugeot are developing a system whereby members can hire the type of vehicle they need, from a van to a bicycle, on any particular day.

BMW has a fund for start-up companies involved in mobility and has recently invested in the UK-based website parkatmy-house.com.

An electric car developer has announced the launch of the Autolib service in Paris, on the same basis as that city's pioneering bike hire scheme – though whether inexperienced drivers will want to engage with Paris traffic is a different matter.

Until recently, bike hire schemes have been either tourist related or specifically designed for urban use. Therefore the launch of the Brompton Bike Dock at Guildford, reported in *Railwatch* 129, could be a very interesting move.

Individually tailored road transport will always be necessary for some journeys, but this does not have to mean private car ownership or traditional models of car hire.

The growth of companies such as WizzCars offering members occasional, short-term car or van hire is an example of this. The website www.traintaxi.co.uk giving information on the availability of taxis at all railway stations and tram stops, is a way of filling a gap for some journey planning, but it is also woefully underpublicised.

Is the country falling out of love with the car? Well perhaps the ardour is fading. Boy racers are still with us, but on average are getting older. Top Gear will not be replaced by Top Rail, or even Top Transport, any time soon.

However, generational, social and economic influences lead more people to consider which options are most appropriate in particular circumstances rather than automatically picking up the car keys.

The rising number of rail passengers is not just a blip. It should continue and will provide both opportunities and challenges to the rail industry and Railfuture.



London and South East

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

■ ■ Electrification best option

Railfuture wants to see an end to the use of diesels on electrified routes. We would also like to see action on electrifying the few remaining unelectrified lines in our region. Brunel's Paddington station will benefit from the Great Western wires being extended but we are worried by the Government's apparent fixation with its inter-city express project to produce bi-mode vehicles to replace the existing diesel IC 125 trains. We believe electrics should run under the wires with a diesel locomotive available at the end of the electrified route to take the train further if necessary. Of course the proposed electrification as far as Cardiff should continue to Swansea. In Railfuture's response to Network Rail's rolling stock consultation, we dismissed the proposed bi-mode trains as an unnecessary expense while loco-haulage remains a viable solution.

The routes out of St Pancras and Marylebone are also prime candidates for electrification which would rid our London terminus stations of noisy, smelly, dirty diesels. All these routes, including the East Coast main line, could benefit from new long-distance trains, built for 25kv power, running at 125-140 mph and with tilt capability. The imminent re-franchising of GW, West Coast and East Coast will give Railfuture the opportunity to make the case for a national inter-city rolling stock strategy, using a common fleet of new trains, driven by a proper national electrification strategy.

■ ■ Station counts used to improve train services

National Express East Anglia has modified its planned timetable changes in December after receiving information based on extensive station passenger counts which followed the pattern started by the Railfuture-affiliated Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail Users Group. With extra data provided by the West Anglia Routes Group, NXEA reprieved six stations from peak hour cuts. The CHLFRUG/WARG figures were validated by Transport for London, accepted by NXEA, and apparently found their way into the DfT when it was considering which of three short-listed bidders should run the East Anglia franchise from February. It was announced in October that Abellio will take over the franchise. Evidence from Railfuture counts at four stations on Southern's East Coastway are also supporting the case for timetable improvements, while counts at Chiltern's two Sudbury stations aim to demonstrate a case there too.

■ ■ Key people who can help to turn on the funding taps

Decisions on who gets money from the Government's local sustainable transport fund will be influenced by transport co-ordination officers employed by local councils. Rail campaigners would be well advised to identify who they are. Most belong to the Association of Transport Co-ordination Officers. You can contact ATCO through www.atco.org.uk to find out who their member is in your county, unitary or London borough council. Please contact me with your findings.

■ ■ The timetable cuts that never were

The Railfuture-affiliated Marylebone Travellers' Association sounded the alarm about unintentionally misleading information in *Railwatch* 129 about "timetable cuts" at Chiltern's Sudbury & Harrow Road station. In fact trains were re-timed but not cut. Beware when you check for times. At present, even Chiltern's printed timetables for this station seem to be wrong, while its website appears to give the correct information.



West Midlands

By Les Fawcett
les.fawcett@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Norton Bridge flyover

Network Rail is consulting local communities again over the Stafford-Norton Bridge project, this time on the preferred alternative with minor modifications. The planned flyover will ease congestion at this busy junction. Network Rail said: "Untangling the railway lines at Norton Bridge Junction and wider improvement work around Stafford will deliver a more reliable railway for passengers and freight customers. The scheme will create extra capacity, allowing more trains on the route and shortening journey times. It will help reduce congestion and delays in the Stafford area."

■ ■ London Midland proposes 110mph West Coast services

Train operator London Midland has applied to use the spare path on the West Coast main line to run its London-Crewe trains at 110mph giving a better service to Nuneaton, Tamworth, Lichfield and Rugeley, stations which were disadvantaged by the West Coast route modernisation. By missing out the Northampton loop, LM can save 30-40 minutes on the journey to Euston. The operator also plans to increase services on the Trent Valley line, plugging several gaps that exist at present. These changes should be possible once the "moderation of competition" rules end in April. However the bids for the new West Coast main line franchise in December 2012 may be affected by this increased competition.

■ ■ Centro backs plan to upgrade the Godiva line

A new application has been submitted to the Department for Transport by Coventry and Warwickshire councils and Centro for a 60% contribution to the £19 million project to upgrade the line between Coventry and Nuneaton, the Godiva line. New stations at Ricoh Arena (home to Coventry City Football Club and a growing commercial park) and Bermuda Park are proposed, as well as a new bay platform at Coventry station to keep Nuneaton trains off the main line, extension of Bedworth platforms for six carriages, increased line speed, an increase from the current hourly service to two trains per hour, and additional six-car units for extra services to events at the Arena. It all adds up to a transformation of this under-utilised asset.



■ ■ Delay to plan for Bromsgrove station upgrade

A funding shortfall is delaying the £12 million plan to replace the station at Bromsgrove – which is at the foot of the Lickey incline – and extend the wires from Barnt Green to allow Birmingham's Cross-city services from Lichfield to reach Bromsgrove.

■ ■ New hope for commuters on Redditch line

Network Rail has started a consultation on providing a dynamic loop and a second platform at unstaffed Alvechurch, Worcestershire. This will enable a three trains per hour Cross-city service to run on the single-track line to Redditch. The proposal will also include a footbridge and lifts to reach the new platform. The scheme should be completed by summer 2014.

■ ■ Rail development strategy coming soon

Centro is working on an update to its 20-year regional rail development strategy which was published four years ago. The update is in response to Network Rail's published spending plans for 2014-2019 and it is hoped the new strategy will cover more services in a wider "travel to work" area.



PARTY TIME: Supporters of the Devon and Cornwall Rail

Partnership celebrating 20 years of success at Gunnislake

Think radical and local

The community rail movement started over 20 years ago with some pretty radical ideas on separate local management of lines modelled on what had been achieved in Germany.

The concept of microfranchising developed by Paul Salvesson was based on local management of services, but also of the lines and stations themselves.

First steps produced some good results with newly formed community rail partnerships raising the profile of local lines and attracting many more passengers to use the railway.

Taking this a step further, a number of partnerships have been successful in improving the specification of services with more trains to carry the growing numbers of passengers. The Bittern line partnership secured extra evening services some time ago, and in Devon and Cornwall, all the branches except Looe, have Sunday services throughout the year. Twenty years ago, when the partnership started, none had Sunday services in the winter. Partnership working is

saving costs too, with a reduction in trespass and vandalism at adopted stations and innovations like the Harrington hump saving thousands of pounds at each station where this avoids rebuilding the platform.

Now is the time to revisit this and look again at microfranchising and other forms of local management to see if further progress can be made to put local lines on a secure footing for good.

The McNulty report supports this approach, and it is certainly true that where rail specification has been devolved, as in Scotland, Wales, the passenger transport executive areas and London, the result has been a bigger and a busier railway.

Is there any reason why the rest of England should not benefit from this approach?

This was the theme of a seminar held by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships in Cardiff on 2 November, chaired by former transport minister Stephen Norris, and including Anna Norris, chairman of the Office of Rail Regulation and



Professor Andrew McNaughton of HS2 among the speakers. ORR is clearly up for change where this can benefit passengers and freight customers and there is certainly scope to be flexible in the way that many of these lines are regulated. Even short of full microfranchising, there is scope to manage and maintain the railway locally.

In recent years, we seem to have moved to a "white van man" culture where a broken window or a fence repair or a points failure involves someone driving 50 miles in a van from some central depot to do the work, rather than tackling it more quickly and cheaply with local staff or contractors.

Andrew McNaughton pointed out that many of the recent increases in cost were driven by the increasing weight of trains, which not only meant higher fuel consumption and maintenance costs, but more

wear and tear on the track as well. Simplifying signalling to allow extra crossing loops or closer headways meant moving to light rail technology, where track brakes not only allowed street running extensions but "drive on sight" for some local routes.

The tram/train trials will be important in proving the principle. As well as the technology, there is also a good case for allowing local authorities and partnerships a stronger role in specifying and paying for local services, with appropriate support from central government.

A simpler approach to running and maintaining local railways would also improve the chance of restoring rail services where they no longer exist, through reopenings.

This is an area where we may see some interesting developments over the next few years and one which Railfuture could get behind and influence.

How to improve the links between train and plane

Last year, Railfuture issued its *Airport Links* report on train and public transport links to UK airports, writes Trevor Garrod. Nearly all remaining copies of the report were eagerly taken at a European Commission seminar in Brussels. The seminar on Intermodality at Airports was organised as part of the Commission's Inter-modes Project and those present

represented the Commission, national governments and the airline industry. My own presentation, as chairman of the European Passengers Federation, stressed that information provision, trained staff, and luggage facilities are crucial. Through ticketing between air and high-speed rail is advantageous but many people want to use regional or urban

trains and even buses. Airlines could negotiate an add-on similar to our Plus Bus ticket, or the German "City Ticket".

French railways introduced a special "TGV Air" ticket and at German stations it is possible to buy a ticket to the airport if you show your flight ticket, but neither facilities is very well known. Finally, the meeting discussed some

"quick fixes" to make transfer between plane and surface public transport more seamless. These included making automatic rail ticket machines at certain airports more user-friendly and simply ensuring that there are enough of them. For a report of the meeting, please send an SAE to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

◆◆◆◆ The answer to polluted cities: More tram-trains

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright
chriswrightmk@aol.com

■ ■ East West rail

The East West rail link retains a high profile for the branch. Officers joined the Oxon and Bucks Rail Action Committee at an encouraging meeting with the East West Rail Consortium project manager in October. We were told Rail Minister Theresa Villiers had agreed to consider funding in the funding period 2014-15 with a decision expected next year. The MP for Milton Keynes South, Iain Stewart, is seeking to set up an all-party parliamentary group to press the case. A launch is planned for 23 November. The consortium is publishing a prospectus highlighting the potential of the proposals.

Meanwhile the planning process and funding mechanisms, including the Community Infrastructure Fund, and the New Homes Bonus, are being identified. A report by Oxford Economics into the economic case for the route has produced more encouraging supporting evidence. It is estimated that the economy will benefit by £38 million a year, 12,000 jobs will be created and an extra tax revenue of £17.4 million will be generated. The scheme will pay back the investment in 5 years. 2.58 million extra rail trips a year will be generated and 1.74 million car trips saved. The benefit-cost ratio of 6.3:1 increases to 11.2:1 if 15% of funding can be obtained from the private sector, which is far higher than most rail and road schemes. More information: Community infrastructure fund: <http://www2.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/policy/cif2/> New homes bonus: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingsupply/newhomesbonus/>

■ ■ Can tunnel bats learn to live with the return of trains?

Railfuture is eagerly awaiting the decision of the Transport Secretary on the Oxford-Bicester Evergreen 3 proposals. Further environmental work has been undertaken, relating to the bats found at Wolvercote tunnel. A trial with lights to warn the bats of an approaching train have been carried out.

■ ■ Oxford improvements promised in spending plan

Network Rail makes only limited reference to the East West rail link in its initial industry plan for 2014-19 but it has been pointed out that the scheme is not sponsored by NR. The plan does, however, commit to completion of the Reading upgrade as well as electrification. It proposes increased capacity for Oxford with a new platform for London-bound trains, bi-directional signalling between Didcot North and Aynho Junction, passing loops and an increased line speed. The work could be combined with resignalling in 2015.

OXFORD CAMBRIDGE RAIL CAMPAIGN

■ ■ Register your support for crucial rail reopening scheme

Railfuture members and others can register their support for the East West rail link on the Railfuture website www.railfuture.org.uk/Ox-Cam/ and the consortium's site at www.eastwestrail.org.uk/your-views

■ ■ Off-peak journey times protest on the Met

The Federation of Met Line users and Chesham Transport Users have expressed concerns to London Underground that timetable changes have increased journey times for off peak travel from Chesham and Amersham. However, they welcome extra peak services.



East Anglia

By Nick Dibben
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and Trevor Garrod
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Improvements supported

Railfuture is supporting a proposal to improve the road underpass adjacent to Ely station. The road has limited headroom and vehicles frequently hit the bridge, causing delays to both road and rail. Increasing the headroom under the bridge will enable the adjacent level crossing to close, and the scheme will be half the cost of a new road bypass. It would also be less visually intrusive. Cambridgeshire County Council is hoping that developer contributions and money from Network Rail will help fund the scheme.

Improvements required at home of horse racing

The branch has joined with the local rail user group to call for improvements at Newmarket, the "home of horse racing". A recent count of passengers at the station showed that numbers had increased significantly from a similar count in 2008. Only part of the platform is in use and the station has only basic facilities. The small car park is usually full, deterring other rail users. During race days, the station and trains are very busy and Railfuture believes that a better gateway to the town is needed. In a press article local councillors supported the idea and we have written to them with further suggestions.

40 years of making progress

Railfuture's East Anglian branch will be 40 years old in February, having been formed as a branch of one of Railfuture's predecessor organisations in Norwich in 1972. Three members (including one who was present at the original small meeting) have been working on a four-page leaflet which will look at what has been achieved during the past four decades and what our priorities should be for the next 10 years. It is important to get the message across that many things we have in the region today might not have happened without campaigning by Railfuture. We battled for electrification to Ipswich, Norwich and King's Lynn and campaigned for reopened stations at Watlington and Arlesey, the modernisation of the East Suffolk Line and even adequate cycle space on local trains. Active campaigning over the next 10 years, constructive dialogue with all stakeholders and careful research can enable us to achieve further improvements which will be set out in our leaflet. A series of small exhibitions at libraries and other public places is also being planned to promote our message. If you live outside East Anglia and would like a copy of the leaflet, when published, please send SAE to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

Move to help the road lobby condemned

The Government's decision to reward its road lobby backers by allowing longer lorries has been condemned by pedestrians, cyclists and rail freight campaigners. The "trials" of longer articulated lorries were approved by transport minister Mike Penning and will allow around 1,800 lorries two yards longer than normal to operate for up to 10 years. Railfuture's freight committee warned there is a threat that cargo will be abstracted from rail to road as a result. In a press statement, the committee urged logistics operators to ensure that the new lorries are used to take longer swap bodies to and from railheads, where the loads can be integrated with the use of low-platform rail vehicles, such as megafret. It is essential that long-distance trains with a mix of swap body lengths become the first choice for freight operators. For the past 50 years, governments have been promoting big lorries in defiance of public opinion.



Train operators fail the

By Trevor Garrod

trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk

Railfuture has just issued its second Snapshot Survey of Eurostar journeys, three years after the first.

One notable change since 2008 is the greater number of origins in Great Britain and destinations on the continent used by our members and others.

It showed that, increasingly, Eurostar's services to Lille, Paris and Brussels are being used as a link in a longer journey chain.

Thus the 179 respondents to our questionnaire travelled from 127 different stations, from as far away as Barnstaple and Muir of Ord, with 71% of them travelling beyond Eurostar stations. There were 27 different destination stations in France and 22 in Germany.

This trend may show passengers being more adventurous, and the growth of high speed lines on the continent is almost certainly a factor. For example, the faster

journey now possible between Liege and Aachen, following the opening of a stretch of high speed line, means that more towns and cities in Germany and Austria are within easy reach of London.

The same can be said for France and Switzerland, following new high speed line openings. Our report goes on to say: "The opening of such lines also brings London within easier reach for continental visitors to our country. Is our own tourist and railway industry taking advantage of that?"

Very few of our respondents had any problems booking their Eurostar ticket or on the train itself; and for 86% of them, train was also the main mode used to reach London, with 90% of them boarding at St Pancras.

The questionnaire asked about possible improvements to Eurostar services which respondents would like to see. There were calls for a simpler fare structure, cheaper fares and through

Eurostar booking test

ticketing between more British and continental stations. A significant number called for more trains to stop at Ashford International and there was criticism of the on-board catering.

We also undertook a mystery shopper exercise this time, checking websites and publicity by train operators and making telephone enquiries to call centres.

With the exception of East Coast, we found many operators were ignoring or saying very little about Eurostar in their printed publicity.

Our members checked 20 operator websites and found only seven had good links to the Eurostar website.

Our mystery shopper volunteers sought information from their local operators on through bookings from their local station to Paris or Interlaken. None of those contacted was able to do through bookings, but it was encouraging to see that their call

centre staff gave phone numbers or websites for Eurostar or, in one case, www.internationalrail.com

The report can be obtained from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ. Please enclose large SAE.

Welcome DB

Meanwhile in 2013, Deutsche Bahn plans to run its ICE high speed trains from London to Brussels, where they will split, one half going to Amsterdam and the other to Cologne and Frankfurt. DB hopes to run three trips each way per day. Railfuture has been in contact with DB's London office and we hope to meet them in 2012 to learn more about their plans.

Draw winner

All our completed Eurostar questionnaires were put into a bag and the chairman drew one out. As a result, Mr Paul Boness of Stratford-upon-Avon won a £25 WH Smith gift card.

Wessex

By John Friedberger

john.friedberger@railfuture.org.uk

SWT problems

Over recent months SWT has suffered from an abnormally high level of suicides and cable thefts in the Basingstoke area. At a Stakeholders Forum in September SWT managing director Andy Pitt and Richard O'Brien, Network Rail's director of Wessex region, explained the steps being taken to reduce thefts and provide speedier and more accurate information to delayed passengers.

In November, with other rail user groups, we had a helpful and constructive meeting with SWT senior management. Subjects covered included fares policy, information during disruption, reduced engineering possessions, the long-awaited result of the high level output statement and upgrades to ticket vending machines.

Only minimal changes are planned for the December timetable which will last for a full year. Some changes to stock formation on the Exeter route are based upon two years experience of the hourly service to Exeter. There will be no changes or re-issue of publications in May 2012 but a separate timetable will be published for the period of the Olympic Games, including the timings of extra late night trains.

Unsuitable suburban units exposed but still running

An example of what can be achieved by a vigorous campaign is the 'No 450' group which successfully inspired Portsmouth area MPs and councillors to raise the issue of the inappropriate class 450 suburban units with ministers. An adjournment debate was held in the House of Commons, so raising the profile of the campaign in the national press and on TV. However it has become apparent that only the Department for Transport can change the situation and this may not happen until the next franchise change.

Railfuture Wessex AGM to be held in Winchester

The next Railfuture Wessex annual general meeting will be held in Winchester on the afternoon of Saturday 17 March. We are inviting a senior representative of Network Rail to be our guest speaker. The agenda and other papers will be sent out in February. Only if rail engineering work seriously affects the Wessex main line will there be a change of plan. The venue is five minutes walk from Winchester station and is suitable for disabled people.



Thieves and vandals

The price of scrap metal has risen in recent years, driven particularly by demand from China, and one unfortunate consequence of this has been the rise in theft of metal from buildings and storage yards, and even plaques from war memorials.

Railways are particularly vulnerable as their "worksites" spread over many thousands of miles and, while fenced, remain accessible to organised gangs of thieves with cutting equipment.

Rails, rail fastenings, signalling equipment and locomotive parts have all been stolen in recent months, and when cable is stolen, it inevitably causes delay to trains until communications are restored.

These assaults on the national network have caused 16,000 hours of passenger train delays over the past three years, costing the industry £43 million, and the number of attacks has been increasing.

On heritage lines, some specialist steam locomotive parts, carefully made at great expense, have been stolen and sold to scrap dealers for a few pounds.

Heritage railways have spent money on better fencing, lighting and stronger door and gate locks as well as CCTV

cameras overseeing yards, but still the wanton destruction of the railway's history goes on.

British Transport Police have been effective in tracking some of these illegal scrap sales, and they lead an Association of Chief Police Officers task force on the problem, but the practice is widespread and heritage railways have to rely on local police forces for support.

Network Rail and heritage railways alike have been the subject of damage and theft and have joined forces to combat it.

Thieves sell on to scrap merchants for cash, and valuable railway equipment is often on its way for shipment before it can be tracked down.

One effective way to stop this illegal trade would be to outlaw such cash sales and another would be for proper regulation of scrap dealers, to replace the inadequate Scrap Metal Dealers Act, 1964.

Lord Faulkner of Worcester has introduced a private member's bill in the House of Lords designed to draw attention to these problems and to propose a solution.

Railfuture members who agree that action is needed to stop this menace to the railway from itinerant gangs of thieves who work "cash in hand" can sign



Heritage railways seem to be a magnet for criminals

the e-petition on the direct.gov website which already has 25,000 signatures (100,000 are needed for a Parliamentary debate).

Go to the petition on the Cashless Scrap Metal Trade at <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/406> to read and sign the petition.

You can also contact your MP

and seek his or her support in to safeguard communities and the local economy from these crimes. In particular, you can ask them to raise the problem with Home Office ministers or sign the amendment to Early Day Motion 2130 A1 on Scrap Metal Theft, sponsored by Andrew Percy, the Conservative MP for Brigg and Goole.

Scotland

■ ■ Cuts undermine £1 billion electrification plan

Rail campaigners were delighted to see The Herald taking up the issue of the Garngad curve in Glasgow. The curve, an essential part of the £1 billion Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme which includes electrifying 200 miles of track has been removed "to save £52 million".

But removing the curve from the plan erodes much of the benefit of electrifying the main Glasgow-Edinburgh lines and the Cumbernauld-Stirling-Alloa-Dunblane lines and is a "slap in the face for rail users". Without the curve, electric trains will have to reverse at Springburn, adding about 10 minutes to the existing journey times.

Ian Richard said: "Through rail services from Ayrshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire to Edinburgh, Stirling and beyond would offer a viable alternative to the morning and evening delays which currently plague the motorway system around Glasgow." Campaigners were encouraged that the issue has been taken up by MSP Jamie Hepburn who represents Cumbernauld and Kilsyth.

North Lanarkshire Council has protested to Network Rail over the plans to drop the curve from EGIP and the RMT rail union has called for the curve to be reinstated.

The Capital Rail Action Group in Edinburgh wants Abbeyhill station, near the Scottish Parliament, to be reopened and included in the EGIP programme by relaying tracks heading east from Calton tunnels.

Lawrence Marshall of CRAG said: "It is a very modest, small scale project but it could be like the Haymarket of the east. There are some potential sites for development around Abbeyhill too. It could give a boost to the area."

■ ■ ScotRail 'should be brought into public ownership'

ScotRail should be brought back into public ownership to bring down the costs of running the rail network and improve services for passengers, believes Ken Macintosh, a candidate for the leadership of the Scottish Labour party. The Eastwood MSP attacked rail privatisation as "one of the most ill-conceived, ineffective and impractical decisions of the Conservative administration of the 1990s", which left passengers facing a "frustratingly complex and expensive rail system".

He called for ScotRail, which will cost £1.5 billion in taxpayer subsidies over the next three years, to be handed to a mutual or not-for-profit organisation. "The decision to create a fragmented series of operating companies was supposedly taken to promote competition, but has produced a frustratingly complex and expensive rail system across the UK completely lacking in transparency and accountability," he said.

"We the taxpaying public pay millions of pounds in subsidies to the shareholders of private companies for the dubious privilege of paying exorbitant prices to travel on a disjointed national network." The "Transport for Quality of Life" organisation has found that 71% of the population supported moves towards greater public ownership of the railways.

■ ■ New stations could improve life in south east Scotland

East Lothian Council is working with South East of Scotland Transport Partnership to explore the possibility of reopening the former Longniddry to Haddington line which closed in 1968. Another station could be opened at East Linton as part of an upgrade to the Edinburgh-Dunbar service which operates over the East Coast main line. East Linton's former railway station - which is now privately owned - closed in 1964. Rail Action Group, East of Scotland, has been campaigning for a station at East Linton since 1999. Iain Gray, East Lothian MSP, said: "I think there is a great deal of unmet demand for rail travel in our county."

Contact details for Railfuture Scotland:
mike.harrison@railfuturescotland.org.uk

www.railfuturescotland.org.uk



More reopenings

I understand there is considerable local support for the reopening of Chard Junction since the introduction of the hourly service last year. Whether Chard reopens or not, there are well-advanced plans to site a new station in the Broadclyst area to serve the new town of Cranbrook, east of Exeter, along the A30 Exeter Airport corridor.

Devon County Council has started planning procedures for the new station, which it wants to be part of a new 30-minute frequency service between Axminster and Exeter, made possible by the provision of extra track in the Whimple area. I understand this will not increase the journey times to Waterloo.

Existing times to and from Waterloo were increased by 15 minutes by South West Trains when the timetable was recast some years ago to provide a regular hourly service from Yeovil Junction. The existing constraints on timings have more to do with track capacity than station provision.

As a regular traveller on this line I confirm how important local passenger flows are throughout the line. Particularly heavy flows are between all stations between Exeter Central and Axminster, all stations between Salisbury and Yeovil Junction with Sherborne and Gillingham the busiest. Even Andover and Basingstoke

to Salisbury support quite heavy local flows. Historically it was this characteristic of local traffic that kept the line open during the western region rationalisation and enabled investment in the 1990s.

More people board some SWT trains at St David's than board the comparable First Great Western service to Paddington, because of this local journey pattern.

With services into Waterloo heavily loaded, and the Department for Transport still in the process of agreeing with SWT just how to provide extra capacity with longer trains, services from Exeter face an interesting future.

I notice that my regular three-car service from Exeter is strengthened to eight or nine cars at Salisbury. Conversely, the three-car service from Waterloo is strengthened to six cars at Salisbury for Exeter, such are loadings from local traffic.

I would expect more local stations to reopen, following the reopening of Templecombe many years ago. The line serves areas where a lot of new urban development is planned over the next few years and demand is sure to grow even without the new towns planned.

My personal feeling is that the line should be electrified to the third rail network, along with the section between Southampton and Salisbury. This would allow more efficient use of the existing electric stock as well as opening up new journey opportunities from Exeter to Brighton and the

south coast. I am not holding my breath for this development.

David Baldock, Broomhill, Lezant,
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d_e_baldock@hotmail.com

Glasgow link

I regret that East Coast has dropped the Edinburgh-Glasgow leg of its franchise. This has considerably worsened travel times for those of us getting from somewhere on the East Coast to Motherwell or Glasgow.

I used to be able to get to Motherwell for 10.30 by catching the 06.15 from Doncaster. Now one is lucky to get there before midday, which in my case rules out a morning start for work.

The return travel is also worsened as well. The stopping train certainly takes at least twice the time and then there is the connection time in Edinburgh to add on.

Could not the franchise letting have reinstated a semi-fast service as a substitute?
Steve Moir, Tring Road, Wendover,
Bucks HP22 6NU
shmoir@btinternet.com

District capacity

I have been a member of the society for about 20 years, encouraged by the word "development" in its title.

I wonder though how well informed our lobbyists are. Did members know that in 1944, during the Second World War, a train was scheduled every 90 seconds on the section of the District line of the Underground from South Kensington towards Mansion House?

I see no point, however, in HS2. In theory we are in the age of paperless business, of video links, of working from home, so the need for business travel should be reducing, not increasing.

By contrast, freight seems to be ignored by the politicians and civil servants.

I also read of the Chelsea-Hackney Crossrail route. I seem to remember that was mooted

about 60 years ago. Or was it 50?
C A Cowland, Lapwing Way, Four
Marks, Alton GU34 5FD

Africa calling

Having just received the latest issue of Railwatch, I am a little puzzled at the need to publish Rowland Dale's letter.

In essence, he is merely telling you he has moved house and asking you to change the address to which you send his copy. I'm not sure that the rest of the readership really needed to be involved in witnessing this exchange.

David Golding, Castle Donington,
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Editors' note: The aim was to highlight Rowland's continuing interest in rail development even though he had moved to South Africa and the fact that Railwatch is still sought after in foreign parts. Railways have been deliberately under-funded in South Africa to encourage the growth of road haulage.

Welsh fares

The Railwatch report that English and Welsh rail fares would rise by the retail price index plus 3% was not correct for Wales. In fact the Welsh Government has controlled Arriva Trains Wales' fare increase to RPI plus 1%, the same as in Scotland. MerseyRail and Northern Ireland also have lower increases. The Welsh Government however cannot curb the fare increases of First Great Western, Arriva CrossCountry and Virgin West Coast in Wales as these are controlled by the Department for Transport in London.

I assume the same applies in Scotland for the four cross-border English-based operators because the Scottish Government controls only ScotRail.

Rowland Pittard, Penyfaï,
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Your letters extra

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
and Roger Bacon

anthony.kay@railfuture.org.uk
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■ ■ Improvements at Wellingborough station

New passenger facilities, including a footbridge and lifts, were opened at Wellingborough station on 30 September. The improvements were funded by Network Rail and the Government's Access for All programme. The closure of the barrow crossing will contribute to Network Rail's programme of line speed improvements on the Midland Main Line.

■ ■ Benefits of high speed rail revealed

HS2 Ltd held a stakeholder briefing at Loughborough on 14 October. It is hoped that HS2 will bring Loughborough and Derby within an hour's travel time of London, while the capacity released on the Midland and West Coast main lines will allow time savings from Leicester and Northampton to the capital. HS2 will also make major improvements to northward travel from the East Midlands. The plans for HS2 have also highlighted the urgent need for MML electrification, which is in Network Rail's Initial Industry Plan for 2014-19, but needs strong lobbying if it is actually going to happen.

■ ■ Existing services in need of improvement

Rail campaigners and local councils want speeds improved on existing lines. The ambition is for journeys to London in 60 minutes from Leicester, 85 minutes from Derby and 90 minutes from Nottingham by 2014. However, Network Rail has said that the various incremental line speed improvements currently planned will not achieve the "Nottingham in Ninety" ambition. A NR spokeswoman said that even electrification won't achieve it. The route would need to be straightened. Nottingham City Council's head of transport planning and strategy, Grant Butterworth, expressed concern that NR's current commitments are not ambitious enough, and asked for new stopping patterns which prioritise Nottingham. Major works to transform Nottingham station have started. Together with new signalling and new track, the project will cost £164 million. The first item, due for completion in May, will be a multi-storey car park. The line from Beeston to Nottingham will be closed for 37 days in August 2013 (known by Network Rail as a blockade). During this time there will be extensive track relaying and an additional platform built at Nottingham.

■ ■ New attempt to find funds for Ilkeston station

Derbyshire County Council remains committed to a new station at Ilkeston, despite two recent failed attempts to secure funding, from the Regional Growth Fund and from NR's Station Commercial Project Facility. December 2013 is considered to be the optimum opening time for the station, and the council will continue to seek the £5 million required.

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SKELETON: The bodyshell of Austrian Federal Railways' Railjet vehicle, made of steel which makes it easy to recycle

Trains are getting 'greener' than ever

Rail is far out in front as the most environmentally friendly means of transport despite clever spinning of the statistics by some "experts".

Now Siemens is making sure it uses as few resources and little energy as possible in manufacturing rail vehicles.

Siemens Rail Systems in Vienna claims it is a pioneer, constructing its trains, metro and light rail vehicles so that they use as few resources and energy as possible during the manufacturing process as well as during operation.

Siemens is also selecting methods of production to ensure that when the vehicles become obsolete, the materials can be re-used.

In assembling the vehicles for the VAL automatic people mover being made for Toulouse, body parts are screwed together, rather than welded to allow it to be disassembled more easily.

The company now says that it can recycle 95% of the materials.

In Britain though, politicians seem to have lost the plot on

pollution and the environment. There is stupid talk of "stimulating" the economy by building roads as well as raising the speed limit. The terrible M5 crash and the average of seven people who are killed on Britain's roads each day are ignored.

"If more than 30,000 people had been killed on trains or planes in the past 10 years there would be a national outcry," said Cathy Keeler of Brake, the charity that speaks up for road victims.

London Mayor Boris Johnson wants to build a giant airport in the Thames estuary while failing to tackle the capital's air pollution, which is causing 4,000 people a year to die early.

But in Britain, domestic and international aviation already accounts for 21 per cent of the UK transport sector's emissions, according to the European Commission. By opposing the extension of congestion charging, Boris is condemning more people to breathe polluted air.

As usual, the politicians are out of touch with reality. Use of

Heathrow is declining, as is car use. Both would decline much more rapidly, to virtually everyone's advantage, if the politicians would just nudge things in the correct direction.

Sadly there is an army of well-paid lobbyists making sure that it is big oil and the road lobby that get listened to before the electorate is considered.

If the Government attempts to implement the McNulty "common sense" recommendations, it may shackle the rail industry just when it should be expanding.

The rail unions are keen that the money taken out of the industry in company profits and inefficient franchising arrangements should go back into making the rail network better.

First Group announced in November that it had made £55 million in profit on its rail operations, an increase of 15%.

The unions call for nationalisation, not-for-profit and co-operative options to be examined. They say this would be a better

way of making rail affordable than closing ticket offices and removing staff from trains.

Plaid Cymru leader Ieuan Wynn Jones also believes there is a better way, perhaps "not for dividend" way, to run trains in Wales.

Currently the Welsh Government has to pay Arriva Trains Wales £170 million a year to get the service it wants.

"Because of the way the franchise was written, Arriva is under no obligation to provide extra services," he said.

Transport expert Professor Stuart Cole, from the University of Glamorgan, said the model "has the potential to keep the profits that are made in the business, and any other surpluses within Wales and within the railway franchise."

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