

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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Original map: Department for Transport



High Speed Two going north

Vital questions: Pages 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7

Historic day as rail links Europe to Asia and news in brief

A new £2.5 billion rail tunnel linking Europe with Asia was opened in October on the 90th anniversary of the Republic of Turkey.

It is the first time the Asian and European sides of the Bosphorus have been linked by rail.

The eight-mile long transcontinental tunnel under the Bosphorus has been built to withstand an earthquake, and was opened by Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan in a ceremony attended by Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe.

Mr Erdogan boasted that the line could connect London to Beijing. The new stainless steel trains for the Marmaray project, pictured right, have been built in Korea and Turkey by Hyundai Rotem.

The line, built by a Turkish-Japanese consortium, is expected eventually to carry 1.5 million passengers a day under one of the world's busiest waterways.



New Marmaray train

It is hoped that the rail line will reduce the city's appalling car traffic by about 20%, particularly over the two road bridges which span the Bosphorus.

It is hoped that high speed trains and also freight trains will eventually be able to use the tunnel.

The project was delayed by archaeological excavations and will not be fully completed until 2015. More than 40,000 artefacts were found which traced the city's history back beyond Byzantium to 8,500 years ago. Marmaray's three stations, Uskudar,

Sirkeci and Yenikapi, are located on archaeological sites. The government will open an "archaeological park" at the Yenikapi station to display the finds.

A new rail connection linking Kars in eastern Turkey with Georgia and Azerbaijan, to be completed next year, would allow more trade through Central Asia.

Secret illegal blacklist

Several large firms involved in rail construction including London's Crossrail have apologised for their involvement with an organisation which maintained a secret illegal blacklist.

Most of the 3,200 people on the blacklist, which was discovered in 2009 at The Consulting Association (now closed down), were trade unionists but some were ordinary workers who raised health and safety concerns.

Balfour Beatty, Carillion, Costain, Kier, Laing O'Rourke, Sir Robert

McAlpine, Skanska UK and Vinci said in October they are working on compensation plans.

Some people were denied work for years as a result of the illegal blacklist.

Regulator axes £1.7bn

Network Rail's plans for the next five years should be cut by £1.7 billion, the Office of Rail Regulation announced in October.

ORR chief executive Richard Price said the cuts in the proposed £37 billion spend for 2014-19 would give the Government the option to change its policy of annual above-inflation fare rises.

The cuts were being dressed up as efficiency savings but are actually a threat to jobs, maintenance and safety, warned rail union RMT.

RAIL USER EXPRESS

Rail User Express is published monthly and can be downloaded from the Railfuture website.

Rail user group awards

The results of Railfuture's national awards for the unsung heroes of rail campaigning were announced at Railfuture's rail users conference in Oxford on 2 November.

The winners

Best Campaign: Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group, commended: Harrogate Line Supporters Group and South East Northumberland Rail User Group.

Clara Zilahi Award for Best Campaigner: Steve Smith of Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group. Best Website Gold Award: Portishead Railway Group. Silver: Avocet Line Rail Users Group.

Oliver Lovell Award for Best New Group: Harrogate Line Supporters Group.

Best Newsletter: Avocet Line Rail Users Group.

Judges' Special Award: Peter Wakefield, Railfuture East Anglia chairman.

Other nominees included Lancaster and Skipton RUG, Rail Action Group East Scotland, Friends of Reddish South Station, Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways, and Trains for Deal.

Two of the awards were made in memory of long-serving members who died during the year, Oliver Lovell of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group, a winner last year, and East Anglia member and Railfuture Board Director Clara Zilahi. The awards were judged by Railfuture vice-presidents Ian Brown, Barry Doe, Roger Ford, and Chris Green along with Railfuture president Christian Wolmar who chaired the conference and presented award-winners with framed certificates.

Recruitment campaign

To attract more members, Railfuture has decided to drop its membership from £21 to £18 for a trial period.

This has been made possible by using email and the website, rather than paper and postage, to reduce running costs.

Savings should also be possible next year when Railfuture gives members the opportunity to obtain AGM notices and annual accounts by email or by download from the Railfuture website, rather than by post.

Existing members who renew after 1 January 2014 can take advantage of the temporary reduction in the price of membership. But Railfuture still needs money to campaign for better railways and is dependent on its members for continuing financial support, even though it has recently benefited from bequests.

Please consider, therefore, continuing to pay £21, perhaps by

making a voluntary donation of £3, in addition to the new £18 membership fee. This will allow us to continue the fight for our railways. Please do your best to recruit new members too, especially women, young people and those from ethnic minorities to ensure that Railfuture remains representative and relevant in the years to come.

Members who want to change their standing orders, should use their internet or telephone banking. This saves Railfuture a significant amount in postage charges. People who are unable to do this should write to Railfuture Membership, 6 Carral Close, Lincoln LN5 9BD or email treasurer@railfuture.org.uk for a new mandate.

The reduced rates for family, OAP, student or unwaged members will remain unchanged because of the continuing high costs of providing Railwatch and other services to these members.

Electronic information

The extraordinary general meeting in Oxford on 2 November 2013 approved the option of Railfuture using online voting and receiving annual accounts, AGM notices and election correspondence by email. This will reduce our printing and postage costs, enabling more money to be spent on rail campaigning instead.

Please help Railfuture by registering for electronic commun-

ication as soon as possible. Railfuture members can go to www.railfuture.org.uk/member/

You will need to enter your membership number, pin (from your Railwatch cover sheet), email address and confirm your name.

This will enable the Railfuture database to be updated. A confirmation email will be sent to your email address.

Conference report: See page 19

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

LOCAL ACTION

Yorkshire

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

■ ■ Rail North strategy

Railfuture Yorkshire responded to the Rail North strategy consultation agreeing that there needs to be better connectivity, more local initiatives and more determination to get full value from already planned investments. The strategy was commissioned and developed by Merseytravel, West Yorkshire, Tyne & Wear, South Yorkshire and Manchester and the idea behind it is that rail franchising in the North of England should be decided and operated, not in London, but in the region. Railfuture Yorkshire also called for more progress on achieving modal shift from private cars and road freight, including parcels, and better integration with other forms of public transport. Railfuture called for more progress on line and station reopenings and providing more frequent trains on lines with a limited service. The branch also called for "filling the gaps" left by earlier rail closures and for rail and tram operators to integrate their services.

Our response said: "There is a clear need for more logistics centres, especially those supplying supermarkets, to be rail connected, and for smaller container transfer terminals to be sited strategically across the North of England."

There was also the need for earlier, later and more Sunday passenger trains. Sunday is now the busiest shopping day of the week in Meadowhall. To increase services on the Settle-Carlisle line, a direct Nottingham-Glasgow service should be reinstated. Trains interiors should also be improved to provide more table seats and more on-train toilets. The class 175s used by Arriva Trains Wales were held up as a good example of a comfortable train. Consultation closed in October.

■ ■ Harrogate fights on for Leeds-York electrification

Campaigners in Harrogate stepped up their fight in October to get the Leeds to York line electrified and the service levels doubled on the line which has seen patronage increase by 20% in the past five years.

"We have been working on this important plan since 2008," Brian Dunsby, of Harrogate's chamber of commerce, told BBC Leeds & West Yorkshire News.

"We have a very high chance of success, the scheme has a high benefit-to-cost ratio".

Andrew Jones, Conservative MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough, said he knew from his postbag that commuters and other rail users would welcome "this dramatic change" in our rail services.

He said: "Electrification improves accessibility to our area. This could lead to significantly increased business and leisure tourism, provide a further boost to our conference trade and help revive our town centres."

■ ■ More Grand Central trains for Bradford-London

Open-access operator Grand Central is expanding services from Bradford Interchange to London King's Cross in December. A new 07.52 daily departure is being targeted at business travellers and a 16.03 return. The company has run West Riding to London services since 2010 and from December will operate four a day.

■ ■ Rail campaigners launch Elland reopening report

The case for a new park-and-ride station at Elland has been presented in an 11-page dossier produced by Railfuture-affiliated Halifax & District Rail Action Group. Email js.waring@hotmail.co.uk for more information.

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Media enquiries

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

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Renewals and other membership queries: Railfuture Renewals, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattlingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND. Email: renewals@railfuture.org.uk

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

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

Page one picture

Our map on page one shows where the Government proposes to route High Speed Two north of Birmingham.

One reaction has been to say: You shouldn't do it like that, you should do it like this. Many observers though want to see high speed rail dead and buried.

Many seem quite prepared to harp on about the few environmental disadvantages of high speed rail while content to continue driving and flying, much more environmentally damaging modes of transport.

However one correspondent to the Evening Standard advised anyone who wants to pontificate about HS2 to go on a rail tour of the many countries, including China, which have already invested heavily in high speed rail.

There was an orgy of ill-informed comment about high speed rail in October in the mainstream media.

Warwickshire County Council has already spent half a million pounds trying to undermine HS2, even though only 1.5% of its population responded to its own HS2 consultation. But there are many people trying to make their

voices heard above the howls of protest from HS2 opponents.

West Ham MP Lynn Brown wants the main London HS2 station to be at Stratford International, while Hammersmith MP Andy Slaughter said there is a consensus for the main station to be at Old Oak Common. Of course the best option is to have both, as well as the Euston Cross station, linking Euston with King's Cross.

Railnews correspondent Alan Marshall believes work on the northern routes should be started in 2017, so the whole network can be completed in 2026. He also believes that the money spent on modernising the West Coast main line from 1998 to 2008 would have been better spent on building a new line.

Professor Peter Hall of University College London wants Britain to learn lessons from France where the benefits were spread around the regions by developing a regional network of TGV services to towns and cities not on the high speed lines.

More analysis: Pages 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Lincolnshire

LOCAL ACTION

By Don Peacock

don.peacock@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ RailFAIR! campaign to boost Lincoln-Nottingham line
Railfuture Lincolnshire is supporting the RailFAIR! campaign for improved Lincoln-Nottingham services. MPs, business organisations, local authorities and key local councillors have been lobbied. The campaign has the support of MPs along the route who are applying for an adjournment debate in the House of Commons to press the case with ministers. See www.railfair.co.uk for up-to-date details.

■ ■ Access problems at Ruskington station reviewed
Lincoln branch committee member Paul Jowett, who has also "adopted" Ruskington station, has been active in a campaign for better access to the station when Network Rail removes the narrow crossing which currently provides access between the platforms. He thought the Network Rail proposal to use the nearby road overbridge was ill thought-out and did not provide a suitable way for passengers to get to the platforms and car park. He reckoned it added 400 metres to the journey. There was also an increased risk of pedestrians having to use an unlit narrow road with no footpath over a hump-backed bridge. Access for disabled users was also unsuitable as the route would be steep and not provided with a smooth hard surface. He provided a critique for the local council and attended public meetings to discuss what appeared to be Network Rail's only solution. The result of all this effort is that NR is reconsidering the provision and is going to have a consultation with those likely to be affected by the change.

■ ■ Poor train availability and overcrowding
Northern Lincolnshire has recently suffered a large number of rail cancellations. The Grimsby-Newark service run by East Midlands Trains saw cancellations, overcrowding and poor bus replacement services. Market Rasen Rail Users Group has been formed with the help of Railfuture Lincolnshire. The group has contacted local MPs with varying levels of response. The group, with the assistance of the council, has run a fact-finding exercise questioning users and non-users. Members of the committee participated in this. The results are now becoming available for analysis.

To add to the frustration of the travelling public, the South TransPennine route from Cleethorpes to Manchester, via Scunthorpe, Doncaster and Sheffield, has also seen a sharp fall in reliability as trains are cancelled. East Midlands Trains and First TransPennine have problems with staffing, probably because of over-reliance on overtime and rest day working.

There is also a problem with provision of enough trains at times of high demand, which is mainly down to the Department for Transport micromanaging stock allocation. Last December Lincolnshire lost a train to strengthen the Liverpool-Norwich service, which has left Market Rasen commuters complaining about safety on overcrowded trains. The suggestion by EMT that passengers wait for the next service, two hours later, was not appreciated.

The transfer of three-car TransPennine Express units away from South TransPennine route to operate Manchester-Scotland services and replacement with two-car trains has exacerbated overcrowding between Cleethorpes and Manchester especially on the Sheffield-Manchester section where the addition of two coaches on EMT Liverpool-Norwich trains has been negated by the loss of one carriage on TPE trains. Overcrowding at peak times is so bad that TPE has even put notices up at Grimsby listing the worst overcrowded trains and suggesting passengers travel on other services. The usual response from the local MP is to pass letters on to the managing director of either EMT or TPE without comment and pass back the response without comment.

■ ■ Grantham Rail Show
Members looking after the branch stand at the two-day Grantham Rail Show were kept busy dealing with enquiries from some of the 1,700 plus show visitors and recruiting a new member for London and South East branch. The display highlighted schemes which have benefited from Railfuture's Fighting Fund money: Lewes-Uckfield, Lea Bridge station and East West Rail.

You can contact Railfuture Lincolnshire at: lincolnshire@railfuture.org.uk

HS2 must be right for UK and regions

By Ian Brown

ian.brown@railfuture.org.uk

Getting High Speed Two right is more important than taking sides between the extremes of "the world will end if it is built" and "the benefits to the UK economy of infrastructure investment".

Since my article in *Railwatch* 137, the feedback I have received from readers shows there is a deeper understanding of the rail operational issues here than among many politicians, particularly the detractors of high speed rail.

Possibly the most outrageous anti-HS2 argument is that places like Bristol and Cambridge will not benefit from a railway being built between London and Birmingham!

The first section of the M1 motorway, opened between Watford and Rugby in 1959, did not appear to detract from the economies of Cambridge and Bristol.

The underlying theory at that time was that a strategic network of motorways needed to be built across the country, properly integrated into the existing road network.

The M1 was completed 67 years before HS2 is even programmed to open.

The economic disbenefits to Cambridge and Bristol appear to be a threat from not building a new railway to these locations.

The authors of the report by international accountants KPMG appear not to have noticed some improvements already being made to the railway network.

Bristol will benefit from its railway to London being rebuilt and electrified.

Cambridge will benefit from the enormous investment being made into Thameslink.

Of course, as with the motorway network, we need both to build new railways and upgrade existing lines right across the country and then the rail network in this century can fulfil a massively increased role, as the road network did after the motorway programme started in the 1960s.

Work on Crossrail has demonstrated two things in this area. First, improving the economy of London has had a spin-off into the wider UK economy.

This should also apply to HS2 if it is properly designed to serve the needs of the growing economies of our cities and regions.

Second, and realistically for HS2, the actual construction can bring massive benefits to the regional economy and jobs, provided the contracts are placed locally. There is a lot of interest among



IAN BROWN

Railwatch readers and Railfuture supporters in getting HS2 right in the three big cities of Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds.

The HS2 plan recognises that a massive increase in station capacity cannot be achieved in these locations without new construction. There are not many choices for location, with Curzon Street closest to New Street and Ardwick adjacent to Manchester Piccadilly.

At Leeds, the site is slightly more distant, given the fact that the Leeds Central station and goods yard area is now a huge offices and shops redevelopment.

The first challenge is to integrate these stations even further into the existing main line stations, so allowing for regional distribution, thus bringing HS2 benefits to the regions.

The second challenge is probably also an opportunity. As far as possible, the stations should be able to handle the need for through services rather than being mere terminals.

If they are terminal stations, HS2 runs the risk of delivering network benefits to London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds, rather than being a network for the whole of the country.

Interestingly, through stations have much higher capacity per platform than terminals, so permitting a smaller station footprint and a much better chance of integrating it into the existing main line station.

As an illustration, a through platform can typically accommodate a long-distance train every five minutes, whereas the turnaround at a terminus is typically between 30 and 40 minutes or sometimes even more. This suggests that a terminal station may need up to eight times as many platforms as a through station of similar throughput.

At other locations we do not need new HS2 stations, and plonking a parkway station at Toton and Meadowhall, although similar to the M1 funnily enough, misses the opportunity to feed directly



The proposed HS2 terminus at Manchester Piccadilly

into East Midlands and South Yorkshire stations, each with quite a comprehensive regional distribution network.

A link into the Midland main line to directly serve Derby, Nottingham and Sheffield is far more likely to stimulate both the city economy and the sub-regional economies.

HS2 should be seen as providing increased capacity, feeding into the West Coast, the Midland and the East Coast main lines.

Many readers will know that Nottingham station has just been rebuilt and Derby station can easily be expanded by an additional island platform next to Pride Park.

Sheffield needs a more comprehensive re-examination of regional transport links if it is to maximise the HS2 opportunity.

For London, many people agree that the Railfuture idea of an East-West link rather than a massive Euston station terminal without proper distribution capacity is far better, far less disruptive and even potentially cheaper.

This is based on providing much faster journeys to the London catchment area, through the station at Old Oak Common, with two north-south Overground links plus Crossrail.

It would also benefit from a central King's Cross "cross" station linking into Thameslink and five Underground lines, all recently rebuilt with massive extra capacity, unlike Euston.

The third station in East London is of course the massively under-used Stratford International, just waiting to provide a high speed service from the UK regions to East London and onwards via HS1 to Kent, Belgium and France.

The yes-no HS2 debate, with its resultant "political mob" uncertainty, is dangerous and likely to overtake sensible discussion about getting HS2 right in respect of both meeting clear objectives of rail capacity and improving the UK economy. Yet we must get HS2 right and, to be logical, it must be part of a strategic approach to provide increased

capacity for the whole British network including freight.

Other schemes such as the electrified freight spine from the south coast to the Midlands, and a similar complementary spine from Kent, Thames ports and East Anglia to Doncaster, should also be seen in the same context of a strategic rail network meeting objectives.

I also detect a tendency for politicians to make investment announcements, probably knowing that ministers change and indeed that there is an election coming up in 2015.

This will likely spawn all sorts of other commitments that may or may not happen.

Given the lack of a strategic context and an integrated approach, all individual schemes are vulnerable, particularly if Network Rail plays hardball with the Office of Rail Regulation, demanding continuous efficiencies, and so denying sufficient investment funds.

Aside from HS2, three schemes are in my opinion particularly vulnerable: later phases of electrification, the Northern Hub, and the freight spine from the south coast to the Midlands.

Railfuture president Christian Wolmar has noted recently that both the erstwhile Strategic Rail Authority and HS2 have been based at the same address in London. Neither has been particularly strategic so far, and here lies the problem.

The need for a strategic vision for railways and how railways can contribute sustainably to a growing economy, more stringent environmental demands and increased personal mobility is evident. Who will rise to this opportunity?

It is doubtful that the political infighting surrounding the 2015 general election will be a good platform for a strategic approach.

■ Ian Brown CBE FCILT is a former managing director of London Rail and was awarded a CBE for services to railways.

Department for Transport

North West

By Arthur Thomson

arthur.thomson@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Northern Hub

With the forthcoming electrification of just one trans-Pennine route, from Leeds to Manchester via Huddersfield and Stalybridge, STORM (Support The Oldham, Rochdale and Manchester line) is concerned that the current practice of diverting TransPennine Express trains via the Calder Valley route during engineering works or other disruptions will not continue after electrification. This will inevitably leave passengers trying to get on already overcrowded Calder Valley services unless plans are made to supplement them. STORM is calling for those plans to be made now. The current four trains per hour service is expected to be increased to five from May 2014, but this is to meet demand from the current route, not absorb extra from diversions. STORM is also concerned that the original Northern Hub proposals included an additional platform and through running line at Rochdale, but after a review, Network Rail has decided that, to save costs, the additional platform at Rochdale will be a west-facing bay and not a through line. This will leave 31 miles westbound (Halifax to Miles Platting on the outskirts of Manchester) and 24 miles eastbound (Castleton to Halifax), with no passing loop for faster services. Given that the Department for Transport is keen for a much faster service between Manchester and Halifax-Bradford than at present, with two fast trains per hour, how can this be scheduled if there is no opportunity for the fast trains to overtake the three or four slower trains per hour?

■ ■ How Mersey Connect can boost regional economy

North Cheshire Rail User Group is pressing for the Halton curve to be brought back into regular use and has been working with consultants Gutteridge, Haskins & Davey over the past 18 months on its reinstatement, and to have a regular service on the Ellesmere Port to Helsby line. Joint interviews with the leading stakeholders have been carried out, including local enterprise partnerships, local authorities, politicians and industries. Most have been extremely supportive with none against. It is clear that there is synergy between these two schemes and also those in north-east Wales: Saltney-Wrexham (redoubling confirmed by the Welsh Government in early October), Wrexham-Bidston (service improvements and electrification) and Crewe-Chester-Holyhead and Chester-Warrington electrification.

Car maker Jaguar Land Rover would like a station adjacent to its Halewood factory for their workers, some of whom commute from north Wales, which would help to reduce car park use and free part of it for expansion. Components could also be brought in by rail instead of road from its central logistics operation in Birkenhead. The new incinerator at Runcorn could take more waste, but local objections are preventing it being brought in by road, so a rail connection would be welcome.

Shell's Research & Development facility at Stanlow has been given to Chester University and will become its new engineering faculty in 2015, so this would mean more public transport needed, with a significant role for a decent rail service on the Ellesmere Port-Helsby line.

To link all these projects, NCRUG has come up with the name Mersey Connect. Halton curve reinstatement has to be one of the first steps as the other schemes depend on this 1½ mile length of track. Merseyside, North East Wales, Wrexham, Deeside Industrial Park and North Wales coast through to Holyhead need good rail connections to help expand the economy of these regions.

LOCAL ACTION



Wales

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

■ ■ Railfuture On Track

Railfuture Cymru published its latest development plan for the railways of Wales and the Borders in October. The plan, entitled *On Track for the 21st Century*, was presented to Welsh Assembly Members and then distributed to many other key people. The 142-page report is also available free as a download from the Railfuture website. It includes a series of maps compiled by Julian Langston. The report examines easy ways to improve the rail network but also presents a radical vision for the long term.



■ ■ Franchise inquiry

Railfuture's John Rogers "starred" on TV when he gave evidence to an inquiry into the future of the Wales and Borders franchise, carried out by the Welsh Government's enterprise and business committee in October. He said the franchise system was hideously expensive with millions of pounds being wasted. Railfuture Wales would like to see a not-for-dividend company, owned by the Welsh Government, take over when the Arriva Trains Wales franchise runs out in 2018. He said the basis of the current franchise was wrong and based on "no growth". Wales has been badly treated by the current system which has left it on the same level as Albania, not having any electric railways. He said the Welsh Government should have the maximum control possible. Even now, the UK Government's attitude to railways is anglocentric. David Mawdsley from Railfuture North Wales said punctuality and reliability are important but, in measuring the franchise, "soft" issues, such as cleanliness, availability of toilets, fare structure, and how operators deal with problems, should be measured in some way. There was no incentive to invest in a short franchise, while there are too many unknowns for planning for a long franchise. That was a good argument for a vertically integrated not-for-dividend company owned by the Welsh Government. He said Welsh passengers also needed better train links to Liverpool and Manchester. Running more services over the Halton curve would help. He said there was a range of improvements in Railfuture Cymru's latest report, which included a call for the reopening of Bangor-Caernarfon. The hearing can be viewed on the web by searching for 3 October at www.senedd.tv

■ ■ £62 million Metro plan to link trains and buses

The Welsh Government has announced plans for a £62 million Metro system, combining park-and-ride rail stations and bus priority lanes to improve public transport links across south Wales. Draft budget proposals were published in October, with a three-year implementation plan. The new network will focus on Cardiff, as well as offering links to surrounding areas such as Newport.

■ ■ The future of diesel trains and electrification

Almost three-quarters of the Welsh diesel train fleet will have to be withdrawn or upgraded by the rolling stock companies because the law requires the trains to be suitable for "persons with reduced mobility" by 2020. This could pose problems because the ATW franchise ends in 2018, and electrification of the Valleys network may happen by 2021, although no definite date has been given by Network Rail.

■ ■ Double track plan to speed up north-south journeys

The Wrexham-Chester line is to be redoubled as part of a £44 million plan to improve north-south journey times in Wales by 2015 after Network Rail reached an agreement with the Welsh Government.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk

Questions over high speed route to North

By Mike Crowhurst

The route of High Speed Two from the Midlands to Manchester, Leeds and beyond was put out for consultation by HS2 in September.

Intermediate stations are planned at Manchester Airport, Sheffield Meadowhall and Toton, between Nottingham and Derby.

It is regrettable that the plans for a high speed rail network seem to segregate it from the classic system.

This is repeating the problem exposed by the plan for the HS2 route from London to Birmingham. Only north of York, Crewe and Preston is there any commitment to run compatible services on to the classic system.

This should be the rule rather than the exception at Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester. Only then will the benefits be spread beyond the few major cities directly served, which is essential to gain public support.

Only at London Euston and Manchester Piccadilly are the proposed stations placed conveniently next to existing ones.

Leeds near miss

In Leeds, as in Birmingham, we are offered "near misses" within a few minutes walk, with perhaps moving pavements to join the HS station to the existing station.

These are no substitutes for unified stations and connection times could be unpredictable and inconvenient, especially for the disabled and people with heavy luggage.

Out-of-town locations are even worse. None of the "airport stations" are close enough to the airports they are supposed to serve.

At Birmingham a two-mile rapid transit connection is promised.

At Toton new connecting shuttles will be needed to reach Derby or Nottingham. A better location for the HS station would be the relatively new East Midlands Parkway which has good connections to all three cities and to the nearby airport.

Only Crewe and Meadowhall are sensibly located with good rail links, but even here better alternatives would be central stations at Stoke-on-Trent and Sheffield.

The need for shuttle connections undermines the timesaving and convenience of new HS lines.

We should perhaps learn from well-established practice in France and other countries.

TGV fleets travel widely over classic lines as a matter of course, bringing fast services to numerous places large and small.

City centre stations are the norm in France, with new stations only at Lille Europe and Lyon Part Dieu.

If we followed the French example, existing track could be widened where necessary, and would be used on the approaches to cities like Birmingham and Manchester.

Half sets would be used to serve less busy routes. So Birmingham trains should go forward to Wolverhampton as now, and maybe to Walsall, while Nottingham and Derby sections could combine at East Midlands Parkway for the London run.

Sheffield services could leave the fast line, call at Chesterfield, Sheffield, Doncaster and then split for Hull and Cleethorpes.

Trains coming off the HS line at York could continue to Newcastle and also split to serve Middlesbrough and Scarborough. Leeds trains could serve Bradford as now.

Similarly on the West Coast, Blackpool, Barrow, Windermere, Chester and North Wales could all be served. Finally CrossCountry services could continue as now, through Birmingham to Bristol and beyond.

On the West Coast branch, why end south of Wigan? Given that Preston will be the first calling point for most services, Wigan and the two-track section north of it could become a bottleneck.

Some experts have suggested starting construction at both ends. One place where early construction would undoubtedly be a huge boon would be a West Coast main line bypass from the end of quadruple track at Winsford to the start of four-track at Euxton. A Crewe underpass would also be welcome as an early start.

Manchester

I wonder though whether a seven-mile tunnel under south Manchester is justifiable. Connecting curves towards both Manchester and Liverpool from the new line on to the Chat Moss line, with a new interchange station at Ordsall Lane, accessible from both sides of Manchester, would be a lot cheaper.

To serve Manchester Airport, the proposed link from the HS line could be extended into the existing airport station from the west, instead of depositing passengers over a mile away on the wrong side of the motorway. If the tunnel is justified, why not continue south to Kidsgrove and through Stoke-on-Trent instead of Crewe?

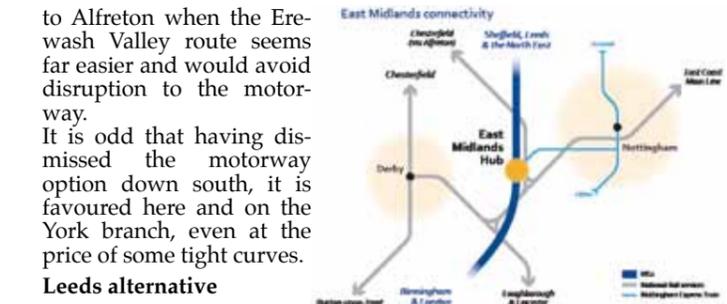
Apart from the poor location of Toton, it is odd to follow the M1



LEEDS: Proposed HS2 station on left, existing station on right



MANCHESTER: Proposed HS2 station left, Piccadilly right



NOTTINGHAM: Well almost

to Alfreton when the Erwash Valley route seems far easier and would avoid disruption to the motorway.

It is odd that having dismissed the motorway option down south, it is favoured here and on the York branch, even at the price of some tight curves.

Leeds alternative

At Leeds the opportunity to get a decent approach right up to and indeed under the existing station from the south is blocked by development south of the station.

An alternative might be to approach the city through the Cross Green area, joining the East Leeds line near Neville Hill depot, from where the track is quintuple for the short distance to Marsh Lane. There is unused railway land here where a combined new local interchange and HS terminus could be built.

As in Manchester the section from here to the existing station is a two-track bottleneck, but at least proper direct interchange would be provided with existing services and the bus station nearby, and a limited number of HS services could continue to points beyond Leeds.

It could be argued that we would be better off with new fast track alongside the existing East Coast route from King's Cross to

Peterborough and Doncaster. At Euston, I commend the proposals of Lords Bradshaw and Berkeley for a through subsurface station between Euston and St Pancras, connected to both HS1 and HS2 by tunnels. Taken together with the idea of diverting London Midland services from Milton Keynes into Crossrail at Willesden, this ought to remove the need to knock down part of Camden to expand Euston station.

Coventry Parkway

Even if we accept the route as proposed, the "Birmingham Interchange" station should be scrapped in favour of a Coventry Parkway station where the line crosses the Coventry-Leamington line near Kenilworth, and an East Birmingham Parkway where London-Manchester and Birmingham-Leeds lines cross near Water Orton and junction 9 of the M42/M6 toll.

■ Mike Crowhurst was chairman of Railfuture from 2004 until 2012 but these are his personal views. Railfuture's response to the consultation, which closes on 31 January 2014, will be coordinated by Andrew Millward. You can contact Andrew at andrew.millward@railfuture.org.uk For more information on the consultation: www.hs2.org.uk/phase-two/route-consultation/document-library

◆◆◆◆ China's 1,200 mile long Shanghai-Kunming high speed line will open in 2016

London and South East

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

■ ■ Franchise bidders must back electrification

Railfuture followed up June's announcement that the Gospel Oak-Barking line is to be electrified with a request for electrification of the East Sussex route from Uckfield to Hurst Green. We made our case in a response to the Office of Rail Regulation's draft determination on Network Rail's plans for 2014-19. We won support for our stance from an alliance of 10 stakeholders and two local MPs. Since September's publication of the invitation to tender for the new combined Thameslink franchise, we have stepped up the lobbying of the five short-listed bidders to back electrification.

■ ■ Renewed battle for Sunday services

Three stations on the Marshlink line from Ashford to Hastings had all-day Monday-Saturday services restored in 2010 on an alternate-hourly basis. This was in response to pressure by Railfuture-affiliated MarshLink Action Group and Three Oaks and Winchelsea Action for Rail Transport. Local campaigners have been calling for the same level of service on Sundays to support the area's visitor economy, rather than the sorry current offering. Far from improving the service, the invitation to tender for the combined Thameslink franchise requires only a minimum of one less train every day across the timetable for these stations. Instead of equalising Sunday service levels with Saturdays, the present three could decline to just one Sunday train, with none at all towards Ashford. Campaigners are planning a promotional event on Saturday 7 December, the day before the timetable change. We need to mobilise wider support to boost, not cut, Sunday services.

■ ■ Fight goes on for Uckfield-Lewes reopening

Railfuture took part in East Sussex County Council's rail symposium in September, part of the consultation on the council's draft rail strategy. Our detailed response can be found at www.railfuture.org.uk/Submissions. The strategy was adopted in mid-November and can be found at www.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/about/committees/meetingpapers/cabineteconomy/default.htm. Network Rail was also expected to publish its final Passenger Market Study for London and the South East, before consultation began on its draft Route Study for Sussex which will deal with infrastructure investment from 2019-24. That is the period when our Bridge the gap: connect East Sussex campaign targets reconstruction of the missing link south of Uckfield to enable the extension of Wealden line services via Lewes to Sussex coast destinations.

■ ■ Network Rail lays out its plans for another five years

Railfuture will be paying special attention this month when Network Rail's draft delivery plan is published, following October's final determination by the Office of Rail Regulation on Network Rail's plans for 2014-19. As part of its long term planning process, Network Rail will also be publishing its final freight and passenger market studies, followed by consultation drafts of route studies. Our branch will target Anglia, Kent and HS1, and Sussex, although East Midlands, London North Eastern, London North Western, Wessex and Western will also be of interest.

■ ■ A job well done by Railfuture vice-president

Former Railfuture vice president Norman Baker was much more impressive as a minister at the Department for Transport than most of his predecessors but in the October Cabinet reshuffle, Lewes MP Mr Baker was moved to the Home Office. When he became a minister, Mr Baker had to relinquish his honorary Railfuture position. However, we can probably be grateful to him that in May Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin asked Network Rail to examine if "reopening the Lewes-Uckfield railway line will meet the demand for the future growth in rail travel".

■ ■ Stay in touch at www.railfuture.org.uk/branches



Keep on fighting

I always feel sad when I see Railfuture members resigning their membership because they feel strongly about a particular issue (Michael Weinberg's letter in *Railwatch* 137).

One of the joys and strengths of Railfuture is its diversity of opinion, and on High Speed Two I have no doubt that there are as many views as there are members.

I for one would rather see the trains stopping in many more places, and regret the emphasis on high speed.

I am convinced that many more people living along the route would be in favour if they could look forward to a shiny new station at the end of their road, and start to plan the journeys that could open up to them.

Michael says he feels like a lone voice out in Milton Keynes, but one has only to read the columns submitted by the branches around the country to know that Railfuture members are busily beaver away on their local patch, maybe achieving only small improvements year by year, but making themselves heard.

And never mind that the credit for the East-West line seems to be going to the Department for Transport, the important thing is that it finally might happen. I have no doubt that Michael's commitment to the campaign has helped keep the idea alive for all those 25 years he has been trying to get it built!

Thanks to Michael and all of those Railfuture members who work so hard, often with so little personal reward, to do their bit for their communities. It really does make a difference.

*M A King, Hackney E9 7HU
maggieking@deltic.net*

I support HS2

I can assure Michael Weinberg in *Railwatch* 137 that I, for one, support High Speed Two,

knowing that if the money does not go to high speed rail, it will be spent on new roads and airways. As for ours being a minority view, I honestly do not know as I have not been asked my views on the matter.

Referring to the North West local action column in *Railwatch* 137, when I lived in Hebden Bridge, I cannot recall the line closing for flooding, despite being a regular commuter. So I doubt if it is an "annual problem" as Arthur Thomson says.

*Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby DN31 2JP
timmickleburgh2013@yahoo.co.uk*

HS2 false arguments

Two letters in *Railwatch* 137 made the point that Railfuture should be less ambiguous in supporting HS2, while not holding back from supporting improvements to the proposal. This is particularly important in view of the battering that the project has recently received in parts of the media and some political circles.

It seems to me that there are a couple of groups of criticisms that are particularly misguided and should be scotched.

The first is the "costs are out of control" argument. Yes, the initial costings needed to be revised, a fact recognised by HS2 by the time it was included in a report by the National Audit Office. Most of the increase in the revised costs consists of a large contingency reserve included at the behest of the Treasury.

This did not stop the Institute of Economic Affairs, correctly referred to for over 50 years as a right-wing think tank, from further enhancing the figure by adding in the possible cost of just about every public transport project in the pipeline that could have any connection with HS2.

This figure was then used by the dubiously named Taxpayers Alliance and has been used in the media. In fact major rail infrastructure projects have generally had a good reputation

for being carried out within budget this century.

The second false set of arguments can be grouped as "the money would be better spent on" with the name of a particular project or city not linked to HS2 inserted.

This ignores the amount of improvements to the rest of the network that are already in the pipeline. Improving links between cities in the north of England is precisely what the work that is now being carried out on the Northern Hub aims to do.

Capital expenditure on the rest of the railway system is projected to continue to increase even when the construction phase of HS2 gets under way. Of course, there will still remain many improvements that Railfuture members will want to see, but building HS2 will not prevent any of them from happening at all.

*John Stanford, Colvestone Crescent, London E8 2LJ
jhn.stnfrd@tiscali.co.uk*

Wrangle over HS2

I hoped my article *Scotland needs high speed rail network for all the UK* in *Railwatch* 136 would re-invigorate the debate on high speed rail and I was not disappointed as I read the letters in *Railwatch* 137.

My ideal would be to be able to board a high speed sleeper in Central Scotland and alight 10 hours later in Barcelona, one of the most popular charter flight destinations from Scotland.

The major problem with through trains to continental destinations is the requirements of the UK Border Agency, including segregated facilities for domestic and non-domestic trains and passengers similar to airports. These would have to be designed at the outset for any station at which continental trains may call.

Michael Weinberg expresses disgust at Railfuture's reaction to HS2. I also was unhappy about Railfuture's response and spoke up to say so at the Bletchley Park conference. Please do not leave Railfuture over this matter.

RAIL ACTION

The next issue of the *Rail Action* e-zine will be in February. *Rail Action* can be downloaded from the Railfuture website but it will be emailed to you direct unless you request it not to be.

Stay and fight for your views. An overall network plan should be agreed, and each element of high speed provision designed to fit in with the overall plan, rather than designing one part then adding on sections which may not fulfil the overall objective of reducing the carbon footprint of domestic and, where feasible, international travel.

*Roderick McDougall
ftel@btinternet.com*

First class question

There has been discussion within Railfuture and outside about whether first class accommodation should be abolished to make more room for standard class passengers.

At my suggestion, Passenger Group set up the Railfuture rolling stock design panel a couple of years ago and we have already had several meetings with rolling stock companies and others. The most recent was with Hitachi and the Department for Transport to discuss first class and other issues.

Interestingly, Virgin West Coast Voyagers now have one carriage rearranged with all seats in bay style with tables and all aligned correctly with the windows. This is an unclassified carriage (coach D) and is intended for use by first and second class passengers, although it has two-plus-two seating. It has the additional benefit of providing luggage space between the seat backs and therefore does not need extra luggage racks.

I recently enjoyed a journey to Chester and back in one of these Voyagers and you get a feeling of spaciousness which is very different from the claustrophobic and cluttered atmosphere in the rest of the train. I wrote to Virgin suggesting that it converted one of the four first class carriages in their Pendolinos to this configuration which would also provide about a dozen additional seats compared to first class, but did not get a reply.

I cannot agree that first class should be abolished and I have used it on occasions myself. Booked in advance on East Coast, it can also provide good value for money as I found when I travelled to the conference in Stirling last year. The return fare cost less than £90 including food and drinks for well over 1,000 miles of travel.

It is also worth noting that Passenger Focus surveys have

found that the great majority of passengers want to be able to see through the windows and no less than 62% prefer bay seating with tables.

*Norman Bradbury
chairman, policy, lobbying and
campaigns committee
norman.bradbury@railfuture.org.uk*

Reduce first class

I watched a brief debate on BBC TV when Railfuture president Christian Wolmar and a representative from Passenger Focus were interviewed about first class accommodation on trains.

I consider the question of the provision of first class accommodation does need to be addressed. I would not go as far as Christian in suggesting its total abolition in respect of some inter-city trains, but its amount could be significantly reduced.

First class has been abolished on Chiltern Clubman trains, although on their locomotive-hauled trains there is a "business zone".

I would look to abolish first class on trains where there is little demand for it and where there are only two/three coaches, for instance, Cardiff-Nottingham, Birmingham-Leicester and Birmingham-Stansted Airport. On these routes, first class was introduced only a few years ago when CrossCountry was given the franchise to run them. I have never seen many first class passengers and there is often overcrowding on a two-coach class 170 unit.

On the Newcastle-Reading corridor, there is probably some demand for first class travel but if the coaches were converted to standard class it would reduce overcrowding. Reducing first class on East Coast and West Coast main lines would free up more standard class accommodation and I think business demand for first class is falling. Many organisations are not willing to pay for their staff to travel first class.

When new trains are built, if they provided a satisfactory amount of standard class accommodation as on Chiltern Railways, there would be no need for first class. The real problem with standard class is that seats are not lined up with windows and there is a lack of tables and luggage space.

Those mistakes should not be made in the design of the new inter-city express trains to be



RUGGED: One of the Inlansbanan's diesel-hydraulic railcars made by Fiat/Kalmar

Railway coming in from the cold

A remarkable railway that runs into the Arctic Circle is gradually coming back to life after being mothballed in 1992.

The Inlansbanan was built by Sweden for strategic military reasons as a secure route that could continue to run through the centre of the country even if coastal communication lines were disrupted by enemies.

Once the Soviet Union stopped being a military threat after the end of the Cold War, the Inlansbanan lost its trains. Local councils and people objected to closure and gradually the councils took over parts of the trackbed and now trains run again, with the main aim of boosting local tourism.

The line runs roughly north-south for about 800 miles, through about two thirds of the country. It is now run by only 55 permanent staff, including management, yet it is integrated with the national rail network and has growing freight and passenger traffic.

The Inlansbanan runs from Kristinehamn in the south to Gällivare in Lapland and is controlled centrally from Ostersund.

The northern section is in the coldest accessible area in Europe, colder even than Murmansk in Russia. It has 65 stations and 840 level crossings of which 140 are automated. Many points are hand thrown but interlocking is often ensured by outdoor metal signal panels nicknamed "sausage stands". If signalling were split from operations, as in Britain, there would be unsustainable double manning.

Despite light traffic of around one passenger train per day, summer only, principal stations are manned. Contractors are used for line maintenance. Normally a bus covers the still-closed section between Persberg and Mora but in July a train operated using an alternative route on the national rail network via Grangesberg.

One British traveller who used the train said that it seemed many passengers were not tourists but ordinary travellers put on it by computer-search ticketing programmes, since the route is a short cut.

The line speed is generally 62 mph, but the service is slow because local councils insist on leisurely gourmet-food style stops at local stations where sometimes three types of salmon are available.

Freight has thrived with a competitive can-do attitude. Open access freight operators include Hector Rail and Green Cargo, which evolved from the old Swedish Railways freight department.

Commodities carried include peat and peat pellets, wood chips, pulpwood, round timber to sawmills, liquefied petroleum gas, mixed goods, containerised goods, and limestone. A large deposit of iron ore has recently been found at Jokkmokk.

This is no heritage railway. Staff are properly paid employees but in the summer, the pool of drivers rises from six to 22, with retired and holidaying staff from other companies taking temporary posts.

built by Hitachi. So there is a case to be made for abolishing first class or reducing the amount of it to free up capacity.

*William Whiting
williamwvt@hotmail.co.uk*

Luggage problems

In response to the letter from Phyll Hardie about luggage problems in *Railwatch* 137, the overhead luggage racks

on trains are inadequate for anything other than a holdall. They should be redesigned to take suitcases so that passengers can use the empty spaces. At the moment suitcases overhang the passengers and it only needs the train to go round a curve for the suitcases to fall out.

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

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

More letters: Page 18



Pictures: NETWORK RAIL

THE PAST: London Bridge in 2010 with the Shard partly built and the station roof still intact over the station's terminal platforms



THE FUTURE: An artist's impression of London Bridge station, adjoining the Shard, with Tower Bridge in the foreground

Changing fates of London and its railway stations

By Chris Austin

christopher.austin@railfuture.org.uk
 London Bridge station is undergoing a major rebuild with most of the old station being taken down to be replaced by a £500 million new station. The rebuilt station will be able to accept longer trains, as part of the £6 billion Thameslink programme. It should also accommodate 190,000 passengers during its three-hour peak period, compared to 110,000 now. The platform canopies will be longer than the height of the Shard, the tallest building in London, which adjoins the station. Part of the dismantled station roof from London Bridge, dating from 1864, and the cast-iron columns, have gone to Aberystwyth to house a new £10 million museum for the narrow gauge Vale of Rheidol Railway. Railways were always good at recycling, even before its significance in terms of earth resources was properly understood, and this historic tradition has taken on a new urgency. Just think of the old rails used as fence posts,

signposts or re-used to form buffer stops or even signal posts. As for sleepers, well they are everywhere – forming bridges, fences, farmer's storage bins, even small buildings. So many locomotives have been rebuilt to extend their active life and most steam locomotives are like granny's broom with many refurbished parts, often from other locomotives. Network Rail has already supplied redundant bridge spans from Reading to help the Great Central Railway extend across the Midland Main line to link with GCR (North) and head towards Nottingham. The Handyside bridge from King's Cross has found a new home at Ropley on the Mid Hants Railway. On the West Somerset Railway, recycled ballast from Network Rail has been used on the heritage line and has allowed the construction of a turning triangle next to the main line at Norton Fitzwarren. Heritage railways have made extensive use of track, signalling equipment and rolling stock no longer required on the main line. Signal boxes and gantries have been moved, as

have other buildings, including complete stations. For most heritage railways this has, in the past, represented patient negotiation with British Rail and its successors, with many disappointments along the way. Two things have now happened to change this. First, Network Rail has developed a pro-active policy of seeking heritage railways or museums that might make use of redundant assets and buildings. This does not mean that they come free of charge, but the working assumption now is that a use will be found for them rather than that they will end up in a skip. For a major organisation with more than its share of problems, this is an enlightened attitude and a very responsible one in terms of protecting Britain's remarkable industrial heritage. Second, the Railway Heritage Trust has supported the transfer of some of these assets, such as the King's Cross bridge, with practical help, including funds for restoration. With the clock ticking on the remaining signal boxes, English Heritage has identified 26 to be listed. Network Rail has

also reviewed others with Historic Scotland and the Welsh Government's historic environment service Cadw. Around 150 boxes are listed in Britain. The National Railway Museum has been reviewing its extensive collection of signalling equipment to ensure it protects material that tells the story of railway safety and control, but can free up other equipment to find a useful second life on heritage lines. Network Rail is also working with the Institute of Railway Signal Engineers to document the working of boxes and to record things that cannot be kept. They will also seek to make available those boxes where an alternative use is possible, like the cafes at Totnes and Bodmin Parkway, although some will be too close to the railway or too small for this and will have to be moved or demolished. Together this shows a joined-up approach which is admirable and will ensure that much more will be preserved and used productively than would ever have been possible under the old system where enthusiasts often had a race against time to save the equipment from the gas axe.



REINCARNATION: Artist's impression of the planned Vale of Rheidol Railway museum in Aberystwyth which will re-use the central section of London Bridge station's overall roof, which was dismantled this year as part of the Thameslink programme

North East

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

■ ■ Long-term view essential for train leasing companies

The complicated train leasing process, one of the many factors which make up current railway operation, was explained to Railfuture members at October's North East branch meeting in Newcastle upon Tyne. Tim Burleigh of Eversholt Rail Group spoke on how important "long term commitment" was to the rolling stock owner. The days when railway companies owned and controlled every aspect of railway operation were far simpler!

■ ■ Historic line is still delivering economic value

The Newcastle-Carlisle Railway, the world's first coast to coast line, celebrated its 175th anniversary this year. Members of the Tyne Valley Community Partnership donned period costumes and made a ceremonial journey from Newcastle to Carlisle, where they were met by the Lord Mayor. Plans

for the reopening of Gilsland station have been supported by a feasibility study which shows a positive business case.

Forecast journeys will cover operating costs, and economic benefits for the local area will follow. The MPs for Hexham and Penrith & the Borders convened a meeting with senior representatives of Network Rail to pursue reopening. The next stage will depend on money being provided to fund Network Rail's GRIP process. Planning permission has been granted for a major redevelopment of the former goods yard at Hexham. This will be the first ever direct development by Network Rail. Direct control will allow Network Rail to retain ownership of the property and retain financial returns in the network. The 3.2 acre site will be transformed into 40,000 sq ft of retail space occupied by major retailers, with the possibility of four additional office or warehouse units.

■ ■ Polar Express trains to the rescue of Weardale Railway

The Weardale Railway Trust was unable to provide heritage services in the summer as its steam locomotive was undergoing an overhaul and repairs were needed to coaches. Iowa Pacific Holdings, which invested in a 75% holding of the railway in 2008, had since 2011 enjoyed income from coal trains servicing a local opencast site. Unfortunately the site proved uneconomic and the last train ran on 2 October. With the support of the trust, Iowa Pacific repeated the Polar Express trains serving lunch, afternoon tea and dinner are also planned. www.weardale-railway.com/Polar_Express/

■ ■ Free bus is temporary substitute for foot bridge

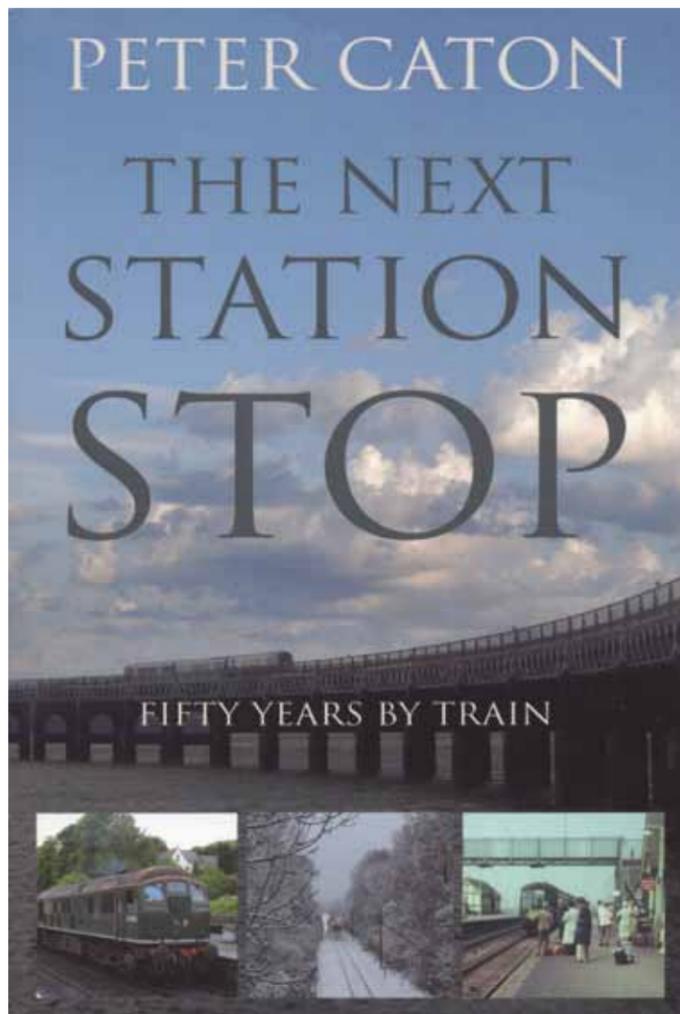
Ashington signal box, last used to control passenger trains in 1964, has been demolished, with control of the freight operations transferred to North Seaton. Additional works to the subway at Morpeth following the installation of lifts, are bringing the station to acceptable standards. Concrete corrosion led to the demolition of the footbridge over the East Coast main line at Cramlington which connected a housing estate with shops. Until the road system can be reconfigured, the county council is providing a free shuttle service bus.

■ ■ Hump fails to bridge the gap at Seaton Carew

Coastliners report that the long-awaited Harrington Hump at Seaton Carew station proved a disappointment. It failed to provide same-level access to train doors, and to begin with had to be roped off.



CARLISLE: Newcastle train, left, with a Settle-Carlisle train on the right



Are we on the right track?

In his new book, Peter Caton takes us on a 10,000 mile tour of Britain, repeating his childhood journeys and looking at what has changed in 50 years of rail travel.

He goes to remote parts of the country and writes with affection about lines such as the Heart of Wales, Settle-Carlisle, Far North and Cambrian Coast.

But after sampling some inter-city routes, he questions if the pursuit of speed and efficiency has taken away some of the enjoyment of travelling by train.

The author enjoyed his journeys on our sleeper trains and encourages readers to try them.

He recalls 1970s Merry-maker excursions and retraces a mystery trip from London St Pancras. His journeys end with a trip through the Alps to Italy, comparing European train travel with British railways.

Research into old timetables shows a surprising number of routes are now slower than 20 years ago, but with frequencies increased.

He writes in glowing terms of lunch in a First Great Western restaurant but laments the loss of virtually all our dining cars. The inevitable difficulties of ticketing,

missed connections and lack of information are aired, along with his frustrations with health and safety and public address announcements.

This is very much a pro-rail book, even if sometimes things "were better" a generation ago.

The Next Station Stop provides insight into social changes over the 50 years of the author's travels and describes his exploration of some of the most beautiful parts of our country.

It includes interesting stories and snippets of railway history. Sixty colour photographs taken over the past 50 years illustrate how our railways have changed.

A committed environmentalist, Peter Caton is the son of Railfuture's vice president Michael Caton. Peter has used public transport when travelling for his previous books, which cover the diverse themes of tidal islands, walking and football terraces.

It is available to *Railwatch* readers at a reduced price of £8.99 post free from www.railfuture.org.uk/books

More information about *The Next Station Stop* (ISBN 978-1-78306-050-4) can be found at www.petercatonbooks.co.uk

Railfuture in Ireland

By Trevor Garrod

trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk

Each year since 1994, groups of Railfuture members have visited continental Europe. This year, we broke new ground by organising a rail and sea group visit to Dublin, staying four nights in the city.

The ferry journey from Holyhead was not exactly seamless. A bus was needed from the rail station to the terminal used by Irish Ferries and at Dublin the terminal was at the eastern extremity of the Docklands.

This meant completing the journey to the city centre by a local bus at a cost of three euros.

It is still possible to catch a ferry from Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire, where the ferry berth is almost adjacent to the rail station, but this service is currently only seasonal.

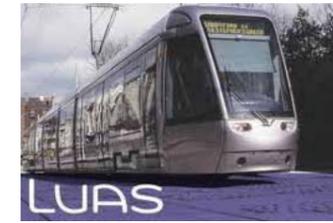
Our hotel was close to a LUAS tram stop on the line which extends through the southern suburbs, partly using the abandoned trackbed of a railway closed in 1958. So we were able to sample rides on these sleek modern vehicles.

Dublin has two LUAS lines, but they do not yet connect with each other.

We saw work in progress on extending the green line, including a new bridge over the River Liffey, to link with the red line.

Some of the group bought the Leap smart card ticket for use on buses, trains and trams in Dublin, while most also bought three-day "Gathering" tickets which were introduced in 2013 to encourage rail-based tourism, and enabled us to have lunch in Limerick and travel over the recently reopened "western corridor" line through Ennis to Galway.

Several members also sampled the scenic route down the coast to Wexford and almost all of us made a day excursion to Belfast,



where we were met by Railfuture's Northern Ireland representative Mike Stevenson.

The *Enterprise* inter-city train from Dublin takes you to Belfast Central station, which is not in the centre of Belfast, but frequent buses take you from there to the City Hall. If you have a return ticket from Dublin, the bus is free.

After exploring the city centre, we used the newly built Great Victoria Street rail and bus terminal for a local train to the well-preserved and historic Lisburn station, changing to the *Enterprise* back to Dublin.

In Dublin our members had an enjoyable discussion with Dr Mark Gleeson and Colm Moore of our Irish sister organisation Rail Users Ireland.

We were also able to meet Mr Paul O'Kelly, marketing manager of Irish Rail (Iarnród Éireann). He explained how electrification of the north-south Dublin suburban services, the DART, had transformed commuter travel in the 1980s.

Over the past 10 years, new rolling stock and additional or reopened stations had made regional services into Dublin much more attractive.

Mr O'Kelly also told us how Irish Rail handled service disruption when there was engineering work and about special offers made to passengers.

We hope to organise a return visit to Dublin to see and experience further progress on the trains and the LUAS.

High speed rail to Milan

Railfuture was a founder member of the European Passengers Federation, which holds its annual conference on 14 March 2014 in Milan. Our Italian sister organisation Associazione Utenti del Trasporto Pubblico will organise two local excursions on the Sunday.

You can reach Milan from London by high speed trains via Paris, by night train from Paris or by high speed train from Paris to Basle and then international train via the Lotschberg and Simplon tunnels into northern Italy.

A major theme of this conference will be the *Challenge of High Speed Rail* and the role of high speed trains in the wider network, in respect of Italy but also throughout Europe. There will be opportunities to learn about public transport developments in the city and the surrounding Lombardy region. Bookings for the conference, which also includes the annual general meeting, will open in December via the website www.epf.eu. If you do not have access to the internet, you can receive paper information by contacting Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

◆◆◆◆ Denmark is to use oil taxes to pay for a £3 billion rail electrification programme

Severnside

By Nigel Bray

nigel.bray@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Station wins friends

When the McNulty Report proposed closing 591 category E station ticket offices, including Bridgwater, local rail passengers were provoked into forming the Friends of Bridgwater Station. At Railfuture Severnside's September meeting, members heard a stimulating talk by Glen Burrows from FOBS, now a corporate member of Railfuture.

FOBS has set up working groups for train services, integrated transport and station facilities. It engages with First Great Western, Network Rail and local authorities, although its delegates to a Somerset County Council transport forum were amazed by the lack of an agenda, minutes or replies from the county council to suggestions FOBS sent following the forum. Disabled access is a big problem at Bridgwater, where the station is unstaffed after 14.30 and has no lifts. Both FGW and the town council agreed ramps were needed but Network Rail "could not" allocate resources before 2014. The independent catering outlet on the station forecourt has been trying for eight years to move inside the listed station building but there appears to be a reluctance to spend on alterations before the new Great Western franchise is settled. The lack of a rail-bus interchange at Bridgwater prompted discussion. Earlier in the month, I represented Railfuture at a Sedgemoor District Council scrutiny meeting. The seamless rail journey from Gloucester was in stark contrast to the lack of information at Bridgwater station regarding bus travel, even though many arriving passengers need a bus to reach their final destination. The scrutiny committee unanimously passed a resolution calling for bus information to be provided at the two rail stations in the district.

■ ■ Charity and volunteers join forces for Frome reopening

The branch has contributed towards the cost of a planning application by Friends of Radstock Railway Land for the Green Rail Radstock project, which would combine open space and a wildlife site with preparation of land for reopening the railway to Frome. The scheme has received a grant from the LUSH Charity Pot, which will be used for campaigning, planning and supervision of volunteers for ecological works. More information is available on www.friendsofradstockrailwayland.org

In the meantime Railfuture has objected to a developer's planning application for housing and roads which would jeopardise the return of rail services.

■ ■ More trains needed to meet Swindon-Westbury demand

Following Railfuture's response to Wiltshire Council's core strategy consultation, we have welcomed a draft modification to the Wootton Bassett and Cricklade area strategy, which now says that the development of a station at Royal Wootton Bassett will be promoted and encouraged. It is also proposed to amend core policy 66 (strategic transport routes) to make station reopenings and improvements to Melksham station "subject to the provision of suitable stopping train services". The first step should be the enhancement of Swindon-Westbury services from the present two to eight trains each way. The council was awarded £4.25 million of Local Sustainable Transport Fund money in 2012 to do just that but this awaits the leasing of additional rolling stock by FGW.

■ ■ New ways around the Bristol area, via Henbury loop

South Gloucestershire Council held a meeting on 30 September to discuss the Henbury loop line. Railfuture submitted a statement calling for passenger trains to be restored earlier than the target date of 2023. We argued that a circular service via Filton and Avonmouth would make better use of rolling stock and enable more cross-city journeys to be made, particularly between west and north Bristol.



Wessex

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

■ ■ Crossing the railway

Two of our stations on the Southampton-Weymouth route will have pedestrian access improved as a result of works about to commence.

At Brockenhurst station, building work is in hand to provide a new footbridge with lifts to replace the old structure which not only involves stairs, but unusually a change of level, part way across. Easier access to the platforms has long been a campaign aim for Railfuture Wessex in view of the importance of Brockenhurst as an interchange between services.

Building work is also about to start on a ramped footbridge just to the east of Wareham station. Two years ago, we reported that the busy pedestrian route across the railway line from the town to its northern suburbs was considered too risky to be ungated – even after the addition of warning lights and recorded announcements. Automatic barriers were also ruled out on safety grounds, so 8ft high, motorised gates controlled from a manned booth were installed. Of course, this could be only a temporary measure because of the high operating costs, but it does illustrate the measures that Network Rail now considers essential to eliminate busy, ungated crossings.

■ ■ Smart ticketing – a dog's breakfast

In South Hampshire what started off as a project to implement an integrated public transport smart card ticketing system has degenerated into a limited bus and ferry scheme only. This covers the mainland and excludes the Isle of Wight even though the island has linked up with Transport for South Hampshire Partnership.

The island has its own smart card system but both systems will exclude rail. Further east, Southern Trains has its own smart card system called KEY but this only goes as far as Warblington and fails to cover Southern services west to Portsmouth and Southampton. The KEY system also includes certain bus services in Brighton, Hove and Crawley but these are limited to the same holding company, Govia/Go-Ahead, as Southern Trains. So much for localism and integrated public transport to help the traveller.

■ ■ The Island Line needs investment urgently

There are increasing concerns that the state of the Island Line, the only part of the national network left on the Isle of Wight, is deteriorating and will need substantial investment in both infrastructure and rolling stock if it is to continue operating. Passenger services are provided by the oldest trains in the UK, the ex-London Transport Tube trains dating from 1938. Little has been invested since electrification in 1967. As a first step to establish what might be done, Network Rail held a stakeholders meeting on the island in September and has now gone away to consider the options. Railfuture was represented at that meeting and we have clear views on what sort of service should be provided in the future.



In brief: Reports of rail campaigners

Maps and timetables

Railfuture vice president Barry Doe has succeeded in gaining new sponsorship for his website which promotes bus and rail timetables in their printed form.

He said: "The excellent news is that Pindar Creative has become a sponsor.

"My full list of sponsors is therefore: Chester-le-Track, First, HaCon, Network Rail, Pindar Creative, réseaulutions, Severn-Dee Travel, Stagecoach, TAS, Transdev Blazefield, Walkden Software and Wilts & Dorset."

He added: "Without these 12, the website would not exist. But more than that, it proves that many such prominent consultancies, ticket agencies, transport groups, software providers and cartographers do support this work and the dissemination of information regarding printed timetables which comple-

ment the existence of electronic media." Barry has also produced a new edition of his rail franchise map.

Anyone can download copies for private or commercial use, including printing at any size, from the Rail Operators in the British Isles section of www.barrydoe.co.uk where links to the previous 24 editions also appear. His bus and rail timetable directory is at the same site.

Ferry questionnaire

Railfuture's international group has produced a preliminary report on the ferries questionnaire which was distributed with Railwatch 136 (July 2013) and was also available online at railfuture's website.

Peter Walker and Damian Bell report that over 150 questionnaires were returned.

Over 70 ports, including British and continental, were mentioned

in the responses. As expected, rail travel features in most of the journeys reported, but there were surprisingly few mentions of bicycles.

The two most popular routes were Harwich-Hoek van Holland and Holyhead-Dublin, both of which are rail-served at the British end.

A significant number of adverse comments related to bus links of various sorts, often tied to criticism of which type of traveller is allowed to leave the vessel first.

Those travelling in cars often comment on the smooth processes of loading and unloading. We have been very impressed by the length and the variety of some of the journeys that respondents made, not unusually using one crossing (or Eurostar) in one direction and a ferry journey in the other.

We are not sure whose journey

was the longest of all, but think that a destination in southern Sicily, Pozzallo, may well be the furthest reported from Britain.

A fuller report will be available shortly on the Railfuture website while paper copies can be obtained from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

Changes at Railfuture

Railfuture has set up a policy directorate headed by board member Andrew Millward, who is also a public member of the Network Rail board.

The heads of Railfuture's passenger, networks, freight and international groups will report to Andrew and will sit on the policy directorate.

There is also now a finance and corporate governance division, to which the media, marketing and communications group and the Railwatch group will report.

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright
chris.wright@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Millions for East West Rail

East West Rail continues to attract our attention with councils finalising their £50 million financial contribution to be made over a 15-year period. The East West Rail Consortium has invited us to an update and signing of the contract with the Department for Transport in November. Funding from Oxfordshire County Council of £11.06 million, Buckinghamshire of £10.16 million, Milton Keynes £7.65 million, Aylesbury Vale £5.4 million, Central Bedfordshire £4.2 million and Cherwell £4.36 million has been agreed. A decision from Bedford on £2.6 million is expected in November with Oxford City on £4.68 million to follow. The council leader is positive about the project. Some of the funding will finance projects such as crossing improvements. EWR is seen as bringing positive economic benefits to the area.

Railfuture is obviously delighted at the continued council support for EWR and their growing interest in the link to Cambridge. The project, however, continues to be controversial with concerns raised in Bicester, Woburn Sands, Bow Brickhill and Lidlington over the impact of the improved services on their areas. Network Rail has set up a crossing task force to review the options for crossings and plans consultations. The topic prompted enormous interest at Railfuture's rail users conference, which was organised by Thames Valley branch.

Meanwhile, Surrey County Council's Rail Strategy has suggested that EWR could be linked to the North Downs line and Kent, which further emphasises its strategic importance. Likewise, councils are recognising the value of the Heathrow connection at Reading and possible cross-country services.

■ ■ Work goes on to create a new London-Oxford service

The work to create a new rail service from London Marylebone to Oxford (Evergreen 3) continues, with recycled ballast deliveries by rail for the chord linking EWR to the Chiltern line at Bicester. If this material had been moved by road, it would have required 10,000 lorry movements! Chiltern Railways has confirmed that Oxford Parkway is the preferred name for the new Water Eaton station and services should start in summer 2015 with a journey time of under an hour to London. A consultation has been held by Chiltern Railways on the replacement bus services, when the Bicester-Oxford service is closed for the major works to take place, probably from February next year.

■ ■ Town wants Bletchley station to have a facelift

Bletchley Town Council continues to press for improvements to the station, particularly so it provides a more attractive and convenient "face" to the town centre. Milton Keynes Council features the idea in its Local Transport Plan and hopes that East West Rail will assist in bringing the project to fruition.

■ ■ Half a million spent on station upgrade

Haddenham and Thame Parkway station is being upgraded, with £500,000 being spent on the ticket office, waiting room, motorcycle and cycle parking. The move is welcomed.

■ ■ Heritage and main line services show the way forward

The Chinnor-Princes Risborough line had a series of weekend special trains in October with support from Chiltern Railways and Network Rail. It is hoped the heritage line will be able to extend services to the main line and negotiations continue.

■ ■ Rail users merge to strengthen their influence

Taplow Rail Users Group has merged with the Marlow-Maidenhead Passengers' Association. It is hoped to strengthen the influence of the groups with the impact of Crossrail and the mainline upgrade work of particular concern.



Sweet scent of success

Midges were making life difficult for passengers at Barrhill station on the Stranraer line. They were suffering bites from the insects which clustered so thickly on the waiting shelter lights that passengers were literally left in the dark.

The clever solution hit on by Louis Wall of the S W Railway Adopters Garden Group was to plant lemon eucalyptus bushes on the platform. The bushes produce citronella, which is the basis of anti-midge preparations and it worked! Passengers can now wait for their trains without being attacked and can see to read while they are doing so.

Louis has already won awards for his work on station gardens along the route, but this is a brilliant solution to an intractable problem.

He was highly commended in the *Passengers Matter* awards category of the 2013 Community Rail Awards which were presented in Llandudno on 27 September.

Industry awards can be a bit self indulgent but the community awards bring recognition to a few of the amazing groups of volunteers who put so much



PLANT POWER: At Barrhill station

time and effort into their local railway. The awards are also, of course, an excellent showcase for the volunteers' projects and a great way of encouraging others to use the ideas or to develop their own.

A selection of the other winners gives an insight into the sheer diversity of projects and the imaginative ways in which people are bringing new life and vigour to local stations.

Bee friendly

At Alsager, the local school, together with the station friends group, the North Staffordshire community rail partnership and East Midlands Trains have



planted bee-friendly flowers and installed bee boxes, while the schoolchildren also produced bee-themed posters to encourage travel by train.

Hair today

Finding new uses for redundant station buildings has been one of the successes of community rail partnerships. An imaginative one that netted first prize for the North Cheshire rail users group and partners was the opening of a hairdressers salon at Frodsham, bringing life back to a previously slightly forbidding, and fire damaged, station.

Community hub

An award also went to the Strawberry line cafe at Yatton, evoking memories of the Cheddar Valley line for which it was the junction station. The cafe is in a redundant waiting room, and, apart from providing an excellent service for passengers, it also gives work experience for adults with learning difficulties, several of whom have now achieved their City and Guilds qualification in hospitality and catering.

People

Most important are the awards to individual volunteers. This year, first prize went to Gerald

Townson who is not only secretary of the Lancaster and Skipton rail users, but also a director of the line's community rail partnership, the founder of the Friends of Bentham station, and has done so much to raise awareness of this lovely line and encourage people to use it. Brian Jewell of the Yarmouth Community Trust was also recognised for his work in setting up and running the "welcome host" scheme which meets and greets visitors who come by train to the resort and offers help and advice. Sheila Davidson, a dedicated volunteer with the Friends of Hindley station group also earned an outstanding volunteer contribution award.

Overall winner, for outstanding delivery of the community rail strategy, was Abellio, operating group of Northern, Merseyrail and Greater Anglia.

All credit as well to the 15 sponsors of these heart-warming awards. The number itself shows a partnership, ranging from Network Rail and Angel Trains to train operators and Lancashire County Council. Credit too goes to Arriva Trains Wales for hosting the event, with the awards presented by managing director Ian Bullock.

Pictures: ACoRP

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
anthony.kay@railfuture.org.uk
and Roger Bacon
roger.bacon@railfuture.org.uk



■ ■ Corby line improvements

About a mile of single track at Manton Junction in the Corby direction has been doubled, and Railfuture campaigners in Corby hope the current single line to Kettering will be upgraded to double track soon. There have also been improvements to track and signalling to allow higher speeds through the junction.

■ ■ Chris Precey 1944-2013

It was sad and unexpected news that our colleague Chris Precey died in early September. Chris was the branch sales officer and until recently the branch treasurer, a post he had taken on in 2003. He also did work for Railfuture nationally and organised the annual lottery which will be now be named *The Chris Precey Annual Draw* in his memory. Chris kept a constant lookout in the press for any proposed railway developments or news affecting our region and made sure we all knew what was going on, so adding to the breadth of information and networking that is one of the main strengths of local rail lobbying. His latest passion was the freight enhancements from Felixstowe to Nuneaton with special interest from Syston through Leicester to Wigston where he hoped to see a flyover taking container trains over the Midland main line. Perhaps when it is built we should lobby Network Rail to call it the "Chris Precey Bridge". Members from East Midlands, Lincolnshire and West Midlands Railfuture branches attended Chris's funeral at the Heart of England Crematorium in Nuneaton in September.

■ ■ Good news on the Midland main line

From this December, and after decades of lobbying by Railfuture East Midlands, line speeds on the Midland main line will reach 125mph in some places. There will be many other increases along the line which will result in reduced journey times for passengers. It will be the first time that InterCity 125 trains have actually reached 125mph since British Rail started running them here in the early 1980s. Many miles of track were re-laid by Network Rail mainly at night, with little or no impact on existing passenger services. Electrification is also coming to the Midland but there is no publicity about it on Network Rail's website where only the Great Western and Northern schemes are mentioned. At our recent meeting with Network Rail we raised these issues and managers have promised to publicise them in the near future.

■ ■ Electric rolling stock for the East Midlands

We now understand that a decision will need to be made in 2014 on the type of rolling stock to be ordered and used on the newly electrified Midland main line if some services due to start in 2018 are to commence at that date. All options are likely to be considered but Railfuture East Midlands would like to see good space for passengers and luggage at least on a par with the existing IC125 trains they will replace.

■ ■ Nottingham-Lincoln

Railfuture East Midlands is backing Newark Business Club's RailFAIR! campaign for improvements on the Nottingham-Newark-Lincoln line. The last decade has seen the service deteriorate, with a reduction from two trains to one per hour, loss of through services to Birmingham, worse connections at Newark Northgate and replacement of a two-car with a one-car unit, leading to overcrowding. RailFair's strategy for improving the service, worked out with local authorities, user groups, Network Rail and East Midlands Trains, includes extending Matlock-Nottingham trains to Newark, resignalling and upgrading track and level crossings, increasing line speeds to 85/90mph from around 60mph currently, and electrification as an add-on to the Midland main line electrification. There would be benefits for freight from the Midlands and the Humber ports, as well as for passengers.

The final mile

By Trevor Garrod

trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk

After a swift journey by train to a main station, the passenger does not want to waste time queuing to obtain a bus, tram, underground or suburban rail ticket to his or her final destination.

Travel can be more attractive if the inter-city rail fare includes the "final mile" by whatever mode.

The European Passengers Federation has issued a six-page report in which it highlights good practice in various European countries and points out where there is room for improvement.

Britain comes out rather well in this report. It points out that a PLUSBUS ticket is available for rail travellers to 290 towns and cities in Great Britain and to some in Northern Ireland. This add-on is also available for trams in Nottingham, Birmingham, Blackpool, Sheffield and Wolverhampton. If you have to cross London, your through rail ticket from, say, Lowestoft to Southampton, has, for 30 years, been valid also on the Underground.

For a cross-Manchester journey, the free Metroshuttle bus links Piccadilly and Victoria stations.

In Glasgow the service 398 bus gives a free transfer between Central and Queen Street if you show a valid rail ticket from, say,

Birmingham to Aberdeen. This is what the EPF report means by "the mile in the middle".

To cross Paris, in contrast, you have to buy a metro ticket, not quite so convenient but at least you can now buy a carnet of 10 on board your Eurostar train or at St Pancras station. The German-speaking countries have a range of City Ticket add-ons which are useful if, for example, you are going by high-speed train to Munich and then want to continue by public transport to the Olympic Park.

On the other hand, Spain currently has no add-ons for urban transport other than suburban trains, and the only add-on in Hungary is for rail travellers heading for Budapest Airport and its bus link.

The EPF report also looks ahead to the development of city smart-cards and other electronic means which are already beginning to make paying for the final mile easier and quicker.

The report has been sent to transport professionals and decision-makers and can also be useful for visitors to a country, so travel agents could also find it helpful. You can read the report on www.epf.eu or send for a paper copy (in English, French or German) from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

Spain to increase rail spending by 22%

Spending on railways in Spain will increase by 22% next year, according to the transport department's draft budget. This year's £3.2 billion will go up to £3.9 billion in 2014. More than 700 miles of new line are under construction. There are also plans to convert the broad-gauge Barcelona-Valencia main line to dual gauge to allow standard-gauge trains to use the line.

SPRING IN ALSACE
Group visit by train to Mulhouse by Eurostar and TGV
Tram-train, French National Railway Museum, wine, possible trips to the Black Forest and Switzerland
Monday 28 April to Sunday 4 May 2014
For details, send an SAE to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ or email trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk



A Socialist salvo

Paul Salveson has been a long-time campaigner for better railways and he is also a proud Socialist, a former Labour councillor for Golcar in the Colne Valley.

Like most Labour supporters, he is unhappy with the results of rail privatisation and wants to see change.

In his new book *Railpolitik* he looks at the history of the railways under private ownership, nationalisation and the present-day scene.

As a former railwayman, an advocate of community railways, and now a visiting professor at Huddersfield University, Paul is well qualified to give opinions as well as to provide an alternative vision for the future.

He rejects a return to a centralised British Rail-style nationalised industry and looks for other ways to tap into what he calls the "ignored socialist tradition of co-operation, community, mutuality and decentralisation".

His book includes a foreword by Maria Eagle who, as shadow

Transport secretary, has been looking at what changes any Labour government might make to the railways. Maria, however, was replaced in a reshuffle in October by Mary Creagh, the MP for Wakefield. Labour's policy remains unclear.

Paul's book makes some suggestions for how a more co-ordinated but accountable railway could be delivered in the future.

There is a lengthy chapter on how rail services are delivered in mainland Europe.

The book reveals Paul's reservations about High Speed Two and how an expanding railway might include new lines integrated with the classic network.

The book was launched in Liverpool and at York Railway Institute.

The normal price is £15 but *Railwatch* readers can get £3 off by ordering the book online at publishers Lawrence and Wishart's website at www.lwbooks.co.uk At the check-out, quote the discount code 'Railpolitik'.

Railpolitik ISBN 978-1907103-810

◆◆◆◆ Please remember Railfuture in your will: <http://tinyurl.com/3qtdzj7>

West Midlands

By Peter Hughes
peter.hughes@railfuture.org.uk



■ ■ £10m package for rail

Centro signed an agreement in September with train operator London Midland to deliver £10 million of rail improvements. More than £8 million will fund park-and-ride schemes at Longbridge, Yardley Wood, Rowley Regis, Four Oaks, Kings Norton and Stourbridge Junction stations. More than £1.2 million will be spent on fitting lifts at Birmingham's Acocks Green station where passengers currently have to climb 34 steps from the ticket office to catch their trains. The plans also feature a pilot smart ticketing system and extra CCTV coverage. The two organisations will also be urging the Department for Transport to agree to a better service on the Chase line from Birmingham to Rugeley in Staffordshire, via Walsall.

■ ■ New Bromsgrove station fit for electric future

Bromsgrove's new multi-million pound railway station was approved by Worcestershire County Council's planning and regulatory committee in September. The station is expected to open in 2015 on a new site and will be jointly funded by Worcestershire County Council and Centro.

Unlike the existing station, the building will have a staffed ticket office, a passenger waiting room, toilets and travel information. There will be a car park with 365 spaces, electric vehicle charging stations, car share bays and two bus stops.

The concourse will be fully accessible and is designed to cope with 800,000 passengers per year compared to the 520,000 now. There will also be covered cycle storage, a lift and a covered bridge from concourse to platforms. A new site was needed because platforms at the current station could not be extended from three-carriage to six-carriage trains.

Mike Ponsonby, chair of Railfuture-affiliated Bromsgrove Rail Users Group, told the *Bromsgrove Standard*: "This is the most important infrastructure development for all residents of Bromsgrove in over 150 years and will significantly enhance travel to and from Bromsgrove by an electrified rail service."

Bromsgrove MP Sajid Javid added: "This vital infrastructural upgrade will bring clear benefits to the whole of Bromsgrove, as well as the wider region."



BROMSGROVE STATION: Artist's impression

Scotland

By Jane Ann Liston
janeann.liston@railfuturescotland.org.uk

■ ■ Blast-off for the Borders railway

Progress on rebuilding the Scottish Borders Railway is now far more visible. Most dramatic is the weekly blasting of hard rock at Falahill to make way for the realignment of the road and to reduce intrusion at the small community of Falahill, which will not get its station reopened. Campaigners have called for modifications to allow single track sections to be doubled more easily in future, having learned that single track will be laid in the centre of the double trackbed. Tracklaying begins in earnest next year but a long section of test track will start being laid in November.

■ ■ Almond Chord would prevent service disruption

Members of Railfuture Scotland have distributed 5,000 leaflets to regular commuters from all the affected stations between Dunblane and Edinburgh and from intermediate stations between Glasgow and Edinburgh alerting them to the future closure of Winchburgh tunnel for up to three months and explaining that the disruption could be avoided if the proposed 3km Almond Chord is built before the closure. The campaign is now being supported by West Lothian Council, the Regional Transport Partnership for Southeast Scotland, as well as the local MP and MSPs. Transport Scotland, the Scottish Department for Transport, claims the cost of the Almond Chord would be £175 million (an increase of £73 million over their previous bloated estimate) which works out at £60 million per kilometre. That would make it the most expensive surface railway construction in Europe, if not the world.

■ ■ Paisley Gilmour Street could be key to Crossrail

Glasgow benefits from the most extensive suburban railway network outside of London, but suffers from one major defect, which could be rectified by fully reinstating and electrifying the double-track City Union Line. At present, the 3km long line is used for diesel freight and empty stock movements. It should form the first part of the long-planned Crossrail route which would have both a local and a regional impact. RAILQWEST, the rail lobby group in the West of Scotland, has campaigned to correct this situation by engaging with over 40 organisations and key individuals to promote the advantages that electrification will bring. The response has been very positive. The line has the potential for 1.5 million annual rail journeys following electrification. Paisley Gilmour Street station could become a very useful cross-platform interchange. Transport Scotland has consistently denied the viability of this rail link, by claiming it would cost more than £200 million, which is the cost of the complete Crossrail project, including building three new inner-city stations at West Street (interchange with the Glasgow Subway) Citizens (serving Hutchestown & Laurieston) and Glasgow Cross (interchange with the Argyle Line). Now Members of the Scottish Parliament from all parties have been persuaded to form a cross-party pro-rail group at Holyrood.

■ ■ St Andrews deserves proper analysis of benefits

Contrary to earlier indications, the expected report on the proposed new St Andrews line has not yet been tabled at Fife Council's north east area committee, but it is still hoped it will appear before the end of the year. The railway was apparently mentioned during a closed session of TayPlan but there have been no indications that it has been added to the strategic plan for Tayside and NE Fife. It is hoped the planners will take a wider view of the benefits such a service could bring to the whole of Fife and even Scotland, rather than simply considering potential advantages for Dundee. There is some concern that each of the main players, Fife Council, TayPlan, SESTRAN and Transport Scotland, is waiting for one of the others to make the first move.



Letters extra

Put heritage on map

Chris Austin is absolutely right to highlight the added value which heritage railways bring to the communities they serve (*Railwatch* 137). All the more ridiculous, therefore, that the Association of Train Operators refuses to show heritage lines on the London and South East network map unless they have through ticketing arrangements.

Thus, the Spa Valley, the Bluebell and the Isle of Wight Steam Railway are shown, but not the Mid Hants, the East Kent or the Cholsey & Wallingford (all of which have direct interchange with main line services) – nor others without a main line connection but with decent bus links, such as the Kent & East Sussex. Railfuture should press strongly for this piece of arbitrary silliness to be rectified for the 2014 edition of the map.

Graham Larkbey, Carr Rd
London E17 5ER
Graham.larkbey@gmail.com

Look to the future

I disagree with Trevor Garrod when he criticises the Railfuture board for not wasting our valuable time dwelling on the past (*Railwatch* 137). Our organisation is called Railfuture, not Railpast. The vast majority of the media interest I saw on the

Beeching Report concentrated on nostalgia for 50 years ago using as many photographs and film clips of steam engines as they could fit in. There was minimal mention of any current reopening opportunities.

Instead of dwelling in the past, Lincolnshire branch activists were busy concentrating on the present.

We encouraged passengers to come back to rail after the Scunthorpe to Doncaster route had been closed for months following the Hatfield coal tip slippage.

We helped the Market Rasen rail users carry out a residents survey. We surveyed passengers at stations on the Lincoln to Nottingham route to obtain background data for the RailFAIR! campaign (see www.railfair.co.uk)

None of the council leaders, MPs and other local opinion formers I have visited with the RailFAIR! Campaign have wanted printed copies of leaflets. They all ask for an electronic version that they can then circulate themselves.

David Harby, chairman Railfuture
Lincolnshire, Carral Close, Lincoln
LN5 9BD
david.harby2@railfuture.org.uk

Editors' note: This correspondence is now closed.

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Rail is the key to Oxford's status as global gateway

The railway must help Oxford retain its position as a global gateway, Railfuture's November conference in the city was told.

Welcoming Railfuture, Lord Mayor Delia Sinclair said it was vital trains work well, because roads are so heavily congested.

Other world destinations in the area include Harwell, which the European Space Agency moved to in January, Bicester Village, the second most popular visitor attraction in England, and Culham Science Centre, which is involved in researching future methods of nuclear power generation.

One of the key aims for the railway must be to develop a direct service to Heathrow Airport, via a western access route, so international travellers can get to Oxford more easily.

A whole raft of rail improvements is being planned for the Oxford area, but the link into Heathrow airport is still to be decided, said Network Rail strategic planner Chris Aldridge.

The enhancements would have been unthinkable five or ten years ago and he said Railfuture's campaigning support was very important. He said: "Keep up the good work."

Already approved is the new Evergreen 3 link from Bicester so trains can operate from London Marylebone to Oxford, which was described by Stephen Barker of Chiltern Railways.

After five years of planning how to deal with newts, bats, badgers, and the remains of a Roman town, work is under way but only after a long process of coping with objectors to the scheme.

After Evergreen 3, the East West Rail link will provide services from Oxford to Milton Keynes and Bedford, and eventually to East Anglia, said project director Patrick O'Sullivan.

EWR has succeeded in winning approval against all the odds, even though nearly everyone agreed years ago it was a good idea which "would probably never happen".

The key to convincing the Government was to show that EWR joined up six of the fastest growing population centres in Britain, and it is now recognised as having an exceptional benefit-cost ratio. Other projects planned for the area include electrification, resignalling and line capacity enhancements which would allow longer freight trains to pass through from Southamp-

ton to the Midlands. Possibilities for the future include using the freight-only Cowley branch for passengers and creating a light rail route to Witney.

About 140 people attended the conference, which was judged one of the most successful ever run by Railfuture.

Railfuture president Christian Wolmar said the conference hall was full, just like the railways, which were undergoing a fantastic renaissance which could be seen in both London and Oxford.

He told the largely mature audience that Railfuture needed more young people, women and ethnic minorities to get involved.

He said: "You need to recruit your sons and daughters to Railfuture. Perhaps give them one of my books for Christmas!"

The first speaker was Lord Richard Faulkner of Worcester who co-authored with Chris Austin *Holding the Line - How Britain's Railways were Saved*.

He said he had "unbounded admiration" for Railfuture and its predecessors who kept the flame alive when the lights were going out for railways elsewhere.

He then told the sorry tale of how politicians, civil servants and trade unionists connived in repeated attempts to destroy the railways by starving them of finance and with a large programme of line closures.

He traced the war on the railways back to a secret 1960 government committee whose aim was to close as many railways as possible, aided by politicians such as Ernest Marples.

He paid tribute to a series of rail campaigners and whistle-blowers who exposed some of the plots against the railways.

Tory politician Norman Fowler became an unlikely hero for the railways. Soon after he became transport minister in 1979, he ignored the brief from civil servants and said he would not sanction further rail closures.

Lord Berkeley of the Rail Freight Group said he was pleased that many new intermodal freight terminals are rail linked but said new ways of delivering freight into city centres were being tried out, with freight being delivered into Euston overnight and a new rail-based parcels service on the Midland main line.

But he said the Channel Tunnel was a dismal failure and a wasted asset for rail freight, handling only five to six trains a day.

East Anglia

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

■ ■ Manea's transformed service

Manea has a sparse rail service with only a couple of CrossCountry services a day stopping there. Railfuture East Anglia leafleted the village this year as part of the Wisbech Rail Reopening Campaign and received a high level of support with over 100 of the 800 households supporting the improved rail service. From January, Manea will be served by the two-hourly Greater Anglia service from Peterborough to Whittlesey, March, Manea, Ely, Bury St Edmunds, Stowmarket and Ipswich. It follows the completion of capacity-enhancing works at Peterborough in December.

■ ■ Bus and train link for Saffron Walden

Greater Anglia teamed up with Essex County Council to provide inclusive bus and rail tickets for travel on buses from Saffron Walden to Audley End. Buses run hourly off-peak and half hourly in the peak. Tickets are available from Saffron Walden to both Cambridge and London and can be bought online, at Audley End station or from Saffron Walden Tourist Information Centre. Railfuture applauds Greater Anglia.

■ ■ East West Rail link

Railfuture East Anglia has published *Railfuture Oxford to Cambridge (East West Rail) campaign - Briefing note on route options for the Central Section from Bedford to Cambridge* presenting four options for routes through Cambridgeshire for the East West Rail link, including a new route along the A428 corridor. Such is the rapid growth of Cambridge, developments will soon block easy access through the city fringes. Details at: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+East+West+Rail+Briefing+for+Cambridgeshire> This was released to huge media interest, with branch chairman Peter Wakefield spending a busy day, speaking on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire, Three Counties Radio and BBC Look East alongside Patrick O'Sullivan of East West Rail and Ian Bates of Cambridgeshire County Council. Copies were distributed to 168 city, district and county councillors.

■ ■ South Cambridgeshire Transport Strategy

Cambridgeshire has been consulting on local plans within the city and across South Cambridgeshire backed up by the South Cambridgeshire Transport Strategy. The branch has responded to these, covering issues such as protecting routes of East West Rail, and giving rail a stronger role in the proposed high quality transport corridors to Haverhill and west from Cambridge to Cambourne, St Neots and the new development at Alconbury. Details: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+South+Cambridgeshire+Transport+Strategy+Consultation+Response>

■ ■ Transport Minister McLoughlin visits East Anglia

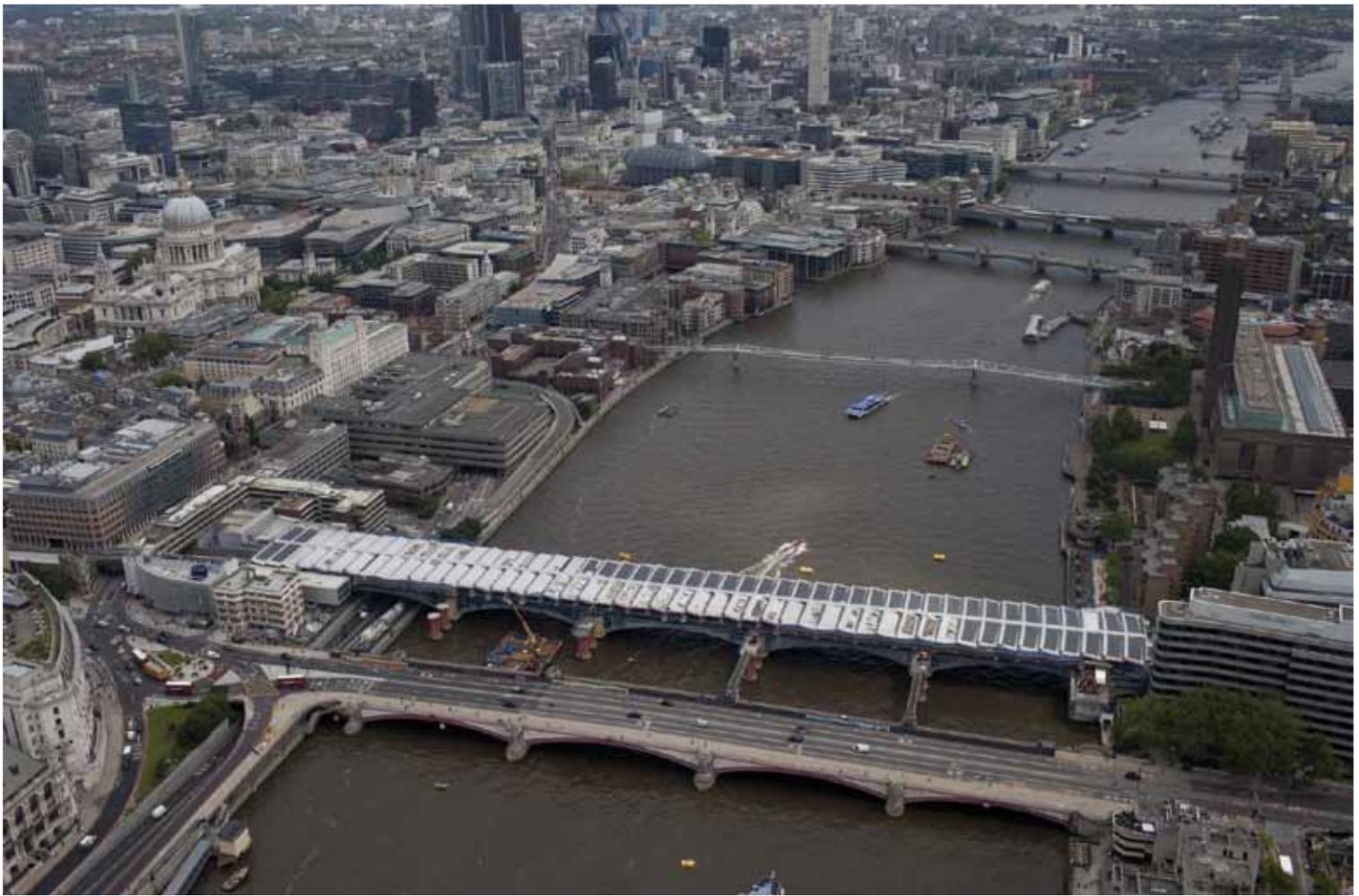
Transport Minister Patrick McLoughlin visited the region in August to meet East Anglian MPs, who made a strong plea for additional track in the Chelmsford area so faster trains from Suffolk and Norfolk can be run without detriment to users in Essex, for higher speed limits on the main line and for better rolling stock. Mr McLoughlin also visited Felixstowe Docks and was able to see the 70 millionth container handled there.

■ ■ East Suffolk Line

The Lowestoft-Ipswich line is gaining new passengers rapidly since the service went hourly a year ago. In October 2012, the branch and East Suffolk Travellers Association counted passengers at Halesworth to gain a "before" number. This year a new count is planned to gain figures for comparison. Halesworth is the site of another positive Greater Anglia initiative, with a bus link from Southwold connecting with each train. We shall count those transferring too.

■ ■ East Anglia branch website

The branch has moved its website to a new home as part of Railfuture's national website and has been using it in conjunction with campaign and media work. You can find news, events, campaigns, the branch newsletter RailEast, a news and document archive, gallery and information about local rail user and campaign groups at www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia See also twitter: @RailfutureEA



THAMESLINK 2013: The new solar-panelled roof of Blackfriars station can be seen in the foreground of this picture as the Thameslink programme gets nearer to its completion date of 2018. By clearing the way for more trains through the centre of London, the Thameslink scheme will be making a major contribution to reducing the pollution caused by London's historic acceptance of a car culture. Top left in the picture is the City of London, one of the worst pollution hotspots in Europe and one of the most powerful undemocratic forces in Britain, which has for years encouraged a Carry On Polluting attitude in both economic and financial investment as well as transport policy

Bright spot in fight against pollution

The solar-panelled roof on the new £550 million Blackfriars station will be making a contribution to reducing pollution in London.

The photovoltaic panels in the roof already supply half the station's energy requirements, according to M R Site Services, the company responsible for the water-tight seam welding of the largely aluminium roof.

The station itself will play a key role as part of a range of infrastructure improvements which will allow 12-coach trains to run every two to three minutes in each direction through central London.

There will be links to Crossrail at Farringdon from 2016 to provide easy connections for passengers between many areas north and south of London to areas well to the east and west.

Of course pollution will not be reduced just because there is an excellent train service. There has to be a political will to encourage non-polluting modes of trans-

port and to curb the car. In Islington, which adjoins the City of London, pupils have discovered that air pollution outside their school is more than double the limit set by the European Union.

Pupils from St John's Upper Holloway Church of England Primary School in Pemberton Gardens took part in a project by the London Sustainability Exchange, which is trying to encourage ways of cutting air pollution.

Main roads near the school carry more than 100,000 vehicles a day.

The Cleaner Air 4 Schools campaign is making a new generation aware of the threats to health which politicians and planners have known about for years. Across London, around 4,300 people each year die prematurely from air pollution-related causes, double the number killed in road crashes. Children are particularly at risk, and children with asthma often dangerously so.

The years of inaction by politicians at local and national level is a scandal. The highest

number of deaths attributable to air pollution occur in the City, according to the London Assembly, followed by Westminster, "home" to our MPs, Kensington and Chelsea, and then Tower Hamlets.

Sitting in highly polluted Westminster, MPs have done little or nothing about Britain's Supreme Court landmark ruling in July that the Government has failed to keep within European air pollution limits.

The most likely action from the Government is more prevarication and delay. It has already approved a controversial major programme of road building which will make air pollution worse.

Now there is more bad news about the filthy reign of King Car.

Air pollution, of which car pollution is a major contributor, has been conclusively linked to lung and bowel cancer, according to the International Agency for Research on Cancer in October. Professor David Phillips

of King's College London said "much can be done to protect the world's population from exposure, particularly those in urban and industrialised environments".

However, the political will has been lacking for years. Since Boris Johnson became Mayor of London in 2008, he has allowed the single bus fare to rise by 56% and cancelled the extension of the congestion zone.

Although some London boroughs have introduced 20mph speed limits on safety and pollution grounds, the Metropolitan Police claim it is "not enforceable".

The most polluted roads in London can be found at www.how-pollutedismyroad.org.uk

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