

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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Clearing the way

See page 2

Rail is taking off

Heathrow is likely to gain a new link so that passengers from the West can travel by rail direct to the airport.

It will reduce the need to travel into London and back out again, or transfer by bus on congested roads.

Network Rail announced in February that it was planning to provide a service from Reading, via Slough, to Heathrow.

Network Rail has met MPs and other stakeholders to discuss the detailed plans, known as the Western Rail Access Programme.

A new junction would be created between Langley and Iwer stations, linking with a three-mile tunnel for trains to go to Heathrow Terminal 5. A steering group, including Network Rail, the Department for Transport, Thames Valley Berkshire local enterprise partnership, Slough borough council and the Airport, has been set up to make progress on the proposals. Work could

start in 2016 if planning permission is granted, with tunnelling in 2018. The project would be complete in 2021.

A double for Corby

The line from Kettering to Corby is to be doubled this year, underlining the success of Corby station since it was reopened five years ago.

Railfuture's David Fursdon, who has promoted the new services to Corby, said he was optimistic that a second platform would soon be installed at the town.

David is delighted that the *Corby Evening Telegraph*, as well as TV and radio stations are keen to report the good news and to interview rail campaigners. He said: "I am proud of what we are achieving."

The number of people using Corby nearly doubled from 115,400 in 2009-10 to 215,400 in 2011-12.

Page one picture

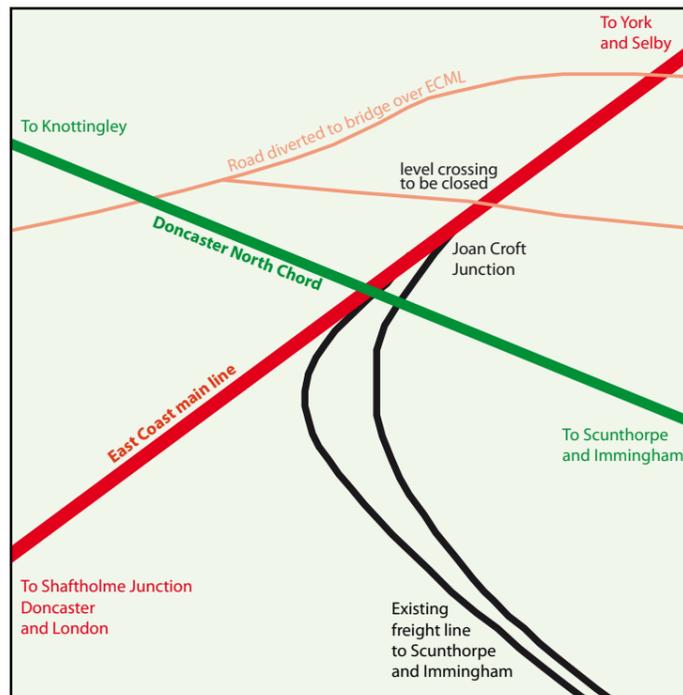


DIAGRAM OF PAGE ONE PICTURE: The new chord allows freight to travel across the East Coast main line without impeding main line traffic while the newly diverted road allows the level crossing near Joan Croft Junction to be closed

Our page one picture shows the new twin-track flyover aimed at freeing up a notorious bottleneck over the East Coast main line.

The bridge and two miles of new line will take freight clear of Shaftholme Junction, just north of Doncaster.

The £45 million chord will allow for freight trains serving Immingham docks and the three power stations of Drax, Ferrybridge and Eggborough to keep clear of the main line.

They currently have to travel along the East Coast main line for a short section, sometimes delaying passenger trains.

The project will also clear the way for the closure of Joan Croft level crossing (middle right in the picture) because the road is being diverted and a new road bridge, top right, is part of the scheme.

A number of other level crossings on the East Coast main line are being upgraded.

The Doncaster work is part of a £600 million package which will allow services on the East Coast main line to be increased and less susceptible to delay. Network Rail has estimated the investment at Shaftholme and Joan Croft junctions could allow an extra 300 seats per hour to be provided on East Coast services.

One slight cloud on the horizon is the long-term future of the

power stations because British energy policy is in flux at the moment. The power stations are involved in switching from coal to biomass in an effort to reduce pollution, but the Government is being accused of failing to provide subsidies to allow all of them to continue in full operation.

"We see coal shrinking very rapidly from now on, probably contributing nothing to power generation by 2030," Energy Minister Michael Fallon told *The Times* in December. "Coal is going to disappear off the system."

In 2012, coal generated 40% of British electricity. Freight trains are however expected to transport much of the biomass which will become one alternative fuel. Providing more capacity on the East Coast main line could help Alliance Rail Holdings (owned by Arriva, which in turn is part of Deutsche Bahn) which wants to operate an open-access London-Edinburgh service from 2016 using Pendolino trains from Alstom, with a journey time of 3.5 hours.

Local councils along the line believe more investment should be poured into the East Coast main line because of its economic importance to all the regions along the route.

They have set up the East Coast Main-Line Consortium of Local Authorities and Scottish

www.railfuture.org.uk



East Coast interloper

It is possible that new Pendolinos from Alstom could be taking advantage of the extra capacity being created on the East Coast main line. Alliance Rail Holdings wants to run nine-coach tilting trains under the Great North Eastern Railway brand between London, Newcastle and Edinburgh from 2016.

The Pendolinos could be targeting the Edinburgh and Newcastle segments of the market, two years before Hitachi's new Intercity Express trains are introduced on the ECML. Alliance believes it can persuade people who currently fly to switch to rail. It applied to the Office of Rail Regulation in February for permission to operate under open access rules.

Regional Transport Partnerships, after a series of meetings at Peterborough, Doncaster, Newcastle and Edinburgh.

The Government has ignored a Trades Union Congress supported campaign to keep the East Coast franchise in the hands of Directly Operated Railways which has run EC services since 2009. In January, it named three bidders on a shortlist to take over the franchise of the 393-mile long line.

The three are East Coast Trains (First Group), Keolis-Eurostar East Coast (SNCF and Eurostar), Inter City Railways (Stagecoach 90% and Virgin 10%). The Government wants the line in private hands before the general election next year. The franchise

will run for eight or nine years, well beyond 2018 or 2019 when new Intercity Express trains built by Hitachi for Agility Trains at a new train factory in Newton Aycliffe will become available for the East Coast line.

The East Coast line has had an ill-starred history since privatisation. Twice it has had to be taken back into public hands because of the financial failure of its operators (first GNER and then National Express).

Since 2009 it has been run, with some success, by an arm of the Department for Transport – Directly Operated Railways.

A map of British rail operators can be downloaded at www.barrydoe.co.uk/railmap26.pdf

Railfuture chairman David Berman is calling on members to recruit younger members and to expand our active membership base across the board. He predicts 2014 will be an exciting year with major challenges and major targets to meet.

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

RAIL USER EXPRESS

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

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes
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■ ■ Electrification

The *Halifax Courier*, the *Hebden Bridge Times* and the *Todmorden News* are backing calls for the Calder Valley railway line to be electrified. Nina Smith of Railfuture said there is a massive groundswell of support right along the Leeds-Manchester route via Halifax for it to be electrified. Calder Valley MP Craig Whittaker has also spoken in favour of electrification. The Halifax & District Rail Action Group said: "It's a no-brainer." The group says it is astonishing that the line was not included in a list of lines to be considered for electrification. HADRAG insists: "If our line is not electrified this will mean keeping diesel trains to operate Calder Valley line services that will run under the wires to destinations beyond Leeds, Manchester and Preston. This reduces efficiency and hence increases costs. The alternative of an isolated diesel Calder Valley – connectivity lost – using outdated units well into the 2020s is simply not acceptable. We should be planning for electrification now."

■ ■ More improvements needed at Halifax station

There have been big improvements at Halifax station over the past six years but Halifax & District Rail Action Group says more needs to be done, including plumbing improvements in the toilets, attention to the inefficient power-operated doors to the platform and better signs. HADRAG also wants to see an additional running line serving a restored platform 3.

■ ■ £45 million reopening campaign for Ripon

MPs have been urged to support £45 million plans to reopen the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway. The Leeds Northern Railway Reinstatement Group sent a 19-point proposal, highlighting the economic benefits, especially if further routes to Leeds and Wetherby are reopened. The MP for Skipton and Ripon, Julian Smith, told the *Yorkshire Post*: "I'm very supportive of any ideas for returning the railways to Ripon – but thus far there needs to be more detail and much more focus on the cost-benefit analysis of any proposals." But Railfuture member Graham Lund said: "It is bizarre that Ripon with a population of over 16,000 inhabitants, is not a front runner for funds to reopen its long abandoned rail link to Harrogate and Leeds."

■ ■ £17 million project to improve Leeds station

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin described Leeds as a "gateway to the north" in February when he praised the £17 million project to improve the station by opening up a southern entrance.

■ ■ Rail North team prepares for new franchises

A partnership between local councils and the Department for Transport was set up in January to oversee the renewal in 2016 of the TransPennine Express and Northern rail franchises. Rail North involves 33 local authorities. Sir Richard Leese, vice chair of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, said: "The railway has a key role to play in a more robust North of England economy." Rail North is developing a long-term strategy. Railfuture Yorkshire organised our submission to the consultation draft. More information at www.railnorth.org

■ ■ New £8 million station at Wakefield Westgate

Years after it was first mooted, Wakefield's new £8 million Westgate station welcomed its first passengers in December, after a 12-month construction project. It was officially opened by Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin in February. The station now has free wifi and a photovoltaic roof.

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

Devon and Cornwall

LOCAL ACTION

By Gerard Duddridge gerard.duddridge@railfuture.org.uk

■ Tunnel works expose need for diversionary route loops



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

Cement spraying to strengthen Whiteball tunnel

Railfuture is campaigning for improvements to diversionary routes following the closure of the Taunton-Exeter St David's line for three weeks while Network Rail upgraded the 170-year-old Whiteball tunnel and the well-publicised breaching of the sea wall at Dawlish. Network Rail also used the closure to carry out track renewal and drainage works as part of a programme to reduce flood risks at various locations. There was enough capacity on the alternative route via Yeovil Junction to allow a limited service to run through from Plymouth and Penzance to London Paddington during the line closure but all other trains were replaced by buses from 18 January to 9 February. Railfuture has also called for more loops to be opened on the Exeter-Yeovil Junction line to increase the number of trains that can be run.

■ Backing for Cullompton station reopening

Railfuture is pleased to see that the campaign to reopen Cullompton station is gaining backing. Devon County Council has issued a strong statement in support of the station, as a way of supporting proposed development in the area. The *Exeter Express & Echo* reported in January that Devon council officers are in talks with Somerset counterparts. "Working with Somerset, we intend to carry out a study this year to determine likely patronage at a potential Cullompton station, including connectivity between intermediate stations along the whole line between Exeter and Bristol," a Devon council spokesman told the paper. "Before a station can be provided at Cullompton we need suitable local train services that can serve it." The county council wants to develop both Cullompton and Crediton stations as "park and change" sites, where drivers from the wider area will be encouraged to leave their vehicles free of charge. Councillor Linda Holloway, who has been calling for Cullompton to be reopened, said: "It is certainly fantastic news that we have the county council behind us. The key issue will be to provide the trains at the right times and going to the right places, otherwise we will never get people out of their cars."

■ Ticket carnet boosts numbers on Tamar Valley line

A discounted carnet ticket scheme introduced 10 years ago is being credited with boosting passenger numbers on the Plymouth-Gunnislake line. Rebecca Catterall of the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, said: "The carnets have helped increase passenger numbers on the Tamar Valley Line by more than 50 per cent. They have proved popular because of their flexibility and ease of use and the fact that the tickets are sold in local shops and post offices in the Tamar Valley."

■ Worry over Great West Run blocking buses to station

Railfuture has expressed concern to Devon County Council over the extent and length of time of the road closures for The Great West Run in 2013 and hopes this will not be repeated in 2014. In 2013 Sunday morning buses were cancelled and diverted away from Exeter St David's station.

■ Contact Railfuture at: devon-cornwall@railfuture.org.uk

Urgent: 120 diesel trains needed now

By Ian Brown

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We need new diesel trains now for the social railway – and they should be built in Britain.

Before diesellisation, British Rail employed the cascade principle to good but sometimes mixed effect. When new trains were built for main lines, the old trains were passed down.

The branch lines therefore had plenty of old and unsuitable, although sometimes quite comfortable, equipment.

The modernisation plan in the late 1950s and 1960s worked the other way round. New diesel multiple units were built especially for the branch lines.

When politicians closed many of these lines, there was a sort of inverse cascade with branch-line units reallocated.

Nottingham-Manchester trains were formed of two-car Cravens units, replacing a class 45 diesel locomotive and six coaches.

In the 1980s, second-generation diesel units – the Sprinters and the Pacers – were procured.

It was assumed that the cascade principle would return and the Pacers (at the bottom of the popularity charts) would disappear.

For three main reasons, they have not been retired and a different strategy is now required.

Electrification has been slow and largely applied to long-distance routes. Older electric locomotives and displaced vehicles such as the Mark 3s were considered unsuitable and generally thrown away when displaced by more modern electric Pendolinos.

Sustained growth on the network has continued relentlessly, using up any displaced usable diesel rolling stock, and Pacers are by far the cheapest trains to lease so they remain attractive to operators.

On top of this as *Railwatch* readers know only too well, the social railway is growing, requiring much greater capacity.

Electrification rides to the rescue this time round – or does it?

There has been a spate of recent electrification announcements, but as before, these are largely on long-distance routes with limited scope for trains to be cascaded on to the social railway.

There are exceptions, such as Barking-Gospel Oak electrification. This is largely aimed at benefiting long-distance freight, but, as a bonus, will allow eight new Turbostar diesel trains to be cascaded to the social railway.

The north-west electrification project, announced by Lord



IAN BROWN

Adonis when he was Transport Secretary, is an intelligent application of a gradual, incremental approach to electrification.

At each modest stage, electric passenger trains can displace diesels which can in turn cater for growth on the social railway. Even this suffers from the effect of passenger growth.

Ten new four-car electric trains are being delivered to Trans Pennine Express, where the first stage of electrification allows them to be used on Manchester to Glasgow and Edinburgh services.

The journey takes three and a half hours so eight trains are required for an hourly service, plus one for maintenance and only one for peak Friday and Sunday strengthening.

Six-car trains are used at present on this route so the new fleet is not large enough. Diesels will be required to strengthen peak services.

The current plan thus displaces seven three-car diesels, which will be used to strengthen Liverpool-Newcastle services with a new fast hourly service via Manchester Victoria from May.

Both these initiatives are bound to be huge commercial successes to the economic benefit of the north.

But there is no cascade, and relying on one to provide capacity for the social railway is no longer a sustainable strategy.

What about Crossrail and Thameslink?

These huge metro-style projects involve displacement of many elderly electric units for use elsewhere on the network.

Crossrail will also displace some diesel units from the Great Western lines out of Paddington.

Some of these trains will come to the rescue of the social railway but do not add up to a strategy.

Any cascade will be too late because Crossrail and Thameslink do not come on stream until 2018-2019. Growth on other lines in the south-east will continue,



CASCADE CANDIDATES: Class 170 diesel trains on the Barking-Gospel Oak line which is to be electrified

and there are too many calls for the use of displaced units, including the north-west of England and south Wales.

Some of the trains will be too old to be used elsewhere. For example, the class 315s, built in 1980, will be 39 years old when available for cascade. Is this something for south Wales to look forward to?

This process is far too slow to be meaningful in providing for growth on the social railway and one can only speculate when the cascade will eventually trickle down to the Pacers.

My own analysis suggests that as long as growth continues, the Pacers will continue for ever!

Is there a more sensible approach?

Railfuture is devoted to campaigning for rail expansion and reopenings. Putting the infrastructure back in place is difficult enough, but if there is no rolling stock, expansion is stymied.

The recent examples of the Todmorden curve and gross overcrowding at Bolton are a warning. Network Rail has provided the infrastructure and operator Northern is keen to run the service. The difficulty is, where will the rolling stock come from?

The integrated transport authorities share this dilemma in actively wanting to develop services and provide more capacity.

There is a tendency to look at light rail as an alternative to traditional trains.

The next step perhaps would be to consider tram-train operation, which is actively under development in South Yorkshire as part of a Department for Transport experiment, and in Manchester.

All such light rail developments require new trains or trams which are expensive and take time to produce.

The missing strategy, complementary to but not in competition with electrification, should be to build new, attractive, economical diesel trains in Brit-

ain to a standard specification, but competitively sourced and capable of being built by more than one supplier.

With light rail, all orders so far have been unique in specification, constructed in relatively small batches and built in mainland Europe.

We need a more ambitious approach from the Government, which should approve a build of approximately 120 vehicles per year, starting next year.

This would accommodate current growth levels, but it would need to be sustained for approximately eight years before any coherent and meaningful electrification cascade kicks in.

There will be local government elections this year, when the prime motivation of all candidates will be to get elected.

Let us all call on these candidates to promise to implement policies to support a revitalised and growing social railway which would create jobs in providing new diesel trains in many constituencies in the north of England, in the Midlands and in the West of England and Wales.

The train build could be justified on the basis of replacing obsolete low-capacity equipment, a cost-efficient way of providing for rail journey and revenue growth, as well as boosting British train building and its supply chain.

It would also lead to lower operating and maintenance costs, as well as higher availability and reliability. The reliability record of the Pacers is dismal.

The current official policy of fare rises is an unwelcome way of pricing off growth, and is now at a political turning point.

Railfuture members have a clear role in urging politicians to plug the UK rail policy gap to the benefit of the economy and the environment. Let's get lobbying.

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

LOCAL ACTION

North West

By Arthur Thomson

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■ Calder Valley electrification

The Government's decision not to electrify the Calder Valley line is being questioned by local rail users. The line from Leeds to Manchester via Bradford Interchange and Halifax must be included says STORM, the Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester Lines group. It also believes the short section from Dryclough and Milner Royd Junctions on the line to Mirfield should also be electrified. The issue is critical now because a Government task force has been set up to consider the next electrification schemes in the North. STORM points out that the line carries over 10 million passengers per annum and is frequently used as a diversionary route by TransPennine Express. When the main TPE route via Huddersfield is electrified this diversion will not be possible and, with six fast TPE trains an hour between Leeds and Manchester, chaos will result, with the prospect of thousands of stranded passengers within hours.

■ FLAG waving for a fair deal for Cumbrian coast line

The Furness Line Action Group is fighting to prevent a new franchise taking the Cumbrian coast line back 20 years in time. Reductions in Manchester through services in December 2013 and more in May are the tip of the iceberg. FLAG fears all could be removed after 2016 under the new Northern franchise. Both short and medium term investment is desperately needed on the Furness line. FLAG is aiming to prevent the DfT from changing the franchise specification by removing the requirement for through Barrow to Manchester services (ironically threatened by the advance of electrification elsewhere in the North West). It has enlisted the help of local MPs Tim Farron and John Woodcock and the Cumbria Better Connected campaign. FLAG also is calling for a Barrow-Whitehaven Sunday service, a more regular service, better connections and more use of the line by freight. FLAG wants the line from Carnforth to Barrow electrified "in the long term" and resignalling of Barrow-Whitehaven to eliminate manual crossings and facilitate new services.

■ Updated curve plan could boost Mersey-Dee rail links

A bi-directional curve at Halton could be reinstated in 2016 to link the Chester-Manchester and Liverpool-Crewe lines. It would clear the way for new train services between Liverpool, Runcorn, Chester, Wrexham and Llandudno for which North Cheshire Rail Users have long campaigned. Merseytravel has updated the GRIP 3 study, and is now going ahead with a GRIP 4 study, which they are funding with the Welsh Government and local authorities. Network Rail says the cost could be cut from an estimated £16 million to £10 million by combining work with maintenance planned for Weaver Junction to Wavertree Junction.

■ Friends back plan for Manchester-Carlisle service

A new passenger service should be run from Manchester Airport to Carlisle via Blackburn, Hellifield and the Settle-Carlisle line. It would use 18 miles of under-utilised track from Clitheroe to Hellifield and would require no capital investment, say the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line. The Friends are working on a business study to convince train operators and the Government of the value of the service.

■ Freight plan for Settle-Carlisle line

Gritstone from quarries at Helwith Bridge may switch from road to rail. Quarry owners, newly merged Lafarge Tarmac, are hoping to re-establish a connection with the Settle-Carlisle line so the stone can be taken to Darwen, Lancashire, by train for onward despatch, also by rail.



Wales

By Rowland Pittard
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Transport policy changes

A £2 billion metro system for South East Wales is likely to be a key component in a new national transport plan being developed by Welsh transport minister Edwina Hart, announced in January. She has appointed a metro implementation group to make detailed recommendations by the summer, as well as a Cambrian railways implementation group to develop a better service on the Aberystwyth-Shrewsbury line. The Heart of Wales Line Forum has been asked to find ways of improving its service. Her changes will lead to the closure of the four Welsh transport consortia and the passenger transport users committee. A ministerial task force is building up evidence to support a call to the British government for the electrification of the north Wales main line. Consultant Mark Barry has been commissioned to provide a strategic report focused on maximising the benefits from the Valley lines electrification.

One new station opens and another is on the way

A new £5 million station, Energlyn & Churchill Park, near Caerphilly, was officially opened in December as part of a £220 million scheme to improve the railways in Cardiff and the Valleys. A new £3.5 million station at Pye Corner, Newport, on the Ebbw Vale line, is expected to open later this year.

Storms play havoc with train services along the coast

Storms in January closed the Cambrian coast line between Harlech and Dovey Junction. The line north of Harlech was already closed because of damage to the bridge over the River Dwyryd near Llandecwyn. Two trains were trapped at Barmouth for 10 days and were eventually moved 74 miles by road to Chester. A series of replacement bus services has been introduced between Machynlleth and Pwllheli while the new river bridge is built between Penrhyndeudraeth and Llandecwyn. In south Wales, the line between Llanelli and Carmarthen was closed for 10 days following breaches in the sea wall. Five trains, trapped west of the blockages, maintained rail services west of Carmarthen.

Railway industry in joint action with Welsh Government

Bombardier, Hitachi and Alstom hosted a rail industry supply chain event at Cardiff city stadium in January in conjunction with the Welsh Government.

New Railfuture development plan for sale

On Track for the 21st Century – A Development Plan for the Railways of Wales and the Borders, published by Railfuture Wales, is now available for sale. It is available (post free) for £12.50 (£9.50 for Railfuture members) from Rowland Pittard, 61 Chantal Avenue, Penyfael, Bridgend, Glamorgan CF31 4NW (email: rowland.pittard@railfuturewales.org.uk). Please quote your Railfuture membership number. The plan can also be read on the Railfuture Wales website – and downloaded.

Untapped potential of the Welsh rail network

There is vast, untapped potential to develop the rail infrastructure of Wales to benefit the economy and environment, said Plaid Cymru MEP Jill Evans who met European Union officials in December. She has accused the British and Welsh governments of failing to seek any of the £21 billion EU funds for improving cross-border links.

Parcel service mooted as well as hourly train service

Parcels could be carried on trains between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth as a way of boosting trade and enterprise. Steve Kaye of Powys Federation of Small Businesses said trains could carry parcels between towns along the Cambrian routes, but he said the main aim was to secure an hourly service on the line.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk

Have your say survey: What YOU want

By Chris Page

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Railfuture set up a *Have Your Say* survey to collect views on issues facing the railways and how Railfuture can help.

The survey ran online and a questionnaire was also sent out with the December *Railwatch*.

We received an excellent response with 79% online and 21% by post, with 13% of the total coming from non members.

The most important issue facing the railways was deemed to be capacity (32% of responses).

Other popular topics were fares 12%, industry costs 4%, access to the network for people without a station nearby (5% overall, but 19% for non-members), privatisation 7%, fragmentation and the franchising system 5% while the figure for HS2 was 4%.

We did not ask for views on HS2, but of respondents who gave a view, 59% were in favour and 41% against.

The capacity issue is seen to be important to reduce overcrowding and satisfy demand, but also to enable economic growth and to reduce pollution by other forms of transport.

The solution is seen to be investment in infrastructure with more track and trains, and also some new lines.

On fares, respondents suggested freezing or reducing fares with some suggesting higher taxpayer support, while a few called for nationalisation.

The solution to improving access to the network is seen as building new or reopening selected lines, to be achieved by campaigning and working with others.

The respondents who identified privatisation as most important, saw it as wasting money. Most proposed renationalisation as franchises come up for renewal, although some suggested mutual ownership, to be achieved by political campaigning.

Other respondents who identified franchising or fragmentation wanted improvements in the franchise system and better integration.

Respondents said campaigning would be more effective by lobbying politicians (17% overall but 29% for non-members), increase media contact 9%, agree policy and focus on specific issues 8%, join forces with other like-minded organisations 5%, engage the wider public 5%, and focus on passenger issues 5%.

Some respondents were not impressed by our campaigning, but others recognised Railfuture's efforts to become more

professional and objective. Respondents' favourite action was reopening lines 21%, followed by electrification 9%, improving services 5%, improving a line 6%, improving the travel experience 4%, and simplifying fares 5%.

The need for more luggage and cycle space on trains, and improving modal integration was also mentioned.

Asked how they help Railfuture, only 9% said they already help to campaign, while 14% said they were unable to help.

Railfuture's directors know of course that just being a member is support in itself.

A promising 77% of respondents are willing to help, including 13% in general or local campaigning, 10% in lobbying politicians or rail companies, 17% writing letters, and 14% who did not know how to help but were willing.

Our respondents just need to be mobilised and guided either nationally or by branches and 52% of them provided an email address so that we can contact them. One response suggested a template, based on existing successful campaigns, to help provide that guidance.

Asked how Railfuture should attract new members, the most frequent responses were to increase media exposure 18%, leaflets or posters at stations or on trains 13%, advertising 8%, active campaigning (6% overall but 14% for non-members), and to make ourselves relevant to passengers.

Other interesting ideas were to link up with university student unions to encourage more young members who are likely to use rail, to offer a membership gift pack to new members, and for members to recruit their friends and colleagues.

We asked how respondents had first heard of Railfuture, as that should give us a clue as to the most effective way of making contact with potential new members. A small number (3%) said that they had joined one of Railfuture's predecessors (which as one respondent put it, is code for can't remember) while 30% actually admitted they could not remember.

However 18% heard of Railfuture through a friend, 9% through a rail user group, 8% through the internet, and 5% through local campaigns. A few members first heard of Railfuture through active recruiting, for example by a member walking through a train. The number may be low because few of us have tried that approach. We also asked what had persuaded our respondents

to join. The main reasons were a desire to campaign actively (17%), belief in rail as an efficient and sustainable form of transport 26%, interest in railways (24% overall but only 4% for non-members), being a regular rail user 8%, and despair at the state of rail at the time 5%.



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

MORE CAMPAIGNING NEEDED: The storm which washed away the railway at Dawlish in February alerted public and the authorities to Railfuture's calls for an alternative all-weather route to Cornwall. One choice is via Okehampton and Tavistock, a route from Exeter to Plymouth, much of which closed in 1968. If that route reopened, it could lead to further reopenings. Network Rail said the work could cost £200 million. The line from Lydford (on the Okehampton-Tavistock section) could subsequently be reopened to restore rail services to Launceston and even as far as the north Devon coast

to join. The main reasons were a desire to campaign actively (17%), belief in rail as an efficient and sustainable form of transport 26%, interest in railways (24% overall but only 4% for non-members), being a regular rail user 8%, and despair at the state of rail at the time 5%.

The key factor to persuade people to join is visible successes by Railfuture. When we asked what activities respondents would like the branch to organise, 7% felt branch activities are OK as they are, and 7% do not attend.

Overall, 39% (50% for non-members) wanted activities where they could actively further Railfuture campaigns, for example, engaging other organisations or the public, canvassing passengers, meeting decision makers and train operators, fundraising, and station adoption or counts.

The remaining 47% (40% for non-members) wanted activities in which they can participate passively, for example visits, speakers or outings.

In ranking the top five key issues on which Railfuture should be campaigning, the overall result was capacity, fares, new lines, and electrification, followed by network connectivity. Most of us would like to see lower fares and

more investment in the railways. The next question forced respondents to make the difficult choice between lower fares (26%) and investment (74%).

Railfuture might have more influence with stakeholders if it were seen as representing rail users, so we asked whether Railfuture should focus on improving the service to customers (17%) or development of the railway network (83%).

For many members, *Railwatch* is their only contact with Railfuture. Many respondents said it is informative and worth reading, but a few felt it should say more about campaigning, the layout needs updating and the tone is too negative.

Finally how is Railfuture perceived? This drew a wide variety of responses, from effective to ineffective, punches above weight to limited influence, confrontational to not challenging enough, forward looking and backward looking.

Some complained that there is too much internal conflict. On the positive side Railfuture is seen as committed, knowledgeable, becoming more professional and influential, and with the opportunity for a key role to bridge the gap between users and the industry.

London and South East

By Roger Blake
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Holiday rail services

Railfuture is keen to persuade Network Rail and the train operators of the importance of rail services over Christmas and New Year. Few services ran on Boxing Day and only Sunday services ran on New Year's Day, except on the Overground, which ran a well-used Saturday service. Railfuture wants to see trains run when they are needed for people to visit shops and sporting events at Christmas time. These services should be included in any new franchises. Network Rail is committed to the concept of a seven-day railway but it and the train operators need to go further.



Carollers join MP to demand a better Sunday service

Around 50 passengers and representatives from local groups turned out at Winchelsea station on Saturday 7 December, to call for all-day Sunday services at Winchelsea and Three Oaks stations on the Marshlink line. At present the stations have only three calling services, compared to 19 on Saturday. Campaigners want the new franchise to provide the same number of trains on Sundays. Hastings & Rye MP Amber Rudd supported the gathering organised by the Three Oaks and Winchelsea Action for Rail Transport. She joined in a hearty rendition of *Once at Winchelsea station* to the tune of a well-known carol.

Overground transport for more of London

Transport for London's latest business plan shows the Overground network covering services from Liverpool Street by the end of next year. Railfuture expects services to Enfield Town and Cheshunt via Seven Sisters, as well as to Walthamstow and Chingford, to come within TfL's orbit. Existing and future Overground routes will be linked via a new passenger interchange between Hackney Central and Hackney Downs early next year.

Eurostar and Ashford anniversaries in 2014

Eurostar will mark its 20th anniversary in November. February was also the fifth anniversary of Eurostar reintroducing a daily return service between Ashford International and Brussels. Bexhill Rail Action Group prides itself on having three links with London, one via Ashford. Going via Ashford also allows a Bexhill to Brussels rail journey in three hours.

Bridge the electrification gaps and banish the diesels

Railfuture is keen to see two of the South East's diesel "islands" electrified. We made this clear in our response to Network Rail's draft enhancements delivery plan for the five years to 2019. In its new Rail Strategy Action Plan, East Sussex County Council gives top priority to electrification of Uckfield-Hurst Green and Ashford-Hastings.

Value of heritage rail in focus at branch AGM

At the branch AGM on Saturday 26 April, Railfuture members will have a chance to hear from three speakers about the economic value of heritage railways: *Railwatch* contributor Chris Austin, secretary of the all-party parliamentary group on heritage railways, Chris MacRae, deputy chairman of Spa Valley Railway and Graham Baldwin, general manager of the Kent & East Sussex Railway.

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



Overcrowding

I see from *Railwatch* 138 that overcrowding is so bad at Grimsby that TransPennine Express is putting up signs listing the worst trains and suggesting passengers use other services.

To my mind, this is adding insult to injury. Train operators should provide adequate passenger accommodation. What next? Will rail passengers at Grimsby have to book in advance, as with airlines?

In many areas, train overcrowding is becoming extreme and potentially dangerous in the event of a fire or an accident.

A local MP can be voted out at the next general election but unfortunately franchise holders can not. The only answer is to get rid of the party which introduced privatisation in the first place.

Sadly Labour failed to renationalise when it was in power from 1997 to 2010.

Overcrowding should be referred to the Health and Safety Executive, which would be involved in the event of even one fatality. Maybe even the police could intervene as they can when people's safety is put at risk.

Overcrowding is unacceptable, particularly if additional rolling stock is available but the franchise holder is not prepared to lease it because it wants to maximise its profit. I agree with Railfuture's John Rogers who said the franchise system is hideously expensive, with millions of pounds being wasted.

As we saw in the *Railwatch* North East report, railway operation was simpler when companies controlled all aspects of the operation. It is a pity those days are gone.

I was also concerned to see in the *Railwatch* back page report that London Mayor Boris Johnson has allowed the single bus fare to rise by 56% in five

years. As a Northern Ireland resident, I appreciate Johnson's purchase of 600 buses from Ballymena but he has failed to introduce more trams and trolley buses in London and has cancelled the extension to the congestion zone.

It is not inconceivable that he could hold a senior position in national government at some stage and his record on environmental matters and public transport does not augur well.

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PlusBus downside

I am sorry to say that I have always regarded the PlusBus scheme – mentioned in Trevor Garrod's Final Mile article in *Railwatch* 138 – as a bit of a 'con'. While it may indeed be the case that the scheme is available in 290 towns in Great Britain, it does not follow that someone arriving by rail in a particular town will find a convenient bus service to take them to their final destination. The lack of co-ordination of bus and rail networks, certainly outside London, means that the rail traveller is more likely to find that buses passing the station (assuming that there are any) are heading for destinations such as out-of-town superstores or areas of social housing, rather than places of visitor interest or, indeed, non rail-served towns.

There are also issues relating to the conditions in which passengers are expected to make an interchange. Even where money has been invested in upgrading the physical plant – which is far from universally the case – there often seems to be inadequate information and management of the facilities. For example, on a recent visit to Bath's otherwise excellent new bus station, ideally placed by the railway station, I found no public toilets and timetables dispensed on photocopy paper.

PlusBus is really a product of the UK's dysfunctional "public"

(deregulated private) transport, and is no substitute for rolling out physical and managerial integration on the German Verkehrsverbund (or perhaps our own Transport for London) model, across the country.

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Beeching's legacy

It's a pity so many of us have to suffer as a result of the axe being wielded during the Beeching era, with no thought for the future.

Typical of the many "lash-ups" Beeching left us is the junction station of Craven Arms where the Heart of Wales line to Swansea joins the Shrewsbury-Newport Marches lines.

The lovely Victorian station set-up was destroyed, leaving a terrible track layout, no facility for disabled people to cross the line and no crossover points.

Today's station gives a very poor impression of the quite pleasant town of Craven Arms.

There are many improvements, not just at Craven Arms, needed to redress the ghastliness of the Beeching-Marples cuts.

J Evered, Howey, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5RB

HS2 and freight

As someone who attended the November Railfuture conference at Oxford I was surprised not to see a report of Lord Berkeley's pledge of the Rail Freight Group's support for HS2 on the grounds that it would free up capacity on existing lines for a mixture of stopping passenger services and freight.

He said the current situation of fast passenger trains mixing with stopping passenger services on existing lines had led to freight services stopping and starting between headways and was a deterrent to potential freight customers who needed guaranteed timed deliveries. The increased freight capacity from the Thames Gateway and other ports coupled with HS2 would provide increased capacity for local services on existing lines and could reduce road freight,

RAIL ACTION

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

thus improving the road network for everyone.

*Colin Major
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A better HS2

I agree with Michael Weinberg and John Davis in *Railwatch* 137 that the proposal for HS2 should be supported by Railfuture, despite our reservations about details, as it is the only one on offer. Now that the "paving" bill has been passed by Parliament, we should press for amendments to the substantive act to incorporate improvements to the planned scheme. I would suggest that the following three improvements are vital.

1. The "Euston Cross" terminal proposed by Lords Berkeley and Bradshaw. The Government is willing to spend billions on unnecessary tunnelling to spare the sensitive ears of Conservative voters in the Chilterns, but is not concerned about the people of Camden, where thousands of people will have their lives disrupted and hundreds will lose their homes. An underground "Euston Cross" would not only be less disruptive, but would have better connections at St Pancras as well as Euston.

2. A connection with the New Street lines at Birmingham, not only for through trains from London to Wolverhampton, but also for through services from the South West. Ian Brown comments on the outrageous claim in the KPMG report that places such as Cambridge and Bristol will lose hundreds of millions from the building of HS2, with figures presumably plucked out of thin air. Cambridge may not benefit directly from HS2, but certainly will not lose anything. Bristol, however, would benefit directly by being plugged into HS2 at Birmingham. Significantly the Department for Transport map in *Railwatch* 138 shows connections to the North of England and Scotland but not to the South-West, indicative of the London-centric mindset of the planners. The planners and civil servants in HS2 Ltd fail to consider the high speed lines as an integral part of the national rail system, but only as fast routes to and from London.

3. An interchange station in North Bucks where HS2 will cross the Oxford-Milton Keynes line. Two speakers at the Oxford conference were rather dismissive about this, arguing that it would not be "high speed" if trains had to make extra stops.

www.railfuture.org.uk

I do not believe that passengers would be put off by trains having to take an extra five minutes or so to make an intermediate stop. Eurostar passengers are not deterred from travelling on trains which stop at Ebbsfleet or Ashford. On the German high speed line between Frankfurt and Cologne, InterCityExpress trains stop at Montabaur (population 12,500), connecting with a single diesel railcar on the branch line to Siershahn (population 2,779). The planned growth of Milton Keynes will make it the eighth largest city in Britain. Why should Milton Keynes be denied a high speed service to the North?

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HS2 North link line

Looking at the HS2 map in *Railwatch* 138 and the journey times on the HS2 website I wonder whether a north-east to north-west link line might be worth belated consideration for the business case. There are significant numbers of passengers who travel from the North East to Manchester Airport via the trans-Pennine routes, both rail and road.

The current journey time between Newcastle and Manchester Airport via TransPennine Express is between 176 and 180 minutes. According to the HS2 website, Newcastle-Birmingham will be 127 minutes, Birmingham-Manchester Airport 32 minutes, with interchanging taking 15 minutes. This makes a total of 174 minutes.

I estimate a link line could save 25 minutes on this journey, giving a very competitive 149 minutes overall journey time.

A link line could also give Nottingham a direct service to the airport (currently there is no direct service) improving journey times from 140 minutes to 83 minutes (36+15+32).

Removing 25 minutes from this journey puts Nottingham and Derby within an hour of Manchester Airport with no change.

The further north the link line the better the journey time savings.

*David Wells
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PC campaigning

I deplore your dipping into politically correct water in *Railwatch* 138 by saying we

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



CROSSRAIL: A computer-generated image of the Aventura train for London's Crossrail

Designed and built in Britain

This is the new Crossrail train which will operate east-west services across London from 2017.

On Crossrail, unlike the north-south services on Thameslink, passengers will have the satisfaction of knowing that their train was conceived, designed and built in Great Britain.

The 65 Aventura trains for Crossrail will cost £1 billion and be built at Bombardier's Litchurch Lane depot in Derby, which is currently making new trains for the London Underground.

Each new Aventura train will be able to carry 1,500 people and will be maintained by Bombardier at Old Oak Common.

"We have engineers who have been designing UK trains and building them for years," said Jon Shaw of Bombardier. Derby

celebrates 175 years in the railway business this year, although Litchurch Lane depot has been owned by the Canadian-based company Bombardier only since 2001. The Derby area has the largest cluster of rail firms in the world.

Litchurch Lane is Bombardier's global centre of excellence for both aluminium train bodies and light-weight bogie design. Its engineers are now working on the new V300 high-speed train for Trenitalia, the Italian state-owned railway. The V300 will be the fastest train in Europe when it enters service.

Crossrail will operate from Maidenhead and Heathrow Airport in the west to Abbey Wood and Shenfield in the east.

BBC video: www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-26063121

want "especially women, young people and those from ethnic minorities", even though I want Railfuture to get more members.

It does not matter who joins us, as long as they are committed to the cause in which we believe. Railfuture is not a political party, but a campaigning group. Consequently we do not have to tick the boxes for equal representation, provided we are not discriminating against – or in favour – of anybody.

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Editors' note: The Railfuture board is keen to make Railfuture membership more representative of wider society,

particularly as we claim to speak for all rail users.

Reopen more lines

I have an ambivalence towards the HS2 project. Nor can I agree with John Stanford in *Railwatch* 138 saying it is a false argument to suggest that money could be better spent on projects outside HS2. There is a great need for stations and routes closed under the Beeching axe to be reopened in order to spread the benefit of rail travel and help reduce road usage.

He says that there are improvements being undertaken elsewhere external to HS2 but many projects take for ever to

accomplish, if they happen at all. Authorities here are very good at talking about reopening railways but very slow in getting an end result.

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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

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Onwards to Hawick

By Allison Cosgrove

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Onwards to Hawick was the optimistic theme for the Campaign for Borders Rail annual general meeting held in a packed auditorium at Tower Mill in Hawick. Why optimistic?

The first tranche of the Borders Railway is scheduled to run only from Edinburgh to Tweedbank, but clearly due to this incredibly effective campaigning organisation, nothing will suffice until the whole route from Edinburgh to Hawick and then on to Carlisle is reinstated.

Chairman Simon Walton welcomed all members including three from Railfuture Scotland, two from Rail Action Group East of Scotland and a representative from *Railway Magazine*, as well as the local Borders press.

Clearly the progression of works on the railway and the news that passenger charter trains are to be accommodated with the tourism potential that goes with them, has made the campaign seem much more real and there is an air of excitement that "this is actually happening at last".

Also present was doughty campaigner Madge Elliot who has been on the case since the railway to her home town of Hawick closed in 1969 and has striven to see its return ever since. The list of activities over the past year was remarkable for a fairly small organisation



WELL CONNECTED: The Borders Railway will link Edinburgh to Galashiels and Tweedbank next year, but it could go further



MADGE ELLIOT BBC

and highlighted the breadth of their campaigning. At a meeting with the Scottish Minister for Rural Affairs Richard Lochhead, they put the case for a full reinstatement to Carlisle. They

joined the Scottish Borders Tourism Partnership and attended a special conference on Maximising Tourism via the Borders Railway.

Campaign members also met with the author Lord Faulkner, who joined the campaign as a result. Other action includes communicating with the media and attending the royal garden party at Holyroodhouse where the campaigners had an audience with Prince Edward.

Although the Borders Railway is not yet operational, the campaign has already appointed a liaison officer to take forward the campaign's case for a community rail partnership. At this point the meeting was advised of the

breadth of possible visitors to the Borders, noting that a party of 60 Russians is scheduled to arrive this year to visit the home of Thomas the Rhymer at Earlston, not far from Galashiels. Thomas was popularised by Sir Walter Scott whose Tweedbank home was at Abbotsford, a house which has been recently refurbished. Once the railway is rebuilt, it will be possible for fans of Thomas and Sir Walter to travel from Edinburgh to Galashiels by train.

Also adjacent to the railway is Newtongrange Mining Museum, another major visitor attraction which will benefit from visitors using rail rather than car.

On a more sombre note, the audience was reminded of the number of young people who leave the Borders each year for further education and work because of travel problems, especially to Edinburgh. The time of the daily bus journey along the A7 has not improved in 40 years.

A quicker rail journey to the capital may enable younger people to stay in the Borders as well as encouraging new development along the line.

Good reason to be optimistic? Yes, it is really happening and 2015 will see rail coming back to the Borders after an absence of 46 years. It has been the largest area of western Europe without access to a railway, and at 30 miles long, it is the longest reopening in the whole of the United Kingdom.

Another Borders rail service wins backing

A rail service should be established from Edinburgh to Dunbar and Berwick-upon-Tweed, together with new stations at East Linton and Reston.

The recommendation comes in a report which has been submitted to Scottish Transport Minister Keith Brown.

The report, produced by the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership, said the service would increase access to rail travel throughout East Lothian and the Borders

SESTRAN's Russell Imrie said: "This proposal is included as a priced option in the draft invitation to tender for the re-letting of the ScotRail franchise."

Members of Rail Action Group East of Scotland, who have been campaigning for the reopening of stations at East Linton in East Lothian and Reston in Berwickshire, were delighted by the

news. Tom Thorburn, RAGES' Chair, said "At long last the minister will see the full case for increased access through East Lothian and Berwickshire which will benefit both counties. As well as taking hundreds of cars off the busy A1, a rail service will allow travel for young people in eastern Berwickshire to the Edinburgh area for further education and jobs"

Parliamentary rail group

A Cross Party Group on Rail has been set up in the Scottish Parliament, co-convened by John Mason MSP and Neil Bibby MSP. The Scottish National Party, Labour, Conservative, and Green Parties are represented as well as Independent John Finnie, plus members of rail organisations.

In the Scottish Parliament, unlike Westminster, members of the public with a particular interest can be members of cross party

groups, and attendance is not restricted to parliamentarians.

Organisations represented were Railfuture, RailQWest, Campaign for Borders Rail, Rail Action Group East of Scotland, and the RMT.

Politics of road building

The Rail Freight Group has accused Transport Scotland of failing to undertake proper analysis of rail and road alternatives to the planned A9 dualling from Perth to Inverness.

Since its members expressed alarm early last year at the implications of A9 dualling for rail freight, RFG has been urging Transport Scotland to divulge what analyses they undertook of alternative packages of road and rail investment before deciding to press on with full A9 dualling. Now RFG says that a Freedom of Information response from the Government agency reveals

that the Perth-Inverness corridor appraisal process was "seriously deficient" and that the decision to proceed with A9 dualling without properly considering cross-modal alternatives was "politics-led" rather than "evidence-based".

RFG Scottish Representative David Spaven said: "The Perth-Inverness railway is still two thirds single-track, and proposed rail enhancements are capped at £600 million, yet Transport Scotland plans to spend £3 billion on full A9 dualling.

"This huge imbalance of investment will lead to freight traffic switching from rail to road, which of course is contrary to Government policy."

RFG is calling on the Government agency to undertake a fresh evaluation, as part of the still-incomplete outline business case for the A9 dualling programme.



Rail investment in Scotland is high. The busy Edinburgh southern by-pass road is temporarily diverted at Sherriffhall to allow a bridge to be constructed as part of the programme to reinstate the Borders Railway. Once the bridge is complete, the road will be moved back to its original alignment

Devolution is paying dividends for railways

I was proud to work for British Rail for 30 years, and saw the virtues of a strong, integrated railway, efficiently managed as a national network.

It had the benefits of coherence, economies of scale and professionalism.

It also had the drawbacks of uncertain and constantly changing levels of Government funding, that were never quite enough to do the job properly. It was subject to sometimes capricious directives, and was not always very responsive to local demand.

The balkanisation of the railway when it was privatised produced big problems which are only now being addressed and I still have concerns that devolution, if taken too far, will result in a fragmented national network.

But, I have to recognise that the devolved bits of the railway – Scotland, London, the passenger transport executives and to a lesser extent Wales, have brought big benefits and more investment in the local network than we could ever have dreamed of in British Rail days. During

privatisation, Bob Reid, the second BR chairman of that name, argued strongly that Railtrack, as it then was, should be kept as a single national entity, and he was right to do so, for strategic reasons as well as those of stability and safety.

Network Rail remains a national organisation but is itself devolving responsibilities to its route directors.

One concern we have in the Community Rail movement is that we shall lose some of the national focus and drive that the proactive and supremely competent community rail team under Jerry Swift has provided for 10 years.

Microfranchising?

For years the concept of micro-franchises has been put forward as the way to get costs down and provide a much better local service, following the example of German local lines such as the Regiobahn of Nord Rhine-Westphalia.

But their success has depended also on integrated transport, purpose-built new rolling stock, strong regional authorities and

major investment. None of these elements is generally available in England.

In particular, local government has neither the resources nor structure to allow this, and even the modest proposals for the Abbey line in Hertfordshire for example, founded on the question of who bears the financial risk if the line is separated from Network Rail.

If you doubt the importance of this, just think about the costs involved in restoring the Cambrian Coast line after the recent tidal surge and flood damage, or even the cost for an independent owner to insure against such risks.

Rail in the North of England

At one stage it looked as if rail in the north might be able to use the strength of the passenger transport executives to take on many of the responsibilities of running local and regional services, but it now looks as if the department has rowed back from this.

Nevertheless, planning for it has produced a workable structure and is likely to result in a much closer engagement of northern

English local authorities in the franchise specification than would otherwise have been the case.

Meanwhile, in Wales, it is expected that more powers over specifying and funding railway services will be devolved to the Welsh Government before tenders are sought for the next Wales & Borders franchise.

So, the direction of travel is clear but the speed is not. My guess is that any further significant development in England outside London and the passenger transport executive areas may have to wait until interest in regional government revives.

Meanwhile, community rail partnerships have an increasingly important role to play in securing better local transport and in providing genuinely local input to the services provided, but are struggling with reduced funding.

Continued local authority engagement and funding remains crucial, so please make sure you support your local partnerships during this difficult and uncertain time.



North East

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

■ ■ New trains for the North help make the case for rail



A newly delivered class 350 electric train at Preston in January. Surprisingly, the train is not equipped with wifi. TransPennine Express says none of its trains are equipped with wifi and there are no plans to install it

In November, Railfuture North East welcomed Chris Nutton, programme development manager for TransPennine Express, who gave an illustrated account of TPE's achievements during the current franchise and future expectations. The arrival of 10 new electric trains for the service from the North West to Scotland emphasises the importance of future cross-Pennine electrification which must be linked to the East Coast main line system to provide a good service for the North East.

In January branch chairman Trevor Watson and Peter Kenyon attended a breakfast meeting organised in Newcastle by north east members of the East Coast Main Line Consortium. Among the speakers were Heidi Mottram, regional chair of the Confederation of British Industry, and Nick Forbes, leader of Newcastle City Council.

The branch is liaising with NewRail, the centre for rail research at Newcastle University (see ncl.ac.uk/newrail). Railfuture NE chairman Trevor Watson and two committee members attended a February event organised at the Great North Museum in Newcastle, aimed at promoting UK railways as a career option. More than 100 young people attended.

■ ■ Volunteers recognised for Aln Valley achievement

Barred by the Alnwick bypass road from using the last mile of the track bed of the old Alnmouth-Alnwick line, the enterprising band of volunteers dedicated to reopening the link to Alnmouth National Rail station created a new terminus beside the bypass. This remarkable achievement resulted in the award of a Highly Commended certificate in the Small Groups class by the Heritage Railway Association "for the establishment, after many years of struggle, of a standard gauge station and depot complex from new on a virgin site". See www.alnvalleyrailway.co.uk for more information.

■ ■ Passenger facilities improve but luxury not yet on offer

The southbound platform at Morpeth now has a glass-sided windbreak, useful on chilly mornings, though northbound passengers still shiver in a basic brick shelter, a far cry from the coal fires in the waiting rooms of the old NER station. Along the line to Newcastle, a new steel footbridge has been erected with commendable speed at Cramlington.

■ ■ Northern Rail improves service at neglected stations

The Tyne Valley line, a neglected outpost of Northern Rail, has recently seen an improved calling pattern at the Newcastle end of the line. From limited peak time calls only, Dunston now has 31 weekday trains and Blaydon 20.

■ ■ Threat to connections provokes protest to operator

The ever-vigilant Coastliners group is to protest once again that Newcastle-Sunderland-Hartlepool-Middlesbrough line which serves up to a million people, faces a reduction in TransPennine connections with Northern Trains on the Middlesbrough route. Coastliners advocate, in the longer term, a new direct service between York, Yarm, Eaglescliffe, Stockton and points north along the coast to Sunderland. Bridging the 50-mile gap between Northern Rail's York-Leeds-Harrogate and its Darlington-Eaglescliffe-Saltburn services ought to be a vital part of the re-franchising process.

Opportunities for rail education and training

By Marin Marinov
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The railway industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the world so it is expected that an increasing number of people will work in railway positions in their company three years from now.

This indicates a significant potential for railway education and training in the near future.

The university programmes in railways should be more globally oriented, employ interdisciplinary approaches and promote transversal skills such as creativity, research and development and innovation, as well as flexibility.

Recent surveys conducted within European Union education-focused projects found that higher education in rail operations, management and logistics will benefit both service users and providers in improving their economic performance and trade development. Individuals will also benefit for their prospective career paths. Future rail professionals who serve in the diverse industry must be able to

master increasing levels of new information technologies, adopt an innovative approach and comprehend system complexities which differ from the historical concepts and practices that concentrated more on orthodox methods. Such a critical need must be addressed in university programmes and training courses to include modern logistics principles and practices.

NewRail has designed a modern, research-based teaching portfolio, which includes a mix of rail-focused teaching and learning activities, such as an MSc in rail freight and logistics, a PhD in organisation, management and economics of train movement, an intensive programme in rail logistics, as well as a good span of continuing professional development courses.

The portfolio aim is to develop the student's ability to initiate and carry out advanced performance systems analysis, and research projects to solve managerial and engineering-related problems in rail freight and logistics. Specifically, we aim to equip our

graduates with the skills and qualifications they will need to follow a management and/or engineering career in rail freight and logistics.

NewRail's teaching portfolio provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas:

- Railway engineering
- Rail freight operations and management
- Rail economics and planning
- Freight transport logistics
- Rail transport policy, safety and security
- Intermodal and multimodal freight transport
- Rail project risk and value management
- Rail asset management
- Rail marketing and public engagement

The learning outcomes from our activities are a sound understanding of rail management, engineering and logistics concepts, operations, economics, technologies and policies and practice, with



Dr Marin Marinov

a focus on effective freight distributions. Specifically our approach includes a range of multidisciplinary activities such as lectures with discussion, major research projects, panels of experts, analytical and simulation modelling, performance analysis, case studies, scenarios, surveys, lean production systems, systems design, evaluation of network policy and strategy, optimisation of investment choice, economic assessment, road mapping, web conferences and technical visits.

For further information, please visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/newrail/education/msc.htm

■ Dr Marinov is manager of the Rail Education Group, NewRail, Newcastle University.

International rail advice

By Trevor Garrod
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There is a need for simple, concise advice to encourage people to travel to and around continental Europe by train, so the international group of Railfuture has stepped in to meet that need with a new leaflet.

Our leaflet points out how many destinations in France, Germany and other continental countries can now be reached in a day from London, and how many journeys such as Birmingham-Cologne or Cardiff-Amsterdam are also within a day's comfortable rail travel.

We list more than a dozen agencies or websites through whom it is possible to book Eurostar and continental tickets and give other useful sources of information and advice.

Railfuture's leaflet stresses that many of our members are experienced travellers who have, for example, also found InterRail and Rail & Sail tickets convenient and good value for money when travelling to Ireland or the continent.

The leaflet will be available by Easter and can also be viewed on our website www.railfuture.org.uk We hope that it will also

be available at many stations and other outlets.

For a copy or copies, please contact Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ or email: trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk

Arriva in Poland

Arriva has won an £18 million two-year contract to run the trains on four electrified rail routes in northern Poland, including services to Torun Główny and Bydgoszcz. Arriva already operates diesel services in the area.

New Alpine tunnel

Drilling began in November on the 35-mile tunnel for a new £6 billion high-speed rail route through the Alps between Lyon and Turin. The France-Italy line is expected to be operational in 2025. It is expected to cut one million lorry journeys and reduce passenger train times between Paris and Milan from seven hours to just over four.

Leipzig city link

Leipzig's new £800 million 2.5 mile long cross-city twin-track train tunnel came into operation in December

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◆◆◆◆ New 1,000 mile long high-speed line across the Gobi desert to Urumqi completed

Severnside

By Nigel Bray
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■ ■ Joint action needed on rail

Railfuture and Friends of Bridgwater Station were represented at a Somerset Public Transport Forum in Taunton on 13 November. The consensus among rail campaigners was that the county council needs to define its rail priorities and discuss them with neighbouring authorities if train services in Somerset are not to be squeezed between the well-developed plans for Metro West and Devon Metro based on the suburban networks of Bristol and Exeter. Good news came in January when we learnt that there is to be a feasibility study into reopening Wellington and Cullompton stations, led by Devon County Council.

■ ■ MP's film night boosts case for rail reopening



I attended a film evening at Henbury Social Club hosted by Charlotte Leslie MP, pictured left, on 6 December. The film made the case for reopening the complete Henbury Loop line to passengers as part of Metro West and included an interview with *Bristol Post* railway columnist David Wood. My journey to the event took longer on two buses for the four miles from Bristol Parkway station than the 34-mile train ride from Gloucester, which would suggest that

buses alone cannot meet the demand for travel across large cities. A First Great Western representative told the meeting the Henbury Loop had capacity for a train every six minutes in each direction. He was convinced quadrupling Filton Bank, which still await Government funding, would go ahead.

■ ■ Steam line could become essential public transport link



This WSR timetable map shows the WSR in red but fails to include the national rail line through Taunton

Railfuture Severnside responded to the West Somerset Railway's draft corporate plan consultation. The plan details the challenges facing WSR from 2014 to 2023. Our response called for a daily, all-year passenger service to give West Somerset people access to jobs in Taunton and beyond, which we believe would encourage younger people to remain in the area. We regard through

ticketing with the national rail network as essential if WSR is to exploit markets (such as day travel between West Somerset and major cities) needed to justify a regular link between this heritage railway and the main line. Our comments developed a suggestion from the West Somerset Railway Association that WSR should move its emphasis from steam preservation towards a better tourist experience. In our view a regular Taunton service would enable WSR to become a showpiece for green tourism based on public transport. We pointed out that rail-borne holidaymakers were more likely to spend money in local shops and eating places, and far more likely to use local buses, than those arriving by car.

■ ■ Passengers benefit from more trains via Melksham

A greatly enhanced service of eight trains each way on weekdays and five on Sundays, has operated between Swindon and Westbury via Melksham since 8 December. This is the result of a successful bid for Local Sustainable Transport Fund money by Wiltshire Council, supported by Railfuture. The new timetable has created many opportunities for commuting within Wiltshire and for travel to London and the South Coast.

Wessex

By Tony Smale
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■ Isle of Wight floods

Storms caused floods and damage to embankments at Smallbrook Junction forcing the shutdown of the Island Line in December. Ryde tunnel was flooded to roof level and trains in Ryde depot were submerged. Network Rail moved quickly to repair signalling and track, bringing 770 tonnes of ballast by ferry, and the line reopened in January. The flooded trains are not likely to re-enter service until the summer. Until then the service can be run by two units luckily "trapped" by floods at Sandown. Railfuture-affiliated Isle of Wight Bus & Rail User Group and Railfuture Wessex were delighted with efforts to put the line back into working order so quickly. During closure, replacement coaches ran between Shanklin and Ryde Esplanade but, because of weight limits on Ryde Pier, passengers for the Wightlink catamaran to Portsmouth had to change to a shuttle taxi. A Railfuture Wessex member queried why Island Line had not deployed staff at the pier, leaving passengers to find their own way to the replacement taxis. Many passengers were "hijacked" by other taxi operators and had to pay again. South West Trains cited the cost of getting staff there. Wightlink, which owns the road pier, had the cheek to charge Island Line for use of it even though this was to carry Wightlink's passengers! The Network Rail-South West Trains alliance is assessing the future of Island Line after the franchise expires in 2019, and Railfuture Wessex will be making its views known. Island Line celebrates two anniversaries in 2014, 150 years since the line opened, while the ex-London Transport trains are now 75 years old, possibly the oldest trains in Europe in daily service on a national network.

■ One new station could replace two old ones at Wilton

Railfuture Wessex took action when a new station at Wilton was shortlisted as a priority by the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Transport Body. Noting that Wilton Town Council strongly supported the idea, Railfuture committee members arranged to meet a town councillor on the station site. Wilton once had two stations: South station on the Salisbury-Exeter line and North station on the line to Westbury and Bristol. The favoured location for a new station (but a very expensive option) is now further east where the two double-track lines diverge, adjoining one of Salisbury's park & ride sites.

■ Bus cuts prompt calls for new rail station

Bradford Peverell and Stratton station, on the Heart of Wessex Line, closed in 1966 but was never demolished. Now a member of Bradford Peverell parish council is campaigning to have it reinstated, because Dorset County Council has cut funding from the buses originally introduced to replace the trains that called at this and other communities between Dorchester and Yeovil. Railfuture Wessex Branch mentioned this station reopening as a project worth pursuing in its response to the county's draft local transport plan in 2010.

■ Bid to keep dream of passenger service alive

The findings of a consultant's study into the case for introducing passenger services on the Waterside line, still used for oil trains from Fawley, was revealed by Hampshire County Council at a meeting in Hythe in December. Railfuture Wessex chairman David Brace attended and reports that the county council is unlikely to take the scheme further after the study concluded that the cost of upgrading the line outweighs the benefits. There is some support locally for introducing passenger trains, and Railfuture Wessex is considering how to keep the project alive.

■ Rail freight speaker planned for Wessex AGM

Railfuture Wessex AGM is planned for Southampton on Saturday 5 April with a speaker from the rail freight industry.



What about railways in May's Euro elections?

By Nigel Perkins

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People in 28 European countries go to the polls in May to elect 751 MEPs to represent them in the European Parliament.

England will choose 59 MEPs, Scotland 10, Wales four, and Northern Ireland three.

The Parliament can amend or even reject proposed action by the European Commission.

The transport and tourism committee, currently chaired by Railfuture vice president Brian Simpson MEP, scrutinises proposed legislation.

Railfuture members Trevor Garrod and Ian McDonald and vice president Christopher Irwin meet MEPs at official events.

To help Railfuture members make their vote count, we contacted the main parties asking for their views on:

- Encouraging passengers and freight in the Channel Tunnel
- A European journey planner and passenger rights
- The EU White Paper on transport and the urban transport action plan
- The Trans European Transport network.

Liberal Democrat

Transport is the backbone of the single market and an ambitious European transport policy is vital to the good functioning of a market of 500 million inhabitants and to the creation of jobs and growth. While it needs to be ambitious, it also needs to be green to fight against climate change. This is why I am fighting every day as Member of the European Parliament for modal shift from road to rail.

How do we achieve this? By reducing costs of railways and overall by creating a framework that boosts mobility across Europe.

Common European rules are required to certify rolling stock and railway undertakings, in order to, in the case of Eurotunnel, have more competitors.

Common and strong rules of governance of the rail sector are also required to ensure transparency in the setting of fees and charges.

Competition is also required in the journey-planning sector if we want to create opportunities and reduce costs for passengers, although numerous technical and bureaucratic obstacles have been creating monopolies.

I have addressed all those points in the Fourth Railway Package

and I have in particular asked for the European Railway Agency to promote access to data from the booking and timetabling systems of railway undertakings.

The access to this data is crucial finally to see the creation of a functioning European journey planner.

I am also working within the UK to improve plans for HS2 by campaigning for better connections with the conventional rail network.

The completion of a single European railway area is vital for the UK economy, the environment but also to prevent the UK from being isolated from the continent. Much more needs to be done. For the UK to pull out of this area would be a disaster for jobs, growth and for UK citizens travelling abroad.

Phil Bennion MEP

Green Party

Rail should be the backbone of a sustainable transport future.

The Green Party is THE party of and for public transport.

But it is not enough simply to be strongly pro-public-transport, and pro-rail, as Greens are.

Transport policy is not about just getting people from A to B. We must abandon a "predict and provide" mentality, in this era of limits to growth.

Greens therefore start from the key principle of "access not mobility", for example, through sensible planning, and localisation. We are not automatically in favour of every single rail scheme that is proposed.

EU transport policy goes basically in the right direction, towards reduced emissions and improved public transport.

But the neo-liberal single market idea maximises transport use.

The TEN-T network, though it is mainly rail schemes, includes some long-distance road schemes.

The EU Transport White Paper emphasises the need to reduce emissions, but also wants to deal with the "problem" of constraints on the capacity of airports.

So there is a pattern of interference between sustainability and the single market.

Greens believe strongly that the inclusion of road and air in these, and to some extent also in the urban transport action plan, undermines their sustainability goals. Green MEPs have criticised all of these for being insufficiently ambitious in terms of their carbon dioxide reduction targets. As an MEP, I would do



the same, and seek to support a rail network that can be genuinely sustainable.

Rupert Read, national transport spokesman and lead MEP candidate in Eastern England

Conservative

As the Conservative spokesman for transport and tourism in the European Parliament, I have been working tirelessly in conjunction with Government colleagues to challenge unnecessary and burdensome European regulation and strongly advocating the benefits of an open and competitive transport market.

The successful liberalisation of our rail network by the Conservative government in the 1990s increased transparency where subsidies are concerned, creating competition and providing a more flexible pricing structure for passengers. Conservatives are fully supportive of proposals that would see the full liberalisation of the rail sector across Europe.

Furthermore we want to promote a good deal for the passenger, which is why we supported "rail passenger rights", as good customer service equals good business.

Indeed, in the aviation sector, while passengers have been able to travel globally via the use of "through ticketing" and "code sharing" for decades, rail passengers have often been constrained into booking separate tickets for each part of their journey. Ultimately, it is vital that any developments that take place, benefit both UK passengers and businesses alike.

British Conservatives will continue to work hard to ensure that no proposals damage the efficient system currently in operation in the UK. It is vitally important that we guarantee British companies the opportunity to compete with their European

counterparts on a level playing field, and offer passengers the best value for money.

Jacqueline Foster MEP, deputy leader of Conservatives in the European Parliament and spokesman for transport and tourism.

Labour

From a bike ride to the shops, to rail travel between European capitals, transport is vital to life across Europe. If we are to fully realise our continent's economic and social potential, we must co-operate with our European neighbours to improve national and international rail connections, getting people and goods to their intended destination quickly and at an affordable price.

Rail's green credentials mean it will play a key role in our current and future transport system. This is why we fully support the work being done to develop and invest in rail networks that link up all the major European cities, reducing journey times and shifting freight off the roads.

The Channel Tunnel is the UK's rail gateway to Europe and, though strong border and security checks must remain, Labour wants to make it easier for passengers to enjoy high speed journeys to and from the continent. At the moment the rail link through the Channel Tunnel is under-utilised due to bureaucratic rules governing the use of the tunnel and excessive user charges.

To drive forward the quality of rail services and to ensure that UK passengers are protected when travelling by train in Europe, we support European rail passenger rights legislation and would welcome continued EU action to further strengthen the protection of passengers in cases of travel disruption.

Brian Simpson MEP and Railfuture vice president

◆◆◆◆ Rail User Express can be downloaded from the Railfuture website

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright
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■ East West celebration

The East West Rail Consortium held a reception in November at the Institution of Civil Engineers in London to confirm that local councils had agreed to contribute £45 million to the Oxford and Aylesbury to Bedford rail scheme. Railfuture attended the significant event which was marred by the news that Labour-controlled Oxford City Council had failed to agree a contribution. The institution commended the project for "exceptional leadership and commitment with the benefit of visionary thinking". The Department for Transport has requested that the cost of future-proofing the route be examined, while the DfT's "Tech Connect" report proposes that EWRL be extended to Cambridge. Meanwhile, the consortium commissioned Atkins to undertake a new study of the business case and options. It is hoped to meet Network Rail in 2014 for an update. The campaigns of Railfuture, since at least 1983, seem to be coming to fruition but progress will still need monitoring.

■ Railfuture welcomes positive attitude to rail

Local transport boards have published details of their plans. Buckinghamshire includes East West Rail, station access upgrades at Iver and Taplow, Gerrards Cross parking and Aylesbury-Wycombe rail improvements. Wycombe to Bourne End may be reviewed for public transport use in the light of EWRL improving links to Wycombe. Oxfordshire has the London Road crossing at Bicester as an immediate priority with the Bicester Charbridge Lane crossing to follow. The LTB notes that The City Deal and Science Vale UK proposals could see four trains per hour between Bicester and Didcot serving centres of innovation and growth. Reopening the Cowley branch to passengers to link an area of deprivation to growth areas is to be examined. Berkshire has Reading Green Park station back on the agenda as second in its priority list. Reading Council is updating the business case with Network Rail. Cost is estimated as £9.5 million with possible opening in late 2016. A station at Chalvey is also under consideration. Railfuture welcomes the proposals and in future will need to take into account the role of LTBs in transport funding and press the link to Witney.

■ Reading appeals for Crossrail to be extended

Reading Council, Lord Adonis and MP Rob Wilson have called for Crossrail to be extended to Reading. The DfT is evaluating the proposal.

■ Main line forges ahead but branch line users must wait

Milton Keynes Central has secured extra Virgin Train services following pressure from local MPs and rail users. The station has been chosen as a pilot Doodle parcel shop where passengers will be able to send and receive parcels from the shop. Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users Association has expressed disappointment and frustration at the refusal by London Midland to extend services to Milton Keynes station.

■ Big new car park for booming rail station

Banbury has seen work commence on a £10 million 700-space car park to cope with continuing passenger growth. Completion is expected this year.

■ Chiltern shows a "Can do" approach to holiday trains

Chiltern Railways ran services between Bicester North and London on Boxing Day, when most operators were not providing services. Railfuture welcomed the initiative shown by Chiltern.

■ Public joins Railfuture to back Witney-Oxford Transport

The new Railfuture-backed Witney-Oxford Transport group held a very successful public meeting in Witney in January. More information: witneyoxfordtransport.wordpress.com/



East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
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and Roger Bacon
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■ ■ A better tomorrow for rail

Network Rail's route enhancement manager Spencer Gibbens will explain the plans to electrify the Midland main line and ongoing work to improve line speeds and gauge enhancements for freight trains at the Railfuture East Midlands AGM at 13.00 on Saturday 29 March 2014 at GCR Lovatt House, 3 Wharncliffe Road, Loughborough LE11 1SL. David Horne, East Midlands Trains' managing director, will talk about the increased speeds of their services and possible plans for further enhancements including new routes and electric rolling stock.

■ ■ Ilkeston's new £6 million station plan wins approval

Another step has been taken to end Ilkeston's reign as the largest town in Britain without a railway station. Planning permission for a new £6 million station, to be served by Nottingham-Leeds trains, was granted at a recent meeting of Erewash Borough Council. However, the plans also need to be passed by neighbouring Broxtowe, because the station site straddles the two boroughs.

■ ■ Inspector's line may lead to Nottingham tram expansion

The possibility of an extension of the Phoenix Park branch of the Nottingham tram network to Kimberley has been given new impetus by a Government planning inspector. The Kimberley branch was not considered viable when the tram system was first planned. However, the planning inspector, ruling in favour of a new housing development in Nuthall, insisted that the potential route for the Kimberley tram line should be safeguarded. She also considered that the tram extension would be desirable and stood a good chance of success. Maybe the tram line could even be extended another two miles from Kimberley to the new Ilkeston station.

■ ■ Market Harborough upgrade given enthusiastic support

In a change of direction Leicestershire County Council is urging Network Rail to consider track layout improvements at Market Harborough which will allow a Leicester to London journey in under 60 minutes. Other issues the county council wants NR to consider are: Freight loops, more flexible timetabling, more stopping opportunities and improved access at Market Harborough station, which is used by 750,000 passengers per annum. The council's new approach is in contrast to its earlier stance when it commented "that while technically possible the benefit in journey times was approximately one minute and this was unlikely to justify the cost and disruption that would result." Railfuture East Midlands has worked hard to bring about this positive move.

■ ■ No room for luggage on CrossCountry Trains

After earlier requests had been ignored, we at last met with CrossCountry Trains in December on the day that services along the Midland main line were upgraded in some areas to run at 125mph for the first time. Public relations events to mark this took place at Nottingham, Derby and Sheffield stations and although CrossCountry services will also benefit from some of this work the company did not get involved. This was disappointing because the operator could have gained from the free publicity. Indeed, it is difficult to find much evidence of any promotion of CrossCountry services at any East Midlands station. Additionally, CrossCountry's reaction to our comments about continued overcrowding and limited space for luggage on a route primarily used by leisure passengers did not suggest that anything will improve. We were told that all the funds allocated for this franchise had been spent and there is no likelihood of any more rolling stock to ease the situation. CrossCountry's willingness to involve stakeholders remains minimal. It is disappointing that the franchise – held by Arriva, a subsidiary of Deutsche Bahn – has been extended until 2019 with no hope for any improvement until after then.



Steel yourself for a shock

By Andrew Oldfield

Although Railfuture's AGM is in Sheffield this year, the city has a dismal record in promoting rail.

Long-standing members may recall the last time the city staged the event was 1981 when Sheffield still boasted an electrified rail link, the Woodhead route, which closed the following July. It was freight-only in 1981, with the passenger services having been withdrawn in 1970.

The route was electrified 60 years ago, in 1954, which also saw the construction of a second tunnel that was viewed as the jewel in the crown of the entire project, which overall represented the HS2 of its day.

Ironically in what would have been the Woodhead diamond anniversary year, the older Victorian tunnels are set to be sealed, rather than maintained to allow possible future rail use. In a few years, both Manchester and Leeds will be linked by a modern, electrified railway, and when Midland main line electrification reaches Sheffield, it will have

suffered nearly 50 years without electrified trains.

People coming to the 2014 AGM may wish to explore recent local rail developments. They will find very little. This is South Yorkshire, home of the alternative passenger transport executive whose focus is on the questionable Meadowhall-Parkgate tram-train trial and the Sheffield-Rotherham bus rapid transit.

For an area hard hit by the recession, economic recovery could be aided by doubling the Holmes chord to allow more trains through Rotherham Central, plus the provision of a station at Parkgate. No new stations have been opened in South Yorkshire since 1993. The PTE directed local authorities in 2003 to cease safeguarding potential new station sites. In 1999 the PTE engaged consultants who identified 36 potential new station sites, but only three were spared in the brutal cull of 2003. Not one has materialised so Sheffield, England's fourth largest city, has a mere four suburban stations, if

you discount Meadowhall. With rail use soaring nationally, no one at the PTE has considered revisiting the question, and neither has any of the four local authorities.

The movers and shakers of Sheffield have however been supportive of the glamorous HS2 project. The main debate is whether the HS2 station for Sheffield should be Sheffield Victoria or Meadowhall.

South Yorkshire PTE and Sheffield City Council have failed to support rail development for decades with the result that the city has consistently punched below its weight. Sheffield cannot keep pace with its major rivals, Manchester and Leeds, by ignoring rail.

They are not asking important questions about Midland main line electrification, particularly how it could ease road traffic congestion along the Abbeydale Road corridor by providing new stations at Heeley and Millhouses, nor reinstating the main line platforms at Dore to launch a local Sheffield-Chesterfield elec-

trified service compatible with the Sheffield city region.

In the long term, of course, all routes between South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire should be electrified.

Having identified serious road traffic congestion as a problem at Sheffield station, the solution was to increase the capacity of the car park! The better answer would have been to provide rail stations along the Sheaf Valley, to take vehicles off the roads.

Of course, we should also have restored services through Sheffield Victoria by means of a reinstated Woodhead route. But of 40 MPs canvassed about Woodhead, only three responded! The western third of the Woodhead line still remains electrified. A restored Woodhead route would provide an enormous boost to the regeneration of the long-neglected Upper Don Valley.

People living in Sheffield deserve and would support improved rail services and new stations.

West Midlands

By Peter Hughes
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■ ■ Chinese back reopening

The China Railway group has confirmed its interest in a £280 million project to rebuild the seven-mile Whitacre link, now referred to as the Stonebridge railway. The possible reopening, featured in *Railwatch* 137, envisages restoring passenger services from Walsall and Sutton Coldfield direct to the planned HS2 interchange near Birmingham Airport without the need to change trains in Birmingham. It is however dependent on the construction of HS2. The reopening was raised in Parliament by Christopher Pincher, MP for Tamworth, who is excited by the prospect of Tamworth to Birmingham Airport journey times being reduced from 45 minutes to 18. A recent study found that 78% of rail passengers travelling to the airport have to change trains or stations in Birmingham.

■ ■ Green light at last for a new station at Kenilworth

Plans for a new £11.3 million station at Kenilworth were given final approval in December, thanks to the Government's new stations fund. The Department

for Transport has allocated £5 million from the fund following confirmation that the station can be built without any adverse impact on other network improvements. Construction of the station paves the way for new local services to start running between Coventry, Kenilworth and Leamington Spa in December 2016 and electric trains to Birmingham in 2019.

■ ■ Railfuture members visit tram depot

Members of Railfuture West Midlands had an interesting tour of the facilities under construction at Wednesbury for the servicing and stabling of the new fleet of 21 trams, now arriving at regular intervals. Midland Metro's new Urbos 3 trams, built in Spain, are a third bigger than the Italian Ansaldo models they replace. It is understood Centro intends to store the old trams for possible future use. Although the new trams are longer than their predecessors the platforms have not had to be lengthened, contrary to some press reports.

However platforms have been shaved to accommodate the slightly wider new vehicles. We were assured

that checking the trams can pass safely at all points is a major feature of test running already under way. We welcome the extensions in the city centres of Birmingham and Wolverhampton but wonder when England's second city will have a rail rapid transit system to rival Croydon, Nottingham or Sheffield.

■ ■ Another electrification scheme gets under way

Work started in November on a £30 million project to electrify the Walsall-Rugeley Trent Valley line. The work, including rebuilding three bridges, will be complete in 2017.



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

Picture: PHILIP DAVIS



Railfuture members at Wednesbury

Award for King's Cross

The National Railway Heritage Awards at the beginning of December always put you in a good mood for Christmas, and the 2013 awards gave a glimpse of the excellent work of conservation around the country and the high standards being achieved.

Over the past few years, the balance has shifted from awards mainly to heritage railways, to embrace many more projects put forward by Network Rail, the train operators, London Transport and Irish Rail as well.

So, it was great to see a special award from the chairman of the awards panel going to Network Rail and its contractors for the stunning redevelopment of King's Cross station, which has improved the passenger's experience so much, and at the same time, revealed the simple elegance of the Cubitt train shed as seen from Euston Road, London.

Another winner was an imaginative smaller scheme at Inverurie, where the former waiting room of the Earl of Kintore has been converted into a coffee shop, called the Cocoworks. This could be seen as appropriate given that Inverurie was the site of the

workshops of the Great North of Scotland Railway from 1903 to 1969.

Another winner was a beauty salon run by Deborah Harper in a closed station at Helen's Bay between Belfast and Bangor. The 1865 station has been admirably restored.

The Mid Norfolk Railway received the Ian Allan Publishing Railway of the Year award, recognising how far it has come in restoring services from Wymondham to Dereham with the prospect of going beyond.

For the first time, a Railway of the Decade award was given to the Bluebell Railway for the amazing achievement in restoring the link to the national network at East Grinstead.

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships was a worthy winner for its imaginative project to adapt the mighty Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway water tower at Huddersfield for its offices, with the help of European Union and local partnership funding.

The Ouseburn viaduct near Heaton on the East Coast main line, which dates in part from 1839, has been repaired and



HERITAGE RAIL

By Chris Austin
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KING'S CROSS STATION: Back to the original frontage

upgraded, permitting a higher line speed.

Unseen by passengers who travel over it, Network Rail and Carillion took the trouble to incorporate the wrought iron structure rather than replacing it. Much of the good work of restoration of historic buildings and structures benefits from the guidance and financial support of the Railway Heritage Trust chaired by Sir William McAlpine and part funded by Network Rail.

The trust has encouraged the careful restoration of both buildings and structures of historic importance and also match-funded projects with local authority and private sector partners. The awards were presented by TV presenter Loyd Grossman whose passion for railways was infectious and reflected the importance of the awards in Britain, which has the oldest and richest railway heritage in the world.



Tomorrow's world

Many thanks for another great issue of *Railwatch*. I was impressed with Ian Brown's piece, which seems to me to go to the heart of what Railfuture is about – rail and the future.

We have heard a lot about the railway legacy bequeathed to us by the Victorians. I would like to put a new slant on this and look at the legacy the Victorians would have wanted to leave to us if they could, in particular with respect to London.

The main London termini were forced on the railway builders by the city authorities and land owners. The Victorian railway companies did their darndest to circumvent this restriction, and in respect of freight were pretty successful, with the North, South, East and West London Railways enabling a mass of goods wagons to be taken direct from one rail empire to another.

If the Victorians had had full-size rail tunnel boring machines like those making Crossrail, I believe the London termini might well have been consigned to history, sold off in that unsentimental Victorian way and replaced by underground main lines and interchange stations. In New York, the Pennsylvania through-station was operating by 1910.

I propose that Railfuture should have a policy and a plan for better main-line rail connections across London, though just one central station would be massively unfriendly to users.

A triangle of through lines would work better, and might run east-west, southeast-northwest, and southwest-northeast. As to stations, passengers to London seldom really want to go to King's Cross, Victoria or Paddington. I suggest there should be stations in the West End shopping area, the City and South Bank, which would fit the triangle of lines.

These stations should be designed for ease of transfer, as well as good direct access to the places people really want to go to. This would cut out thousands of onward Tube journeys.

Commuter trains could still use the termini, or better still be plugged into the Underground and Overground network. The new stations would only be for longer distance trains and could have continental-style dual

Your letters extra

island platform layouts, with lines crossing at an angle, which would enable direct transfer by escalator/lift with minimum hassle. But the station designers should go to Green Park Tube station to see how not to do it.

All this is not just for people in London and the South East. Efficient ways of getting, with one transfer, from Edinburgh to Brighton, Liverpool to Dover, or Norwich to Exeter will benefit huge swathes of Britain.

HS2 is a golden opportunity to start the process. The Euston Cross scheme is a good idea, but not bold enough! Who really wants to go to Euston? London is crawling with tunnelling machines at present. Let them carry on and bore a four-track east-west line for high-speed and other long-distance trains, with West End and City stations, and continue to Stratford, to link with HS1.

Railfuture should start visualising a 21st century rail solution for cross-London main-line rail, and kick the ball into the politicians' and public's view.

Richard Townend
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Be fair, first of all

Why should ordinary passengers have to travel crammed in like sardines when first class seats are empty? It is often regular passengers who have to stand for most of their journey. Is that fair? I am recovering from an accident and cannot stand.

Research has shown that British rail passengers spend more than three times more on their rail fares than most European passengers. Is this fair?

I believe the Government should investigate as a matter of urgency and introduce a fairer system, with rises based on the consumer price index.

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Stations extra role

Stations could accommodate surgeries for doctors and dentists as well as small shops, meeting rooms for hire, conference suites, rented offices and parcel pick-up points. These functions would ensure a continued need for staff at village, suburban and inner-city stations, even if their ticket-selling function became redundant.

Simon Barber
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Thameslink's new train

Britain's newest train went on show to the public for one day only on 29 January 2014 at London's ExCel centre. The mock-up of Thameslink's new Desiro City train, built in Germany by Siemens, was spacious and airy, with plenty of luggage space.

However the few people who saw the train were concerned that it was suitable for short Metro operations but might not be acceptable for longer journeys, such as Bedford to Gatwick or Brighton to Luton.

The trains are not equipped with tables in standard class, nor wifi. Power points to recharge phones and laptops are provided only in first class. Seat numbers have been reduced to create more space for standing passengers. The new class 700 trains are expected to enter service in 2016.

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Discover Ireland by rail

By Trevor Garrod

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The Republic of Ireland has more than 1,000 miles of railways and 147 stations.

In addition there are the two lines of the modern tram system in Dublin.

Frequent inter-city trains from Dublin will take you north to Belfast, which is the centre of the 186-mile rail network of Northern Ireland.

Most of Ireland is much more lightly populated than Great Britain, but in both north and south there is also an extensive bus network, all still largely nationalised, which will take you to the parts which the trains do not reach.

How to get to Ireland?

Many people from Britain go by air nowadays, even though none of Ireland's airports is directly served by rail, although in two cases a railway line runs tantalisingly close.

Dublin Airport, however, enjoys a frequent coach link into the city centre and the two main stations. Buses link Belfast's two airports to the Europa bus station complex which is also home to Great Victoria Street railway station.

Whether you arrive by air or sea, the website transportforireland.com, run by the National Transport Authority, is very informative, giving details of public transport south of the border and information about the North as well.

It also has real-time information and a journey planner.

Nine ferry crossings link Great Britain with Ireland – and it has to be said that some of these are less user-friendly than others if you are travelling by rail.

The recent Railfuture report on Ferry Links details members' experiences of many of these crossings. You can check it out on the Railfuture website or contact Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ for a paper copy.

From 9 April to 9 September, the most convenient crossing rail-sea-rail is Stena Line's ferry from Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire, once a day. There are also more frequent all-year crossings between Holyhead and Dublin Port by both Stena and Irish Ferries with "Rail & Sail" offers. Similar multimodal ticketing arrangements exist from the ports of Fishguard, Liverpool and Cairnryan.

Four main lines radiate from Dublin, including the scenic route southwards to Rosslare and the lines west towards the Atlantic coast serving attractive cities such as Cork, Limerick,



Limerick station

Waterford and Galway. Limerick and Galway (via Athenry) also have a radial route linking them, following the reopening of the western rail corridor via Ennis.

Dublin has seen reopened suburban lines to Docklands and M3 Parkway as well as the continued expansion of the Luas light rail system.

If you are spending at least four days in Ireland, a Trekker pass costing £90 can be used for exploring, giving you unlimited rail travel south of the border.

In the North, an iLink Travelcard gives you unlimited travel for a day, a week or a month on all Northern Ireland Railways and Ulsterbus bus services.

If you want to explore beyond the rail network, perhaps linking one railhead, Galway, to another, Sligo, then the £200 Explorer Rail & Bus ticket gives you eight days travel out of 15 on Iarnrod Eireann and Bus Eireann. There is also a rail-only Explorer ticket for five days out of 15 at £130.

Useful websites include www.irishrail.ie and www.translink.co.uk

You may also find the new Railfuture leaflet on International Rail Travel very useful in pointing you to sources of further information.

Win two Trekker tickets

You can take part in Railfuture's competition and win two Trekker tickets!

Answer the following questions:

1. What gauge are Irish mainline railways?
2. Which is the only electrified heavy rail line in Ireland?
3. What is the Luas?
4. On which line do "Enterprise" trains run?

Complete the following (50 words maximum):

"I should like to tour Ireland by train because....."

Please send answers to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ

Or email trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk by 30 April. A three-person panel will decide the winner.

East Anglia

By Paul Hollinghurst

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Community rail celebration

There were celebrations at Meldreth station in October when 40 people witnessed the signing of the community rail partnership between the Railfuture-affiliated Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group, First Capital Connect, Cambridgeshire County and South Cambridgeshire District councils, and Network Rail. This secures support for some of the smallest rural stations on the King's Cross to Cambridge line where the railway provides a vital public transport link.

Cambridge to gain from two station development plans

Plans for the £30 million Cambridge Science Park station have been approved. The three-platform station opens next year, with 450 car parking spaces and 1,000 cycle spaces. It will be served by a guided busway extension. Planning permission has also been granted for expanding Cambridge station's ticket hall, along with a large station square which will link to a 3,000 space cycle park. Greater Anglia's Geraint Hughes explained the project at December's branch meeting.

Halesworth boasts 47% increase in passenger numbers

Railfuture East Anglia joined up with the East Suffolk Travellers' Association at Halesworth in October to count train and bus passengers at the station. Numbers were up an impressive 43% compared to the same time last year following the introduction of an hourly train service on the northern part of the Ipswich-Lowestoft line, investment in the passing loop at Beccles, and the improvements to the bus service between Halesworth and Southwold. Every train was surveyed from 05.56 to 23.10. More details at: www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Station+Counts

Peterborough upgrade clears way for Manea celebration

The new platforms and layout at Peterborough enabled the introduction of a vastly improved service at Manea. The two-hourly service linking Manea to Peterborough, Ely and Ipswich was celebrated in January as children, councillors and MP Steve Barclay gathered at the station. Posters from Manea Community Primary School children were displayed.

Access work helps passengers at six stations

Several First Capital Connect stations are receiving significant investment to provide step-free access. Hatfield, Stevenage, Hitchin, Letchworth and St Neots will all have passenger lifts by the end of the year. At Hitchin the disused parcel lifts are being recommissioned for passenger use.

Diesel train shortage hits Sheringham-Norwich hopes

Discussions are continuing with Greater Anglia about a later evening service from and to Norwich, although the chronic shortage of diesel units resulting from level crossing collisions has made this difficult.

Royal approval for King's Lynn station refurbishment

King's Lynn station, which is being refurbished with heritage lighting and other fittings, will also be graced by a royal coat of arms.

Which is best way from Bedford to Cambridge for EWR?

The Department for Transport is promoting East West Rail because it links the triangle of technology clusters in London, Cambridge and Oxford. A route from Bedford to Cambridge is currently being examined and will be followed by a Network Rail-led route option feasibility study.

Keep in touch at www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia

Twitter: @RailfutureEA



ANOTHER HIGH SPEED RAIL LINK FOR SPAIN: The new bridge over the river Almonte on the Madrid-Extremadura line

Bridging the high speed gap

This spectacular bridge under construction in Spain will eventually form part of a high speed rail route from the capital Madrid west to the Portuguese border at Badajoz.

The half-mile long bridge soars over the river Almonte in Extremadura and when finished, the builders say it will have the longest concrete arch span in the world for a high speed rail bridge.

Construction is being masterminded by the Spanish-based company FCC for Adif, the Spanish railway infrastructure company.

The 280-mile long Madrid-Extremadura line is being part-funded by the European Union's regional development fund, as part of the Trans-European Transport Network, and will be available for both passenger and freight trains.

Spain already has the third largest high speed rail network in the world, after Japan and China, and last year, several years late, it opened the new line from Barcelona to the French border, linking Spain into the standard gauge rail network of Europe. Most of Spain's traditional rail network is 5ft 6ins gauge. In 2012, Portugal cancelled its plan, announced in



INTERNATIONAL: A high speed train built by CAF of Spain on the Chinese-built high speed Istanbul-Ankara railway in Turkey

2009, to build a line from Lisbon to link up with the Spanish high speed line, and completion of the Spanish section will be delayed because the Government postponed funding as a result of the international economic and banking crisis. It had been planned to provide a high speed service between the two capitals taking less than three hours.

Elsewhere in the world, high speed rail projects are shrinking journey times. Turkey is poised to complete its 330-mile long Istanbul-Ankara line this year and its transport minister Lutfi Elvan has pledged that 2014 will be the year of high speed trains. He said high speed trains in Turkey transported almost 4.5 million passengers in 2013, and the

figure would exceed 20 million in 2014. The railway has been built by China Railway Construction Corporation Limited. China meanwhile has announced it will spend £60 billion this year in an effort to almost double its high speed rail network after completing the Beijing-Shanghai line last year.

In France Europe's longest construction project is under way, a 200-mile high-speed line from Tours to Bordeaux which will be completed in 2017.

In Britain, one of HS2's high-profile opponents is Peter Mandelson, now Lord Mandelson, who was a European Commissioner from 2004 to 2008.

He claims the cost of HS2 will "suck the very lifeblood out of the rest of the country's rail system".

Others say HS2 will generate £59.8 billion in user benefits when the entire network is completed, as well as £13.3 billion in wider economic benefits.

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