

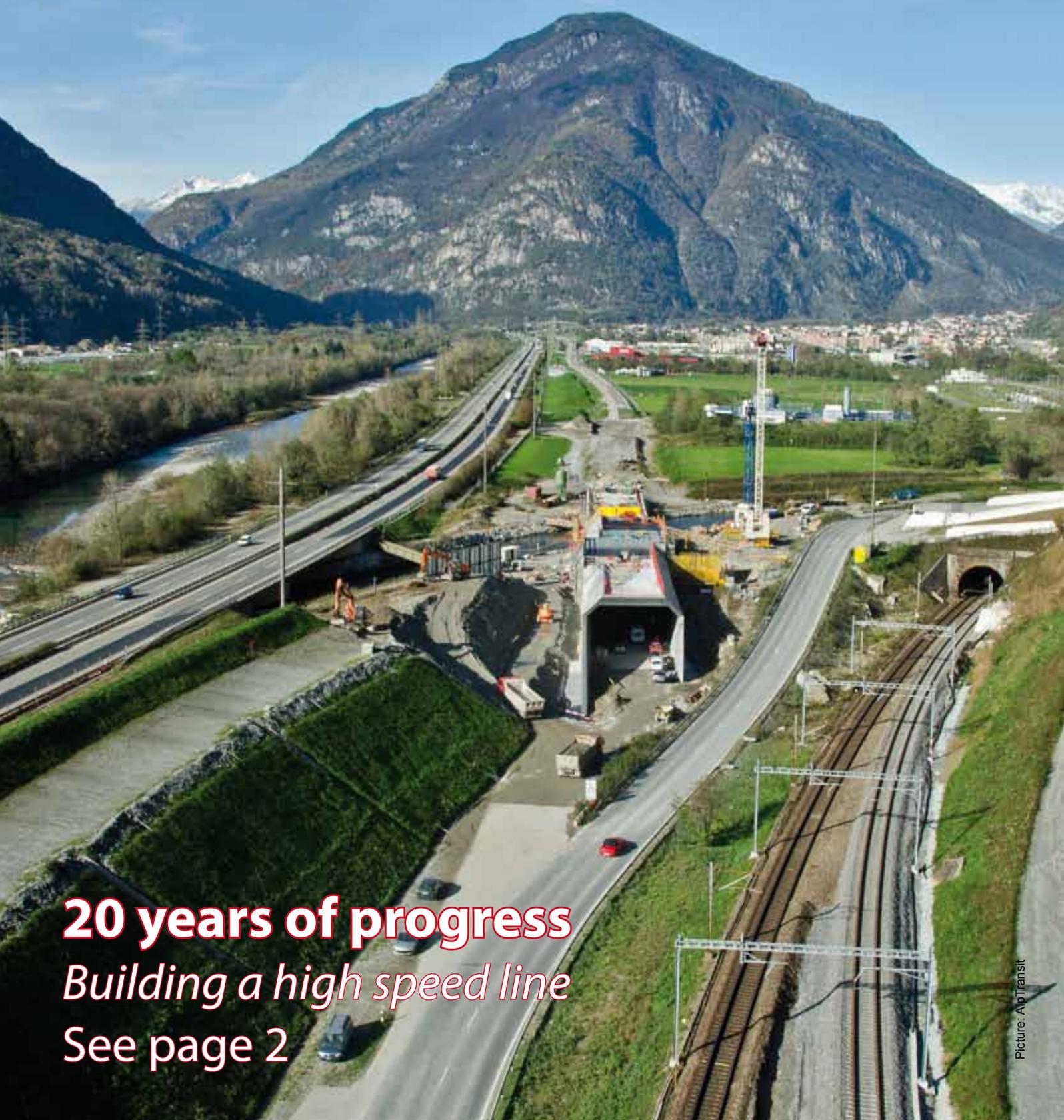
railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

No 141

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October 2014



20 years of progress
Building a high speed line
See page 2

After more than 14 years of tunnelling, one of Europe's most ambitious high-speed rail projects has emerged into the light at Bodio in southern Switzerland.

Engineers are now working at Biasca, near the portal at the south end of the new Gotthard base tunnel, which runs 35 miles underground from Erstfeld.

After a few miles above ground near Biasca, the railway line will plunge into the second new underground section, now under construction, the nine-mile long Ceneri base tunnel to Lugano.

Trains will be able to travel through the tunnels at 155 mph when they open for traffic in 2017.

The aim is not just to speed passengers though from northern Europe to Italy but to transfer as much freight as

possible from the roads to rail and protect the fragile Alpine environment.

The Gotthard base tunnel is scheduled to become operational at the end of 2016, 20 years after construction began, while the Ceneri base tunnel will open at the end of 2019.

Track, catenary, power supply, telecommunication, radio systems and ventilation have to be installed from either end of the twin-track tunnels. The picture on page one shows the concrete box for the new railway emerging in the centre with, on the right, the old winding mountain rail route over the Gotthard which opened in 1882 and which is now being bypassed.

Information centres for the public have been set up at Erstfeld, Sedrun and Pollegio.

More information: www.alp-transit.ch/en/home.html



Picture: Alp Transit

With road and river alongside, the new Gotthard base tunnel rail route emerges at Bodio, 35 miles south of Erstfeld

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

Rail's great leap forward

Public meetings were being held in Bath this month to explain how high-output electrification trains will soon start work in the area.

The electrification of the Great Western main line follows similar work in England's north west region.

Most of the work will be carried out at night to avoid disruption to day-time services.

However, the line through Box tunnel will have to be closed while the track is lowered next year to give room for overhead wires.

Another three-week closure from Box tunnel to Bath Spa is also expected next year.

Electrification is planned for a series of lines in Britain over the next few years and should help rail become even more efficient in future.

Battery-powered trains are expected to be used on some lines.

In August Network Rail began trials at Derby with a modified Bombardier class 379 train fitted with both lithium iron magnesium and sodium nickel salt battery variants.

Meanwhile in China, Bombardier is involved in trial running of trams in Manjin without overhead wires on 90% of their route.

The light-weight batteries are partially recharged at tram stops. Technology is enabling rail to face even greater challenges. In

a lecture at the Royal Institution in September, Professor Andrew McNaughton suggested that British engineers could come up with an immersed tube tunnel from East Anglia to the Netherlands which would allow a rail freight link from the heart of industrial Britain into Germany.

More information: www.railfuture.org.uk/article1511-New-rail-mega-city

Another rail hub "city" is likely to grow up around Old Oak Common where High Speed Two meets Crossrail in west London

It is expected to serve 250,000 passengers a day and could be a counter-balance to Canary Wharf in the east.

Transport for London opened a consultation in September on adding an Overground station.

More information: <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/london-overground/old-oak-common>

A Department for Transport study was also launched in July on linking Heathrow Airport to Waterloo, via Clapham Junction.

A second-stage report is expected to be completed by June next year. The matter is urgent because road traffic in the Heathrow area is causing European Union pollution levels to be breached on a regular basis.

Pollution will be reduced to some degree when the Piccadilly line begins 24-hour operation on Friday and Saturday nights from September next year.

When things go wrong

By Chris Fribbins

chris.fribbins@railfuture.org.uk

One of the top concerns of rail passengers in feedback to train operators is the way journey disruption is handled. There are often horror stories about the lack of information, even to railway staff, about what is happening and advice on how to continue the journey. This negativity is relayed to a wider audience by passengers via Twitter and Facebook and ends up in the mainstream media. The inconsistency of information and the concerns of passengers have been revealed in reports from Passenger Focus, with examples of bad practice resulting from the high winds which affected Scotland and northern England in December 2013.

The rail industry has recognised its shortcomings and there are also examples of handling disruption well.

The Olympics in 2012 were a good example of planning and communication, following previous examples of long-term disruption for the Thameslink Programme.

The rail industry is making a major effort to manage the disruption and keep passengers informed as London Bridge is rebuilt while a busy railway continues to operate through the station.

Railfuture's passenger group has commissioned a study into how disruption is handled now and lessons to be learnt for the industry. We are seeking input from members, branches, passengers in general and the rail industry.

We will publish a draft report early in 2015. The aim will be to collect information on what works well, improvement suggestions and what the industry is working to deliver. There is an online questionnaire on the



Please pass on the leaflet enclosed with this Railwatch to friends, colleagues or fellow passengers

Railfuture website www.railfuture.org.uk where updates on the project will also be published.

A new Railfuture membership leaflet incorporates details about the disruption survey which is on the website at www.railfuture.org.uk/disruption

There is also a 'Call for Evidence' across the rail industry and we have issued press releases to media contacts.

A special email address has been set-up: disruption@railfuture.org.uk

To overcome the geographical differences between the Railfuture branches and the train operators, the passenger group has also established a UK-wide group of train operator liaison contacts who can coordinate and communicate with branches in the operator's area. These are already making contact with operators and seeking input. The liaisons are listed below.

Chris Fribbins is head of Railfuture's passenger group

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Yorkshire

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



■ Ideas for future franchises
Railfuture Yorkshire contributed in August to Railfuture's detailed eight-page reaction to Government plans to renew the TransPennine and Northern franchises, jointly with the Rail North group of local authorities. The shortlist for the franchise, which starts in 2016, includes Arriva, Govia and Abellio for Northern and First Group, Keolis and Stagecoach for TransPennine.

■ High expectations for rail
Rail is now the fastest growing transport mode and will have to play a much increased role in the decades to come, according to *One North, A Proposition for an Interconnected North*. The transport plan developed by key Northern cities and published in August said: "City region rail networks need more capacity, electrification and new rolling stock to meet growing demand. The rail network is extensive across the North yet it fails to offer a sense of a joined up network (in the way that London Underground does, for example)." It also calls for a new trans-Pennine rail route but said further electrification of trans-Pennine rail routes is a crucial first step. Following publication of the report, One North has agreed to examine the proposal to reopen the Skipton-Colne line. It is also considering a tram-train service between Bradford Forster Square and Bradford Interchange.

■ Timetable for new stations in Leeds and Bradford
Work was programmed to start in September on a £16 million plan to provide new rail stations at Kirkstall Forge in Leeds and Apperley Bridge in Bradford, with both expected to open next year. The leader of Leeds City Council Keith Wakefield said: "A new rail station is a key element of the Kirkstall Forge development site, which will support 2,400 new jobs and lever £400 million of new investment into the area."

■ Rail delivers more than £4 for every £1 of investment
Rail delivers £4.30 in benefits for every £1 invested in it, according to the *The Economic Value of Rail in the North of England*. The July report from PTEG, the passenger transport executives of Britain, also revealed that 70% of jobs in the north of England are within walking distance of a rail station.

■ Not-for-profit rail operator needed in north of England
Professor Paul Salveson and colleagues on the Hannah Mitchell Foundation are calling on a future Labour government to replace the ageing Pacer and Sprinter trains with a new fleet of trains. He said: "We need a new generation of diesel as well as electric trains to replace the old trains. And these new trains should be built in the North of England, the home of railways, not in Germany or France." Referring to the franchising of Northern and TransPennine, he added: "Our railways in the North should be accountable to people in the North, run by a not-for-profit company which involves employees and passengers and re-invests any surplus back into the railway". More info: <http://www.hannahmitchell.org.uk/2014/08/15/railways-a-better-network-for-the-north-accountable-to-the-north/>

■ Changing times are a challenge for Settle-Carlisle line
Richard Morris of the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line told a Railfuture Yorkshire meeting in June how travel patterns have changed. In the 1990s, 80% of passengers were day tourists enjoying the journey, now this is only 20%. But the drop is more than made up for by people travelling longer distances to visit friends and family, or for other leisure pursuits and business trips. The Friends are campaigning for better services to Scotland, with surveys showing that 20% of passengers on the S&C are going to Scotland. He said the line urgently needed higher quality rolling stock and said ScotRail provided an example in refurbishing its class 158 trains to a high standard, with seats aligned to windows.

Lincolnshire

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

Lincoln-Nottingham celebration after four-year campaign
Lincolnshire and East Midlands branches celebrated the news in September that an enhanced Lincoln-Nottingham service will operate from May next year. Improvements include 24 extra trains per day between Newark and Nottingham, 11 more stops at Hykeham, and faster journey times between Nottingham and Lincoln. This enhanced service is the culmination of four years detailed work by the Nottingham to Lincoln stakeholder board of which Railfuture is a member.

Champion honour for Railfuture's Paul Jowett

Railfuture Lincolnshire congratulated branch committee member Paul Jowett who won a trophy for his "contribution to sustainable transport" at the North Kesteven Champions Awards 2014 event at Navenby on 11 September. Paul serves on North Kesteven district council's better transport committee, has promoted bus and train services around Sleaford and works as an East Midlands Trains station adopter at Ruskington and Rauceby.

Consultation on TransPennine and Northern franchises

Railfuture Lincolnshire supported work by Railfuture Yorkshire in response to the franchise consultation document. Three Lincolnshire branch committee members also provided a local personal response via the South Humber Rail Users. Most of the drafting was done by Mike Savage of the Lincolnshire branch committee. Railfuture members and Barnetby-based members of SHRU also sent in individual comments which were copied to their MPs.

Avoiding line makes diversions easier through Sleaford

Sleaford's avoiding line, taken out of service in the 1980s, came back into use in September, to allow freight trains to avoid the town. It is part of a £280 million Network Rail renewal project for the Great Northern Great Eastern joint line which runs from Peterborough to Doncaster through Spalding, Lincoln and Gainsborough.

Devon and Cornwall

New stations boost rail services around Exeter

Construction began in September on a new £1.5 million rail station at Newcourt, Exeter, which will be served by a half-hourly service from Exeter St David's on the Exmouth branch. Another new station will be built next year at Cranbrook, Exeter, to cater for six-coach trains which would run hourly between Exeter and London Waterloo.

Dawlish

Network Rail published a 44-page report in July detailing seven alternative routes costing between £400 million and £3 billion in response to storm damage at Dawlish in February. Railfuture believes, as a first priority, the Okehampton line should be reopened to secure a reserve route to Plymouth. The picture, right, shows concrete being installed to reinforce the Dawlish sea wall. Network Rail report: <http://bit.ly/Yvwcyt>

Okehampton area councils urged to aid rail reopening

Local councils around Okehampton are being urged to follow the example of Okehampton Town Council in setting money aside for a study into reopening the rail line to Exeter which is expected to bring enormous economic benefits to West Devon, Torridge, North Devon and parts of Cornwall.

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



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

We must educate our election candidates

By Ian Brown

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Elections next year provide our chance to make a difference.

I was challenged to think about how we could maximise our input into the election process leading up to 7 May 2015. Remember, though, that there are also 279 local elections on that date.

Next year will see the 56th general election in British history and that period (1802-2014) covers the lifespan of railways from their early development.

Elections and politics continue to be important to the fortunes and structure of our railways.

Obtaining parliamentary powers for construction of new railways right from early railway mania days through to the construction of the Channel Tunnel and High Speed One to present day Cross-rail, HS2 and hopefully HS3, has been crucial.

Politics has influenced the structure of the industry, from setting up British Railways in the 1940s, to privatisation in the 1990s.

Passenger transport authorities have been established and then transformed into integrated transport authorities, and Transport for London has been created. It is clear that political change will continue.

Traditionally, when it comes to elections, the big issues of health, education and increasingly, the economy, have dominated.

A fourth, social policy, is now in the mix. Transport has been seen as further down the pecking order. Now, maybe not.

The run-up to the 2015 election has started, with the party conferences taking place in September and October.

Getting elected is the main pre-occupation for politicians and the concept of the "safe seat" is waning.

Interest in transport is rising in both national and local agendas. The controversy around HS2 includes exaggerated cries which in effect allege that all known human and animal life will be extinguished by the project!

The effect has been to raise the profile of transport issues. The worry however is that many other important local issues do not get a fair airing. Local issues will be important in the 2015 election so this is an area where, through questioning and debate, we can make a difference.

We should use the time between now and 7 May to brief candidates on the importance of rail projects, especially where many potential representatives have not formulated their ideas or



IAN BROWN

may not have realised the opportunities of supporting investment in a fit and proper transport system.

There is a danger of seeing transport as purely about moving people and goods around.

Worse still are the claims that investment in rail reduces congestion on roads so that the few who still want to drive can go faster, as if rail is some secondary concept to improve conditions for motorists. The case for railways is more than that.

Integrating rail proposals with economic and social inclusion arguments potentially presents a far stronger case.

Crossrail was justified on the economic case for a viable capital city expanding its economy and population.

If the aim is just to speed up car travel for the richer, there are other solutions, such as the congestion charge which does, to be fair, also have a positive environmental effect.

The upgrade of the East London Line and its incorporation into the London Overground was mainly justified on grounds of improving social inclusion. In this case, social inclusion was defined as increasing the catchment area for jobs that can be reached within 45 minutes, so sustaining the city economy.

These are not just London arguments. They are arguments we can apply to the case for improving rail in and to all our cities. The Passenger Transport Executive Group, which represents England's key conurbations, has only just published the results of a study into how the North's booming railways are integral to the economic prospects of the region, and that future plans for the railways should be based on expansion and growth.

In Manchester, for example, rail now carries more people than cars and buses, so refuting the old arguments that rail may be nicer, but the real need is investment in buses.

This is no longer so, although the case remains for integrating



POLITICIAN IN THE DRIVING SEAT: Labour's shadow transport secretary Mary Creagh at the controls of a train simulator during a visit to First ScotRail in Glasgow in August

buses with rail. Bus deregulation as a general policy is well past its sell-by date.

However, the most compelling argument in the PTEG report – one which we should definitely use, concerns the economic value of rail in the North of England.

The combined economic and regional supply-side benefits deliver £4.30 of economic value for every £1 spent of direct government support and government-backed borrowing.

Now that is a clear business case for rail investment.

Against this background, it beggars belief that recent franchise consultations include splitting services because there are not enough decent trains for core inter-regional services and the cascade from electrification is years too slow.

There have also been suggestions of doubling peak fares, closing less-used stations and stopping pensioners' free travel.

The inference is that we must concede on these issues if we want, for example, to replace the wretched Pacer trains.

This simple-minded thinking demands serious cutbacks to the direct costs of the social railway because fares pay for only a quarter of rail's direct costs.

I am assured that these options are all subject to consultation and no decisions have been made, or have they?

How can it be that these two different perspectives sit side by side?

Unfortunately the negative version is held by some of those overseeing our railways.

Despite these old-fashioned attitudes, rail growth continues.

I was contemplating these issues while travelling on an afternoon two-car Sprinter train from Her-

ford to Birmingham, which was a pleasant journey in a well-maintained train which left Hereford full, left Worcester full and arrived at Birmingham full, with a considerable churn of passengers along the route.

Many were travelling home from work in Hereford and Worcester, illustrating that rail capacity and the need for investment in growth applies to smaller cities and towns and also the rural railway.

Readers will know many examples of overcrowding on a regular basis.

Overall, I believe we are now reaching a tipping point, with many services at saturation levels even on routes away from peak hour journeys into major cities.

So, let us get out there and brief parliamentary and local election candidates about the benefits of investing in our railways, to the economy, to jobs and to the environment, before their minds are set and while they have time to see us.

We need more capacity, both infrastructure and trains. We need investment in both city and rural railways. Every rail reopening contributes passengers and revenue to the network as a whole.

The "contributory" revenue can be more than the direct costs of reopening a feeder route.

Railways must be allowed to maximise their potential as the transport system of choice, ticking all the political boxes.

Our role is to make sure our elected representatives are aware of this opportunity.

Ian Brown CBE FCILT is Railfuture's director of policy. He is a former managing director of London Rail and was awarded a CBE for services to railways.

North West

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

Northern's fares shocker

The rail user group Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester line is supporting a campaign against the new peak time evening restrictions in Greater Manchester. The news that Northern Rail, under pressure from the Department for Transport, is introducing a restriction on the use of off-peak tickets between 16.01 and 18.29 is devastating for local rail passengers in the North West. STORM notes that passengers from Rochdale area stations already have the highest peak fares outside London and the South East. Meanwhile it has been announced that the new Northern franchise to start in 2016 will not now have a requirement on the franchisee to replace the Pacers – just to refurbish and upgrade.
See also back page: 162% fare rise

Two trains an hour needed on Manchester-Chester line

The JMP Consultants study into the Mid Cheshire line is still awaited. It was commissioned by the potential funding partners – Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council and Transport for Greater Manchester. In the meantime, rather than wait any longer, the Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association has produced a draft proposal for a two trains an hour service throughout the day. As well as an all-stations stopping service, it wants a semi-fast service from Manchester Piccadilly to Chester, stopping at the more heavily used stations of Stockport, Altrincham, Knutsford, Northwich, Greenbank and then Chester. This level of service could be provided with the same number of units used up to last December, though it would need more train crew. Interestingly, the 2012 Transport for Greater Manchester strategy calls for stations with a footfall of over 50,000 to have at least two trains an hour. All the above stations fall into that category. The strategy suggests four trains an hour for stations with a footfall of over 500,000. Knutsford has 450,000 according to official figures although MCRUA has recorded more in its counts. Yet Knutsford has only one train an hour. MCRUA says that a "turn up and go" service would be effective in attracting car drivers from the A556 road. The draft proposal has been sent to all the community rail partners, including the Department for Transport

Outrage over trains that run but no longer stop at Moston

Meanwhile, despite that Transport for Greater Manchester policy, Moston, which is four miles from Manchester Victoria, has had its service reduced in May from two trains an hour to one train off-peak. The next station is Mills Hill and trains are allowed the same time from Mills Hill to Victoria whether they stop at Moston or not! There is a local petition about the changes online at: <http://chn.ge/XFBfile>

Halton Curve success clears the way for new services

The Government approved funding in early July to reopen the Halton Curve, for which the North Cheshire Rail User Group has been campaigning for years. It is thought a bi-directional curve 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. Merseytravel has just refreshed the GRIP (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) 3 study, and is now going ahead with GRIP 4, which it is 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, Runcorn, to Wavertree Junction, Liverpool.

Picture: FIRST SCOTRAIL





LOCAL ACTION

Wales

By Rowland Pittard
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■ Pont Brewit reopens

The railway between Harlech and Pwllheli reopened for passenger trains in September after a nine-month closure. The original Victorian timber Pont Briwet, which carried both railway and road over the river Dwryd near Llandecwyn, has now been rebuilt and major repairs to other sections of the Cambrian line were also needed following severe storm damage in December last year. The complete £20 million project, which includes the road and a cycle and foot path, will be completed next year. It is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund, administered by the Welsh Government, Network Rail and Gwynedd Council.

■ Welsh Government concessionary rail travel

All holders of Welsh concessionary travel passes can now travel free on trains on the Wrexham-Bidston and Llandudno-Blaenau Ffestiniog lines throughout the year and on the Heart of Wales and Cambrian Coast lines from October to March. Previously travel was restricted to those who lived in the local authority areas adjacent to the lines.

■ Baglan Bay Energy Park bridge

A £7.3 million road bridge is being built at Baglan Energy Park in Neath Port Talbot to cross the railway lines and sidings which are used as a loading point for timber for the Kronospan factory at Chirk, near Wrexham. The road will open in June next year.

■ Semaphore signals go in Cardiff area signalling upgrade

The lines between Cardiff and Penarth and Barry Island, as well as the City line to Radyr, came under the control of the new South Wales Control Centre at Cardiff Central in June. Barry signal box closed and the functions of Cardiff panel box and Radyr signalling centre were reduced. The last of the Cardiff Valley semaphore signals were removed at Barry and a new reversibly worked platform was brought into use at Barry Town served by trains to Barry Island.

■ New bay platform to serve the Taff lines at Pontypridd

The Taff lines were closed north of Taff Wells on two days in June to enable the installation of point and track work at Pontypridd ready for a new bay platform.

■ Improved Fishguard Harbour services protected

Welsh transport minister Edwina Hart has approved the continuation of an experimental service introduced in 2011 until the end of the current Wales and Borders franchise in 2018. The Fishguard services were introduced as a three-year experiment, but feedback from the local community showed that the additional services brought significant economic and social benefits. Railfuture believes they should be improved further to make it easier for people to visit the area.

■ Scheme will improve north-south rail links

A £44 million scheme to double the line from Saltney Junction Chester to Rossett was launched in June by Welsh government minister Lesley Griffiths, who chairs the task force on modernising North Wales transport. The Rossett-Wrexham section will remain single but the current scheme will deliver significant improvements, cutting journey times between Holyhead and Cardiff and providing capacity for additional trains via Wrexham General. Ms Griffiths also visited Rhyl station, which is enjoying a £2.6 million refurbishment. The work at Rhyl is part of a £24.4 million station improvement programme in Wales.

www.railfuturewales.org.uk



Seven steps to a rail campaign success

By Chris Page

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Railfuture's *Have Your Say* survey showed that most members are willing to campaign, but are unsure how they can help.

One suggestion was that Railfuture should create a template based upon our successful campaigns. This article is a first step toward that template, in the hope that some members will find it useful and others will contribute the benefit of their experience to improve it.

Choose a realistic campaign

Campaigns need a lot of time and effort, so choose your campaign carefully.

You may have a soft spot for reopening the branch line to a rural hamlet, but if nothing has changed since the line was closed 60 years ago then you are unlikely to succeed.

Kilbride Group, which set the ball rolling for the line to Tavistock to be reopened, considers that a population of 20,000 and significant new development are required to make reopening a branch line to an isolated town more likely to succeed.

Campaigns to reopen lines or stations can be viable, but campaigns to improve services on existing lines may be more popular. The aim must be to inspire people to believe they can help make it happen.

You should start by focusing on need, not solution. Start with your own solution and you may come into conflict with others who have a different solution.

Once you have clarity and agreement on the need with all stakeholders, the right solution will probably emerge.

Get others on board

Make contact with potential stakeholders so you can cooperate and build relationships to encourage stakeholders to cooperate with us.

Local parish and district councillors, county councillors and officers, MPs, local enterprise partnerships, train operators, Network Rail, the Department for Transport and local business organisations are potential allies.

You can make contacts by attending open council meetings and workshops, train operators' stakeholder meetings, and breakfast meetings run by business organisations.

Explain the need and seek their views to refine the need.

Stimulating economic growth and accommodating population growth through new housing are top priorities for politicians. Access to employment and edu-

INCREMENTAL APPROACH

NEWS - MAKE IT

SOCIALISE

PARTNERSHIP

INTERNET & SOCIAL MEDIA

RELATIONSHIPS

EVIDENCE

INSPIRE: Spelling out the way to inspire your campaign

cation, and connections between business centres are therefore crucial needs.

Rail must show it can deliver benefits such as reliability, journey time improvements and new journey opportunities.

Network Rail will want to see these benefits quantified as "outputs". It can then present "solutions" in the shape of potential schemes, options for stakeholders to fund.

Start small, think big

Rail development has often been incremental in nature.

East West Rail started with Chiltern Rail's Evergreen 3 project for services between Oxford and Marylebone, by building a chord at Bicester.

The next phase will be reopening lines from Bicester and Aylesbury to Bletchley, followed by electrification as part of Network Rail's electric spine project.

Later a line will be reinstated between Bedford and Cambridge, possibly via a new route.

Airdrie-Bathgate began with reopening the Bathgate branch. It is therefore worth taking an incremental approach with your preferred solution, so that the first phase is affordable and achievable in a reasonable time scale.

Publicity

In parallel with engaging stakeholders, your campaign must build public awareness of the need.

The internet gives instant access to people in their own homes and while travelling at no cost except your own time.

You can use Twitter and Facebook to make contact with potential supporters, and ask them to register their support on the Railfuture website.

Engage the local community by setting up a Railfuture stand at local events, where you can hand out leaflets and get people to register their support.

Explain the need and the campaign on the Railfuture website.

You can collect supporters' email addresses and call on them when you need to get a particular point



Picture: JOHN ELVIN

BICESTER: Rail workers are creating a link from the Marylebone line from London to the former Oxford-Cambridge line so that a new service can run from London Marylebone to Oxford. It can also be viewed as stage one of East West Rail

across to stakeholders, perhaps by asking them to respond to a consultation or write to their MP.

Gather your evidence

You will need both evidence of the need and popular support to convince stakeholders to take the campaign seriously.

Evidence of growth in demand, travel patterns, and economic deprivation can be derived from official statistics published by the Government, city and county councils and the Office of Rail Regulation, and can be supported by passenger surveys. Getting the campaign and the Railfuture name into the newspapers, radio and TV will help build popular support. You can make the news by issuing press releases for every campaign achievement and event.

By setting up a petition, as the Wisbech reopening campaign has done, public support can help you get local authority funding

for a business case study. This required a lot of volunteer effort to set up a website, leaflet every household in the town and collect the responses, but the petition was signed by a significant percentage of the local population and achieved its goal.

The campaign must aim to build a partnership of stakeholders who support the campaign and will actively promote it.

Be flexible

Campaigns do not always go the way you expect. A government announcement or a stakeholder decision can have a positive or negative impact. Be ready to change direction in response, to make the best of a new situation.

An effective campaign needs a team of committed people who can maintain each others' motivation over the long time that it takes to deliver a rail development project. Good luck with your campaigning!

Cost of car, bus and train travel

Green MP Caroline Lucas extracted figures showing how car drivers benefit from Government policy while bus and train passengers lose. Transport Minister Robert Goodwill told the Commons in June that officials statistics suggest that:

Between 2010 and 2013

The real cost of motoring, including the purchase of a vehicle, decreased by 2%

Bus and coach fares increased by 3%

Rail fares increased by 5%

The real cost of the average UK one-way air fare, including taxes and charges, covering domestic flights from 2000 to 2013 declined by 43% and from 2010 to 2013 declined by 3%. Estimates are not available on a comparable basis before 2000.

Between 1980 and 2013

The real cost of motoring, including the purchase of a vehicle, declined by 12% in real terms

Bus and coach fares increased by 59%

Rail fares increased by 62%

Bus and coach fares increased by 28%

Rail fares increased by 22%

Between 2010 and 2013

The real cost of motoring, including the purchase of a vehicle, decreased by 2%

Bus and coach fares increased by 3%

Rail fares increased by 5%

The real cost of the average UK one-way air fare, including taxes and charges, covering domestic flights from 2000 to 2013 declined by 43% and from 2010 to 2013 declined by 3%. Estimates are not available on a comparable basis before 2000.

Between 1997 and 2013

The real cost of motoring, including the purchase of a vehicle, declined by 9%



LOCAL ACTION

Thames Valley

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

■ East West progress

Railfuture Thames Valley continues to see developments on its past aspirations and is now seeking to promote further improvements. East West Rail continues to make strong progress. The Bicester-Oxford section has the Gavray Drive curve under construction and Network Rail is working on an upgraded specification to allow 14 trains an hour and doubling of Aylesbury-Princes Risborough for a possible two trains an hour from Milton Keynes. Objectors continue to raise issues over noise and vibration in the Wolvercote area but a revised economic study by consultants Arup suggests that the EWR contribution to gross domestic product will be £73 million per annum, up from £38 million. It is estimated that 41 of 65 English cities could be served, with one change of train. The latest cost estimate is £402 million and 2019 is seen as the opening date. Estate agents are emphasising the value of the rail link and predict rising house prices as one result.

Mayor of London Boris Johnson has supported EWR as essential to the idea of MedCity which would link up the research centres of London, Cambridge and Oxford. Duncan Hames, the MP for Melksham, has suggested the service be extended to Bristol, while Mid Norfolk MP George Freeman wants it to be seen as the Life Sciences Line and run through to Norwich. The recent Transport Strategy of the South East of England Councils supports the extension of East West Rail to Cambridge and sees a link to the North Downs Line at Reading as a further option. Gatwick Airport is proposing services from Oxford and Milton Keynes post 2020.

■ Cash for rail improvements for enterprise partnerships

Growth Fund allocations to local enterprise partnerships saw Buckinghamshire receive £1.8 million to develop links to Winslow station from Buckingham and £2 million for links to Maidenhead and Crossrail from Iver and Taplow. The South East Midlands LEP secured £1.5 million for Bletchley station-to-town-centre work. It has included the EWR link to Cambridge in its transport strategy. Oxfordshire gained £1.3 million towards upgrading Bicester London Road crossing, £9.5 million for Didcot station parking and interchange, and £35 million for Oxford Transit. Berkshire received £2.6 million towards Reading Green Park new station.

■ County sketches out its future transport vision

Oxfordshire County Council has begun initial work on a fourth local transport plan and the branch has made an input. We fear the council will spend £35 million on a road-based scheme for Witney when rail provides a better solution. A new station at Grove/Wantage Road, increased services from Oxford to Didcot and the potential of the Cowley line are to be examined. A master plan for Oxford station includes new station buildings, platforms and a bus station, for completion in 2019.

■ Open access Blackpool trains could boost Milton Keynes
Milton Keynes Council has welcomed the possibility of an extra six trains a day if Great North Western Railway gains Office of Rail Regulation approval for open access Blackpool-London services.

■ The Queen gives new Reading the royal seal of approval
Reading station was formally reopened by the Queen in July. New platforms, entrances, footbridge and shopping facilities have been built and major track work is being completed as part of an £895 million scheme. Crossrail will further enhance the role of the station.

■ Threat to Bourne End-Wycombe 'airport link' line
Railfuture is objecting to another planning application to build on the trackbed of the Bourne End-Wycombe line which has the potential to be used for rail services to Heathrow airport.





Your letters

Cambridge praise

I just wanted to express my appreciation, through *Railwatch*, for the excellent Railfuture conference at Cambridge on 21 June 2014. It was the best organised and the most useful such event I have attended since joining Railfuture.

Congratulations to the organising team, especially East Anglia branch, for their dedicated efforts to make this a success.

Graham Collett, Copmanthorpe, York YO23 3RY
graham.collett@railfuture.org.uk

Bi-mode trains

In response to the letter entitled "Bi-modes needed" in *Railwatch* 140, I would like to add my own example of where a bi-mode train would be useful. I use Hungerford station, on the First Great Western line from Paddington to Penzance. Hungerford is two stops west of Newbury so, with electrification planned to end at Newbury, that means Hungerford will not benefit.

After electrification, the plan is to run a fast electric service from Reading and Paddington to Newbury. So we passengers west of Newbury will have have to make do with a diesel stopping service and then change at Newbury if we want to go further east, to Reading or Paddington.

What sort of service would be provided west from Hungerford, to Exeter and Penzance? Most likely it would be a diesel semi-fast service, maybe using the existing IC125 trains. Whether these trains would continue to stop at Hungerford is another uncertainty. We may end up having to go to Newbury, and changing there to come back again!

In a sensibly run world of course there would be electrification all the way. At the very least they should give us bi-mode trains which would be able to cover all eventualities by providing a

through service from Paddington to Penzance and Exeter, serving everywhere west of Newbury.

I have copied in my MP (for Newbury), the MP for Devizes who represents Bedwyn, Wiltshire, and the Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group.

Catherine Barber, Hungerford, Berkshire RG17 0DD
kate@catbarber.plus.com

Trains too slow

In *Railwatch* 140, you mentioned that use of the Bedford-Bletchley line has remained static while rail use has gone up elsewhere.

As a local who loves train travel, I am prevented from using it and resort to my car.

The infrequent service, one train an hour, is the biggest disincentive, especially as I have had to wait that long at Bletchley on my way home from Birmingham.

The service is slow. It is frustrating to arrive at Northampton two hours after you left Bedford, and still have more than an hour left before you get to Birmingham, unless you want to empty your pockets and travel Virgin from Milton Keynes, with an additional change of train. Bedford-Bletchley has poor connections with destinations south, apart from London, so travel from Bedford to Hemel Hempstead or Apsley is very slow.

The stations in Bedford town centre, particularly Bedford Midland, are difficult to get to, because of traffic congestion, and expensive parking.

Car parking is lacking at out-of-town stations such as Kempston Hardwick, even though they are easily accessible by car. Parking at these stops coupled with a more frequent service could make them very useful for commuters and others.

The infrastructure is in place to make the service direct to Milton Keynes, but sadly this has not been made use of by London Midland. One

other tremendously useful development would be to add a stop near where the line crosses the Midland main line, near Cow Bridge.

Such a stop would be close to the A421 dual carriageway, Bedford park and ride car park and bus service and the Interchange shopping centre. It would make the line far more accessible for many potential users.

As is the case so often, a little more investment, even one more train and one more platform, could generate a lot more usage.

This summer, however, I found a corner of France that seems to be made for holidaymakers who enjoy travelling by rail.

Where the Pyrenees hit the Mediterranean, there is about 20 miles of coastline, with a string of beautiful seaside towns (Corbère to Collioure) which have inspired painters. A railway connects them like pearls on a string.

Continuing north takes you to the seaside resort of Argeles and Perpignan with a host of cultural attractions.

You can then take the train inland and switch to the "Yellow Train" rack-and-pinion line to take you high into the Pyrenees, with a myriad of walking and sightseeing options.

Or you can take the train over the border into Spain, either to Figueres and the Salvador Dali Museum, or on the brand new TGV line from Perpignan to Barcelona.

On top of sheer beauty of the area, I found travelling by rail in France interesting in itself and cheap. I booked my train trips in advance on the "Capitaine Train" website, though that is not necessary except for the TGV.

Peter Solomon, Green End Road, Great Barford MK44 3HA
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Trains too fast

I thought the picture of Curzon Street station Birmingham on page one of *Railwatch* 140 looked like a dead fish out of the water. But I agree with Graham Larkbey's objection to the £70 million possible fine

RAIL ACTION

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

on Network Rail for late trains. Any government action should benefit rail users.

I am worried by the ancient woodlands at risk from High Speed Two. Planting replacements is not going to make up for hundreds of years of growth and stability. Perhaps essayist A P Herbert was right when he observed that "slow travel by train is almost the only restful experience that is left to us".

I will happily spend a few minutes more on our existing lines, having the time to look at what remains of our beautiful, unique countryside.

Adrian J Liddle, Coopers Lane, London E10 5DG
adrian@adltack.com

County town irony

It was quite ironic to read in *Railwatch* 140 that a rail project manager is being based at Denbighshire County Council, in view of the fact that the county town, Denbigh, does not have either a rail line or a station.

How many other county towns lost their rail services I wonder, as a result of the Beeching report? County towns being disconnected was a disgrace in itself.

Turning to the line west of Dawlish, having been born in Devon, I perceive that all the alternative routes outlined in *Railwatch* have significant problems.

J H Evered, Goylands Close, Llandrindod Wells LD1 5RB

Let's agree to smile

Reading *Railwatch* 140, I had to smile at the first key lesson noted under the article headed "Taking note of your views".

It was basically "Agree on policy and speak with one voice".

Inside Railfuture, we have disparate views of HS2 do we not?

Many members seem to have a rosy view of a renationalised network while I am writing on day four of a national strike by French railway unions.

Network Rail meanwhile has announced that passenger traffic has doubled since 1995, although against the background of us having the "highest fares in Europe".

Railfuture might be able to provide an honest assessment of where Britain stands in the cost of European rail travel across the range of fares, rather

than the selective nonsense portrayed in the media. The Man in Seat 61 suggests we have the most expensive fares for 15% of our journeys while Julie Boston (*Letters, Railwatch* 140) believes our fares are four times those of some other European state-run networks.

My recent experience is that turn-up-and-go rural fares in France make me appreciate the lower fares in my Norwich area.

The research could state the level of subsidy that taxpayers effectively put into each fare.

The research will also need to comment on some return fares being £1 more than the single.

Agree on policy and speak with one voice - hmm.

G P Brown, Fieldview, Bowthorpe Road, Norwich NR5 8AQ
brown.gerald@ntlworld.com

Unpopular takeover

I was concerned when I read in the latest *Railwatch* that Railfuture intends to recommend that Southern and SouthEastern services are taken over by Transport for London.

I am chairman of Edenbridge and District Rail Travellers Association which was in the forefront to stop the Mayor of London taking over SouthEastern suburban services.

I am glad to say that Kent County Council and our MP Sir John Stanley were also against TFL taking over SE suburban services, even though Mayor Boris Johnson spoke to our MP to get him to change his mind.

TfL has to do what the Mayor of London requires which only supports the area that is his electoral area.

When it was British Rail (1986 to 1994 Network SouthEast) the organisation used to weigh up all political pressure and do the best for the total railway. It is not the same today.

When the East London Line was introduced, the ELL trains were first on the timetable graph followed by the Caterham/Tottenham corner services and then the East Grinstead services, which all had to be changed to accommodate the ELL trains.

The East Grinstead passengers had two fast trains in the morning peak, which were taken out and changed to stopping services to accommodate TfL's 15 min service at the Greater London stations of Sanderstead



Picture: DUNCAN HOUNSELL

THE SAS – members of the local Salt and Sham cycling club – joined campaigners to demonstrate in favour of a reopened railway station at Saltford, near Bath

Village rallies to fight for railway station

SAS members and villagers gathered in Saltford, near Bath, in August to demonstrate to their local council just how important it is that their railway station reopens. A crucial meeting will take place on Wednesday 12 November when council leaders will be asked to throw their full weight behind the campaign. The cabinet members of Bath and North Somerset Council will be considering

a report from consultants CM2Hill. Villagers want the council to give the go-ahead to a study into the feasibility of reopening their station so Saltford can take advantage of Bristol's Metro West project. Once reopened, the station, which closed in 1970, will be able to provide a half-hourly train service for Saltford across the Bristol-Bath area. More information: <http://bit.ly/1oyg6uE>

and Riddlesdown. The Uckfield line trains then had to fill in the gaps and the arrival times in London were inconvenient for our passengers. The main train of the day had an amended arrival time from 08.09 to 08.23, too late for our passengers to arrive in their offices by 08.30.

This meant that the previous train became overloaded and we still suffer today with the passengers on the 07.08 from Edenbridge Town having standing passengers all the way to London Bridge.

I, as a member of Railfuture, and also the Edenbridge DRTA, will object to TfL taking over any of Southern or SouthEastern Services.

Bob Howes
bob.howes271@btinternet.com

A tight squeeze

I was much taken with the *Railwatch* 140 article on Bristol-Weymouth overcrowding.

Perhaps this one incident will

highlight how bad the situation can be.

It was on Easter Saturday and I was on the platform at Upwey when the two-car train from Bristol was due in at 10.49.

As it pulled in, I realised that one could not see any daylight across the carriages. It was absolutely jammed full. The doors opened to reveal a solid phalanx of human beings.

No one could get on the train at all. It was just not possible. The guard said he had been forced to leave families behind at Maiden Newton because they

could not squeeze on. Just as he was going to close the doors, a couple extricated themselves somehow from the packed carriage, came up to the guard and asked when was the next train back to Dorchester. They had not been able to fight their way through the carriage to get off at Dorchester.

I personally have never seen a train so full and I spent many years travelling every day on the London Underground.

The guard seemed to think that his train should have been four cars but two had been borrowed to help out with a rugby match.

All other trains on the line that day were strengthened but, as you say, eight trains a day each way and some three-hour gaps is not acceptable.

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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 19

North East

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

■ ■ Busy summer for rail campaigners

The summer months have been a busy time. The branch committee provided submissions on the new TransPennine and Northern franchises emphasising the needs of the region. They met Arriva Trains and put forward our aspirations for future services in the North East. They also met Eversholt Leasing, the providers of rolling stock to the operators of both the present franchises. The provision of updated and attractive rolling stock should be one of the prime requirements of the new franchises. Two branch meetings have been held. In June Paul Salvesson set out his views on the opportunities and pitfalls of the franchising procedures. In September Graham Jellet analysed the lessons to be learned from modern French light railway systems.

■ ■ Rail users cheer progress on line reopening

Submissions concerning the new franchises have also occupied Coastliners, the Tyne Valley users group and South East Northumberland's SENRUG, each being concerned to highlight the needs of their areas. Coastliners welcomed the 10 year extension of Grand Central's track access agreement. SENRUG's AGM in July featured an address by Richard Allan, Northern Rail's area manager. In September the schools which had entered a competition to submit a DVD containing a business case for the reopening of the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line presented their proposals. Previously in June the county council commissioned Network Rail to undertake a Governance for Railway Investment Project (GRIP) Stages 1-3 study for the reintroduction of passenger services. After this, a further study will be required to cost the proposals. Anxiety remains that Network Rail will produce plans for an impracticably costly upgrading. See www.senrug.co.uk for further details of the activities of this vigilant users group.

■ ■ Rail is poor relation as "enterprise" dishes out millions

The North East Local Enterprise Partnership recently received £112 million funding from the Government local growth deal scheme. Only two rail schemes will be funded. £6 million goes to build an underground passenger tunnel linking Newcastle Central station with the aptly named Stephenson Quarter, which is being developed south of the station, together with the refurbishment of Newcastle Central Metro station. In addition £10 million goes towards the creation of space for firms in the supply chain of the Hitachi Rail assembly plant at Merchant Park, Newton Aycliffe. The track formation giving access to the Bishop Auckland line is already under construction. Much of the LEP money though is squandered on road projects.

■ ■ Special trains mark railway's 175th anniversary

The Stephenson Railway Museum, part of the Tyne & Wear Museums Service, celebrated the 175th anniversary of the opening of the Newcastle and North Shields Railway and the inception of Tyneside suburban services in June with special trains at Percy Main station, where the 20th century Metro follows part of the original N&NS route.

■ ■ Rubbish trains just passing through

Manchester's landfill rubbish now traverses the North East in dedicated freight trains on the ECML, bound for the Lafarge cement works at Oxwellmains, near Dunbar.

■ ■ Aln Valley Railway aims to be major tourist attraction

Aln Valley's new Lionheart terminus off the Alnwick bypass is progressing steadily and includes new tourist signs. So far 37 chains of track have been laid, and platforms with signalling installed. It remains to find funding and lay 200 more chains to reach the main line station at Alnmouth. See: www.alnvalleyrailway.co.uk



Picture: ALN VALLEY RAILWAY

Innovation in higher education for rail

By Marin Marinov
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The rail industry includes a vast spectrum of subject areas ranging from engineering to social sciences, because of its multi-disciplinary nature.

A collaborative effort bringing together experts from different fields is needed to build a skilled workforce capable of managing the railways efficiently, if we are to secure a vibrant sector which serves many of our social needs without causing damage to the environment.

This cannot be achieved without adequate rail education and training which promotes collaboration and transferable skills and which presents opportunities for university degree programmes to revisit their teaching methods, learning approaches, policy and practice to introduce improvements, tune their curricula with the industry current needs and hence guarantee a good learning outcome.

Rail service of good quality is dependent on the implementation of rapid technology advances. A vibrant sector has to be created which responds adequately to the economic changes and local markets, creation, promotion and application of knowledge and competences have to be secured.

Universities are the main sources of knowledge and competences. University education is changing from an input-output based, professor-led approach towards a more integrated competence-based, student-led approach, aimed at providing the skills needed for deep understanding of multi-disciplinary concepts, policies and practices.

Today's railways, to secure growth, require multidisciplinary concepts and transferable skills promoting creativity, research and development, innovation and flexibility as well as trans-boundary mechanisms linked with the entire supply chain.

The European Commission stated in its Fourth Railway Package that the creation of a skilled workforce for a vibrant railway sector will need to be dealt with extremely carefully so that the necessary multi-disciplinary element is captured. This presents a great opportunity for universities to update their rail programmes, incorporate the missing multi-disciplinary element in them and make sure that their curricula are tuned with rail



THE BRIGHT FUTURE OF RAIL:

industry needs, trends and agendas. In response to this situation, NewRail at Newcastle University has developed flexible curriculum frameworks. Our education portfolio is based on innovative research-based block teaching, incorporates a strong multidisciplinary element and hence provides the skills and qualifications necessary for a rail sector that is ever growing.

Currently NewRail provides the following opportunities:

■ MSc in rail freight and logistics through which the students develop their ability to initiate and carry out advanced performance systems analysis and research work to solve managerial, operational and engineering-related problems in rail freight and logistics

■ RailNewcastle summer school which employs an innovative multidisciplinary blended approach and is centred on the concepts of efficient rail services and international aspect of logistics, which promote reliable, safer and more secure rail transport systems

■ Continuing professional development courses in rail and logistics, where every course spans two weeks, employs a multi-method learning approach and is suitable for everybody who is interested in the field

■ PhD in "organisation, management and economics of train movement", where the aim is to look at innovative concepts for sustainable rail transport with a particular focus on system services, production patterns and rail system designs. NewRail's teaching framework includes a range of multi-disciplinary activities such as lectures and student-led discussion, rail major research projects, panel of experts, analytical and simulation modelling, performance analysis and 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.

Our framework also provides students with internationally recognised qualifications, which meet the requirements of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and of other benchmark statements for applicability of output standards.

We promote critical enquiry with skills in research and knowledge acquisition and an appreciation

of the value of education to the wider community.

On completion of our programmes and courses the students are ready to engage in life-long learning and become self-learners which is crucial for prosperous careers in the railway industry.

The contributions of my colleagues Anna Fraszczyk and Phil Mortimer have been crucial to the success of NewRail's Education Group.

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

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◆◆◆◆ China's 350-mile long Tailyuan-Xian high speed line opened in July

Severnside

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

■ ■ Rail freight terminal at risk

The only active rail freight terminal in Gloucestershire, the sidings at Ashchurch Ministry of Defence site, may be at risk. In June, the county council announced it was minded to remove the protection for the site, which is to be redeveloped for housing. The sidings received trains of bottled water during the 2007 floods. Railfuture Severnside warned that no other such facility existed in the county. The likelihood of diminishing oil reserves and further electrification would suggest less dependence on road transport in the longer term, yet the council did not appear to have any alternative locations in mind for rail freight depots. Railfuture pointed out that the proposal is at odds with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, which expects local authorities to identify and protect sites which widen transport choice.



■ ■ Cotswolds could benefit from redoubling work

In a response to the First Great Western consultation on the future of train services in the Cotswolds, Railfuture Severnside reiterated the ideas put forward in the unified Railfuture response to the Department for Transport's recent consultation on the Great Western franchise specification. Once sufficient rolling stock becomes available, an hourly Paddington-Cheltenham service would reap the benefits of the £45 million Swindon-Kemble redoubling, which was completed in August after 20 months of work. Extension of some London and local trains to Worcester would give Ashchurch and Tewkesbury a better service and relieve pressure on the limited siding space at Cheltenham.

■ ■ Campaign brings better train service to Gloucester

CrossCountry has reinstated the Gloucester stop in the 13.06 Edinburgh-Plymouth, Mondays to Fridays, following a campaign by Railfuture Severnside and Richard Graham MP. Some improvements have recently been made to the station and more are promised because the nearby Kingsholm stadium will be hosting Rugby World Cup matches in 2015. We hope that the interchange arrangements between trains and buses are improved.

■ ■ Trains a better option for Avonmouth

In late July, Bristol Port Company, which is owned by Terence Mordaunt and Tory party donor David Ord, said it was opposed to restoring passenger services on the Henbury loop, claiming that trains would delay lorries using level crossings at Avonmouth and that buses could be used for port workers. Railfuture media spokesman Bruce Williamson wrote to the *Bristol Post* and *Western Daily Press*, emphasising that expansion of the rail network was essential because buses could not attract people from their cars. He also pointed out that further electrification would benefit the port by removing lorries from the roads.

■ ■ £4m improvements for Taunton and hope for Wellington

Following the recent announcement of a £4 million plan to improve Taunton station, Railfuture Severnside is pleased to see strong support from council and business leaders for reopening Wellington station, which is being considered by three local authorities. In late July the *Somerset County Gazette* reported the headmaster of Wellington School as saying that a station would attract high value professions to the town. The finance director of local firm Relyon was quoted as saying it would support any scheme assisting the commuting of its workers to Wellington.

Wessex

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

■ ■ Island line temporary closure

Temporary closure of the Island line between Shanklin and Ryde St John's Road was planned for 29 September to 4 November for work to repair a landslip north of Sandown, although the dates may also have slipped. Following comments by our branch about the unsatisfactory arrangements for travel down Ryde Pier by taxi, when the line was closed by flooding at the start of the year, it was planned to keep it open for a shuttle service between Ryde Pier Head and Ryde St John's Road, thereby maintaining the rail park and ride service.

■ ■ Better standards needed for the Salisbury-Exeter line

Railfuture is campaigning to improve service levels on the important 89-mile stretch of the former Southern Railway line between Salisbury and Exeter. We want to see improved frequency of services and long distance journey times, new stations, improved reliability, capacity and rolling stock, and resilience for First Great Western services on the Exeter-Taunton-Castle Cary line in times of disruption. There is already action under the Devon Metro banner, with a new station at Cranbrook, Devon County council's wish for half hourly Exeter-Honiton-Axminster services, and a possible through service Honiton-Axminster-Exeter-Barnstaple. The 00.50 services from Waterloo could be extended to Yeovil Junction. A dynamic loop at Tisbury station with a reinstated platform would assist. Many summer services require six-car formations to Exeter, with ageing class 159 diesel units. A long term policy integrating the Salisbury-Bristol-Southampton-Portsmouth interchanges is needed. Improvements from Exeter to Yeovil Junction and Castle Cary could enable more IC125 working. Network Rail's plans for the Devon-Dawlish area may also give further opportunities.

■ ■ SWT franchise extension may offer extra options

Reports suggest that South West Trains may be invited by the Department for Transport to extend its franchise from 2015 to 2019. Railfuture Wessex is already planning to ask the DfT to make the following improvements to services and stations:

- Tighten up the Waterloo to Weymouth and Waterloo to Portsmouth timetable to give faster journey times
- Sort out the Waterloo to Poole hourly stopping service that waits at Southampton for about 15 minutes and then a further 24 minutes at Brockenhurst
- Provide half-hourly Portsmouth-Southampton service
- Resolve the unacceptable usage of Class 450s on the 70-plus mile main line service from Portsmouth to Waterloo. It needs appropriate trains
- Consider a 20-minute interval service on the Island line to increase usage
- Increase train frequency on the Salisbury-Exeter service and prepare a specification for the replacement of the class 159s that are now some 25 years old and due for replacement in the next 10 years.

We invite Railfuture members to contact us with other ideas for improvements.

■ ■ Enhancements needed if GW franchise is extended

Railfuture Wessex is calling for improvements on the Reading-Basingstoke, Westbury-Salisbury-Portsmouth-Brighton and Yeovil-Dorchester-Weymouth lines. The planned overhead electrification of the Reading-Basingstoke line is intended to be just a shuttle but we suggest it should be linked to Newbury with services to London Paddington and on to Crossrail. The Cardiff-Portsmouth-Brighton route should be upgraded to inter-city standards with better trains and more capacity. The Bristol-Weymouth service also needs better trains with more capacity and increased frequency.



From fighting rail closures we can move on to expanding the network

By Chris Austin

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In the early days of the Railway Development Society, the principal objective was to stop the closure programme and save as much of the network as possible.

Now that the threat of closures has receded, but never assume it has disappeared, one of Railfuture's core objectives is to see the network expand.

It would be easy and pointless to set an objective of reinstating the lines that had closed, but the serious purpose behind the work of Railfuture, through the infrastructure and network group and the policy committee, is to set up a framework for lobbying for new rail links where they are most needed, and to indicate some sort of priority, based on today's requirements. Why new lines? Basically, the

need is created by a growing population, strong growth in the number of rail passengers and the demand for freight.

Too many large communities no longer have direct rail access. We have to argue the need for new lines based on changed circumstances, rather than on the basis of what existed in the 1960s.

Inevitably, most of the schemes considered will involve upgrading freight lines or reinstating abandoned railways.

In general, the communities that need a railway today, once had one and it probably used the most favourable route corridor to connect to the rest of the network.

But this should not preclude the use of new rail alignments where these are now needed or would provide a better link.

The infrastructure and networks group is committed to creating a register of lines for reopening and these will be the ones on which we campaign.

In practical terms, projects cannot make progress unless there is a good business case and a sponsor, usually a local authority or Network Rail, to champion it.

The review carried out by the group will include those which are well on the way, like East-West and Tavistock, as well as those that are at an earlier stage, such as Witney or Haverhill.

We want to work closely with branches on this, and already we have engaged with East Anglia on the Wisbech line, Wessex on Salisbury-Exeter upgrading, Devon and Cornwall on routes to Plymouth and beyond, West Midlands on a group of propos-

als in their area and London and South East on Lewes-Uckfield. The group includes some veteran campaigners and some with practical experience within the rail industry of getting lines reopened. We are more than happy to provide advice and help where we can.

We look forward to working together with branches on a powerful and coherent strategy for line reopening which will be accepted by government and can form the basis of a long-term plan to protect route corridors and station sites as well. My aim is to keep everyone up to date with progress through *Railwatch*.

www.railfuture.org.uk / Infrastructure+and+Networks

■ Chris Austin is head of Railfuture's infrastructure and networks group

Eurostar's next 20 years

By Trevor Garrod

trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk

It has become normal to catch a Eurostar train from London to Paris or Brussels. That is as it should be.

The building of the Channel Tunnel, however, was the result of decades of discussion and lobbying, in which our society and its predecessors played a part. There were vested interests who opposed it, including airline and shipping operators who formed the "Flexilink" consortium.

It was also a challenge to design and construct a train that could run on three different electrification schemes and three different signalling systems, but the industry rose to the challenge and Eurostar trains have been operating for 20 years.

The first Eurostar ran on revenue-earning service on 14 November 1994 with just two trains a day to Paris and two to Brussels. In that December, a party of 90 Railfuture members enjoyed a day trip to Paris, where we had a buffet lunch with members of our French sister organisation, and drank to the entente cordiale with the toast "We have seen the future and it works."

Twenty years later, the trains are faster and more frequent and Eurostar's share of the capital-to-capital market has grown.

In February, it was 66% of the London-Paris market and 52% of the London-Brussels market.

For me, living 120 miles from London, going to Brussels for a meeting can be a day trip, not

much different from a business trip to Cardiff.

Eurostar has also become a key part of longer journeys, especially as new or upgraded lines brought much of the continent closer to London. Taking a Eurostar from London to Lille and changing there for Bordeaux, for example, has become feasible.

Railfuture has taken advantage of this improvement as each year organised parties visited such cities as Barcelona, Milan, Munich and Berlin. Eurostar also brings visitors for business and pleasure to Britain.

What are the challenges for the next 20 years?

The first is affordability. Fares are relatively high, especially for families, compared to the alternatives, one of which is driving on to the Shuttle or catching a coach from London Victoria coach station (still using the Channel Tunnel).

You can obtain cheaper fares if you book in advance or if you can be flexible with times. Booking online was not possible 20 years ago but even now, you sometimes want to speak to an agent, who may also advise you on best prices. The recently published Railfuture leaflet *Going abroad?* gives details of many specialist travel agents as well as other sources of information.

You cannot just walk on to a Eurostar as you can the 09.30 from Norwich to London. Check-in times are not as long as for airlines or some ferries, but they can still be an inconvenience. In



Picture: RAILVOLUTION.NET/WOLFGANG SCHEER

The new Eurostar Velaro at Siemens test track in Wildenrath

future, technology and the political situation could lead to faster check-in times. Eurostar must build on the advantages of rail over other modes.

Another challenge is that other operators may use the Channel Tunnel. Open access could mean new operators running trains, though Eurostar's main competition remains cars, coaches, ferries and airlines.

Back in 1994, there were hopes of Eurostars from Scotland and the North of England, and sleepers from London to Dortmund. These did not materialise, partly because of the growth of low-cost airlines, but such ideas should remain as a future option.

More progress has been made with Eurostar journeys beyond Paris and Brussels. We can look forward to regular trains from London to the south of France and plans are advanced for an

Amsterdam service. Eurostar is also co-operating with TGV Lyria to offer through fares and bookings to winter sports destinations in parts of Switzerland.

Railfuture will be lobbying for through services from cities outside London to key cities beyond the French and Belgian capitals, and for affordable and understandable through ticketing. New payment methods should make this easier even where it is necessary to change trains.

Railfuture's international group is conducting a year-long survey of members' journeys to see what customer-focused progress is being made and to help us influence developments.

Please fill it in or use the website if you or a colleague or family member make a trip by Eurostar. In the autumn of 2015 you should be able to read the results in *Railwatch*.

London and South East

By Roger Blake
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■ ■ Electrify Uckfield!

Railfuture is calling on Network Rail and the Government to electrify the line from Hurst Green to Uckfield as soon as possible. This is the best way to boost capacity to meet the Government's own requirement to lengthen weekday peak services by December 2016. Additional diesel trains are in short supply. Govia operates the line at present and from July next year will be operating it as part of the new mega franchise, Thameslink Southern and Great Northern. Govia is unable to say when, or from where, the extra diesel carriages will come. Railfuture is worried that the Department for Transport and Network Rail are dithering over how to electrify the branch, by third rail or overhead wires. Taking compatible diesel trains away from CrossCountry, London Midland or Greater Anglia or ScotRail is likely to provoke a storm of protest. By contrast, DfT ministers, three of whom have northern constituencies, may calculate that electrification to Uckfield would allow them to cascade the line's 32 recently refurbished Turbostar carriages northwards. Add your support to the campaign at www.railfuture.org.uk/article1495-Electrify-Uckfield

■ ■ Electrification urgency for Barking-Gospel Oak

The Barking to Gospel Oak line is to be electrified after a long campaign by a wide range of individuals and organisations, with funding approved last summer. Passengers however face the prospect of route blockades as the only way to meet the deadline. Crossrail services between Paddington and Shenfield will start in May 2019 so an electrified Barking-Gospel Oak line must be ready before then, to give freight an alternative to the Great Eastern main line. New four-car electric trains will replace the two-car diesel trains.

■ ■ Electrify Marsh Link for high speed Hastings

Hastings and Rye MP Amber Rudd, who convened March's Rail Summit on the Hastings Javelin, has since held two meetings in which we and our newly affiliated rail user group SHRIMP (St Leonards and Hastings Rail Improvement Programme) have participated. Extending Javelin services to Bexhill, via Hastings and Rye, depends on electrification and line-speed improvements to allow 10 minutes to be knocked off the journey to Ashford International. When completed early in control period 6 (2019-24), 12 Turbostar carriages will be released for cascading north. See www.railfuture.org.uk/Marshlink www.1066shrimprail.org.uk

■ ■ Railfuture calls for two Hackney stations on Crossrail 2

Transport for London consulted again in the summer on three specific refinements to the regional option preferred in last year's consultation. Railfuture supported a variation of the options for the route north, to serve both Dalston Junction and Hackney Central, rather than one or the other. The consultation launch was noted for its commitment to bring forward the opening date by five years to 2029, given the growth of London's population and rail use. See <http://crossrail2.co.uk>

■ ■ Stay up to date with our branch newsletters at www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East+branch+news



East Midlands

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

■ Rail freight gateway planned for East Midlands Airport

A proposal for a strategic rail freight interchange near East Midlands Airport will soon be presented to the Planning Inspectorate. The public was consulted about the "East Midlands Gateway" plan earlier this year. The 336-hectare site close to junction 24 of the M1 motorway would be served by a rail spur from the Castle Donington freight line and could accommodate 16 trains per day. The plan from Roxhill Developments includes over 500,000 sq metres of warehousing and improvements to the road network. Roxhill says it has "engaged constructively" with HS2 whose proposed route passes through the site.



■ First tram travels over new bridge at Nottingham station

The first tram passed over the new Karlsruhe Friendship Bridge at Nottingham station during a night-time trial on 22 August. This is the first time a railway vehicle has passed over Nottingham Midland station since services ceased running into Nottingham Victoria station in 1967. The new bridge, on the same alignment as the dismantled Great Central bridge, is named in honour of Nottingham's twin city and connects the existing tram line, which runs northward from the city centre, to the Phase Two lines being built by Taylor Woodrow Alstom to Clifton in the south and Chilwell to the south-west. The new lines are set to open in early 2015. Meanwhile, to the north-west of the city, Broxtowe Borough Council has voted to commission a feasibility study into a tram line to Kimberley, to provide an alternative travel opportunity to the congested A610 road.

■ Ilkeston's new station delayed by newts discovery

Great crested newts found near the site of the new Ilkeston railway station have delayed the start of building this £6.5 million project. It will not now be completed by December. The town has been without a station for around 47 years since it was closed as part of the Beeching cuts in the 1960s. Erewash MP Jessica Lee has called for a "less vague" timescale from Derbyshire County Council after it found the newts. Ms Lee, who led a campaign to reinstate the station, will step down as an MP at the next election, hopefully having achieved her main goal.

■ Plan to split Liverpool-Norwich service at Nottingham

Railfuture East Midlands strongly supports the retention of the existing through service between Liverpool and Norwich as part of the current East Midlands Trains franchise. The Department for Transport's suggestion of splitting the franchise at Nottingham would result in undesirable platform occupation, add to the overall journey time, and the transfer reliability of the services operated by two different franchises would be adversely affected. Currently 350,000 passengers travel through Nottingham each year and splitting the service would be an incentive for them to seek alternative transport. Additionally, disabled passengers would have limited transfer time and those using small mobility scooters would be excluded from travelling on the Nottingham-Liverpool section as TransPennine Express excludes them from all their services.

Rail reality on the banks of the Cam

By Peter Wakefield

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 Delegates to Railfuture's summer conference in Cambridge were able to mingle with groups of relaxed picnickers on the grassy banks of the River Cam.

Not far away from this dreamy, gentle landscape among the willows, however, are air-conditioned laboratories, workshops and factories where a new industrial revolution is under way.

The premise of the conference was that sustainable transport is fundamental to managing change. First speaker was David Statham, managing director First Capital Connect franchise, now

taken over by Govia. Mr Statham outlined the massive future benefits of the Thameslink programme to Cambridge.

He was followed by two speakers from Cambridgeshire County Council. Bob Menzies, head of major infrastructure delivery, explained the rationale behind the new station in north Cambridge, which will bring some respite to the existing station but also introduce thousands of new passengers on to the network.

Jeremy Smith, transport and infrastructure strategy manager, described other rail enhancements, including the East Coast main line where a new station

is planned at Alconbury Weald. Paul McMahon, director of freight, Network Rail, described the ongoing upgrade of the railway for freight from Felixstowe to Nuneaton via Peterborough.

Chris Starkie, managing director of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, described how, in coordination with neighbouring LEPs, county and other councils, MPs and Railfuture, *A Railway Prospectus for East Anglia* has been presented to the Government. The prospectus highlights the need not just for local improvements, but also improved links to Bedford, Milton Keynes, Oxford and the

Thames Valley which can be achieved with East West Rail. An advocate of EWR, George Freeman, MP for Mid Norfolk, also called for upgrading the Cambridge to Norwich line.

Mr Freeman, recently appointed the first-ever Life Sciences Minister, said railway stations can be catalysts for improving the quality of life for villages while maintaining much-valued heritage.

Finally Jim Chisholm from Cambridge Cycling Campaign gave a witty talk on how the railway can be accessed by bicycle for dependable and reliable journey times. Full report: www.railfuture.org.uk/Briefings

West Midlands

■ Regional politicians in bid to take on rail powers

Leaders of 14 councils in September called on Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin, to grant them power to award rail franchises and set investment priorities. The renewal of the London Midland franchise in 2017 has concentrated local authority minds. The West Midlands Rail consortium is made up of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Herefordshire, Northamptonshire, Sandwell, Shropshire, Solihull, Staffordshire, Telford and Wrekin, Walsall, Warwickshire, Wolverhampton and Worcestershire councils. "The local rail network has a key role to play in supporting the region's economy, and holding more responsibility here in the West Midlands will help make sure that new investment is best targeted to create growth and jobs," said Wolverhampton council leader Roger Lawrence.

■ £117 million plan for new Wolverhampton Interchange



A new £117 million transport interchange is being proposed for Wolverhampton to incorporate rail, tram and bus services. Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin promised £4.5 million towards the new interchange after he described the rail station as awful. "We have secured around £18 million of the £40 million cost of refurbishing the railway station, building the new car park and constructing the Metro tram link," said Councillor Peter Bilson of Wolverhampton City Council. Labour MP for Wolverhampton North East, Emma Reynolds, said: "I am pleased that after several years of concerted pressure from me and the city council, the Government has announced that Wolverhampton will finally get a new train station as part of the creation of a fully integrated transport hub in the city. A new train station would be a tremendous shot in the arm for our city and is vital to the wider regeneration of Wolverhampton. This major gateway to Wolverhampton is key to the economic future of our city." Artist's impression of the new rail station, above

■ £100 million investment starts to pay off for Cross City

The line between Barnt Green and Redditch reopened in September after an eight-week closure to build a second track which will allow a train every 20 minutes to run into Birmingham from December. The £100 million investment saw new track laid from Alvechurch station towards Redditch. Alvechurch station has also been redeveloped with an additional platform, new footbridge and lifts. Mike Ponsonby, chairman of Bromsgrove Rail User Group, told the *Bromsgrove Standard*: "This will give a better service for all rail users in the area." Network Rail's Liam Sumpter said: "The completion of this work is the first significant phase of the £100 million improvement package being delivered across north Worcestershire."

■ Work starts on NUCKLE project to upgrade services

Work started in August on improving the line between Nuneaton and Coventry, as part of the NUCKLE project. New stations are being built at Bermuda and the Ricoh Arena, and the platform at Bedworth station extended. The second phase, which includes a new platform at Coventry station and new trains to run a twice-hourly service between Nuneaton and Coventry, had been in question although Nuneaton MP Marcus Jones told the *Nuneaton News* that the extra cash has now been earmarked. He said: "This is a project that has been talked about for years."

West Midlands contact: westmidlands@railfuture.org.uk

Threat and opportunity

Community Rail has been a great success in developing and expanding local and rural railways that 20 years ago were in terminal decline.

There are now 43 community rail partnerships covering 77 lines and, amazingly, over 1,000 station adoption groups.

More people are travelling, more trains are running and the threat of retrenchment has been replaced by the struggle to create capacity for all the new passengers!

More passengers and more trains mean more staff and a happier working environment. So why did the RMT union attack community rail plans back in June as part of its opposition to refranchising Northern and TransPennine?

Many railway staff support the work of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships and some contribute as partnership members or volunteers.

Some rail staff collected trophies at the Community Rail Awards in early October and I will be reporting on that in the next issue of *Railwatch*. We welcome their support and

practical experience, which has forged a real partnership between staff and supporters.

In the early days of community rail, the union voiced concerns that volunteers might replace paid staff, but dropped their opposition when they saw that this was not the case.

To be clear, ACoRP does not support the replacement of paid staff by volunteers, nor does it seek one person operation of trains.

Volunteers add value and services that would not otherwise be provided, from station gardens to running a shop and ticket agency at what would otherwise be an unstaffed station.

I believe that conductors provide an invaluable service in terms of ticket selling and checking, providing information to passengers and a reassuring presence on the train.

If train doors were under the control of the driver, conductors might be able to work more effectively, but I am convinced that they are needed on the train on community rail lines. With

We are fighting to stop the destruction

In the north of England, RMT said it is fighting to maintain rail services and staff at stations when the new Northern and TransPennine franchises come in.

It issued a press release, mobilising an all-out fight "to stop the destruction of jobs, services and safety on Northern Rail and TransPennine Express in the wake of the Government's launch of a consultation that would rip the two franchises to

shreds in the name of maximising private profit".

An RMT spokesman told *Railwatch* that the union was worried that, ever since the McNulty report, the Government has been aiming to de-staff as many stations as it can get away with.

De-staffed stations become a magnet for vandals and graffiti artists and the public is frightened away. Then the local community, sometimes volunteers,



CO-OPERATION: Rail staff and Friends of Dawlish station work together with TV gardener Toby Buckland to put heart back into Dawlish station after the winter storms

support from everyone from the Secretary of State and Rail Passengers Committee to passengers and local businesses, it is disappointing that the trades union does not join the movement to develop local and rural railways for the benefit, not only of the communities they serve, but also of their members.

What is not to like about such

support? The union's approach to its natural allies is puzzling and appears to be wrapped up in general campaigning against a new Northern franchise. It wants to see it revert to the public sector.

What do Railfuture colleagues think? Indeed, do we know what the RMT thinks about us, and should we be engaging more closely with them?

of jobs, services and safety, says RMT

has to pick up the pieces. He added: "Local councillors and MPs are sometimes happy to don a high-vis vest for a photo opportunity, clearing up their local station for an hour or so, knowing that it is their very policies which have led to the station being de-staffed."

RMT is certainly happy to see volunteers joining with rail staff to improve conditions for passengers but there are limits.

He added: "In one area, the buses were cut and volunteers came forward to drive the buses. They think they are doing a good job and maybe they are, but looked at from the point of view of the paid drivers who have lost their jobs, the picture is not the same."

More information on the RMT campaign: <http://www.rmt.org.uk/news/rmt-launches-northern-rail-and-transpennine-express-campaign/>

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

Scotland

By Jane Ann Liston
janeannliston@railfuturescotland.org.uk



■ **Vision for reopened stations**
Nobody can say that Railfuture Scotland lacks vision. Vice-chair Roddy McDougall has produced a list of 50 stations on existing lines which should be opened or reopened, plus 23 short branches to be constructed which could feed valuable new traffic into the rail network.

■ **RAGES plea to First Minister**

In the meantime the local campaigns continue. Rail Action Group, East of Scotland has been in correspondence with First Minister Alex Salmond, though the pre-referendum 'purdah' limited what ministers could say or do. See ScotRail article, right.

■ **Borders line progress raises optimism for the future**

Construction of the new Borders line is progressing, with services to Galashiels and Tweedbank expected to start on 6 September next year. Steam trains are to be accommodated as is all 143 metres of the Great Tapestry of Scotland, the latter at Tweedbank Station. The leader of Scottish Borders Council has also declared his support for extending the line to Hawick and Carlisle.

■ **Passenger survey to support stations campaign**

In the Clydesdale area, a passenger survey has been carried out at Larkhall, and the Beattock Station campaign has identified funding from the regional transport partnership SWESTRANS for a STAG (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance) evaluation.

■ **New funds put Glasgow airport rail link back on track**

Money made available from the UK government means that a Glasgow airport rail link is now back on the cards. However, a suggestion that the airport be served by tram-trains is being resisted, as through running would not be possible and there could be resulting congestion at Glasgow Central station. A conference to progress the Crossrail campaign is being arranged for late October.

■ **Petition aims to get Almond chord built at right time**

A petition is being organised to demand the construction of the Almond chord before the Winchburgh Tunnel is closed for improvements to avoid delays between Edinburgh and Glasgow as well as Fife.

■ **St Andrews campaigners meet Scots transport minister**

Thursday 4 September marked the 25th anniversary of the launch of the Starlink campaign to reconnect St Andrews. Following a meeting with Scottish transport minister Keith Brown, useful discussions are being held to try to identify the £100,000 needed for a STAG, and communities served by branch lines will be contacted to ascertain the advantages of a rail connection and how these could apply in the case of St Andrews. Meanwhile Fife Council has agreed to provide £100,000 to update the Levenmouth rail link STAG from 2008.

■ **Rail campaign contacts**

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES)
www.rages.org.uk/
Beattock Station Action Group
www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/
Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG)
https://sites.google.com/site/capitalrailactiongroup/
St Andrews Rail Link (Starlink) campaign
www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/
Newburgh Train Station campaign
http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/
Levenmouth Rail Campaign
www.lmrc-action.org.uk/



Picture: SCOTRAIL

ScotRail signs rail concordat with council

The increasing importance of railways was recognised in August when ScotRail and East Lothian Council signed a concordat to work together to maintain and enhance rail services in the area. In a ceremony at North Berwick station, ScotRail's commercial director Sean Duffy, left, and East Lothian Councillor Michael Veitch signed a giant rail ticket.

Mr Veitch, who is the council's spokesman on transport, said: "Rail services are extremely important to the people of East Lothian and I am delighted that we are entering into this agreement with ScotRail. I trust that the increased cooperation it brings, alongside partnerships like the brand new East Lothian Community Rail Partnership, will help further enhance the benefits of commuters, visitors and other users."

The concordat recognises the importance of rail in the local economy by getting people to work, connecting businesses and creating jobs, as well as contributing to the environment and carbon reduction.

One of the immediate aims of the concordat is to improve off-peak services.

The council has also contributed £1.5 million towards funding a new station at East Linton, while Scottish Borders Council has earmarked £1.2 million for a new station at Reston.

Join Railfuture

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

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Postcode

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Send to Railfuture, 6 Carral Close, Lincoln LN5 9BD
Please make cheques payable to Railfuture
Tel: 01522 874513 Email: membership@railfuture.org.uk

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

Your letters extra

Dawlish options

I would like to put on the table yet another option for a new line bypassing Dawlish. Just follow the A38 road between Exeter and South Brent, using existing routes at Heathfield and Buckfastleigh to provide connections to Newton Abbot, Torbay and Totnes. If made high speed compatible, this could form part of a future service from Plymouth to Leeds or Manchester.

Exeter and Newton Abbot with much interest. However, I must point out that whereas he states that there are three tunnels between Newton Abbot and Plymouth, actually there are five, namely Dainton, twin bores at Marley (where the original down line bore is dead straight and the later up line bore is curved), Wrangaton and Mutley.

Maurice E J Dart, Bethel, St Austell, Cornwall PL25 3ES
railway photographer and author

Phoney war

Our roads are getting busier than ever, so what does the Government do? That's right, yet again it freezes petrol duty so that the cost of motoring will fall in real terms. Meanwhile a reduction in subsidy means that rail and bus fares continue to go up by more than the rate of inflation.

It seems that those involved in the so-called "war on the motorist" (which never existed, as the last Labour government abolished the fuel price escalator and cut the Road Fund Licence for most vehicles) was conducted with toy guns!

Tim Mickleburgh, Grimsby, Lincolnshire DN31 2JP
timmickleburgh2013@yahoo.co.uk

However, I agree that there is also a need to reopen the route via Okehampton.

The proposed Okehampton Parkway station would serve only Holsworthy and Bude effectively if a new road link to the A3079 facilitated the diversion of the existing bus service via that station. Rail campaigners usually oppose road schemes, but should this be an exception?

Simon Norton, Hertford St, Cambridge CB4 3AG
simon@dpmms.cam.ac.uk

Tunnel count

I read the article in *Railwatch* 140 by Gerard Duddridge on alternative routes between

naire with this *Railwatch* to let us know of your experiences in Holland and elsewhere.

Railfuture's eye on Europe

RDS Group Travel is planning an eight-day trip to Rostock, Germany in late April or May 2015, probably with an overnight stop in Hamburg.

There are trams and a narrow-gauge steam train to ride in this popular tourist area and many interesting excursions.

In autumn we also hope to offer a three or four day trip by Eurostar and local train to northern France or to Belgium. Possible centres could include Chartres, Rouen, Rheims, Orleans, Antwerp or Ghent.

For the spring of 2016 we have pencilled in the French city of Nantes for a group visit and in the spring of 2017, Innsbruck.

Full details will be available later and from trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk

The introduction of a new ticketing system in the Netherlands in the summer affected users of the Harwich-Hoek van Holland ferry.

Dutch stations now have barriers operated by an OV-Chipcard but Railfuture's Dutch sister organisation ROVER is trying to persuade operators to offer a user-friendly public transport day card on the ferry.

Please use the Eurostar question-

The 2015 conference of the European Passengers' Federation will be held in Budapest on Friday and Saturday 20-21 March 2015.

Speakers from Hungary and elsewhere in Europe will lead the debate on what EPF and its member associations are doing.

Transport-themed visits and a rail excursion to Debrecen will be timed to coincide with the conference.

More details at www.epf.eu

The Spanish government plans to spend 54% of its £7.5 billion transport budget on railways in 2015. The Madrid-Galicia high speed line is expected to reach Zamora next year. The broad gauge Tarragona-Valencia line is to be made dual gauge.

A freight train service from Hamburg to Zhengzhou, China, began in September, a year after a rail service was started in the opposite direction.

Passenger and freight train use increased by nearly a third in the 12 years to 2013, reports the US-based Worldwatch Institute. Most of the increase was in Asia.

East Anglia

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

■ **Start to super franchise**

Govia replaced First Capital Connect from 14 September 2014 as operator of the Thameslink and Great Northern sections of a big, new combined franchise. The Great Northern section includes lines from East Anglia to King's Cross and Moorgate. Southern and Gatwick Express will become part of the new super franchise from July next year. New class 700 Siemens trains will be introduced from 2016, prompting a cascade of existing trains to other areas. Smartcard ticketing will be introduced, and East Anglia will benefit from the off-peak frequency to King's Lynn being increased to half hourly.

■ **Wisbech reopening campaign**

March-Wisbech rail reopening campaign has been boosted by £250,000 being made available for a Network Rail detailed engineering study. The money comes from the Government via the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership. This significant level of commitment signals the increasing level of certainty that this reopening will go ahead. See also www.wisbechrail.org.uk

■ **Campaign to protect through services via Nottingham**

The Department for Transport is consulting on franchises in the north of England and has proposed splitting the Liverpool-Norwich service at Nottingham as the DfT suggests "there is currently a relatively small amount of cross-Nottingham traffic". The figures show otherwise with almost 1,000 people a day staying on this service at Nottingham, an important link to East Anglia. Railfuture is campaigning to retain this successful through service, supported by East Midlands Trains which has built up the service.

■ **Norwich in Ninety vision could bring new trains**

Great Eastern Rail Campaign

Delivering better, faster trains for Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk

The New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership for Norfolk and Suffolk is leading the GE Rail Campaign which is pressing for improvements to services on the London-Norwich Great Eastern main line. The business case so far developed indicates a new inter-city type electric multiple unit will be necessary, with rapid acceleration and an extra inter-city service each hour to cover stops omitted by the fast services, and less fragile track, overhead line and signalling. The vision for railways in the region is described in *Once in a generation - a Rail Prospectus for East Anglia* which is being updated. www.newanglia.co.uk/gerailcampaign

■ **Clara Zilahi honoured at Downham Market station**

A memorial plaque to Clara Zilahi was fixed to a replica Great Eastern Railway style bench at Downham Market, provided as a token of gratitude by train operator First Capital Connect, with the plaque donated by Railfuture East Anglia members. Throughout her long life, Clara was an ardent and consistent user of bicycles, buses and trains and worked tirelessly with Railfuture and as the branch membership secretary to push for improvements to public transport.

■ **Felixstowe line enhancements**

After studying various options, Network Rail and the Port of Felixstowe are now seeking to amend the original section 106 agreement. This would see new passing loops at Trimley, Levington and Westerfield where the station would move to the west of the level crossing. The loco fuel point would move from Ipswich to Felixstowe port. These works will be undertaken before 2019. Network Rail is also looking at a comprehensive plan to dual the line, probably coinciding with electrification in control period 6 (2019-2024). Moving the fuelling point would make room for more platforms at Ipswich.

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

■ **Twitter: @RailfutureEA**



TOKYO: The Bullet trains, and their N700 successors, have been effective images in defining modern Japan in a fast-moving world

50 years of the Bullet train

October 2014 marked the 50th anniversary of Japan's Shinkansen trains.

Construction of the Tokaido Shinkansen line began in 1959 and was completed in 1964, with the first train travelling from Tokyo to Shin-Osaka at 130 mph, just in time for the Tokyo summer Olympics.

The Bullet train sparked a worldwide rail revolution still going on, with the latest Japanese trains running at 200 mph.

France's first TGV ran in 1981, with Eurostar following in 1994. Britain's HS1 came on the scene in 2007.

High speed trains may not always seem to be profit-makers, but the economic, energy and environmental paybacks are enormous.

162% fare rise – and more to come

A cosy agreement between the Department for Transport and train operator Northern has left thousands of passengers angry and out of pocket.

While the Government backed down on plans to increase rail fares in the New Year by 1% more than the retail price index, it allowed a "stealth" rise in September which meant some fares in northern England went up by 162%.

The RMT union warned that the rises were a taste of what is to come when new franchises come into effect in 2016 and staged protest meetings.

Northern provoked an angry reaction when it announced that off-peak tickets cannot be used in the evening peak on certain services. The move affected passengers in South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Manchester, Cheshire and the Hexham-Newcastle line.

Northern told the *Manchester Evening News* that the changes were being made after the Department for Transport asked it to look at several options to generate additional revenue as part of its new franchise agreement which goes on until February 2016. The RMT's Mick Cash said: "The axing of off-peak fares

is a savage kick in the teeth for people already struggling with low pay and austerity.

"Let's not forget that the core of the Government's future plans for Northern and TransPennine Express is to axe jobs, throw guards off trains and jack up fares."

Jokers at the satirical website *The Daily Mash* said mafia mobsters from New York were visiting Britain to get tips from the private train operators on their "beautiful racket".

The financial viability of the Northern franchise was undermined in 2003 when TransPennine was split away from it.

But this year the Department for Transport confirmed that in future there will continue to be two separate franchises for the north of England, one for inter-city and one for local services.

Northern has been run since 2004 as a joint venture by Serco, which is being investigated for allegedly overcharging the Ministry of Justice for tagging prisoners, and Abellio, a subsidiary of Dutch Railways, which has not distinguished itself in operating Greater Anglia.

However Railfuture campaigners recognise that most Northern managers are doing the best they can, even though they have been strong-armed to implement unpopular policies by the DfT.

The fare changes were not mentioned when the DfT hailed the "new" Northern direct award franchise in March. Railfuture believes fare increases can be jus-

tified only when new trains are provided for Northern.

There have been no new trains for Northern services for 14 years when class 333 electric trains were introduced on the Leeds to Ilkley and Skipton line.

Northern admitted it was pricing off passengers by claiming that the rises would "ease crowding for commuters".

Commuters in Chancellor George Osborne's constituency of Tatton are among those affected by the "stealth" rise, which followed the ruling that off-peak tickets would not be valid on many weekday train services between 16.00 and 18.30.

Those losing out most are part-time evening workers who in the past were able to benefit from off-peak fares because they travel against the peak flow.

For them, a return journey from Rochdale to Wigan now costs £11, up 162 per cent. Other fares rising sharply include a return from Hexham to Newcastle, which doubles to £7.10, while the cost of commuting between Wigan and Manchester will rise from £4.20 to £9.10 for a day return.

Mary Creagh, the shadow transport secretary, said: "Commuting looks very different when you are travelling in the back seat of a government car."

Martin Abrams of the Campaign for Better Transport, said: "This fare increase threatens to make rail travel unaffordable to tens of thousands of part-time workers."

Fears that rail fares throughout

Britain could increase by more than 3.5% or even 5.5% in January were eased in early September when Chancellor George Osborne announced that regulated fares, which include season tickets and "anytime" singles, would rise by a maximum of 2.5%, which was the level of retail price index inflation in August.

This is the second year that the Chancellor has held back rail fare increases but this year he also abolished the "flex" which would have allowed train operators to put up some fares by 5.5%.

In Scotland, there will be no rise in off-peak fares in 2015. Peak fares will rise by 2.5%, the same as the July inflation rate.

The Welsh government has yet to make a decision but it usually follows England.

In London Mayor Boris Johnson is accused of allowing Tube fares to rise more than a third faster than earnings.

And rail passengers in the South East could soon face "stealth" fare rises of up to 18%, Labour shadow transport secretary Mary Creagh has warned.

She said the new Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise, which started in September, involves eliminating cheaper fares, where two separate fares existed in the past.

She said an off-peak day return from Brighton to London will rise from £16.40 to £28.50 – up 74%. She said ministers have failed to admit when and how this will be implemented.

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