

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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Scotland's
leading lady

See page 2

Our page one picture by Railfuture member Barrie Forrest shows Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon unveiling a new Flying Scotsman at Edinburgh Waverley station in October.

Two days earlier Prime Minister David Cameron was on Oxford Parkway station to launch Chiltern Railways' new service to London Marylebone.

The importance of rail can now no longer be ignored by those at the top of the political tree although the railway is still susceptible to changing political moods.

Virgin Trains is using the iconic Flying Scotsman name to promote its East Coast main line service, although the class 91 electric locomotive being renamed at Edinburgh was built 26 years ago – when British Rail was being kept very short of investment. Money was however found to electrify the ECML over a 15-year period from 1976 to 1991, a tiny fraction of the money that was being spent on new roads at the time.

Virgin has announced it is refurbishing the MTU engines in its IC125 diesel trains which were also built by British Rail and are now nearly 40 years old. But a general shortage of diesel trains in 2015 is holding back plans to improve services in Scotland – and also the rest of the UK.

ScotRail has said it is not possible to provide a local service on the ECML from Edinburgh to Berwick because no rolling stock will be available until 2017. Rail campaigners are beginning to ask whether the award of the Scottish rail franchise to Abellio was on the basis of using too few trains, which was the same technique the company used to obtain the East Anglia franchise in England. The campaigners question whether, in the closed-door ScotRail franchise negotiations between Transport Scotland and Abellio, there was at the very least a degree of 'skipping' – and not just on the number of trains required.

After just six months of operation the Abellio-controlled ScotRail has been fined more than £250,000 for failures in the July-September period to meet quality standards in service areas ranging from toilets and timetables to train cleanliness, graffiti, staff service and the public address system.

When First ran ScotRail, the average fine per quarter in 2014 was £144,000, although it is claimed there are now stricter standards.

Transport minister Derek Mackay told The Herald: "We are pleased to be working with Abellio ScotRail to uphold and improve upon the high standards that we set ourselves by not only running a clean, efficient and safe rail network, but one that also offers unprecedented levels of transparency for the consumer."

Rail campaigners are worried that the "skipping" approach may also bedevil the Borders Railway which has proved immensely popular with the public, with twice the number of passengers as predicted. They are questioning the methodology used by



A single-track section of the Borders Railway near Stow

Transport Scotland to assess potential demand for rail. Scottish Borders Council leader David Parker said he was always confident the route would be a success but even he was "taken aback" by the usage figures. This kind of under-forecasting undermines the case for new railways and puts the business cases on an unnecessary knife edge. It also leads to under-provision of both infrastructure and rolling stock.

Not perhaps surprising then that in a review of traffic forecasting, Professor Phil Goodwin concluded: "The astonishing, systemic flaw was how few modellers, or clients, cared whether the forecasts were right or not." Nor is it surprising that the foundations of modern urban traffic forecasting were in Detroit, famous for its car culture.

Rail campaigners believe that Transport Scotland's behind-the-scenes skipping meant that the originally intended 15 miles of double track and dynamic loops on the line was downgraded to just nine miles, leaving operators with an inflexible infrastructure likely to undermine punctuality and timetable reliability, caused by late-running trains on long sections of single track.

Single track is also causing problems on the Highland main line. The Rail Freight Group said Transport Scotland should halt plans to dual the A9 road and spend the £9 billion more productively on improving the rail network because speed cameras had already achieved the objective of making the road much safer.

It said: "The priority should now be to fund upgrading of the parallel Highland main line railway, which is still single track over two-thirds of its length.

"With more and longer crossing loops, or ideally double track throughout, freight trains such as those serving Tesco could be increased in length from 20 to 28 containers – a massive increase in productivity."

You too can be a Railfuture lottery winner

Why not help us and help yourself by joining the Railfuture Lottery. Entries are just £1 per month each and there are currently six prizes every month with a top prize of £40. Half of the money raised helps Railfuture's campaigns, while the balance is ploughed back as prizes after expenses have been deducted. More details can be found at www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery/ where you can enter using PayPal, or send a cheque for a multiple of £12, payable to Railfuture Lottery to: Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND.

Latest winners:
March: Alan & Hilary Everett, Stephen Hutchings, Ian & Jane Appleyard, Roger Goring, Mike Kneen, David Allard.

April: James Pattison, Elaine Holland, Roger White, John Ward, Michael Hanson, Francis Thomas.
May: Ray King, P Sherwood, Christopher Hyomes, Alan & Hilary Everett, Philip Bisatt, John Ward.
June: Robert Burrows, Richard Shaw, John Fancourt, Roger Goring, Fred Golding, John Ward.
July: Charles Burns, Garth Smith, H Mills, Graham Smith, Peter Pass, Neville Bramhall.

August: Keith Porter, J Moorhouse, Colin Palmer, David Stocks, Ian Clatworthy, Neville Bramhall.
September: Neville Bramhall, Michael Breslin, Janet Cuff, J Moorhouse, Anthony Cleveley, Graham Collett.

October: Peter Pass, Michael Savage, John O'Sullivan, David Stocks, David Porter, B Buttigieg.

Railfuture AGM 2016 notice

Notice is hereby given that the annual general meeting of the Railway Development Society Ltd will be held at either Juries Inn, Milton Keynes or the Quadrant, MK on 21 May 2016. There will be a morning session with one or more guest speakers followed by a break for lunch. The formal AGM will commence at 13.30. Nominations for election for chairman and to the board of directors must be sent to Railfuture Returning Officer, 12 Valley View, Great Bourton, Banbury OX17 1QJ to arrive by 1 February 2016. Nomination forms can be obtained from the same address or from the Railfuture website at www.railfuture.org.uk Motions for discussion at the AGM must be sent to the Company Secretary, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Ipswich IP9 2ND to arrive by 28 April 2016. They should be posted in typed format or emailed to CompanySecretary@railfuture.org.uk Details and a booking form for the buffet lunch will be sent to members later. By order of the board, L Butler, Company Secretary. Railfuture is the campaigning name of the Railway Development Society Ltd. More info: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/>

Where next for railfreight?

In my opinion

By Lee Davies

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I have worked in the rail industry now for 30 years, with 17 of those in rail freight.

The past 15 years have seen new entrants into the sector along with the established companies from post-privatisation being bought and sold.

Since the financial crash in 2008 the sector has been in turmoil with contracts won and lost on a monthly-near-weekly basis.

This is what the Government wanted but competition is having a dramatic impact on the companies' work forces.

Some are lucky and get good conditions when transferring to a new company (under the TUPE regulations).

Others however are made redundant and are "let go", sometimes, with luck, to be snapped up by the competition.

From where I stand, it looks as if there is a shrinking market for rail freight in Britain. Coal is dead and coal is what the railways were originally built for.

As I write this in November, the Government wants all coal-burning power stations closed by 2025 with gas, nuclear and renewables providing Britain's energy requirement.

Biomass will involve more trains to move it but it may have a limited life.

So where next? Construction is strong at present with stone and other building materials going through a boom, but this is a cyclical industry and after the boom maybe will come the bust.

Containers are the biggest growth in Britain but the flows are restricted from the ports because of pathing constraints along with a lack of facilities in certain areas of the country.

Automotive is another sector enjoying a mini boom, but this can all too easily reverse as people tighten their belts, especially in the Far East. Premium logistics is a sector that Railfreight has flirted with in the past, with 110 mph trains running from the West Midlands to Scotland until the post-Hatfield speed restrictions caused them to be postponed then abandoned. Yet when you travel around Britain

◆◆◆◆ Pollution from road traffic kills 10,000 people prematurely in London each year



DAY ONE: British Rail launched Freightliner in 1965. Many freight trains at the time were formed of 16-ton loose-coupled trucks so this was the start of a transport revolution

Freightliner celebrates 50 years

Britain's largest rail maritime intermodal operator, Freightliner, is celebrating 50 years since the running of its first train from London to Glasgow. Customers and industry representatives marked the anniversary in November with an event at the National Rail Museum in York with Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin as a guest.

Freightliner has gone from strength to strength since its creation in 1965 as the container arm of British Rail. As part of the privatisation of BR and the National Freight Corporation, Freightliner was sold through a management buyout (with the backing of 3i and Electra).

Since privatisation, Freightliner has seen strong growth and has diversified beyond deep-sea intermodal traffic with the creation of several subsidiaries, including Freightliner Heavy Haul, Logico, Freightliner Maintenance, Freightliner Poland and Freightliner Australia. The group has also acquired

ERS Railways in the Netherlands and expanded into the Middle East as part of a British consortium.

Earlier this year, Freightliner was acquired by Genesee & Wyoming, a US-based owner of short line and regional freight railroads which has more than 15,000 miles of track in five countries.

Jack Hellmann, president and chief executive officer of Genesee & Wyoming said: "Working with Freightliner's talented management team, who have a long track record of success in building Freightliner over the past two decades, we expect to grow the business even more and also unlock a range of investment opportunities worldwide."

Freightliner chief executive Russell Mears said: "Freightliner is a respected, premium rail brand and our staff, some of whom have been with the company for over 40 years, are proud to be part of a successful organisation with such a rich history."

you cannot fail to see the new entrants in the market for logistics: Yodel and Hermes along with the established companies TNT and Parcelforce.

In my opinion these are the areas rail freight should be looking to break into.

Railfuture says

In a submission to a parliamentary enquiry into the shortage of lorry drivers, Railfuture said:

"For many months now the road haulage industry has been demanding that central government provide £100s of millions of taxpayers' money to pay for the

training of HGV drivers. The rail industry also has to train its drivers, and to a far higher standard than HGV drivers, but receives no government funding towards the cost. Road haulage is already in receipt of subsidies, some estimates putting it at 60% of running costs, which massively distorts the market against rail. Further subsidy can only add to this distortion.

Road hauliers have known of this impending problem for several years but have chosen to bury their heads in the sand. Indeed, several years ago the industry had a similar problem and chose to import large numbers

of poorly trained Eastern European drivers rather than train UK citizens. This had twin benefits for the industry of solving the shortage in the short term, and depressing UK wages due to the lower aspirations of the incoming drivers.

HMG should resist calls for further subsidy to road haulage in the form of paying for driver training and should insist that the industry pays its own costs.

A driver sitting in a traffic jam or pounding 200 miles up a motorway is a very inefficient use of a now valuable resource, and HMG should encourage the transfer of freight to rail."

East Anglia

By Paul Hollinghurst
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■ ■ Norwich OK but . . .

The invitation to tender for the East Anglia franchise contained some good news for the region with Norwich in 90 minutes being achieved by a small number of services a day, along with Ipswich in 60. New rolling stock has effectively been requested as train running times would be difficult to achieve without. The Norwich-Cambridge service is to be extended to Stansted airport giving Cambridge to Stansted an all-day half-hourly service. However, there was disappointment for the Ipswich to Peterborough and Cambridge corridors, where the minimum service specification simply maintains the existing and inadequate two-hourly and hourly frequencies on these two services for the nine-year duration of the franchise. Railfuture East Anglia has written to MPs, issued a press release, and continues to talk to other parties such as bidders, to push for a more ambitious service, one which is worthy of this high growth region.

■ ■ Haverhill campaign gains strength

Railfuture East Anglia continues to work closely with the Rail Haverhill campaigners on a day-to-day basis as they gather support via a petition. Over 3,000 are signed up so far. The profile of the scheme continues to rise, hitting the front page of *Haverhill News*. A public question was also delivered to the Cambridge City Deal Assembly by Heike Sowa, chair of Rail Haverhill, who asked for a feasibility study to be commissioned. Graham Hughes, director of economy, transport and environment at Cambridgeshire County Council was supportive, saying a feasibility study was under way. Railfuture East Anglia is studying commuting data for the A1307 road corridor to make sure the railway's central future role providing fast congestion-free transport on this corridor is appreciated.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Haverhill

■ ■ Winning the Cambridge News vote

The *Cambridge News* recently ran a public vote for a number of transport infrastructure schemes which have been suggested by transport groups over the past year. Railfuture East Anglia was delighted that its Cambridge Metro proposal won by a substantial margin, gathering a third of the vote, and twice the votes of the runner-up. Cambridge Metro is an enhanced local rail network with line and station reopening and better train frequencies, and in the longer term a light rail link for direct access to the city centre. It is not a separate network such as on Tyne and Wear, but instead focuses on making the existing network serve Cambridge better. The solution for Cambridge needs to be multi-mode, so many of the runners-up contain ideas which would complement rail.

www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Cambridge+City+Deal

■ ■ Hereward community rail partnership

The Hereward partnership is developing action plans to enhance March, Manea, and Whittlesea stations, including impressive plans for platform lengthening, extensions to station car parks, a footbridge at Whittlesea, bus integration, and an hourly Ipswich-Peterborough service. Railfuture East Anglia is campaigning for later evening services along this route.

■ ■ 50 years of progress for ESTA

East Suffolk Travellers' Association celebrated its 50th birthday in November, reports Trevor Garrod. It also launched a 32-page illustrated book *ESTA - the first 50 years* which recounts the successful campaign to save the Ipswich-Lowestoft line in the mid 1960s and efforts to promote it. Passenger numbers are climbing steadily following the introduction of a more frequent service. ESTA which represents train and bus users, has worked closely with Railfuture. The book costs £4.95 post free from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ (Cheques payable to ESTA).

Keep in touch at: www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia
Twitter: @RailfutureEA

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay
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■ ■ Railfuture allies get together

Following the Railfuture branches and groups day, attended by Ariadne Tampion on behalf of the East Midlands branch, we are liaising with East Anglia and Lincolnshire branches to campaign together on improving connections between our regions. We are concerned that funding and planning structures often focus within regions and so inter-regional connections can get forgotten.

■ ■ HS2 and east-west connections

The branch was represented by Graham Nalty at the Independent Transport Commission's high speed rail workshop at Nottingham Trent University in September. The workshop started from the premise that the HS2 station for the East Midlands would be at Toton. Although much emphasis was placed on the need for "classic compatible" services and on connectivity, the possible advantages of other locations, in particular Railfuture East Midlands' preferred option of East Midlands Parkway, were not considered. Nevertheless, it is pleasing that the urgency of better East-West connections, particularly Nottingham-Birmingham, was recognised.

■ ■ Midlands can be the engine for growth

The theme of connectivity was also to the fore at the launch in Derby of Midlands Connect, attended by Roger Bacon and Ariadne Tampion from Railfuture East Midlands. Midlands Connect is an initiative to invest in the region's transport infrastructure so that the Midlands can become the UK's "engine for growth".

■ ■ Positive moves on Derwent Valley Line

Ariadne Tampion and Steve Jones attended the AGM of the Friends of the Derwent Valley Line (Derby-Matlock), one of the more active rail user groups in the region. We hope this is the start of our two organisations supporting each other's work. Meanwhile a petition on change.org to reopen the line between Matlock and Buxton has attracted over 4,000 signatures

■ ■ Nottingham tram extensions



A study by Mott MacDonald for Broxtowe Borough Council has estimated the cost of a

four-mile tram network extension westward to Kimberley at up to £168 million. However, councillors criticised the report for not answering important questions about effects on highway capacity. Meanwhile, the leader

of Gedling Borough Council, to the north-east of the city, has stated that he wants to see the next extension of the tram network coming into his borough.

■ ■ Electrification to Kettering 'unpaused'

Work on double-tracking Kettering-Corby is progressing and electrification work is to be resumed following the Government "pause", reports Jim Wade. Railfuture is worried, however, that there does not appear to be a definite timetable for the completion of the electrification project.

■ ■ Massive viaduct receives attention

The 82-arch Haringworth viaduct on the borders of Northamptonshire and Rutland is being repaired by Network Rail, reports David Fursdon. The longest masonry viaduct on the UK rail network is already used by passenger and freight trains and could be used by trains from Oxford and Bletchley via the projected East West route as a route to Peterborough.

More on EM Branch activities at <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch> and on Twitter: @RailfutureEMids

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes
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■ ■ High hopes for Northern Powerhouse

The Rail Executive published a 16-page document in October trying to put meat on the highly elusive bare-bones concept of the Northern Powerhouse. The mantra repeated on every page was "Moving Britain Ahead". It pointed out that North West electrification should be complete in 2017 and Cross-Pennine electrification by 2022 while new routeing options would be opened up in 2017 by the Northern Hub project. New Northern and TransPennine Express franchises start in 2016. It agrees with Railfuture that "rail is the best way to move people quickly and easily to and from jobs, and to provide quick business-to-business travel". It calls for the establishment of a Transport for the North partnership which should lead to improved journey times to support the Northern economy, as well as new and reopened rail routes, more tracks on some routes and upgrades of existing stations.

■ ■ Long wait for North Leeds rail link

Plans to reopen the rail line from Harrogate to Northallerton via Ripon to create a new £210 million North Leeds rail link have been included in North Yorkshire County Council's long-term plans. But the proposed 15-year wait for it to happen has been condemned by Councillor Adrian Morgan who has already been campaigning for the link for nearly 30 years.

Julian Smith, the MP for Ripon and Skipton, told the *Wetherby News* that he was fully supportive of the project to reinstate the line.

The link, which will be valuable as a diversionary route for East Coast main line trains, is being submitted to Transport for the North, which is a partnership between local transport authorities, government and national transport agencies. The link could also be used to justify housing and business development and to relieve the "horrendous" A61 road.

Transport for the North representatives met Lord Adonis, chair of the National Infrastructure Commission in November, during his two-day fact-finding visit to the north of England.

Time to take stock and plan for the future

By Ian Brown

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Quite a lot is happening in the rail industry at the moment so it is probably a good time to reflect on where the industry is and where we are with campaigning. Specifically, are we ready for the challenges and opportunities ahead in the new year?

A doubling of passenger numbers in the past 15 years is a great start to the New Year for rail, particularly as the trend continues upwards despite a few recent wobbles in the economy.

In any business, growing demand is the key to success, but most businesses are in control of their own destiny and can innovate and invest to meet demand.

The rail industry is more complex, with no single guiding mind. We can marvel on the complexity of this, and many industry players do, but they usually represent one part of the money-go-round jigsaw.

Sir Roy McNulty identified that industry costs are some 30% too high as a result of duplication so there is scope to cut costs.

The McNulty report has been buried with due dignity over the past two years, as all the industry players have no interest in cutting their own margins.

In my opinion the question however should have been a different one: can the industry continue to meet demand by expanding capacity at an incremental cost that represents value for money?

In other words, with fixed costs, can you increase output?

The answer is probably yes, in terms of safe, reliable operation delivered by the train operating companies, even if tempered by too short franchises as a result of an earlier franchise letting fiasco.

The answer is only yes though, if the industry can deliver projects to increase capacity. Where specific, highly concentrated management processes have been put in place, as with Cross-rail and light rail projects such as Metrolink in Manchester, the answer is yes.

The UK has certainly shown it has the capability to do big projects. This however has not been the case for programmes, as distinct from specific projects where process adherence or non-adherence has been the issue rather than a fully functioning client side management team. Network Rail's electrification programme is the most high-profile example of failure, leading to the recent politically expedient "pause" inflicted by government followed by reinstatement, albeit with changes to scope, phasing

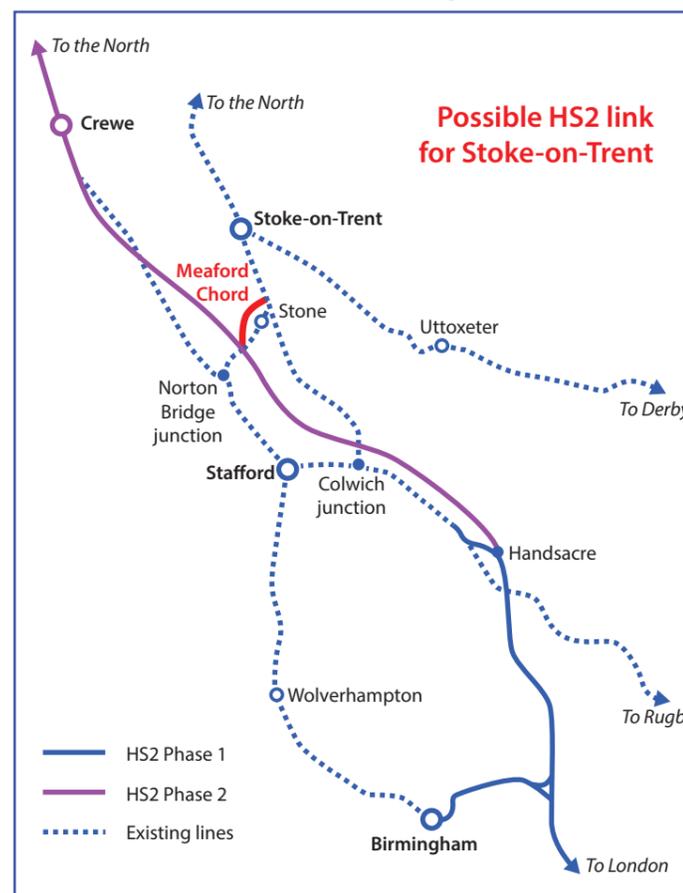
and timescales. The Great Western main line electrification was not paused, the cost just went up. Take your pick.

This matters, because despite huge investment we are seeing fewer bangs per buck, so not addressing the efficiency improvement requirement. This is not sustainable in the medium and long term.

The industry must learn from the general industry approach of continuous improvement both of the product itself and in the cost of providing it.

As the programme of electrification recedes, so does the ability to cascade electric trains on to other parts of the network. My own spreadsheet used to suggest a deficiency requiring about 100 new diesel multiple units per year if the railway, including local services, is to be maintained physically and allowed to continue to grow. Given the recent project failures, my estimate is now far too low.

Railfuture's membership was at its strongest when privatisation was at its height. There is a new urgency now with threats of further fragmentation or



HS2 OPTION: Stoke-on-Trent is keen to share the benefits of high speed rail and believes a five-mile Meaford chord could deliver a double-barrelled economic impact from HS2 – for both Stoke and Crewe. It is working with the Department for Transport on the idea which has a 'better benefit to cost ratio than any other current UK rail project'

We want a bigger, better railway now and we need to use the informed opinion of our collective group of members to focus on this. There are few bodies whose interest is the wellbeing and development of the whole railway.

High Speed Two is an emotional area too, with the Marmite "love or hate it" approach being taken by many. HS2 is happening and Railfuture has been supportive of HS2 as enhancing capacity.

We still are but there is much to play for in campaigning to ensure that HS2 is properly integrated into the network and that it maximises the opportunity to contribute to regional economies.

A second front concerns residual services on the classic network after HS2 services begin. If you look at the existing inter-city timetable, the conclusion can soon be reached that the HS2 service could lead to decimation of

the existing West Coast main line timetable, partly decimates the East Coast, but hardly affects the Midland main line as the stations at Toton and Meadowhall are unlikely to be competitive.

Do we really think that the future of the West Coast main line is an enhanced suburban service to Milton Keynes? The existing service to Manchester is actually better than the HS2 timetable but it is too slow and also serves Crewe, Stoke-on-Trent, Wilmslow, Macclesfield and Stockport.

Would the connection at Crewe allow services to run also via Wilmslow and Stockport? Would a similar connection near Toton be better, by allowing trains to run directly to Derby, Nottingham and Sheffield itself.

Should we not also consider linking to HS1 properly and serving both east and west London as well as Euston? Members have expressed many more examples.

The conclusion is that there has not been such an opportunity to make a positive difference for many years, especially when we consider the opportunities with devolving local railways partially or totally to regional and local authority control.

This is an area where Railfuture branches have great strengths providing intelligent support to local authority aspirations.

As Railfuture, we also need to respond to the question: are we ready to meet this challenge? Since my appointment as Railfuture's director of policy, I have been working with some very able colleagues to ensure that all our efforts are directed at maximising our chances of success.

This means our focus should be on identifying and promoting winning proposals against proper success criteria, being listened to by stakeholders and organising ourselves to engage with industry processes so that franchise specifications and rail projects include our economically sustainable proposals.

We have reorganised Railfuture's group structure to maximise the strength of our arguments by incorporating our international experience, previously in a separate international group, into each of our support groups (passenger, freight and infrastructure & networks) as we refocus our campaigning for a bigger, better railway in the UK. The response is optimism that we have a role to play and that we will be listened to.

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

Map: ELLIE KING

◆◆◆◆ Railfuture AGM will be held in Milton Keynes on 21 May 2016

Scotland

■ ■ Glasgow Crossrail

The importance of the Glasgow Crossrail project has been regularly brought to the attention of decision makers by Railfuture campaigner Ken Sutherland. There is overwhelming support for the logic of Crossrail which also enjoys broad cross-party support. It has been described as "the most important strategic rail infrastructure project in Scotland which would close a critical gap in the Scottish rail network, deliver new connections and faster journey times and support economic regeneration in some of Glasgow's poorest areas". It would also bring key regeneration to areas on the east side of the city centre at relatively modest cost. But Transport Scotland, which is responsible for the delivery of major infrastructure projects and for overseeing the operation of the Scottish transport networks, has failed to recognise its importance and has put obstacles in the way of making progress on it. Ken believes it is essential that the 325 metres of the intended High Street curve should be given official protection. He has urged Glasgow City Council to think innovatively and courageously and explore all the options for retaining the High Street rail curve as a key element in the long-planned Crossrail project. He insists: "Glasgow must not be cheated out of the planned Crossrail link, Scotland's missing rail link."

■ ■ Heavy rail needed for Glasgow Airport

The UK and Scottish governments have agreed to provide £145 million towards the cost of a rail link to Glasgow Airport. But Railfuture campaigners fear that instead of a heavy rail link which would maximise the social and economic benefits to the greater Paisley-Renfrewshire area, some form of downgraded light rail or tram-train link may be under consideration. This would have the disastrous effect of excluding all the trains currently running on Scotland's and Britain's national rail network. Railfuture agrees with experts who say it would be absolute stupidity and short-sightedness if a rail link to Glasgow Airport was built which could accommodate only light rail/tram-train style vehicles, and not any of the current rolling stock in Britain. Studies have already confirmed that a tram-train link would deliver fewer social and economic-employment opportunities for the Greater Paisley-Renfrewshire area compared with a heavy rail link.

■ ■ St Andrews campaign on the march

StARLink Action Group members were meeting members of Transport Scotland in November to try to identify a clear plan to get the campaign for a reopened line from Leuchars to St Andrews taken to the next stage. A meeting with ScotRail's head of economic development is also being arranged for early next year. Among the latest to endorse the campaign are two former presiding officers of the Scottish Parliament.

■ ■ East Lothian reopening campaign

The success of the Borders line rail reopening should convince the authorities that providing good local services on the East Coast main line and reopening East Linton and Reston stations would be similarly successful, rail campaigners told officials who attended a meeting hosted by East Lothian Council in Haddington in October. Rail Action Group, East of Scotland has suggested that a local service could start before the reopened stations are available,

but ScotRail has said no rolling stock will be available until 2017 at the earliest.

■ ■ Boost for the Highland main line

The new Highland Main Line Community Rail Partnership was launched at Pitlochry station in early November. Deputy First Minister John Swinney and Phil Verster, managing director of the ScotRail Alliance were among guests welcomed by the CRP chair Sally Spaven. The CRP has nine executive committee members and more than 40 volunteer members who will promote the rail service and devise ways of persuading car drivers to switch to trains as well as supporting economic development.

■ ■ Plea to re-link the whisky line

A campaign has been launched to re-link the volunteer-run Keith and Dufftown "whisky line" to the national network at Keith Junction. The link would save passengers from a 20-minute walk between the two stations at the Keith end of the line. Rod Furr of the Keith and Dufftown Railway Association told the *Press and Journal*: "The old Glen line platform still exists at ScotRail's station and to get into that platform would mean we could provide a connection for some of the trains on the Inverness-Aberdeen line." Moray MSP and Environment Secretary Richard Lochhead has already held talks with Transport Scotland officials to discuss the railway association's proposals.

■ ■ Railfuture Scotland contact:

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London and South East

By Roger Blake
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■ ■ 5,000 new homes depend on rail

Railfuture campaigners were alarmed to discover that the invitation to tender for the new East Anglia franchise, published in mid-September, failed to require all-day-every-day quarter-hourly services along the Lea Valley line between Stratford and Angel Road where a £1.5 billion property development providing 5,000 new homes and 3,000 new jobs is being built at Meridian Water. Network Rail is committed to adding a third track through Tottenham Hale to Angel Road before 2019 to enable the existing two trains an hour service to be doubled. The Lea Valley line is one of the few areas of the new East Anglia franchise left in our branch area since Transport for London's two concessions took over Liverpool Street's West Anglia and Great Eastern metro services in May. Lea Bridge station, which closed in 1985, is being rebuilt and is expected to open next spring, after Railfuture-affiliated Chingford Line Users'



NEW HOMES: An image of the Meridian Water development at Angel Road

Picture: MERIDIAN WATER

Association used Railfuture's Fighting Fund to commission Jonathan Roberts Consulting to demonstrate the case for reopening the station. The study also made the case for upgrading the line from Stratford to Angel Road to allow for a doubled train frequency.

■ ■ Economic case for Javelins to Bexhill

Bringing high speed Javelin trains to Bexhill and Hastings will create over 200 jobs in the local tourist economy worth up to £7.6 million per year to Bexhill and Hastings by 2028. A report by Mott McDonald also identifies regeneration and economic benefits worth £19 million as well as the creation of a further 425 jobs. The *Economic case: High Speed Rail to Hastings and Bexhill* report was launched in October by Bexhill's Tory MP Huw Merriman, along with representatives of East Sussex county, Hastings borough and Rother district councils which co-funded the report. The economic benefits, including better connections and shorter journey times, would result from extending High Speed One services. How the infrastructure can be upgraded between 2019 and 2024 to enable Javelins to travel over the Marshlink line from Ashford to Rye, Hastings and Bexhill is being examined by Network Rail. Its first meeting with Railfuture, rail user groups and other stakeholders for the Kent area route study also took place in October. Railfuture's supporting campaign:

www.railfuture.org.uk/Marshlink

■ ■ Investment in South Coast corridor

The new Siemens train depot at Three Bridges for the Brighton main line and Thameslink opened on 15 October 2015, on the day the Department for Transport published the terms of reference for the London and south coast rail corridor study, following encouraging announcements from the Government in March and July. Railfuture is campaigning for Thameslink 2 as an evolution of reinstating the Uckfield-Lewes line. We want to see Uckfield-Lewes reinstated between 2019 and 2024, as well as more capacity and better connectivity along the London-South Coast corridor. Add your support to our campaign at

www.railfuture.org.uk/Uckfield+Lewes

■ ■ Flyer group wins Railfuture award

The Abbey Flyer Users' Group, for the Watford Junction to St Albans Abbey line, won the 2015 gold award for best website in Railfuture's rail user group awards. General secretary Dave Horton received a commendation in the best campaigner category.

www.abfly.org.uk

Railfuture London and South East branch's quarterly newsletter railise at www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East+branch+news

Rail link to boost economy and solve airport problem

A new rail route could be created between London and the south coast to relieve pressure on the overcrowded Brighton line and to provide a whole host of new journey opportunities.

It could even address the Government's airport problems by providing more efficient links between Gatwick and Stansted airports which have the potential to relieve some of the pressure on Heathrow.

It would also address some of the problems of public transport access to Britain's new financial "city" of Canary Wharf which began life as a hopelessly road-orientated plan and was saved only by the construction of the Docklands Light Railway and the Jubilee line extension.

Now the Department for Transport has hired consultants WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff to examine plans for a second direct link between Brighton and London after Chancellor George Osborne pledged £100,000 towards the London and south coast corridor study.

It could mean reopening Lewes-Uckfield for which Railfuture (Bridge the Gap) and others have long been campaigning.

The Conservative think-tank Bow Group in a new report *Reviving Britain's Railways* has recommended providing cash for reopening railway lines.

Report author Elizabeth Anderson said: "Tracks and tunnels closed in the Dr Beeching era could be vital now in improving transport links across the country – and the social benefits that this can bring by allowing people the freedom and ability to access employment or education in nearby towns, as well as increasing tourism."

Bow Group chairman Ben Harris-Quinney said: "Reviving existing railway lines has the ability to improve lives for people across the whole country."

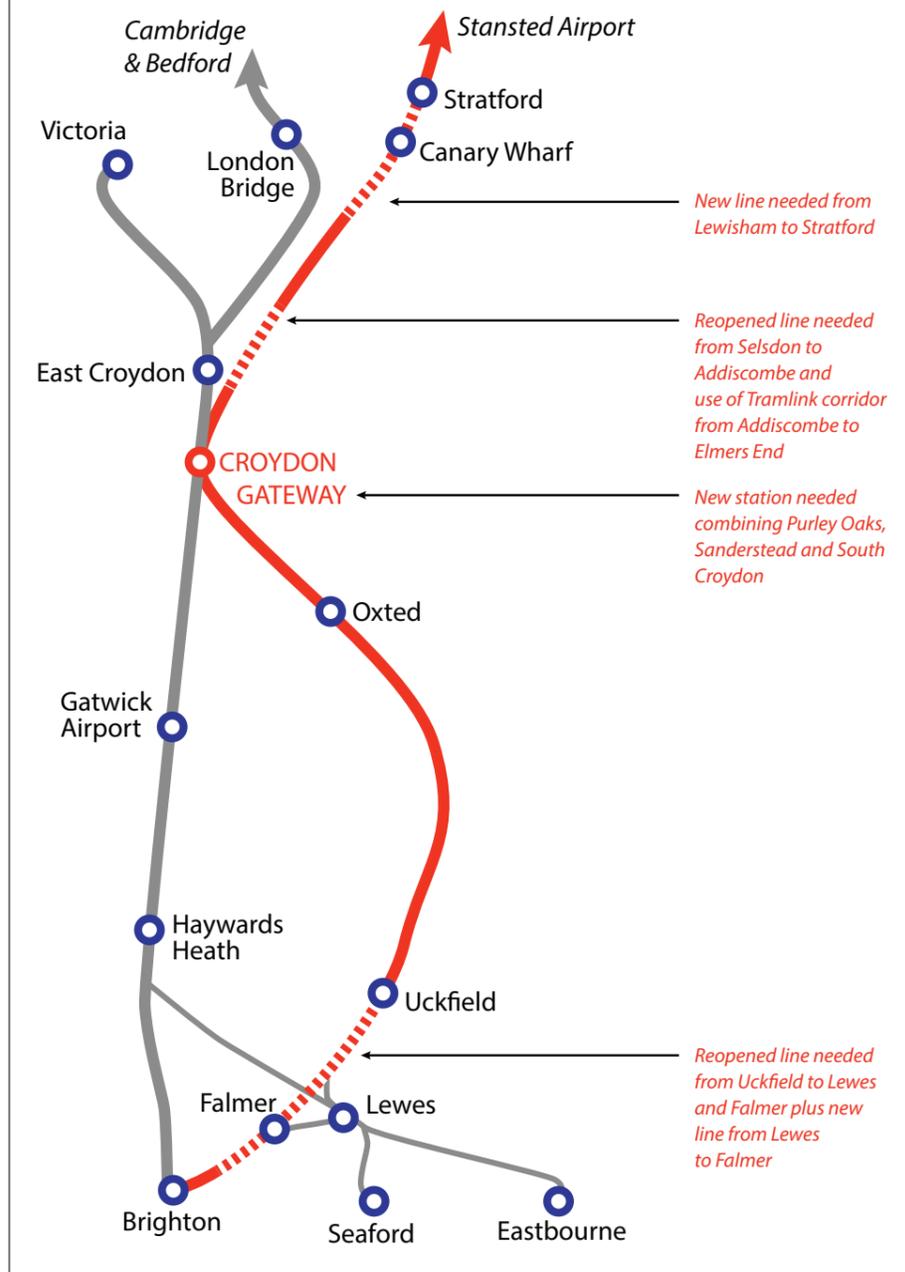
The group recommends that a minister should be given the remit to cover reopening rail lines and to develop a framework to evaluate closed routes.

The Department for Transport said the South Coast study would cover "recommendations for investment in both the existing Brighton main line and for consideration of the BML2 concept."

Railfuture has pressed for reopening Uckfield-Lewes and moving on to a Thameslink

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

CANARY WHARF LIFT-OFF



2 which you can see at www.railfuture.org.uk/Thameslink+2. Other campaigners have pressed for BML2 (Brighton main line 2) which could include a new station south of the existing and very busy East Croydon station and with links to Tunbridge Wells.

They believe it is not just a transport project but is essential to the regional economy and will deliver the "biggest productivity gain in the UK". See www.bml2.co.uk

Lewes's new MP Maria Caulfield and Wealden MP Nusrat Ghani have recommended the project to rail minister Claire Perry and George Osborne. Railfuture vice president Caroline Lucas, who is the Green MP for Brighton Pavilion, also supports BML2.

Brian Hart of BML2 says some tunnelling would be needed for BML2 and Thameslink 2, under the South Downs and under the River Thames and that some sections of

Croydon Tramlink can be diverted or shared. Sadly one of the most promising reopening schemes, the £50 million East West Rail link from Oxford to Bedford and Cambridge looks like being delayed by as much as seven years.

Milton Keynes South MP Iain Stewart said: "It is vital we keep lobbying all departments on just how important this project is."

Instead of pressing on with the East West rail link, the first phase of which was the Oxford Parkway-Bicester line opening in October, the Government has funded a £500 million study into building an "express road" between Oxford and Cambridge.

Railfuture's Hugh Jaeger has written to the local press, urging the Government to scrap the expressway study and confirm commitment to the complete East West Rail project, across Buckinghamshire and all the way to Cambridge.



National Rail

It would appear there is a desire among many people to recreate a national railway although opponents suggest this may be an expensive move.

Could Railfuture provide an unbiased assessment of what the costs, if any, might be?

My own impression is that to take the existing franchises back into a National Rail set-up as they expire would cost very little as no private company would need to be bought out or compensated.

Where there are excessively long franchises, some action might have to be taken to shorten them.

The curious arrangements about rolling stock would need sorting out. But could Railfuture set out the necessary steps?

C A Cowland, Lapwing Way, FourMarks, Alton GU34 5FD

Memories of BR

Given the stance taken by Labour's new radical leader, I think Railfuture should re-examine its collective opinion of railway renationalisation.

In *Railwatch* 145, Ian Brown says that "political approaches will not deliver the bigger, better railway we need now", and Chris Austin adds that "advocates of renationalisation need to remember what it was like in BR days".

Well I did much travelling back then, and I recall being able to go to my local railway station the day before my planned journey and being able to buy the cheapest possible ticket.

What is more, far from being "starved of capital and with barely enough money to maintain the network" (Chris Austin again), I remember a whole host of modern diesel designs being introduced to replace steam locomotives, including the successful introduction of the InterCity

125s which gave Britain scheduled services averaging 100 mph for the first time. Other developments were electrification of the West Coast main line, along with services out of King's Cross and around both Liverpool and Glasgow.

More recently of course, we have seen that state ownership of the East Coast main line saved money for the taxpayer as compared to when it was previously in private hands.

So what therefore is wrong with renationalisation?

Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby, Lincolnshire, DN31 2JP

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Borders crowding

Congratulations to everyone involved in reopening the Borders Railway but what a pity we have not learnt the lessons of previous line reopenings (in particular the Welsh Valley re-openings). Only a few weeks after services started and the trains are unable to meet demand.

I had two days of travel on the line and on Friday, trains consisted of one two-car class 158 unit full and standing. On the return from Edinburgh I let one train go as there were no seats. There have been several reports in the local newspapers of trains being so overcrowded that people have been unable to board.

Saturday saw the large car park at Tweedbank (signed as park and ride) completely full and parked cars on every conceivable piece of land nearby. Services were strengthened with the train into Edinburgh formed of 2 x two-car 158s, and the return a three-car class 170, both with standing passengers from and to at least Brunstane.

The line itself is already up to capacity with the half-hourly service and to run a steam

special or charter train it is necessary to cancel a service train. There are calls for the line to be extended to Hawick and Carlisle, talk of a diversionary route and freight paths. Alas apart from the cost of the extension, millions of pounds will need to be spent on upgrading the existing route to Tweedbank.

One thing that I found very praiseworthy was the standard of revenue protection. The conductor guards were all very active. On Saturday morning, two customer service staff were selling tickets to people boarding at Tweedbank. On each occasion that trains arrived at Edinburgh, a ticket inspection was carried out and, where appropriate, excess fare tickets issued.

*Keith Montague, Station Road, Attleborough NR17 2AS
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Low platforms

I can't express how disappointed I am that the new London Bridge station rebuilt platforms are just as low as the previous ones. The very large gap between platforms and trains still remains on terminating platforms that are straight. So no excuse about curved platforms.

Campaigners have been told by Network Rail that they could not get a straight answer from the Department for Transport to make a decision other than to replace like for like platforms of the same low height. How daft is this? What an own goal.

*James Barber, Liberal Democrat councillor for East Dulwich and Lib Dem parliamentary candidate for Dulwich and West Norwood
James.Barber@southwark.gov.uk*

Improving image

The reference to the alleged "shambles" of the May AGM in *Railwatch* 145 has prompted me to reflect – as a member of some 35 years standing – on the image Railfuture presents to new members and to others. First, a glance around any meeting reveals that the active membership consists almost entirely of white, middle-class males of mature years.

Yet rail is used extensively by people of all ages, both sexes and a huge range of ethnic backgrounds, while other environmentally conscious organisations, and even political parties, attract much younger activists. Why aren't these people attracted to Railfuture, and what are we doing about it? Secondly, Railfuture is not

always very good at making new members and would-be activists feel welcome and included. Whether intentional or not, there can be a tendency to appear cliquish and self-absorbed, and new arrivals can find it difficult to blend in. There is a crucial role for all branches (particularly committee members) to play here. Make new members feel welcome, encourage them to come to meetings, ensure they are fully included in discussions, and, if they are willing, give them things to do so that they feel a real part of the team.

Thirdly, Railfuture is not good at being open and transparent. Meetings, particularly board meetings, are minuted very sketchily, and it is virtually impossible to find out what points have been made in discussion and debate, or how decisions have been arrived at. Such a degree of secrecy is neither desirable nor healthy, and the board in particular needs to address this with regard to its own meetings and how it records and reports them.

We should also consider taking a scythe to Railfuture's multi-layered, cumbersome and bureaucratic structure, the administration of which takes up much time and effort which could be more usefully deployed.

Finally, we must ensure that at all times we conduct ourselves in a civil and professional manner. There is nothing wrong with robust debate, and we shall never agree on everything, but disagreements must not be allowed to descend into acrimony, and decisions or attitudes must not be tainted by personal antipathies or prejudices. That will only put people off and deter them from listening to us, taking us seriously, or indeed joining us – and that is the last thing we want.

*Graham Larkbey, Carr Road, London E17 5ER
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Rural need

Being from east Devon, I was pleased to see mention of Axminster station in *Railwatch* 145. Trains which stop at Axminster, however, thunder through the site of the former Chard Junction station just a few miles over the border into Somerset.

The rural area around Chard has experienced a growing population in the 50 years since its station closed, while stations on the same line, such as Whimple and Feniton exist

to serve smaller communities. Rural areas are often neglected but still require public transport.

In the Welsh Marches area, for instance, a parkway station could be provided at the former Wooferton Junction site between Ludlow and Leominster which both have small, expensive car parks. Wooferton has room for a big car park and could serve as a railhead for the town of Tenbury Wells and a large rural area around it.

Also perverse is the apparent closure of the convenient bus station at Cardiff Central rail station before a new station is completed. I fear people will be put off using trains as a consequence.

J Evered, Goylands Close, Llandrindod Wells LD1 5RB

Miss out Bedford

For the East West line to Cambridge to be viable the most useful route would be to forget about linking Bedford to Cambridge and build a link from Lidlington or Ridgmont on to the Midland main line and then a new line from Luton Airport to Stevenage, thus serving a much bigger population and an airport.

*Nigel Watt, Overhill Road, London SE22 0PH
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Two-way traffic

Ian Brown says we should always ask the question, "How do they do it in other countries?" (*Railwatch* 145) and therefore whether we can learn from them.

In fact the now abolished international committee of Railfuture has always had that as part of its remit and it is also why Railfuture was a founder member of the European Passengers' Federation.

Our relationship with sister organisations elsewhere in Europe is actually based on what we put in, as well as what we can get out, and that is as it should be. For example, I have explained in articles and presentations how consultation with customers works in our country, how satisfaction is measured through our National Passenger Survey, and how lessons can be learned from the way in which our services were privatised.

I recently helped a Czech MEP who needed information about facilities for disabled passengers in Britain, and a Romanian colleague on the arguments which we have used successfully against rail closures and for rail reopenings. I have also contributed to a report on



Chinese build £3bn rail line to new airport

Work starts next month on a rail line to Beijing's new international airport which is already under construction to a design by Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid and ADP Ingenierie.

Rail passengers will be able to check in baggage and obtain boarding passes for their flights at a city centre station at Caoqiao and travel to the new Daxing airport on the new 24-mile long rail line in 30 minutes. Half of the 100 mph line will be underground and eventually there will be 15 trains an hour. The three stations will all be underground.

Both rail line and airport, which is expected to be the biggest in the world, are scheduled

to open in four years time. The rail line is expected to cost £3 billion. The new airport with four runways is being built in the south of the city because the existing international airport built in 2008 by Foster + Partners in the north is becoming too busy.

The new airport aims to accommodate 45 million passengers a year.

It will have a grand central courtyard through which transfer passengers will be able to walk between the 82 flight gates.

The aim is to reduce the need for shuttles to transfer between separate terminals.

Picture by Methanoia/Zaha Hadid Architects

the role of regional railways to be published shortly by our Czech sister organisation. PlusBus was invented in Britain and similar schemes have been introduced in certain continental countries. In others the concept of including urban public transport in the train ticket to produce seamless travel is virtually unknown. We in Railfuture can, and do, therefore export ideas and experiences elsewhere, as well as learning from other countries.

*Trevor Garrod, Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ
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Puzzling fares

Ian Brown bemoans our inability to answer questions about European fares (*Railwatch* 145). You can use carefully selected examples of fares to show how expensive they are in Europe

compared to ours. If only there could be an honest study which also considers average wages, tax levels and government subsidy. Many members appear to want non-rail-using taxpayers to subsidise even more the minority who use trains. In Britain, many bemoan the cost of single tickets compared to that of returns. Does any "insider" have the information to advise what increase in return fares would be necessary to offset the loss from reducing singles to approximately half the equivalent travel restrictions return?

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

Names and trains

At the risk of being a pedant, I was disturbed to see the assertion that Madge Elliot named a train after herself. A well deserved honour indeed, but actually, she

named an engine, not a train. I am increasingly irritated by the spreading of the habit of referring to a train station, (an Americanism) as opposed to a railway station and I would have hoped that an august publication like *Railwatch* would not have allowed such an error to creep into p.S3.

*John Stretton, Davey Road, Tewkesbury GL20 8UL
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Editors' note: However, you do not catch a railway at a railway station while you do catch a train at a train station.

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

Take the central route for a South West speed-up and rail resurgence

Railfuture's Gerard Duddridge told the Bristol conference how he had devised a cost-effective and efficient way to speed up train services by upgrading the central rail route to the South West of England.

The importance of rail links to Devon and Cornwall has been the centre of attention, following the collapse of the railway into the sea at Dawlish in 2014.

The two-month closure of the railway line cost the economy around £1.2 billion and people began asking why the journey to the South West took much longer than to other places a similar distance from London.

Preston to London for instance takes around two hours while London-Plymouth takes three hours.

In an interim report in October, the Peninsula Rail Task Force, set up by the Government to work with Network Rail to devise a plan for the future, called for immediate steps to improve services as well as a long-term plan. It says even a relatively modest reduction of 15 minutes in the journey time between the South West Peninsula and London would create 1,500 new jobs and increase productivity by £300 million a year.

Andrew Leadbetter, chair of the task force, wants to cut the 225-mile London-Plymouth journey time from three hours to two hours 15 minutes.

Railfuture believes it might be more realistic to aim for two hours 45 minutes.

This can be achieved by:

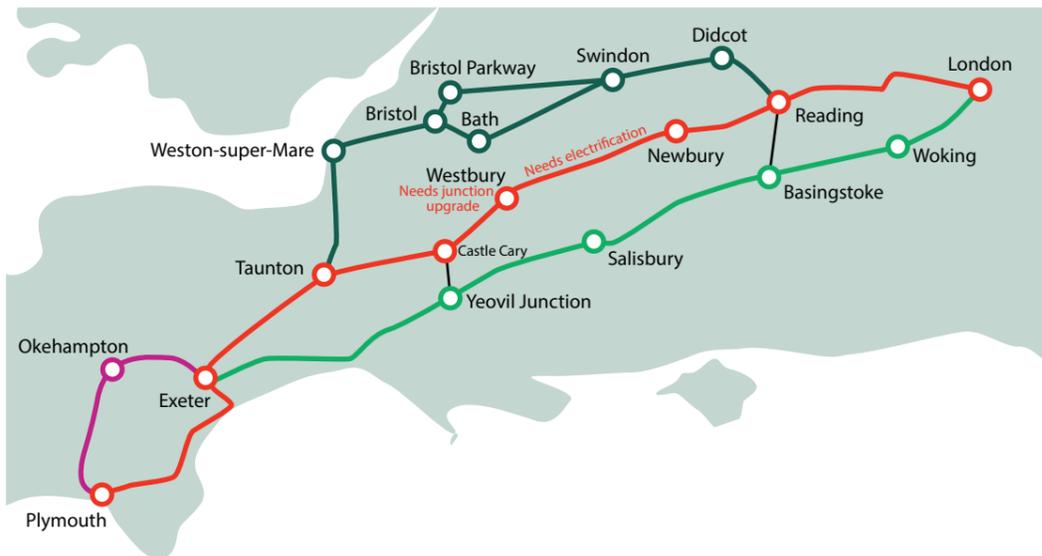
NOT targeting the route from London Waterloo to Exeter which is currently limited to 60 mph as far as Hampton Court. Other third rail electric services effectively restrict speed to 100 mph from there to Basingstoke and line speed beyond to Exeter is no more than 85-90 mph.

NOT relying on the Great Western route from London Paddington via Bristol.

The most attractive route to be upgraded would be via the 107-mile Berks and Hants line from Reading to Taunton which is already cleared for 100 mph running for most of its length.

The improved speed could be achieved using the existing 40-year-old diesel InterCity 125s and at the moment, electrification is only going as far as Newbury.

The new Hitachi AT300 trains cannot run at much more than



Map: ELLIE KING

The three main options for improving rail services from London to the South West

100mph in diesel mode. The line speed should be increased to 125 mph and so electrification should be extended from the currently planned end point at Newbury to Westbury and possibly to Bathampton (near Bath). By electrifying the extra 14 miles to Bathampton, the train operator would have the advantage of an electrified diversionary route from Reading to Bath.

But Fairwood junction (Westbury) also needs upgrading because at present the turnouts (points) are limited to 40mph while the main line is cleared for 100 mph at this point.

Gerard told the Railfuture conference that some of the existing timings are so slack that if a car driver missed his London-bound train at Bodmin Parkway, he could drive to Tiverton Junction and catch the same train - with time to have a coffee before he boarded.

The Hitachi AT300 has a valuable role in bridging the gap between electrified and non-electrified lines. For semi-fast services the acceleration and deceleration of the AT300 will benefit trains calling at numerous intermediate stations between Paddington and Taunton such as Newbury,

Pewsey, Westbury and Castle Cary. It will also help trains crossing Cornwall, because of the many stops needed for towns and branch line connections.

But the infrastructure needs to be improved as well. A cut-off should be built at Crofton where trains have to slow to 70 mph, and other curves need to be upgraded.

It should be realistic then to provide an hourly fast service to the South-West, with a one hour 50 minute timing from Paddington to Exeter when including stops at Reading and Taunton.

Some trains could then run non stop from Exeter to Plymouth in 52 minutes, giving an overall journey time of two hours 45 minutes.

Taunton would be served by an hourly semi-fast service from Paddington to Exeter, calling at Reading, Newbury, Pewsey, Devizes Parkway, Westbury, and Castle Cary (every two hours).

West of Exeter, £875 million would pay for a full double track northern route from Exeter to Plymouth via Okehampton and Tavistock.

Trains calling at Okehampton, Sourton Parkway station and

Tavistock all with two-minute station dwell times would take 65 minutes.

Non-stop diversionary trains could take under 55 minutes. A 50-minute journey time would be possible with an improved Coleford Junction and upgraded Cowley Bridge Junction near Exeter.

The Okehampton line could provide a full Exeter-Plymouth backup, as well as additional capacity. With an Ernesettle chord, it could give faster services into Cornwall from Exeter.

Recent calls for a two hours 15 minute London Paddington to Plymouth timing seem reasonable, but ignore the technical difficulties.

But by electrifying throughout and using Pendolino tilting trains, the standard 100 mph line speed is usable for 125 mph running and the standard 125 mph line can be used by 140 mph trains.

Ideally level crossings would be replaced with bridges and a tunnel from Exeter to the Newton Abbot line, coupled with realignment of numerous curves between Newton Abbot and Plymouth, would improve speeds even further.

The conference also heard from James Freeman of First Bus West of England who stressed his commitment to bus-rail integration and provided free buses to the station for delegates. James White said Metro West involved a £100 million investment, two reopened rail lines, as well as five to 10 new stations. Christina Biggs of Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways reminded rail managers to take note of rail campaigners. They knew better than some

managers what passengers wanted. John Parry of Parry People Movers said many former rail lines could be reinstated and operated by light rail vehicles. Peter Wakefield of Railfuture East Anglia advised rail campaigners to contact local councillors and officials who were now only too willing to talk about rail improvements. But always be relentlessly positive and polite.

West speed-up and rail resurgence

A 'Great' future for the West

The future is looking Great for what used to be First Great Western, the Railfuture conference was told.

First has already begun painting its trains green and has rebranded itself the Great Western Railway.

Matthew Golton, the commercial development director, said passengers could look forward to improvements, many of them agreed with the Government and after consultation with stakeholders.

The Government has granted First Group a three and a half year extension to its Great Western franchise which would otherwise have run out in September 2015.

Mr Golton said contacts had been established with the 13 local enterprise partnerships in the area of the franchise and GWR would improve journey times, run more frequent trains and upgrade stations.

The first electric services are planned for Paddington-Hayes by next year. By 2018, construction work should start on providing Metro West in the Bristol area, for completion in 2019. Devon Metro, centred on Exeter, will be implemented between 2018 and 2019.

And London Crossrail will be operating to Reading by 2019.

Most of Great Western's existing fast trains will be replaced by Hitachi's class 800 bi-mode trains. To cope with the steeper gradients in Devon and Cornwall, a fleet of Hitachi class AT300 bi-mode trains would have updated diesel engines and larger fuel tanks.

The AT300s will start arriving in 2017 and will operate trains to Plymouth and Penzance by 2018 at 90mph rather than 75 mph. There will be free wifi on all trains and most would have at-seat power supplies to charge phones and computers.

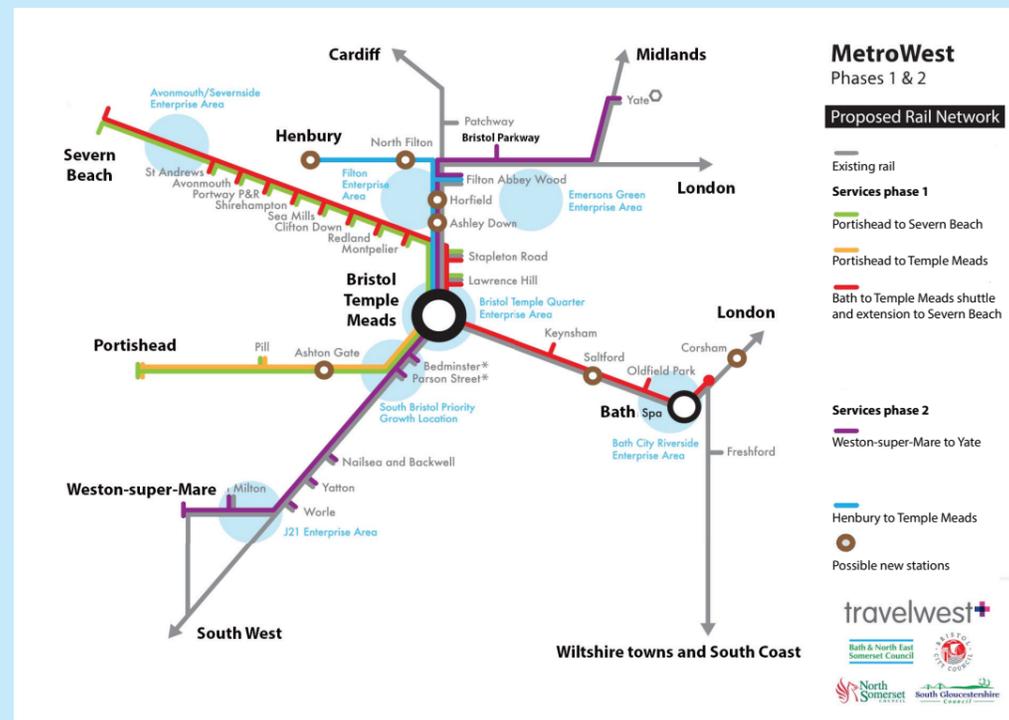
Metro West comes after the franchise ends but GWR is committed to making it happen.



THE PRESENT: Paddington station with a loco-hauled train, an IC125 and a local train



THE FUTURE: Hitachi's AT300 which will operate from Paddington to Plymouth and Penzance



Picture: GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

Picture: GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

Wessex

By David Brace
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■ ■ Railfuture Wessex AGM

Railfuture Wessex AGM will be held in Winchester on Saturday 12 March 2016. We have invited Chris Loder, head of business projects at South West Trains, to talk to us. Branch members will be notified of the exact venue later.

■ ■ New Wessex franchise

Given the very short period between the official issue of the tender notice for the new Wessex franchise (likely in November) and the formal issue of tenders (likely in spring 2016) there is expected to be only a short period of consultation to influence the content. Railfuture Wessex has already met Arriva Trains and we have also heard from South West Trains. We are creating a wish list of changes and improvements we want included in the tender. Help us by sending your suggestions to Railfuture Wessex and we will include them in the wish list.

■ ■ Final Wessex long-term planning study

The final version of the Wessex long term planning study was published jointly by Network Rail and South West Trains in August. The fundamental problems of rush hour overcrowding on the lines into Waterloo remain. While short-term solutions, mainly on the inner suburban lines continue, there has to be doubt whether the next phase of enhancement works will be authorised for the control period 6 (2019-2024). This study recommends constructing flyovers at both Woking and Basingstoke. For Basingstoke, the draft study proposed a dive-under for the Reading line. Our picture shows the impossibility of creating a flyover that would



Looking east from Basingstoke station with a train from London approaching the Reading line which crosses the main line on a flat junction from left to right

return to ground level to serve the station. In the meantime, preparing the international platforms at Waterloo for domestic use, converting electric multiple units for higher capacity and platform lengthening to 10 cars on the inner suburban lines and the Windsor and Reading lines continue.

■ ■ Service boost for West of England route

The West of England service receives a substantial boost in the December 2015 timetable changes. A frequent link service between Yeovil Junction and Pen Mill will be introduced along with services diverted at Salisbury via Westbury, Frome, Castle Cary to Yeovil Pen Mill and Yeovil Junction. This will also help link to services from Bristol to Weymouth. Ideas for infrastructure upgrades for future service improvements were being developed by Network Rail. Is all this now up in the air if

NR's performance is to be reviewed? The class 159s, mainstay of the service, are currently being refurbished.

Our West of England representative has been very active in promoting ideas for further improvements to the services between Salisbury and Yeovil Junction. Bruce Duncan is encouraging the proposal that should see a formal community rail partnership being formed. This is an area where South West Trains is becoming very active with supporting funds and help from a dedicated member of staff – Richard Kempton. The partnership would include Tisbury, Gillingham, Templecombe, Sherborne, Yeovil Junction and Crewkerne. Most of the stations already have active station supporter groups. They want to see a more frequent train service and this can be achieved only by restoring at least some of the sections that were singled following Beeching. The first section would be from Wilton to Tisbury with the down platform restored. This would help in punctuality, a problem at present with trains



Picture: DAVID BRACE

often held in a loop outside Tisbury station, pictured left with a train departing towards Exeter.

■ ■ Railfuture Wessex newsletter

A newsletter, the first of many we hope, will be issued by our branch to explain our views and to point out the various issues.

www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+Branch

Severnside

By Nigel Bray
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■ ■ Celebrations at Trowbridge

Railfuture was represented at a ceremony on 18 September when Rail Minister Claire Perry unveiled a plaque celebrating improvements at Trowbridge station. Speeches were made by the minister, First Great Western (now Great Western Railway) managing director Mark Hopwood and Councillor Horace Prickett of Wiltshire Council. Trowbridge has become more of an interchange station since the quadrupling of train services on the TransWilts line in December 2013, following a vigorous campaign by the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership, now a corporate member of Railfuture.

■ ■ Ways to make station more successful

On 15 October, Railfuture Severnside was represented at a meeting to discuss the Cam & Dursley station development plan. Jon Harris and Sandy Moller from Harris Ethical, a consultancy working with Gloucestershire County Council, invited suggestions from stakeholders to increase use of the station and also deal with the problems of success. Recorded passenger journeys at Cam & Dursley have increased from 61,000 in 1997/98 to 177,000 in 2013/14 and the car park is often full at 08.00. Many people from the Stroud area drive to Cam & Dursley to catch trains to Bristol and our representatives reiterated the need to reopen Stonehouse (Bristol Road) station which would serve the Stonehouse and Stroud area more directly. Also discussed was the scarcity of bus services between Cam & Dursley station and its local catchment area. Late running by either mode of transport could wreck integration between hourly trains and

infrequent buses. Jon Harris believed that shared taxi connections were more realistic than a subsidised bus service in view of the financial pressures on local authorities. An alternative idea from the floor was to charge for parking and use the revenue to provide a free shuttle bus.

■ ■ Gloucester needs a rail boost

Station development plans are mentioned in the Gloucestershire rail study report produced recently by Amey Rail. It examines the strengths and weaknesses of the nine National Rail stations in the county and offers hope of improved access and more frequent services. Unfortunately it fails to make a similar assessment of the train services, such as why Gloucester (population 122,000 in 2011) should have little more than a stopping service to Bristol. Five possible new stations are considered but the report is not consistent in its use of supporting data. Thus the case for rural Charfield (just inside South Gloucestershire) appears stronger than for Stonehouse (Bristol Road) because the former is based on forecast population growth for the entire unitary authority and the latter only on growth in its immediate area. The scant references to freight are a major omission but the report does suggest that depots at Sharpness Docks and Lydney might be possible.

Our response to the East of Bath park and ride consultation suggested that any station opened at Bathampton should be served in all three directions and not merely by a shuttle from Bath Spa and points west. The park and ride scheme is itself controversial but we see the station as having potential to extend Metro West into Wiltshire.

■ ■ Award for Saltford campaigners

The Saltford Station Campaign won the Oliver Lovell Award for Best New Group in Railfuture's nationwide Rail User Group competition. It was presented to Chris Warren at Railfuture Rail Resurgence conference in Bristol on 7 November. Chris said: "I was absolutely delighted to receive this award on behalf of the Saltford Station Campaign. To be recognised by Railfuture is just reward for all our hard work. This award gives the campaign a further boost. I ask the new Bath and North East Somerset Council to take the reopening of the station to the next stage of project development without undue delay." Councillor Duncan Hounsell, chair of Saltford Parish Council, said: "I congratulate the Saltford Station Campaigners on this national award. The Parish Council fully supports the reopening of Saltford Station which would give villagers a gateway to the half-hourly services of the Metro West rail project."



Chris Warren and Duncan Hounsell with the award at the Railfuture conference



Picture: CHRIS AUSTIN

BLACK AND WHITE PAST: Two trains cross at Haverhill station in 1966, before the axe fell, even though the Suffolk town's population was already growing as a result of building London 'overspill' housing. Reinstating Haverhill by rail to the employment hot-spot of Cambridge is one of the schemes supported by Railfuture

We must change the red signals to green

By Chris Austin

chris.austin@railfuture.org.uk

Network Rail's long-term planning strategy is still on hold pending the report of its new chairman, Sir Peter Hendy, on its capability and associated reports on funding and so, affordability.

By November, no further route plans had been published for consultation since March.

In the interim though, a rather large consultation has arrived from Transport for London about Crossrail 2 on which we will be working with the branches concerned.

This could be crucial in terms of meeting the burgeoning demand for travel from the south London suburban area and Surrey where, as the Wessex consultation paper showed, forecast demand simply cannot be met from the existing railway, even with all available paths occupied by 12-car trains.

It also raises the interesting questions of how many more new lines can be

accommodated under central London! As part of the Hendy review, Railfuture's infrastructure and networks group, together with freight group and Railfuture East Anglia, made representation on the proposed deferral of work on the Felixstowe-Nuneaton scheme on the difficult single track section between Ely and Soham.

This is not just a local issue, but a national one, as this important cross-country enhancement takes pressure off the West Coast main line, the North London line and the Great Eastern main line and indeed the infamous A14 road.

The Ely-Soham scheme is needed for rail to play its full part in carrying the far-east imports that stream in through the port of Felixstowe, far too many of which are currently carried by lorry juggernauts on the A14. Ely-Soham has impacts as far away as Manchester and Glasgow, plus Birmingham and Doncaster. Meanwhile, work has continued on the

register of lines whose opening Railfuture can support. We will shortly have checked these in detail and will circulate them for comment. A three category "traffic light" approach has been adopted:

Green schemes Ready to go, with a sponsor, funding in place or in hand, and an agreed scheme with Network Rail and the Department for Transport or the train operator. Campaigning on these lines would be aimed at the priority of the scheme, particularly to prevent slippage, and to keep up the pressure until it is delivered.

Yellow schemes Almost there, with a sponsor or funding or an agreed scheme, but not all in place yet. The feasibility of the project will have been demonstrated, however, either with a separate study or by inclusion in Network Rail plans. Campaigning could be directed towards getting the scheme into the green category and making sure it is in statutory local authority-local enterprise

partnership plans as well as rail industry plans.

Red schemes These may need more work to secure the sponsor or to seek funding, or to turn the concept into a workable scheme. Campaigning here is likely to be around fund-raising for feasibility studies, or getting the proposal included in the formal planning process, or securing its priority over other expenditure.

This last point is important as schemes are unlikely to be directly funded by government in the future. Partnership is the name of the game and new lines will need real input from local authorities, local enterprise partnerships or developers.

It may mean making the case for priority over other infrastructure projects including roads. Railfuture is not anti-road but we must promote the economic benefits of the rail schemes on which we are campaigning. A big push on new lines will follow in the new year, even though the economic conditions are going to be tough.

Eurostar passengers are travelling further

By Trevor Garrod

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Thank you to all members who completed the Railfuture survey form after they made a journey to Lille, Paris or Brussels by Eurostar. The results were analysed by Chris Brown and Nigel Perkins and a report was issued at the end of September. The report has gone to the

operator, other key stakeholders and politicians, and can be read on the Railfuture website.

Three quarters of the journeys made by our members were for leisure purposes and there was a small increase in those booking on line compared to our previous survey in 2011. There was also a noticeable

increase in the proportion of members travelling beyond Paris or Brussels, together with a demand for easier booking of such journeys and in some cases better onward connections. Many passengers commented on the poor state of the interior of the trains. While this should improve with the introduction of the new class 374 Velaro trains,

the remaining 21-year-old trains are in need of refurbishment. We suggest that, as part of that process, Eurostar should consider increasing the luggage space. A significant minority of passengers also considered the length of time needed to go through security was a disincentive to travel.

◆◆◆◆ Join Railfuture online at www.railfuture.org.uk/join

Picture: DAVID BRACE

North East

By Peter Kenyon
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Branch members get out more

Early in September members were invited to the Aln Valley Railway inaugural model railway show at Alnwick and took the opportunity to display our wish list of 25 new or reopened stations in the North East. We distributed information about Railfuture, plus copies of main line and local time tables, which proved very popular. Later in the month we were invited by Railfuture Scotland to travel on the reopened Borders Railway and attend their autumn meeting in the new transport interchange at Galashiels. Railfuture North East is preparing to liaise with the new franchise holders which operate services in our area.

Metro is more pleasant and safer

Modernisation has reached Newcastle Central station, used by 5.3 million passengers each year. An 11-month work period began with the station's closure from 20.00 to 05.00 from Sunday to Thursday except during public holidays. Improvements at Felling, Gateshead Metro and Heworth stations will follow. A new radio system will replace the original analogue set-up and connect trains with the South Gosforth control centre. A rail traffic management system to track the progress of trains across the system will also be installed.

Getting up steam at Lionheart station



Aln Valley Railway Trust reports that the 1917 vintage 0-6-0 Hudswell Clarke steam locomotive Richboro should be in traffic on the Alnwick site, pictured above, adjacent to the A1 bypass during the Christmas period. Durham-based Banks Mining Group offered to provide coal for the loco from an opencast mine near Cramlington. www.alnvalleyrailway.co.uk

Two reopening steps forward, six to go

Now that Northumberland County Council has agreed to back the Grip 2 (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) study into reopening the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line, Network Rail personnel are reported to be at work. Dennis Fancett, chairman of the proactive South East Northumberland Rail User Group is delighted, but emphasises this is only the second of eight stages in the Network Rail process. Only at stage four will the full costs of the scheme be determined! The Dickensian delays in the GRIP process are a source of concern. SENRUG has begun a series of public meetings in community centres to publicise its work and aspirations. Campaigns to re-site Cramlington station and provide a new station at Killingworth, north of Newcastle, are among its priorities. www.senrug.co.uk

Northern outposts

Tyne Valley line (Newcastle-Carlisle)
A community rail partnership meeting at Hexham revealed that the promised "120 new trains" will probably be 30 four-car sets

for the Manchester-Leeds commuter service. Subsequent cascading will eventually result in replacement of the aging Pacers which were packed to overcapacity during International



A Sunday service Pacer from Hartlepool to Newcastle on 11 October 2015

Rugby games in Newcastle. Increased services are planned without additional rolling stock much in evidence. The pending termination of existing through ScotRail services at Carlisle will not help. *Bishop line (Darlington-Bishop Auckland)*
"We wish to see more people using the line more often" states the new website www.bishopline.org. This advertises live train times for each station including the full service available at Darlington. Information about the community rail partnership, the station adoption scheme and the history of the line is aimed at stimulating passenger numbers.

Coastliners

The Coastliners user group recently met Bob Whitehouse, community rail officer for the Bishop line who had news of the North East (Rail) Business Unit and a Rail North Office, both based in Newcastle, which should counter the popular view that the Leeds-Manchester-Liverpool axis constitutes "The North". Northern Trains wants to produce a North East line guide (overseen by Bob Whitehouse) which will extend coverage of the Bishop line to every Northern station. RUGs and CRPs will assist.

Rail's role in cutting down on NOx

The campaign to reduce pollution from diesel exhaust emissions is gathering force, following media revelations about car makers and their noxious and cheating figures on nitrogen oxide (NOx). Also highlighted is the irrationality of running diesel-powered trains "under the wires". Railfuture members and campaigners need to stress the need for more rail electrification which has already been delayed too often by short-term decisions of those in power.

Thames Valley

By Martin Smith
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Appleford rallies to fight for its trains

The Oxfordshire village of Appleford has a railway station (originally a halt) but no bus service. So in response to cuts in the rail service since May, a community rail group has been formed, the Appleford Rail Group, which held a public meeting on 16 October, attended by local councillors, Ed Vaizey MP, and representatives from Great Western Railway. Rob Smith, the GWR general manager east, argued that it was necessary to cut some calls saving two or three minutes, in order to avoid delaying inter-city and freight trains. The cuts though have resulted in an unbalanced service. In the London-bound direction there are gaps of three and a half and four hours off-peak. In the opposite direction there are

two gaps of four hours, followed by two trains 30 minutes apart, then a gap of two hours and 40 minutes in the evening peak. The 17.24 from Paddington, 18.26 from Reading, no longer stops at Appleford. Mr Smith said that Appleford enjoys twice as many trains as required in their franchise commitment, and that according to their counts Appleford has an average of 35 passengers a day. The rail group claims that local people have counted at least 80 passengers a day. The group also wants additional facilities such as bicycle racks and a car park, and is concerned about safety on the road bridge because passengers come up the steps from the platforms straight into the roadway. A pavement and traffic lights for one-way traffic over the bridge are needed.

Bicester-Oxford reopening

The guest speaker at Railfuture Thames Valley's meeting in September was Stephen Barker of Chiltern Railways who described all the problems of rebuilding the line from Bicester, culminating in the introduction of services from Marylebone to Oxford Parkway on 25 October. It took five years to obtain the Transport and Works Act Order at a cost of £10 million for legal proceedings and an extended public inquiry. A lot of work has been done to protect wildlife with five badger setts built, butterfly-friendly plantings, 15 miles of new fencing laid and about 7000 newts re-homed. Treadle-operated lights are being installed in Wolvercote tunnel to discourage bats from flying through when a train is approaching. The extension from Oxford Parkway to Oxford station is scheduled for "spring 2016", but completion may be delayed by the last unsuccessful legal objections.

More on Witney-Oxford

Oxfordshire County Council has published its consultation on options for improving transport along the A40 corridor from Witney to Oxford. The £38 million scheme for a bus lane between Eynsham and Wolvercote has been approved. There are five options for the next stage:

- Extend the new bus lane westwards from Eynsham to Witney
- Dualling the remainder of the A40 road towards Oxford
- Guided busway along the track of the old railway line west from Cassington
- Tram-train using the former railway track to Yarnton

□ Reinstatement of heavy rail from Yarnton to a park-and-ride station south of Witney.

Railfuture Thames Valley would support the option of extending the bus lane westwards to Witney, as any scheme to promote public transport rather than encouraging further growth of road traffic should be welcomed, and it would not prejudice any plan in the long-term to use the old railway track for a heavy or light rail service.

Visit to Vivarail at Long Marston

A group of Railfuture Thames Valley members were impressed by the quiet, smooth riding of the Vivarail's D-Train prototype in September. They were invited to Vivarail by its chairman Adrian Shooter, who is also a Railfuture vice-president. The D-trains would be ideal to fill the shortage of diesel multiple units on local services throughout Britain. They may even be used on the Thames Valley branch lines which may be dropped from the Great Western electrification programme. On the Greenford branch they would be almost back to their old stamping-ground on London Underground's District line.

Disconnected Britain needs to get back on track

By Chris Austin

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Over the years, Railfuture has put a lot of work into reopening railway lines and stations, and when my co-author Richard Faulkner and I started to write our book on reopenings, we knew we could rely on Railfuture members to come up with some great ideas. Back in 2013, I invited members to submit ideas, setting out the case for the lines they proposed, and we would consider them for inclusion in the book. The book has now been written and was published by Ian Allan on 19 November under the title *Disconnected! Broken Links in Britain's Rail Policy*. It is available from the Railfuture online shop. A number of the lines suggested have been featured, including Skipton-Colne, the Kinross line (the direct route

between Edinburgh and Perth), St Andrews, the Minsters Line (York-Beverley) and the Somerset and Dorset, although we have not recommended that every one should be reopened.

The winner, though, was Adrian Caltieri from Northallerton with a well-argued case for restoring the Leeds Northern route between Harrogate and Northallerton. (See also Yorkshire report on page 4). This would take the pressure off the busy York-Newcastle line and provide a more resilient alternative to support the seven day railway, as well as serving the cathedral city of Ripon and providing better access to the conference centre and spa resort of Harrogate. He also threw in a link with Leeds-Bradford airport for good measure.

So a copy of the book goes to Adrian, with the thanks of the authors. Thirty five lines are covered in detail, and each has its own sad story of missed opportunities. We also cover the loss of some great city centre stations and the great network of overnight sleeping car trains that used to cover the country. The 28-year saga of active campaigning on East West Rail shows just how difficult it has been to make progress. Yet the list of lines needed to meet today's requirements would add a modest 8% to the length of the national network – we believe an entirely achievable figure. While Railfuture colleagues contributed ideas, the research has informed my views as head of the infrastructure and networks group for Railfuture. A win-win situation, which well reflects the results of line reopenings to date.

Grassroots campaigners critical in battle for rail

Book Review By Paul Salvesson

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The new book by Chris Austin and Richard Faulkner, *Disconnected! Broken Links in Britain's Rail Policy*, is an extremely important book which sheds much light on the dirty goings-on within the British Railways Board and Government in the 1960s and 1970s.

It makes a convincing case that far bigger cuts to the network were only narrowly averted, often by the intervention of "whistle-blowers" within British Rail and government. The book offers insights which are both historical and contemporary. The introductory chapter on *The Policy Gap* in the 1960s and 1970s is a very useful scene-setter and would make a good major stand-alone paper in its own right.

I think the authors make the mistake of transplanting government thinking of the 1960s to the present-day in making a case against a return to state ownership.

Though I am not a fan of state ownership, I do not think this argument is particularly strong given how the policy and political landscape has changed so much since then. What is very clear from Chris and Richard's research is that there was an unspoken cross-party consensus between Labour and Conservative back then which was hostile to rail. What is also very interesting is the extent to which the drive for closures was led not just by civil service mandarins but also by senior BR managers.

The book will be useful both to people with an interest in railway policy and history but should also be read by a wider audience. The early chapters in particular offer a fascinating glimpse of how politics actually operated in the 1960s and should be of great interest to politics students. It would be a shame



Paul Salvesson campaigning against the closure of Lostock Junction station, on the day it closed, 5 November 1966. He joked: "Left it a bit late... but it reopened in 1989 and has done well ever since. Vindication or what?"

if the readership was confined to the likes of Salvo readers.* While Chris and Richard have a lot to say on the machinations of civil servants and BRB officers, they do not ignore the role of the unions in building a broader opposition to closures.

They mention the highly effective 'Save Our Railways' campaign led by the National Union of Railwaymen in 1975, which I played a modest part in, as a union activist in Lancashire. The lobby of Parliament was the high point, and there is an interesting personal story to tell of this one day... But a lot of local campaigning activity went on as well, including a memorable public meeting held in Hapton Methodist Hall (ironically, long since disappeared as part of a motorway scheme).

Virtually the entire population of the east Lancashire village must have turned out to express outrage at the prospect of their railway being closed. The meeting was chaired by local parish councillor Archie Johnstone, who was then a Blackburn train driver and Aslef member, but ex-Rose Grove. I remain firmly

of the view that Rose Grove locomotives were the best in the world. I spent several years working with them after the depot closed in the early 1970s and most transferred to Blackburn. It was a great privilege to have worked with these genuine working class intellectuals. Thanks to their actions, supported by the local community, the East Lancs Line did not close and is now served and promoted by the East Lancashire community rail partnership.

The book is not just history. It includes a substantial amount of text on lines which have potential for reopening and this is probably where controversy will arise. The authors produce a list of lines which would be strong contenders for reopening as well as a list of routes which would be difficult if not impossible to reopen.

I admire their bravery. I think their list of potential reopenings is pretty well spot on but if I was them I would not play down the prospects of Carmarthen-Aberystwyth, for example.

What might seem a no-hoper could become a strong contender if it has political and community support, so I would not dismiss that (and one or two others) out of hand.

The reopenings scene is rapidly changing and some new campaigns may well develop momentum, including Levenmouth Rail Campaign (www.lmrc-action.org.uk/) promoting the reinstatement of Thornton to Leven, which gets scant (though positive) mention.

I think in future years we need to focus a bit less on disused formations and be more imaginative, looking at what connectivity is required and how you achieve it, so building completely new railways (not just high speed) should be on the agenda. If you really wanted to connect south, mid and north Wales you

probably would have to think about a largely new alignment.

The book is co-authored by two people passionate about their railways. Richard Faulkner, a Labour peer, is the 'politician' among them though Chris is an astute political analyst.

I remain of the view that Richard's political universe is highly Westminster-centric and downplays the importance of grassroots action, an issue I highlighted in my review of their previous book, *Holding the Line*.

The Settle-Carlisle line would have closed if it had not been for broad-based community action, involving thousands of campaigners, parish councils, businesses, unions and the occasional dog. Portillo, for all his hype about being "the man who saved the S&C" would have signed the closure order as quick as you could say "Beeching" if it had not been for that mass opposition.

Chris and Richard highlight the enormous change that has taken place in public and political attitudes towards rail. If there is a cross-party consensus on rail now, it is very pro-rail, though there are big emerging differences on the most appropriate ownership structures.

This is an excellent book and I would say if you only buy one railway book in what remains of 2015, this should be it.

One small point. I am not sure if the large format of the book is particularly appropriate. It allows for larger photographs, but the illustrations are very much secondary to the text and make it more, rather than less, easy to read. More up to date maps and less dependence on The Railway Clearing House would have been helpful, though fine as a part of the picture.

Paul Salvesson publishes a regular Salvo at www.paul-salvesson.org.uk

Wales

By Rowland Pittard
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■ ■ Railfuture's united front in Wales

At a meeting in Shrewsbury in October, Railfuture members decided to form one all-Wales branch to be known as Railfuture Cymru/Wales. Meetings will still be held locally when required and there will be an annual Railfuture Cymru/Wales general meeting.

■ ■ Welsh Government franchise update

In the run-up to the Welsh Assembly elections in May, branch chairman John Rogers told the Shrewsbury meeting that Railfuture plans to send an eight-page bilingual summary of the Railfuture development plan for Wales to candidates. Railfuture has already made contact with the different political parties and urged Railfuture members to write letters to the press, so that rail is a major issue during the election campaign. Carwyn Jones, the First Minister of the Welsh Government, had confirmed his support for Railfuture's not-for-dividend proposals for the Wales and Borders franchise which is due for renewal in 2018. After meeting Welsh Government officials, Railfuture was told the next franchise was likely to be a concession, similar to Merseyside and London Overground. Mr Jones had also confirmed that the Valleys electrification had been downgraded to exclude Ebbw Vale, Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan and Maesteg lines, although these lines would still be included in the Metro proposals. The Welsh Government hopes new electric trains would reduce journey times and create a network that could be expanded to serve other areas such as Cardiff City centre and communities to the west of Cardiff. The Welsh Government wants to have more control over Network Rail.

There was concern that if lines in England were excluded from the franchise, poorer access to Manchester and Manchester Airport might result. It was suggested that Wales and England could share responsibility for cross-border operations such as Great Western and Virgin West Coast. It was pointed out that the economy of mid Wales is dependent on services to Birmingham and Crewe and that passengers do not like changing trains. Wales risks isolation if through services are removed. Railfuture has also raised concern about future rolling stock and possible changes. Arriva Trains Wales currently use 30 Pacer trains and there is a need for additional stock for passenger growth and new services. However, no new rolling stock has been ordered or proposed. The Chester depot operated by Alstom is in England and is responsible for the class 175 units operated by Arriva Trains Wales.

■ ■ Lifts and bridges to help passengers



The new bridge at Port Talbot Parkway, pictured above, which includes a new ticket office, waiting areas and information points, as well as steps and lift access to all platforms, has been completed. Similar work at Llandaf and Radyr is well advanced with lifts and tactile paving. Work has started on a new bridge with slope for

disabled access at Severn Tunnel Junction. The double track line between Saltney Junction and Rossett is nearing completion. Work is advanced on doubling Cross Keys to Aberbeeg on the Ebbw Vale Town branch.

■ ■ Rail freight takes the strain

Closure of the hot rolling mill at Llanwern saw the end of trains of steel slab in October from Margam to Llanwern. Celsa Steel at Cardiff is now using rail to send out more steel products to railheads in England at Burton, Mossend and Rotherham. TATA has increased the number of coal trains from Cwmbargoed to Port Talbot Grange siding, from two to 10 per week.

■ ■ Crowded trains for rugby World Cup

The seven rugby World Cup matches held in Cardiff in September-October presented great challenges to transport providers including the three rail operators involved. Large numbers of spectators came from London and other English locations and delays built up, with the new track layout to the east of Cardiff presenting additional problems. Locomotive-hauled trains and additional InterCity 125s helped to reduce overcrowding. Some trains to Bristol were operated as 10-coach diesel multiple trains. CrossCountry diverted some Manchester-Bristol services to Cardiff and many Nottingham-Cardiff services had additional coaches. ATW provided shuttle services between Newport and Cardiff for each match as well as many additional services. More than 25,000 additional passengers were carried on most days.

West Midlands

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■ ■ Reopening group 'alive and kicking'

The Stourbridge Line User Group has met Dudley South MP Mike Wood and Stourbridge MP Margot James to press the case for passenger trains to be reintroduced over the existing freight line. The group is focusing on Stourbridge to Brierley Hill but also wants a service to Walsall. Chairman Rob Hebron and liaison officer Gary Adams are confident the reopening campaign is "alive and kicking". Railfuture would also like to see the line electrified and with intermediate stations at key locations, including at Dudley Port to allow connection into Birmingham-Wolverhampton trains. The line also needs to be retained for heavy freight trains as an alternative freight route into and through the West Midlands from Wales and the South West.

■ ■ Lichfield-Burton could lead to Derby

The Lichfield Rail Promotion Group has been actively campaigning for passenger trains to be used on the Lichfield to Burton-on-Trent line with an intermediate station at Alrewas on a currently freight-only section. Railfuture believes the line could be used for an hourly service to Derby.

■ ■ New 'target' for rail campaigners

Centro and the West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority are to be subsumed into a new combined authority from April. The WMCA will be responsible for negotiating with the Government on transport, land use and strategic planning on behalf of the existing councils of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton, as well as parts of Staffordshire and Worcestershire.

■ ■ Planning for Birmingham conference

Toby Rackcliff of the West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority has agreed to be one of the guest speakers at Railfuture's autumn conference in Birmingham next year. Railfuture West Midlands is seeking other speakers.

North West

By Arthur Thomson
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■ ■ Electrification may hit Fleetwood line

Railfuture North West has learned that Network Rail is considering removing the junction at Poulton-le-Fylde with the mothballed line to Fleetwood as part of the works needed to upgrade signalling for when the line is electrified. It is said this is part of the works necessary to straighten out the section and improve line speeds through the station, but Railfuture believes this can be achieved without severing the junction. Given that the vast majority of trains will stop at Poulton, this seems rather pointless. Works to renew this junction were done as recently as 2007. Railfuture North West has joined the user group, Blackpool and Fylde Rail Users Association, in writing to Network Rail expressing our concern.

■ ■ Progress on Halton curve

In the latest issue of its newsletter, North Cheshire Rail User Group reported progress in reopening Halton Curve for regular passenger services, with Merseytravel now working on outline design to enable the submission of the full business case and though there has been a short delay, they are "...very much progressing the scheme with a view to the curve becoming operational in 2018 as originally intended." Meanwhile it looks like engineering work is already taking place in preparation for the reopening, with contractors Murphy doing various works. A class 66 locomotive was spotted heading on to the curve in early September which was later found to be a ballast working from Basford Hall (Crewe) to Frodsham Junction, with a couple more workings in the following days. The group sees this infrastructure work as really good news, as it shows there is a serious intent to proceed at all levels of the railway management. NCRUG has been told the current activity relates to site investigation to firm up cost estimates. However, this does not explain the large stockpile of ballast and the site depot set up by Murphy where the Expressway crosses the curve, with a notice stating *Busy rebuilding your railway*.

■ ■ New trains may replace class 323s

There are hints that new trains could replace the South Manchester electric class 323s when they transfer to the West Midlands in 2016. At a September meeting of the Transport for Greater Manchester committee, head of rail Amanda White noted in a report that there is a requirement for "significant investment in new rolling stock" for the winning bidder of the new Northern franchise. She was responding to concerns by the committee on the loss of electric trains, which currently serve stations in south and east Manchester. She said the December announcement of the franchise winner would be "when rolling stock proposals will be announced to the public". Given that new trains would probably take up to two years to deliver, it is likely the 323s would be retained in Manchester for some time on a sub-lease arrangement, as the requirement for additional trains in the West Midlands is some way off too.

Sharing good practice

The 2015 Community Rail Awards took place in Torquay at the beginning of October, organised by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships.

A pre-conference treat was an evening trip from Torquay to Kingswear on the Dartmouth Steam Railway, perhaps foreshadowing a wider role for this spectacular railway that serves both Torbay and the ferry to Dartmouth, with stunning views along the way.

One of the two class 153 units provided by Great Western Railway carried *Citizen's Rail* branding, and this, appropriately, was the conference subject the following day.

Citizen's Rail is a European Union-funded project to encourage innovation and sharing best practice between European member states, in this case Britain, France, Netherlands and Germany.

In Lancashire, this included the development of the new station at Burnley Manchester Road, covered in an earlier *Railwatch*.

In Devon, this has delivered an enhanced service between Paignton and Newton Abbott, and support for the Riviera Line, part of the Devon and Cornwall Community Rail Partnership.

This has already brought additional passengers and station adoption along the route all the way into Exeter. So successful has the new service been that in the medium term, Great Western is supporting a plan to increase the service to half hourly all the way to Exeter, linking with the Exmouth service to provide two trains per hour throughout. The awards were made following the conference, and overall winner was the Mid Cheshire



COMMUNITY RAIL

By Chris Austin

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From Helsby to the front. Old memories are stirred by this award winning performance, organised by the Mid Cheshire Line Community Rail Partnership

Line Partnership (Chester to Manchester via Northwich) for their "outstanding delivery of the Community Rail strategy."

Indeed the night was a real triumph for Sally Buttifant, the line's dynamic partnership officer, as she and her team scooped three Firsts in the awards:

Involving Young People – a schools gardening project with Petty Pool College at Delamere station.

Most Enhanced Station Building – Ellesmere Port restoration, with the Railway Heritage Trust, Merseyrail and the station friends group

Special award by GWR for a WW1 Commemoration Project – an amazing series of theatrical performances with Theatre in the Quarter called *Over by Christmas*. Forty seven live performances took place at 25 stations in the North West, involving 400 volunteers and 1,250 schoolchildren at stations during the working day, and all in accordance with health and

safety requirements! The range of awards shows the diversity of the community rail movement, while the 21 rail industry sponsors are an indication of how CR principles are now embedded in the railway.

More stars

Among the 38 awards, I can mention only a few that took my fancy:

St Albans Abbey Gateway project, in the Community Art Schemes category is a practical example of flagging this off-centre station as a gateway to the city it serves.

The Riviera Line Minibeast Trail, involving the local school at Dawlish and a lot of recycled plastic. Now other stations are asking for their own decorative bugs to decorate fences and walls!

The Bronte Garden at Sowerby Bridge, named not after the famous sisters, but their brother Branwell, who had been a booking clerk at the station. A well-judged combination of

history, community links and horticulture.

The top innovation award went to Helmsdale station restoration on the Far North line. A listed building of unique concrete construction was saved with help from volunteers with specialist skills drawn from all over Britain. Not only does the station now look the part, but it is a valuable community facility, offering holiday accommodation as well as a passenger waiting room and an information point under cover.

Finally, I should mention the top marketing award that went to Devon and Cornwall community rail partnership for its **Great Scenic Railways** campaign including a Poldark-themed display at Paddington which featured me dressed in 18th century costume!

It is remarkable how each year, people around the country show how local action and volunteering can achieve so much for the stations and lines that serve their communities.

■ The European Passengers Federation, of which Railfuture was a founding member, is holding its 2016 annual conference and AGM in Berlin at the Stadtmission, a short walk from the main station, on Friday and Saturday 8-9 April, followed by two optional visits on the Sunday. This is an excellent opportunity to hear about and debate public transport issues at European level and network

AROUND THE WORLD AT HIGH SPEED

with fellow campaigners in other countries. Book via www.epf.eu where further details can also be found.

■ The first section of Rail Baltica was opened at Kaunas, Lithuania in October, part of a project to build a standard gauge network for Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia.

■ A joint US-Chinese consortium called XpressWest is planning to build a high-speed line from Los Angeles to Las Vegas.

■ Spain's 100-mile long Valladolid-Leon single-track high speed line opened in September. It can operate at speeds around 200 mph and cost £1.1 billion.

■ Italian national operator Trenitalia is planning to run an open access high speed service between Paris and Brussels with Bombardier Zefiro trains which can operate in seven European countries.

■ The Mayor of London has approved plans to build 25,000 new homes at Old Oak Common, which will be served by HS2 and Crossrail.

Single-track choke point for rail freight

By Peter Wakefield

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Freight on Britain's railway is undergoing another bout of fundamental change. In *Railwatch* 145, we described changes taking place on the network as coal traffic to the power stations declines and other flows such as biomass takes its place....often on different routes.

This can leave infrastructure, even that fairly recently put in for heavy coal flows, having little current purpose, and conversely routes with previously little recent freight activity having to be hurriedly upgraded.

An example of this is the successful upgrade of parts of the railway from Peterborough to Doncaster via Spalding and Sleaford to carry increasing numbers of intermodal and other trains, as well as keeping them out of the way of fast passenger trains on the East Coast main line.

The opening of a very large import terminal for biomass on Liverpool docks will mean a major freight route will be re-established across the Pennines, through Stockport and the suburbs of Manchester to the Calder Valley line to Drax power station.

As this traffic develops it will be interesting to see how the infrastructure copes with heavier use. Some of the route has had what was perceived as surplus track removed, and that may need to be reinstated. Trains are productive only if they keep moving.

The railway has a key role in moving shipping containers efficiently between our great ports and terminals inland. As trade has increased the network has changed to cope, with massive

works at Reading, Nuneaton and Stafford being good examples of keeping railfreight moving, making way for trains from Southampton docks.

The port with the largest throughput of intercontinental containers is Felixstowe, on the North Sea coast of Suffolk.

It is continually expanding and relies to a very large extent on the railway to get thousands of containers a year through its three rail terminals in a disciplined, planned manner.

The railway traditionally coped with this traffic by using the Great Eastern main line and routes across north London to the West Coast main line.

As is well known, capacity on all those lines is now at a premium and a new main line for freight is being forged east west across country through Bury St Edmunds, Ely, Peterborough, Leicester to the WCML at Nuneaton. There are plans to make this route capable of handling around 60 intermodal freight trains every 24 hours in each direction.

Currently 31 trains run off both routes each way into the port, which together with the hourly passenger service, is just about the limit of its capacity. The last 10 miles of this incredibly important railway route is single track. Getting this equipped with double track is imperative.

After that, further west the Felixstowe-Nuneaton line needs to have several major constrictions unblocked. These range from the single-lead Haughley junction, the removal of the "dog leg" on both lines through Bury St Edmunds station, the single



Picture: PETER WAKEFIELD

OBVIOUS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT: The Felixstowe line in the Ipswich suburbs is part of the strategic freight network

line between Soham and Ely, the restrictive track layout through the various Ely junctions, restricted signalling between Ely and March, and a general lack of track capacity in the Leicester area.

Huge infrastructure improvements have not been made. In the Ipswich area a new chord has been built to enable trains to run from Felixstowe directly to the cross-country route and improvements have been made to the yard at Ipswich. At Nuneaton access to the WCML has been grade separated. Train lengths are often over 30 wagons. But the work to upgrade the line must

go on. Trains must keep moving and there must be more of them. The faster the end-to-end journey, the more work the same locomotives and wagons can do. So it was very disappointing to learn recently that one of these key projects, that of doubling Soham-Ely, is on hold as it had become "unaffordable" at £38 million. This project will be part of keeping trains of all sorts moving through the Ely area.

So important is it that Railfuture's freight and infrastructure groups felt that a note to the chairman of Network Rail, Sir Peter Hendy, was necessary. Part of that letter is reproduced below.

MEMO TO SIR PETER:



In order to enable this railway to play its full part we would urge that plans already established for the route should be implemented as follows:

1. Double tracking of the Felixstowe branch, at least partially in control period 5 (2014-2019) with the full scheme in control period 6 (2019-2024).
2. Soham-Ely double tracking should not slip from CP5.
3. Electrification of Felixstowe to Nuneaton in CP6 (along with the Midland main line and doubling remainder of the Felixstowe branch).

The transfer of even more maritime traffic from the A14 and A1 roads to the parallel railway will greatly improve the quality of life of residents across East Anglia by the reduction in emissions and HGV traffic as well as enhancing the efficiency of the Port of Felixstowe. Felixstowe Docks are vital to the well-being of Suffolk and the nation as a whole. This is well described in your Anglia Route Study: "if the projected increase in demand, to end of CP6 (2024) for freight services ex-Felixstowe were to be met in full, it would represent (at present value) a £2 billion benefit to the economy". While we welcome the £250 million allocated to the strategic freight network for the whole national network, it is a modest sum compared with the 15 miles of the A14 trunk road between Cambridge and Huntingdon where £1.5 billion has been allocated. Work to complete this East West super freight railway must continue as planned. Not only will it make railfreight more efficient it will help fulfill the target for carbon dioxide emission reductions, keep freight off the highways, on to which it is being forced.



Inspired campaigners win RUG awards

By Bruce Williamson
media@railfuture.org.uk

The winners of Railfuture's Rail User Group awards were presented with their prizes by Railfuture president Christian Wolmar at the Bristol conference in November. The winners are:

Best campaign Gold Award

Harrogate Line Supporters Group is a successful double campaign to bring major rail improvements to Harrogate which has two aims: To increase the frequency of direct services between London and Harrogate, ultimately achieving a two-hourly service in each direction, seven days a week, and to improve services on the Leeds-York-Harrogate line, removing dated Pacer trains and increasing frequency by introducing electrification and double-tracking. There have been two major developments in both campaigns: Virgin-Stagecoach East Coast announced a new two-hourly service to and from London, and the Harrogate line has been recommended as a priority for electrification by the Government-appointed taskforce.

Best campaign Silver Award

TransWilts Community Rail Partnership, which aims to transform poor service on the Chippenham-Trowbridge line via Melksham through a substantial increase in the number of daily trains to gain and retain an appropriate service. An impressive achievement.

Clara Zilahi Award for best campaigner, in memory of a stalwart Railfuture campaigner who died in 2013.

Best campaigner Gold Award

Brian Dunsby, Harrogate Line Supporters Group. The judges praised his dedicated efforts to promote and develop the Harrogate line.

Best campaigner Commendation

Dave Horton, secretary of Abbey Flyer users group.

Best campaigner Commendation

Bob Morrison of Great Western Coffee Shop Forum is a forum-based website (www.firstgreatwestern.info) where Great Western Railway customers can access over 170,000 messages to find out about travel by train in the Thames Valley, the West of England and South Wales. Members can post questions, chat about what is going on, get help with travel plans, and so on. The forum is provided by and moderated by passengers. It has significant rail industry and governmental input. Each day 60-70 messages are posted, and most are readable by any visitor to the site, whether or not they have signed up for membership.

Oliver Lovell Award for best new group, in memory of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group founder who died in 2013.

Salford Station Campaign shows a sound knowledge of the rail industry and grasp of technical detail, good engagement with stakeholders' buy-in, cross-party support, a strong environmental message, and a good chance of success.

Best newsletter Gold Award

Friends of the Settle and Carlisle Line quarterly newsletter is very informative, packed with news,



www.abfly.org.uk which was clear, well designed and user-friendly.

Best website Silver Award

TransWilts Community Rail Partnership. The website provides easy-to-read information about using the train service, and contains clear campaigning messages. It also operates the www.firstgreatwestern.info discussion board, which the judges said was "live and well used".

Best social media promotion

TransWilts Community Rail Partnership was "impressive".

Judges Special Award

Went to Railfuture Scotland to recognise all in Scotland who campaigned to reopen the Borders Railway, "an historic campaign milestone".

■ The judging panel consisted of Railfuture vice presidents Ian Brown, Roger Ford, Stewart Palmer and Lorna Slade.

and the campaigning message stands out. There is always a stunning photo on the front and back covers.

Best newsletter Commendation

Ribble Valley Rail, the user group for the Clitheroe line.

Best newsletter Commendation

Lakes Line User Group

Best website Gold Award

Abbey Flyer users group for

railwatch

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

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<p>For details, email trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk or send an SAE to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ</p>	

Beware: 'Experts' on the railway

Network Rail engineers installed the first overhead wires for electrification of the Great Western main line near Reading on 12 November.

Eventually the 235-mile railway between London and Oxford, Newbury, Bristol and Cardiff will be electrified.

But while workers and managers struggle to deal with the problems of implementing an ambitious scheme on an operational railway, the railways are now congested with experts examining how not-for-profit Network Rail should be run – or is it in finding an excuse to re-privatise the rail infrastructure?

Perhaps the memory of the disastrous record of deadly, privatised Railtrack is fading. Perhaps not.

Three enquiries are currently under way:

Dame Colette Bowe, a former chair of Ofcom and a former executive chairman of Fleming Fund Management, is investigating how Network Rail got its investment and delivery plan wrong.

Sir Peter Hendy, the former Commissioner of Transport for London, on what upgrade projects are actually affordable. His report is expected soon.

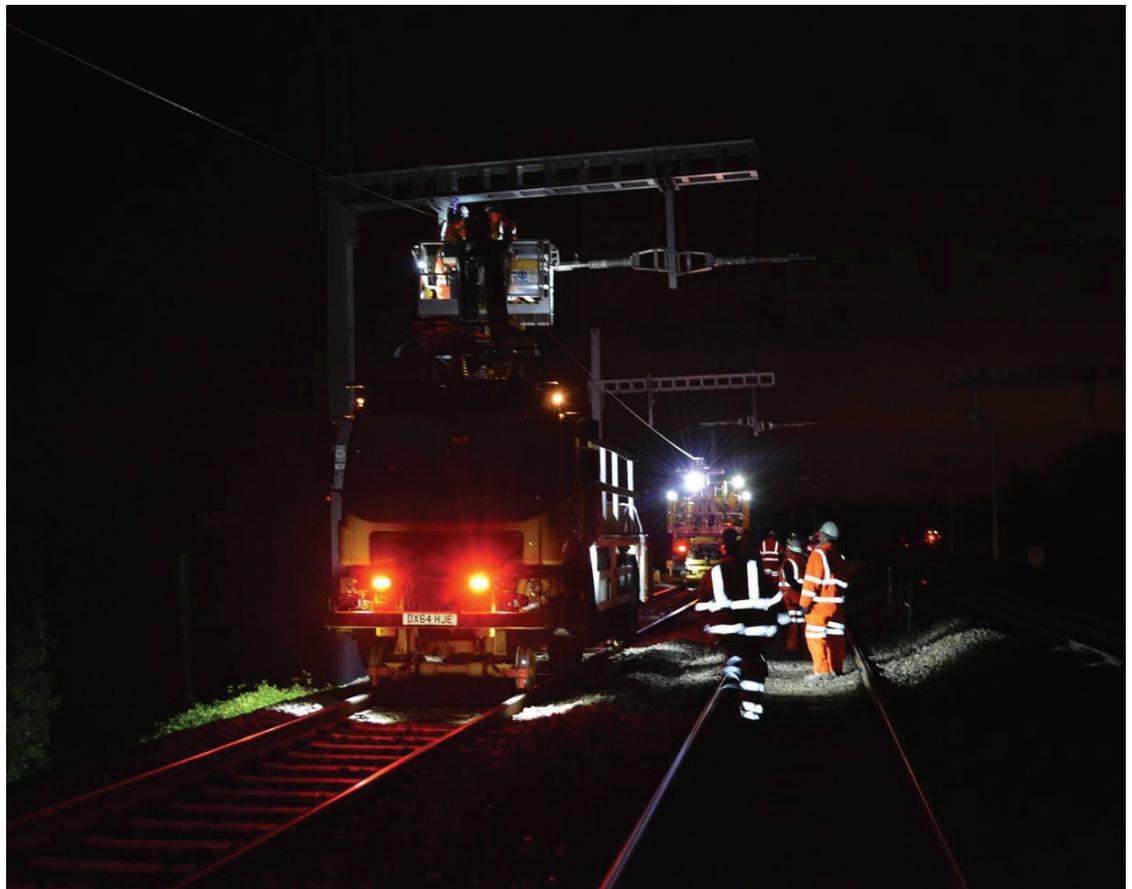
Nicola Shaw, a former First Group executive, in an interim 76-page report on NR's future shape and financing has agreed she is looking at recommending privatisation. Ms Shaw is now the chief executive of High Speed One.

Network Rail chief executive Mark Carne, a former oil man, has already moved the argument on by agreeing to a break-up of Network Rail into eight divisions.

At stake is the much-needed £13 billion to upgrade the railways after years of under-investment, imposed by both Labour, Coalition and Tory governments.

Network Rail, one year into the five-year upgrade plan, was told in June that its timetables and budgets were out of control.

Problems were caused by NR being re-classified as a public sector body in 2014 which meant it could no longer borrow extra money from private sources. Rail



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

WHILE POLITICIANS SLEEP: The first wires are put up near Reading on the Great Western

campaigners are worried that, while the "experts" ponder, the upgrades are being delayed or shelved and if NR is split up, other immediate problems will arise.

Shadow transport secretary Lillian Greenwood said: "Network Rail needs to improve but more fragmentation and more privatisation are the last things we need. "The last time the Tories sold off our rail infrastructure, it was a disaster that put passengers in danger. There can be no going back to the dark days of Railtrack."

Maggie Simpson of the Rail Freight Group, said: "Our members are concerned that freight should get fair and equal treatment in any future restructuring of Network Rail and that safeguards are put in place for businesses to grow their use of rail freight.

"This includes a strong central system operator function to ensure the continued uninterrupted movement of nearly 800 freight trains a day throughout the UK across all Network Rail's routes."

RFG members see the lack of available train paths and shortage of suitable terminals as the biggest barriers to the growth of the rail freight sector and called for continued support from Government including ongoing investment in rail infrastructure.

An NR spokesman pointed out that it had delivered more than 5,000 projects worth more than

£15 billion since 2009, and were now engaged on more complex projects.

He said: "Despite this, over three quarters of our regulatory project milestones have been delivered to time or within weeks of target."

One of the real, practical problems facing NR on the GWR electrification has been the difficulty of locating buried signalling cables.

The House of Commons public accounts committee levelled particular criticism at the "staggering and unacceptable" bill to electrify the Great Western main line between London and the West Country. It is expected to cost as much as £2.8 billion, up from £1.6 billion a year ago.

Committee chair Meg Hillier said: "Network Rail has lost its grip on managing large infrastructure projects. The result is a two-fold blow to taxpayers, delays in the delivery of promised improvements and a vastly bigger bill for delivering them.

"The potential near-doubling in cost of the electrification of the Great Western line is a symptom of seriously flawed control and planning. Another is the continuing uncertainty over electrification of both the TransPennine route and the Midland main line."

We may have to wait some time for an inquiry into how politicians have prevaricated for years over electrification, repeatedly blocking progress, and why they

prevented the implementation of a rolling programme of electrification which would have incidentally delivered an experienced and skillful work force.

While Network Rail is the centre of attention, the franchising of train operators continues.

A public consultation was launched in November into the new South Western franchise which starts in 2017 when South West Trains' contract comes to an end.

The consultation sets out the expected improvements, including the completion of planned work at London Waterloo to lengthen platforms 1 to 4 and bring the former international platforms back into use, allowing for longer trains and more space.

From 2017, a new fleet of 30 five-car trains is also planned to tackle overcrowding, in addition to the 108 extra carriages being introduced during the current franchise as part of a £65 million government scheme.

The work of the Peninsula Rail Task Force, dealing with the rail network in Devon and Cornwall, will be taken into account.

The consultation will close on 9 February.

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