

# railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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**An uphill struggle for the right to travel by train**

**SEE PAGE 2**

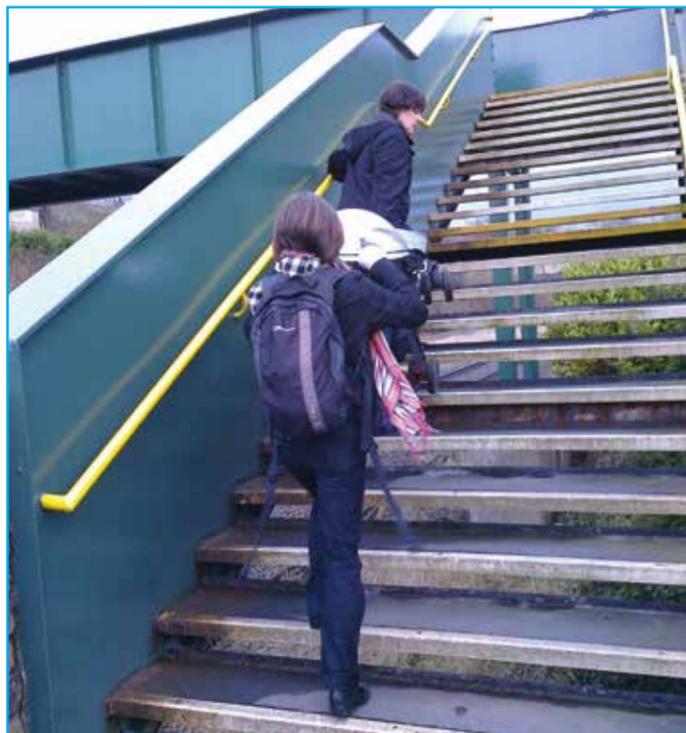
Our page one picture shows red-coated MP Ruth George surrounded by people on the footbridge steps of Chinley station in October.

The High Peak MP promised to deliver an 800-signature petition to the Department for Transport, calling for better access to the station.

Lifts and ramps can be life-transforming for people with disabilities but they help virtually everyone else, especially those with prams, luggage and bicycles too.

And Chinley is typical of many other stations throughout Britain where improvements are long overdue

Here, **Paul Tattam of Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group** describes the background to the protest at Chinley



**CHINLEY: Struggling with a baby buggy over the station bridge**

"I have not been able to use my local train station for over a year to travel to Manchester with my baby and my two-year old."

When we conducted a survey of local rail users in late 2016, this is how a person living in a popular commuter village on the Manchester to Sheffield main line at Chinley described her access to the railway.

No fewer than 114,000 passengers are estimated to use the station every year, but they all have to be able to negotiate a footbridge with steep steps which provides the only access to the single island platform.

The bridge is treacherous to climb and descend for a person travelling alone with a pushchair and infant, extremely difficult to negotiate with heavy luggage or bicycles, and wheelchair users are simply not catered for – which rather makes a mockery of the provision of three disabled parking spaces in the nearby station car park.

Government-contracted franchises should not be able to ignore the needs of significant sections of society in this way, especially when the Passenger Assist option offered to wheelchair users is

either a taxi to or from Hazel Grove in a district notorious for traffic congestion on the A6, or Edale – a small village which is also inconveniently located.

It does not have to be like this. On a recent trip to the Netherlands there was such obvious provision for accessibility that on our return home we checked the Nederlandse Spoorwegen website – and could not find a single example of a station with inaccessible platforms. It gets better. If assistance is required

for a person with a disability, the Dutch equivalent of the UK's Passenger Assist scheme asks the passenger to contact a well-advertised number three hours in advance to arrange a mobile ramp for the train (as opposed to the 24 hours requested in parts of the UK).

Over the border in Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany's most populous state has had a similar history to Britain of problems created by outdated rail infrastructure. But things are looking

**In what is claimed to be a world first, infrastructure manager Prorail has completed a £26 million programme to make all stations on the Netherlands national rail network accessible to passengers who are blind or visually impaired. It involves high-contrast platform edging, braille signs, tactile maps and the removal of obstacles.**

**The work is part of a broader initiative to improve accessibility for passengers with reduced mobility, which will make all Dutch stations fully accessible for wheelchairs by 2030.**

up there too. The £70 million national initiative for full accessibility on the railways launched in 2016 by Transport Minister Alexander Dobrindt started, interestingly, with smaller stations with less than one 1,000 entries/exits per day. Additionally the German "Northern Powerhouse" of Nordrhein-Westfalen has its own £900 million programme for the modernisation of 150 of its 697 stations between 2017 and 2023, by which date 80% of its stations will have step-free access (currently 73%).

The British railway authorities must catch up. Friday 13 October saw a very stimulating occasion at Chinley Station when the Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group handed a petition of well over 800 signatures to Ruth George, MP for High Peak, demanding that the Department for Transport improve access to the platforms at Chinley station. Turnout by members of the public for the handover of the petition was extremely encouraging, and Paul Abell, vice-president of Railfuture, was able to be present on the day. The *Buxton Advertiser* reported in depth, and we were delighted that disability campaigner Chris Hughes had come along to support, but sadly, as a wheelchair user, could not access the platforms.

We are hoping that the publicity generated will prompt the DfT to improve Chinley station so that this accessibility blackspot becomes a community asset for everyone.

Faryal Velmi, director of Transport for All, recently wrote to Transport Secretary Chris Grayling on behalf of 55 organisations to demand that as an immediate priority all deferred *Access for All* projects should be delivered by the end of 2020, with additional funding being made available in the next control period.

People need to be able to get to the platforms!

# The sun should be setting on diesels

By Chris Austin

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Since the shock announcement from Transport Secretary Chris Grayling in July which brought to a close the ambitious electrification programme supported previously by industry and Government, Railfuture has been working to understand the issues and what is best for the passenger, the freight customer and the railway which serves them.

None of us believes that the present position is tenable for long.

The Infrastructure & Networks Group has looked at the problems in depth, and meetings have been held with experts including our own vice-presidents and chairman Chris Page.

Branches and individual members have shared their views and ideas and much has been written in the trade press on the issue.

We are now in a good position to set out our stall and to start campaigning on this important issue for the long-term future of the railway and the country.

Why is it important? The fundamental reason for electrifying is that the operation and maintenance of electric trains is cheaper and cleaner than diesels.

In simple terms, a train with electric motors and transformers is going to be lighter than one requiring diesel engines and fuel tanks.

With less time required on depot, electric trains should have better availability, so fewer are required. In environmental terms too, electric trains are better, with zero emissions at the point of use, and capable of drawing electricity from any power source, including renewables.

There are other benefits too in terms of the availability of power, which is particularly important for freight where it could result in higher trailing loads on steeply graded lines, and longer trains help to make rail freight more competitive.

## Myths and realities

Some reports suggest that electrification is not worth the capital cost as it produces little in the way of journey time reductions.

This entirely misses the point. Electrification is not about journey time savings (although it may deliver these as well), it is about running a more affordable railway.

But, as we have seen, this works only where the electrification infrastructure (overhead lines, substations, control rooms and the supply system) can be provided at an affordable cost. What about bi-modes? The concept of the bi-mode may enable



**POWER POLITICS: Scotland's busiest inter-city route between Edinburgh and Glasgow via Falkirk High is being electrified as part of EGIP (the Edinburgh to Glasgow Improvement Programme)**

the benefits of electrification to be spread more widely, more quickly, and the first reaction to the new trains on Great Western (despite the unfortunate launch day) is good, with vibration levels reported to be low when on diesel power.

But, as our vice-president Roger Ford says, they are not the solution to network electrification:

*'Bi-modes are either overweight electric trains or under-powered diesel ones'*

The history of decision making on infrastructure in Great Britain has not been good.

Just think about the time taken to agree on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, or runway capacity in the South East, and the same is true of railway electrification.

Electric trains go right back to Volk's Railway in 1883, and to 1904 for the Tyneside electrification by the North Eastern Railway.

The Southern Railway under Sir Herbert Walker pushed forward vigorously with electrification

between the wars, and BR struggled valiantly during its 50 years of existence, but, after 113 years we still have only 34% of the network electrified, although this accounts for over half the traffic carried.

There were government enquiries into the subject in the 1920s, and the Weir report of 1931 looked at the technical issues of overhead or third rail supply and optimum voltage. The Modernisation Plan of 1955 included a major programme, as did the main line electrification report of 1981, but neither were fulfilled as intended.

There have been endless studies since, and more will follow. The sad thing is that the great opportunity that was offered by the Government has been squandered by the failings of the Great Western and Gospel Oak-Barking schemes.

There is one benefit of the delay, however, and that is the opportunity to carry out work in preparation for electrification in a rather more structured way than was the case with Great Western.

On the Midland main line, for example, quite a lot of

remodelling is required to improve track geometry, raise line speeds and provide additional capacity, before the layout is frozen by the provision of overhead line, masts and signal gantries.

Similarly, the delay could be used to revise plans to reduce costs, and to identify and justify separately the many add-ons that were lumped in with electrification proposals and eventually sank them.

In July, the Government was faced with a project out of control, and in political terms I cannot see an early resumption of the plans that were suspended.

The case for further electrification remains strong as one element of route modernisation to improve the capacity, quality and resilience of the railway for passengers and freight customers, but it may not be the first priority.

Our job is to articulate that case clearly and move opinion formers to the position where it is no longer a threat, but part of a structured solution to delivering the bigger and better railway we all want to see. Then it becomes unstoppable.

electrical equipment to the rail industry, was straightforward about the clear and obvious benefits of electrification.

He said there was much ill-informed criticism of the Great Western electrification scheme but recognised the problem of cost. He said British engineers had hoped to electrify the line at a cost of around £600,000 per kilometre, £100,000 less than "expensive" Switzerland. The real cost in Britain had increased to £1,700,000 per kilometre.

One of the causes was the Government's on-off approach. Teams of competent people are built up for one project but allowed to break up before the next project is given the go-ahead.

## Bi-modes could be worst of both worlds

Electrification expert Rob Daffern warned that bi-mode trains (the Government's alternative to electrification) could prove the worst of both worlds. Bi-modes carry a heavy diesel engine, which can make them two tons per axle heavier.

He was speaking at Railfuture's conference in Leicester, one of the cities hit by the Government's July cancellation of the Midland main line electrification. Mr Daffern said that an electric train normally goes twice as far as a diesel train between breakdowns, and is much more energy efficient, especially when combined with regenerative braking. Mr Daffern, UK director of Furrer+Frej, a major supplier of

◆◆◆◆ Railfuture conference in Carlisle on 23 June 2018 at Hallmark Hotel 10.00-17.00 railwatch December 2017 3

## Chairman's column: We have to harness your enthusiasm

By Chris Page

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**Railfuture chairman Chris Page**

Enthusiasm was in plentiful supply at the recent Branches and Groups workshop. Our volunteers worked in small groups to put forward ideas for attracting new members to join Railfuture.

The more members we have, the more influence we can have on rail investment and operational decisions. Like all membership organisations, we have to work hard to attract and retain members from the wider community. As the voice of the rail user, we must be strong,

bold and clear in campaigning on the key factors which are important to passengers: reliability, journey time, comfort and value for money.

To achieve these aims, we want the rail industry to deliver more capacity through route modernisation and to resolve the anomalies in the fare system. Volunteers can play a big part in shaping the future of rail.

It was a pleasure to see so many working to form a strategy to reach out to a wider, more diverse audience and increase our numbers, which in turn will increase the

weight our voice carries with government and the rail industry.

I would like to say a big thank you to all volunteers who help Railfuture to achieve its vision and I would love to hear your stories of how you are reaching out to prospective new members. Share your story with chris.page@railfuture.org.uk.

### Our vision for Railfuture:

**An independent organisation whose views are respected by the rail industry, to which decision makers come for advice, and which rail users are proud to join.**

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East Midlands franchise consultation

Railfuture submitted its response to the Department for Transport's consultation on the East Midlands rail franchise to begin in August 2019. Railfuture presented a national response, but East Midlands branch is the most directly affected by the specification to be issued by the DfT in 2018. The most significant single component is the pattern of services on the Midland main line, following the abandonment of electrification north of Kettering. Though supporting the desire to reduce journey times on peak inter-city trains between Sheffield, Nottingham, Leicester and London, Railfuture called for a sensible mix of electric commuter services to Corby and inter-city trains to ensure connectivity for all stations. The service north of Corby should also be retained and developed. We oppose the suggested split of the Liverpool-Norwich route at Nottingham. We support the suggested reopening to Ollerton, an extension of the Robin Hood line. Local MPs Ben Bradley (Mansfield) and Mark Spencer (Sherwood) pressed for this at a meeting with Transport Secretary Chris Grayling. We also want to see additional local services, including the much-needed link from the East Midlands to Manchester.

The Friends of the Derwent Valley Line (Derby-Matlock) also responded to the consultation. Their aspirations include half-hourly services at peak times (which will require a new passing loop), hourly services on Sundays, and later evening services. Longer trains are also needed. Use of the line has more than doubled in the past 10 years, and there is severe overcrowding at times.

Hope Valley line's crucial role

Railfuture East Midlands' Steve Jones and Ariadne Tampion recently met with Kath Aspinwall of the Hope Valley Railway Users Group at Sheffield station. They also took a trip on the line, outward by TransPennine and return on a Northern stopping train. Campaigning on this line is exceptionally complex, as it passes through three transport authority areas, is used by three train operators and is maintained by two separate parts of Network Rail. It has an inadequate service, bearing in mind it links Sheffield to Manchester, two cities which also have poor road connections, and serves a popular tourist area. The line is crucial at both regional and national level.

Great Central railways unification

A major step towards unifying the two sections of the Great Central Railway at Loughborough was taken in September when the main beams of a new bridge over the Midland main line were lifted into place. When work is finished on the bridge and the adjoining embankment, the heritage railway will boast an 18-mile line from Birstall (north of Leicester) to Ruddington (south of Nottingham). Sadly there has been too much building on the trackbed so there is little prospect of extending further towards the city centres.

HS2 connections

Options for connecting the East Midlands HS2 station at Toton to Derby are being debated. An extension of the Nottingham tram network to Toton appears viable but the East Midlands HS2 strategic board has said a tram line from Toton to Derby would be too expensive. Rapid bus services to Derby are now being considered, with the boss of Trent Barton

MP meets Railfuture

Yorkshire

Picture: PAUL COLBECK



Railfuture's Nina Smith and Graham Collett with Labour MP Rachael Maskell, right

Labour's shadow minister for railways was guest speaker at Railfuture Yorkshire's meeting in October, three months after being appointed. Rachael Maskell, MP for York Central, said rail should be the main artery of Britain's transport network. She confirmed Labour's intention to take franchises back into the public sector as they expire but wanted to be sure that devolved bodies had a share in the structure. Public transport needs to offer seamless travel and multimodal ticketing and has to be affordable, she said. Questioned about Network Rail's GRIP process (Governance for Railway Investment Projects), she agreed that there was too much bureaucracy involved in trying to expand the rail network. She is committed to HS3 (Northern Powerhouse Rail) across the Pennines, but prefers to call it Crossrail for the North.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Yorkshire+Branch)  
Twitter: @RailfutureYorks

bus company, Jeff Counsell, putting forward the suggestion of a guided busway. If the HS2 station was at East Midlands Parkway rather than Toton, as suggested by Railfuture, there would be no difficulty in providing fast connections to both Nottingham and Derby!

Campaign for electrification

Leicester Friends of the Earth organised an unusual campaign stunt to protest about the abandonment of the electrification of the Midland main line and to call for it to be reinstated. The stunt involved carrying a giant plug in stages on a train journey between London St Pancras and Sheffield, stopping at most stations along the route to meet local politicians and journalists. The plug was constructed by Railfuture member Chris Williams. Lead organiser Hannah Wakley and a small team of helpers carried it along the train explaining the campaign. It proved an excellent way of engaging members of the public, many of them young and female, with railway issues. Railfuture EM chair Ariadne Tampion joined between Leicester and Derby.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch)  
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Whittlesea audit reveals neglect

Railfuture East Anglia is carrying out audits at stations throughout East Anglia, and in July it was the turn of Whittlesea on the Peterborough-Ely line.

We found one of the most unwelcoming stations in East Anglia which over the years has been degraded by neglect. It is a sprawling station with poor lighting, overgrown vegetation, no ticket machines, no information about ticketing, no public-address system, customer information screens or CCTV. The station adopter is struggling against difficult circumstances.

The findings have been given to the Hereward Community Rail Partnership which recognises the problem and now proposes to extend the platforms bringing them closer together, linked by a footbridge, and encouraging

the station's use for park and ride. These improvements have since been taken up by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Stations](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Stations)

Shelford needs a footbridge

Shelford station was audited in September and was better than Whittlesea. It was clean and in a reasonable condition with basic facilities. However, a number of suggestions were made including improved signage, cycle storage, shelter and information. The level crossing is the only means of crossing the busy railway, bringing uncertainty to passengers catching trains if they need to cross the line. In the long term a footbridge should be considered.

East West study endorses expansion

Railfuture East Anglia has long campaigned for improvements to network capacity to allow faster and more frequent services between Cambridge, Norwich and Ipswich. The existing pattern of hourly stopping services does little to encourage modal shift from road to rail. Our campaign has now received overwhelming endorsement from the Atkins Consultancy engaged by the East West Rail Consortium to show how service development east of Cambridge will add even greater value to East West Rail. The study proposes three trains per hour from Ipswich to Cambridge and three or four trains per hour from Norwich to Cambridge. Meanwhile Railfuture will campaign to ensure that these improvements are included within the scope of East West Rail and delivered before the Cambridge-Bedford section is reopened.

Ely North upgrade welcomed

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling announced at the Transport Select Committee hearing in October that the upgrades and enhancements at Ely will be funded in Network Rail's control period 6 (2019-24). This is a vital piece of work for the East Anglia passenger and freight network, also being identified when Chris Starkie, chief executive of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership came to talk at our members' meeting in September.

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# It's difficult to change the world

## But 2018 will be inspiring



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This has been an uninspiring year in our push for a bigger, better railway in Britain.

Nevertheless Railfuture has continued to raise its game by improving the interface with stakeholders and industry players. For instance, branches are increasingly attracting influential speakers and Railfuture members and officers are increasingly seen addressing selected conferences.

Our profile is developing, as is the involvement of members. Our views are seen to matter, the more we focus on economically sustainable proposals.

A bleak picture of main line electrification cancellations, though described as "smart" by some, will leave a legacy of sub-optimal economics in operation and maintenance of the railway.

Brexit, or rather the handling of Brexit, has caused the Government to issue revised lower growth projections. In theory the need to provide for growth is reduced, at least in the short term.

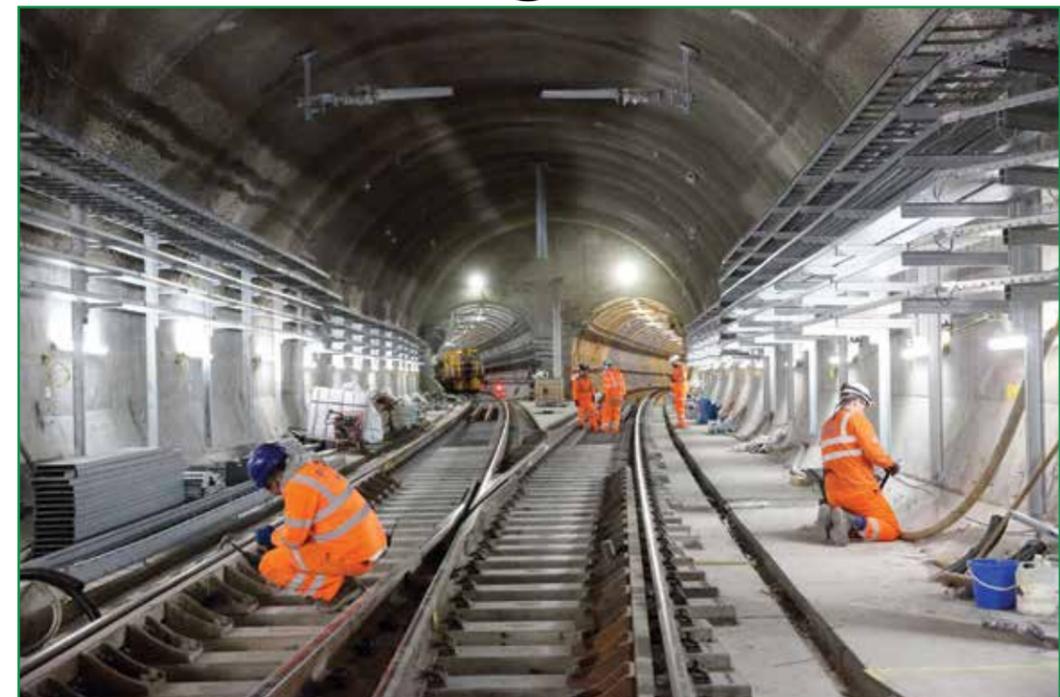
However, the dangers of the motor car are becoming clearer, especially in cities. Health concerns in London are enough to make the congestion charge and the toxin charge (a total of £21.50 per day) necessary.

Other cities including Glasgow are watching intently, mindful of the revenue potential, given the need to fund capital projects. Further afield, Singapore has just announced a cap from 2018 on the number of cars licensed to use the roads there. It will be fixed at 2017 levels.

We still have HS2. This project has a chorus of detractors alleging that all known life will cease as a result.

More worrying is the well-worn theory that money can be better spent on something else. There is no reason to assume that money would be spent on other rail projects if HS2 were to be cancelled.

Against this background, Railfuture has been careful to posi-



Picture: CROSSRAIL

Passenger trains will start running through London's Crossrail tunnels next year. The picture shows work under way in October on the track at Crossrail's Stepney Green cavern where Crossrail diverges, with one route going south-east to Woolwich and Abbey Wood while the other goes east to Stratford and Shenfield. The Crossrail programme is nearly 90% complete. Engineering trains can now

run through the tunnels, following trackwork completion in September. The new Abbey Wood station also opened, one of 10 new stations on Crossrail which will be called the Elizabeth line when it opens. New Elizabeth line trains, with bigger standing areas and ore transverse seating, are already running between Liverpool Street and Shenfield and will start using the tunnels next year.

tion itself to support investment in this new railway, but also to stress the need for our key objectives, including providing more capacity and resilience on the network.

We have also strongly advocated far more connectivity into the regional rail network so that regions as a whole can benefit from HS2.

You may recall that this project was originally promoted as a stand-alone high speed railway. Thanks to campaigning from us as well as many regional authorities, the project has changed significantly against these wider but far more sustainable objectives. We did not succeed in getting the Euston Cross HS2 scheme incorporated into HS2.

*This would have given HS2 three through stations in London – Old Oak Common, Euston Low Level and Stratford International.*

Some trains could have terminated at Stratford and some at Ebbsfleet.

Nevertheless Old Oak Common station, combined with Crossrail, is destined to be far more significant, along with Heathrow

expansion, and recently the Transport for London proposal for two additional interchanges at Old Oak Common, one on the Overground Stratford-Richmond route, the other on the Overground's Clapham Junction route. Both will potentially provide important links not just from HS2 but also from Crossrail.

Railfuture members may recall that Crossrail was originally projected to be routed from Paddington via a Turnham Green interchange to Richmond, but that option succumbed to the nimby politicians of Richmond.

Further north the messages of capacity, integration and regional economies are largely recognised. In Birmingham, Moor Street is to be redeveloped to allow increased services both south and north of Birmingham, currently constrained by New Street capacity, and the light rail service to expedite city centre distribution. Railfuture West Midlands is well in there, discussing and advocating these issues with stakeholders, all to positive effect.

The HS2 route to the North West has also improved, the most significant change being the Crewe HS2 hub proposal in the form of links to the existing rail net-

work and a new HS2 station. Railfuture's response to this formal consultation was well-received. The key to its success is extensive new housing which requires better or new links in all directions from Crewe including along the Stoke corridor with its copious brownfield sites asking for development, but also along the Middlewich-Northwich corridor linking in to HS2.

Manchester does well out of HS2, if it is viewed as integrated with the Northern Hub, which should provide more through services north and north-east of Manchester, for example including Bradford. The Manchester scheme also involves a new and better integrated Metrolink station serving the existing and the new HS2 station in Manchester.

The north-east leg has proved to be more problematic. We still have Toton, albeit with a potential tram link into Nottingham, but at Sheffield the opposite strategy has been adopted.

Following serious campaigning, HS2 will serve central Sheffield rather than the Meadowhall Shopping Centre. We should continue to campaign for a more

Continued on next page

# HS2 on track after 76-year wait for Crossrail

From Page 5

integrated solution for the East Midlands. Together with cancellation of Midland Main Line electrification, the East Midlands cities get a raw deal, devoid of integrated planning.

Leeds is another story, a very successful one in terms of campaigning by all parties, including Railfuture. First the Leeds HS2 station is to be built adjacent to the existing Leeds (City) station. It has recently been announced that there is to be a single-line rail connection from HS2 into Leeds City station, so providing limited access into the West Yorkshire region. We need to campaign to ensure this potential is realised.

In summary, it is fair to say that Railfuture's strategy of visibly supporting HS2 while working with stakeholders to make it better has paid off.

However HS2 is not built yet, although 2018 should see far more evidence that the project is actually happening. No individual party can claim responsibility for these changes, although it is clear that our combined efforts with stakeholders and with informed responses to consultation have certainly made a difference.

The challenge remains to achieve a good pattern of service on the new line. We must ensure that regional feeder services provide an economic stimulus to whole regions, not just individual city centres.

Electrification went through a low in 2017 with cancellation of schemes midway such as at Bath and Kettering, and indecision on whether to complete Manchester to Leeds/Church Fenton.

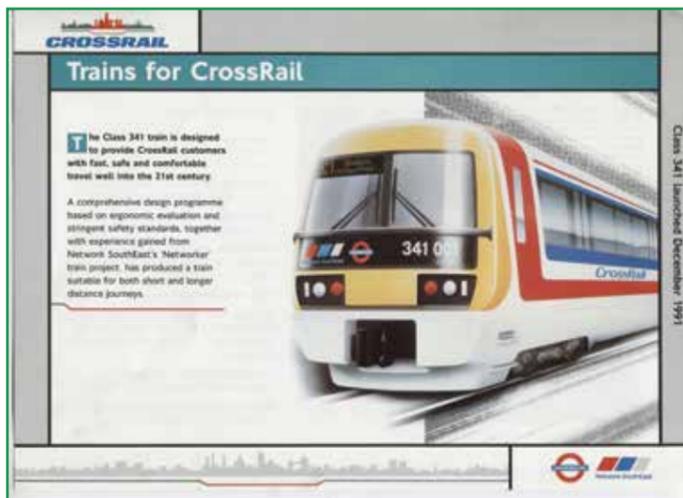
Not particularly smart, nor strategic, although the die is now cast with large orders being made for dual-mode trains. Chris Austin dealt with this in *Railwatch* 153 and gives added insight on page 3 of this edition of *Railwatch*.

If we ignore the awful stop-go approach to some projects, and the appalling waste that goes with it, there is quite a lot happening in 2018.

Try to forget for a moment the 3,000 relatively new electric multiple unit trains which will be trashed because Britain does not have a rolling programme of electrification.

That will not be easy if you read this riding in a Pacer, although that is unlikely on these short winter days given the lighting level in those vehicles!

Glasgow-Edinburgh electrification (EGIP) is a game changer.



**Tunnelling work started on Crossrail in 2012, although this British Rail/London Underground marketing picture from 1991 shows that plans were well-advanced nearly 30 years ago. Two years after this picture was issued, the government of John Major privatised the industry. Railtrack, the new rail infrastructure body, decided not to go ahead with Crossrail**

**The concept was first mooted in 1941, although the name Crossrail emerged following the 1974 London Rail Study. A Crossrail Act was passed in 2008. The project was taken forward as a joint Transport for London/Department for Transport project, illustrating the value of devolution. In 2009 the project received a £1 billion loan from the European Investment Bank. The total cost of the project is £18 billion**

This too was delayed and cost inflated by an idiotic European Union change of clearance specification which should have been mitigated by a proper risk assessment. Despite this, the 42-minute electric service starts in January 2018, to be followed incrementally by other fill-in schemes that result in diesel replacement to Stirling and Alloa and also the Edinburgh-Glasgow route via Shotts. The Shotts route could not be justified as a free-standing project but it makes economic sense as an incremental scheme.

**The central belt of Scotland, benefits directly but there is the additional benefit for other parts of Scotland in that a large fleet of relatively modern diesel multiple units is available for use on non-electrified lines elsewhere.**

Railfuture Scotland has served us well, maintaining good relations with politicians, stakeholders and the rail operator, and making sure they were no pushover.

The current state of Paddington-Wootton Bassett (not Bath) electrification is as daft as it gets strategically.

But Paddington-Didcot will be an overwhelming success. Next year will see an all-electric

service on the Thames Valley taken to a new level with the coming of Crossrail.

This will be another game changer which will potentially stimulate massive growth in rail use in this corridor as long as car park capacity is increased and better bus links to stations are provided.

It will also provide a large cascade of diesel multiple unit trains for Bristol and the West of England. It is a shame that Oxford is not included as yet. This failing is mitigated to a certain extent by the fact that many trains continue north-west of Oxford, and also by Chiltern's excellent new Oxford service (from London Marylebone) which was strongly supported by Railfuture.

Chiltern's new train set worked straight out of the box, both operationally and, importantly, commercially.

Oxford-Cambridge will be the same, although at the recent prestigious railway Derby Dinner at the Roundhouse event one of the after-dinner speakers, Rob Brighouse, said: "Sorry Ian, we are not building this for freight".

At least he is building it. Railfuture East Anglia and Thames Valley have campaigned for this to good effect, demonstrating that active campaigning can get results, provided the project is a sustainable one. The third

scheme to mention is Manchester to Preston and Blackpool. This hit a totally different problem when the contractor walked off the job at an early stage.

This is a shame as the North West is probably the most intelligent example of incremental electrification where each stage, starting with Manchester to Newton-le-Willows, gave extra electric service benefits. This first stage facilitated the hugely popular Manchester Airport to Edinburgh and Glasgow electric service. Not extending the incremental approach to the Windermere branch is less intelligent.

There are actually 11 electrification schemes that should see the light in 2018 so our campaigning for electrification has not been entirely in vain.

If we look at this programme as stand-alone it is one of the biggest electrification programmes we have ever had. What we need now is to emphasise the successes here and campaign for incremental additions to be optimised. The Piccadilly-Victoria link is almost there but Victoria has only four through platforms. This requires running suburban services through Victoria to the recently completed turnbacks at Stalybridge (the second fastest passenger growth corridor in Greater Manchester) and Rochdale requiring incremental electrification.

It is clear that 2018 will see more changes to the rail network than in most recent years, yielding an altogether happier if not strategic New Year. It really is up to us, working with other stakeholders and industry partners, to campaign for more coherent, sustainable ways forward, using these major developments as a new base.

Fears that Brexit will reduce the demand for travel will subside. The squeeze on the motor car will probably result in a modal shift to rail, bearing in mind that a small transfer from car use is a massive increase in rail demand, given relative market shares outside London.

It is difficult to change the world, but working with Railfuture's branches and stakeholders it is clear that we can make a difference in promoting sustainable railway development in Britain. Makes all these efforts worthwhile, doesn't it?

**Ian Brown CBE is policy adviser to the Railfuture board.**

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## Look ahead to 2041

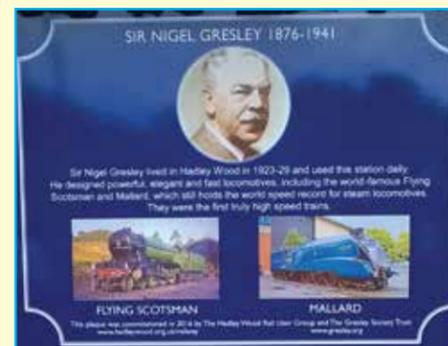
The Mayor of London's attempt to involve people in deciding the shape of transport for the next 20 years included a suggestion that rail use would grow by 80% by 2041. Railfuture suggested this target should be broken down into interim steps and endorsed the policy of giving the Mayor and Transport for London control of more London rail services.

Railfuture also advocates an eastern arm of Crossrail 2 linking into Stratford International and Barking. At Stratford Crossrail 2 should also link with new Overground/West Anglia platforms.

We welcomed the identification of Hounslow-West Hampstead via the Dudding Hill route (Acton-Cricklewood) as a potential outer orbital link.

Railfuture's Thameslink 2 concept should be developed as a long-term cross-London link between Stratford and East Croydon via Canary Wharf. To speed up access to Stansted, Railfuture suggested a fast rail line could be built from the Harlow direction rather than adding a second tunnel to the existing circuitous route.

## RUG Award winners in South East



Six of the 18 nominations for Railfuture's 6th annual Awards came from our area. The Hadley Wood RUG achieved the Best Campaign Silver Award for achieving a step-free access scheme on their down platform, and they also picked up a Commendation for Best New Group. Their leading light Francesca Caine won this year's national Best Campaigner Award. For Hadley Wood this comes soon after a visit by Michael Portillo to unveil a plaque (above) in memory of one-time resident Sir Nigel Gresley.

## Another way is Essex

Railfuture members participated in *The Future of our City/the Future of Transport* workshop, organised by Chelmsford CityLab. Roger Blake spoke on the essential role of rail in the future. A new station on the Great Eastern main line, to serve a development of 3,600 new homes at Beaulieu Park, remains part of the Vision for Chelmsford, which was recently named as Transport Local Authority of the Year.

## Driving growth in the East Midlands

The Department for Transport wants the next East Midlands franchise to deliver "connectivity as a driver for social and economic prosperity". The franchise covers half of Railfuture's branches. With East West Rail coming to Bedford mid-franchise, the town should be recognised as a strategic interchange hub with two northbound inter-city semi-fast services every hour as well as the two Corby services.

**www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East Twitter: @RailfutureLSE**

◆◆◆◆ You can join the Railfuture lottery at [www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery)

# Castle cafe

A new Victorian style cafe "with a nod to steampunk" has opened on Newark Castle station, offering environmentally friendly free water refills and recyclable coffee flasks. Carriages, owned by Wendy Baird, aims to play a crucial role in the local community, and is backed by East Midlands Trains. Volunteers helped finish the new cafe which will offer weekly meals to the homeless.



**TEAM: Wendy Baird with Peter and Suzie Jones who helped design the cafe interior**

janeann.liston@railfuturescotland.org.uk

## Electric trains herald a cleaner future

Ten years of planning and four years of work on the ground will culminate in a faster electric train service on Scotland's busiest inter-city route between Edinburgh and Glasgow via Falkirk High. The electrification phase of the EGIP (Edinburgh to Glasgow Improvement Programme) cleared the way for new Hitachi trains which began test running in October. The scheme will be completed in 2019 but key aspects of EGIP were trimmed to save money.

## Stations wait for STAG studies

Proposals for a station at Beattock, as well as those for Easttriggs and Thornhill, are going to STAG (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide) level 2. The studies will be funded by the regional transport authority SWESTRAN and will cost £40,000 apiece.

## MSPs back Far North line upgrade

Calls for improvements to the Far North Line have been made by MSPs Rhoda Grant and Jamie Stone. Campaigners suggested a seven-point plan to cut the Inverness-Thurso journey from four hours to less than 2 hr 30 min by replacing jointed with continuously welded track, double tracking as far as Muir of Ord, replacing signalling with LED colour aspect lights, raising the line speed to 90 mph where possible, building the Georgemas chord, building the Dornoch link, and cutting out all non-loop station stops south of Tain for the long-distance Caithness services.

## RAGES calls for 2019 station plan

Reston and East Linton stations, which should have opened last year, are now scheduled to open between 2019 and 2024. Having already waited 20 years, Rail Action Group East of Scotland is pushing for 2019.

## Green MSP links Fife rail campaigners

Green MSP Mark Ruskell has convened a rail forum embracing the Fife rail campaigns – Newburgh, Dunfermline-Kincardine-Alloa, Levenmouth and St Andrews. A submission is being prepared for Transport Minister Humza Yousaf. Following a Scottish Parliament debate, Mr Yousaf has instructed Transport Scotland to carry out a GRIP 4 exercise. After the publication of the Policy Review, StARLink is preparing to commission another part of the STAG pre-study into St Andrews reopening. StARLink has also launched a student branch.

## Cross-border funds hope for Hawick

Following the undeniable success of the Edinburgh-Tweedbank service, the Campaign

for Borders Rail is now targeting an extension of the line to Hawick and thence to Carlisle. It is hoping the Anglo-Scottish Borderlands Proposition might unlock funding from both the UK and Scottish governments. Carlisle City Council leader Colin Glover attended the campaign's AGM in Hawick in October.

## Lanark bids for Edinburgh rail link

Railfuture Scotland is working on a demand model for a Lanark-Edinburgh service, following the return of some direct Carstairs-Edinburgh trains. Lanark, which has a regular electric service to Glasgow, is campaigning for the restoration of a service to Edinburgh. At present, buses fail to connect with trains and tourists are unlikely to use park and ride facilities.

## Rail freight hit by road spending

Dualling the A9 road between Perth and Inverness will damage rail freight, according to a report by AECOM for the Scottish Government. The Scottish Rail Freight Group has warned there could be massive losses of rail freight. The rail network is smaller than it was a century ago but roads continue to be upgraded and new ones built, promoting environmental and economic damage. Ironically the Scottish Government says it wants to boost rail freight by 7.5% by 2024. RFG's David Spaven said: "The imbalanced approach to road and rail investment between Perth and Inverness threatens some existing rail freight flows and severely undermines the scope for rail to win new traffic from the roads."

## Contacts:

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland: [www.rages.org.uk/](http://www.rages.org.uk/)

Beattock Station Action Group: [www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/](http://www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/)

St Andrews Rail Link campaign: [www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/](http://www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/)  
[facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign](https://www.facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign)  
[twitter@StARLinkRail](https://twitter.com/StARLinkRail)

Levenmouth Rail Campaign: [www.lmrc-action.org.uk/](http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/)  
[facebook.com/Levenmouth-Rail-Campaign-432832616900648/](https://www.facebook.com/Levenmouth-Rail-Campaign-432832616900648/)

Capital Rail Action Group: [www.capitalrail.org.uk/](http://www.capitalrail.org.uk/)  
Newburgh Train Station campaign: <http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/>

Forth Rail Link: [facebook.com/forthrailink/](https://www.facebook.com/forthrailink/)  
[twitter@forthrailink](https://twitter.com/forthrailink)

Thornhill Station Action Group: [facebook.com/thornhilltrainstation/](https://www.facebook.com/thornhilltrainstation/)  
[www.thornhillstation.co.uk/](http://www.thornhillstation.co.uk/)  
Campaign for Borders Rail: <http://www.campaignforbordersrail.org/>

## Access for all now!

Fifty organisations wrote to the Transport Secretary Chris Grayling to demand that he restore vital *Access for All* rail projects. Despite being one of the wealthiest countries in the world, the UK still has a long way to go on rail access. Nearly 80% of stations across the UK are not accessible to deaf, disabled and older people. At the current rate it would be over 200 years before our rail network is fully accessible.

The Government's own figures show investment in rail accessibility will pay back nearly three times over in economic benefits. *Access for All* funding has unlocked parts of our rail network for deaf, disabled and older people, in many cases for the first time. We urge the Department for Transport to take positive action – to commit to delivering all deferred *Access for All* projects by the end of 2020, and to commit to funding additional *Access for All* projects in the next control period.

Faryal Velmi  
Director, Transport for All

## HS2 connectivity

In pursuing the holy grail of fast London journey times, HS2 has ignored the potential benefits to the wider railway. It has done its utmost to marginalise the cities of Sheffield and Stoke-on-Trent from benefiting from HS2, which is nothing short of disgraceful.

High speed rail can create economic benefits only if connectivity is maintained from the high speed station to the final destination. It is no good getting from London to Manchester in an hour if it takes another hour to get to Rochdale. Rail journey times between many pairs of large cities are extremely poor, such as Nottingham-Liverpool, averaging only marginally above 30 mph.

Graham Nalty  
graham@grahamnalty.co.uk

## All is not well

The Rail Delivery Group launched a promotion exercise at St Pancras station in October, with the self-satisfied message that "everything is fine on the railways". It is not. For one thing, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has just demoted Transport for the North to an advisory role.

Brynley Heaven,  
brynley.heaven@gmail.com

## Heavy criticism

The report on the *Expanding the Railway* conference in *Railwatch*



Hebden Bridge station cafe proprietors Antoinette Hunt and Lisa Crebbin with Railfuture's Nina Smith in the centre

153 implies that the decision on whether the reopened passenger rail services to Ashington should be heavy rail or Metro has not yet been taken.

In fact the decision was taken several years ago, confirmed by report after report after report, all of which have concluded the Metro possibility is not viable due to significantly longer journey times to Ashington which would cause the business case for the whole scheme to collapse. Thus the plan is for passenger trains on the current freight-only heavy rail route, and this is what the local authority is progressing, in line with the South East Northumberland Rail User Group campaign. The

conference talk from Mr Baker of the Department for Transport, which started with praise for Dr Beeching and a startling claim that many of his achievements went unrecognised, was a plea for campaign groups to do their homework and get the early feasibility reports done to avoid surprises later in the process. He rightly said that campaigns should not work from nostalgic feelings or gut instincts of what might work, but must go back to basics and evaluate everything properly.

How disappointing then that, with the Ashington Blyth & Tyne line, he appeared unwilling to take his own advice. Even though our local authority has

## Britain's best station cafe

The Coffee Station at Hebden Bridge station in Yorkshire won a Railfuture competition in September to find the best railway cafe in Britain.

Railfuture Yorkshire's Nina Smith who lives in Hebden Bridge said: "I ensured there was plenty of local publicity for this contest. Having said that, the cafe has a large and loyal customer base, and Hebden Bridge is a can do town!"

Presenting the award, Railfuture board member Christopher Hyomes congratulated Lisa and Antoinette who have run the cafe since 2005.

He said that Railfuture had set up the award as passengers, especially regular commuters, greatly appreciated good quality station cafes.

The ceremony was attended by the Mayor of Hebden Royd, Councillor Pat Fraser. Pete Myers and Richard Isaac of Arriva Trains North also came.

The top five in the contest were Coffee Station at Hebden Bridge, Canvas Coffee at Portsmouth and Southsea, CU Latte (aka Moo la la and Karen) at Farnborough Main, Jubilee Refreshment Rooms at Sowerby Bridge and White and Black at Poole.

completed several iterations of feasibility study (which is why it has taken us 10 years just to get to GRIP 2), all of which confirm the reopening must be via heavy rail, in suggesting Metro would be better, Mr Baker was asking us to disregard these feasibility studies which is contrary to his own advice, threatening to slow down the process yet further as local stakeholders scurry round once more to re-submit the evidence that his suggestion will not work.

Finally, *Britain's Growing Railway* is an excellent publication and congratulations to its editors. But the entry for the Ashington Blyth & Tyne Line is seriously misleading.



**RAIL FUTURE:** These children can still enjoy the pleasure of travelling by rail from Drem station. Well before they were born, campaigners were fighting plans by Dr Beeching to close their station (on the East Coast main line) and the branch line to North Berwick. Thankfully the 1846-built station

survives and the branch has been electrified so there is a train every hour in both directions – to North Berwick and Edinburgh. Now campaigners from Rail Action Group East of Scotland is fighting to reopen two East Coast main line stations which were axed, East Linton and Reston.

The new passenger service will not replace the Metro. There are two routes from Newcastle Central Station as far as Northumberland Park (on the outskirts of the city). The direct heavy rail route, currently used for freight only, with just one intermediate station, or the much longer and tortuous Metro route via Gosforth with 13 intermediate stations.

Maps on both the Railfuture and SENRUG websites clearly show this. Ashington trains will run along the heavy rail route, and the Metro service will continue as is, with interchange at Northumberland Park. Let us hope the good people of Gosforth do not get to see *Expanding Britain's Railway* else we will have a riot on our hands should they think we are planning to withdraw their Metro route.

Dennis Fancett, chair, SENRUG.  
chair@senrug.co.uk

## Expanding railways

Another excellent issue of *Railwatch* (153)! On page 20 you review *Expanding the Railways*. Are you able to let me know how to obtain a copy as I am keen to develop the case for a station at Great Blakenham, on the Great Eastern main line, possibly on the site of Claydon station (closed 1963) as housing

and business park development have expanded rapidly since the 1980s. We have two local train services (Ipswich-Cambridge and Peterborough) either of which could call at such a station. Best wishes,

Barry Moore, Station Road,  
Claydon, Ipswich IP6 0HS.

**Editor's note:** *Expanding the Railways* can be downloaded from the home page of the Railfuture website

## Iconic bridge lost

I was interested by the plan for a tramway from Barnstaple to Braunton (*Railwatch* 153). To get to the town centre from Barnstaple station (Barnstaple Junction until 1970) on a tramway would require a new bridge over the river Taw, unless the tram used the existing mediaeval road bridge. The present station is unfortunately inconveniently sited on the "wrong" side of the river from the town centre and the bus station. Ironically, there was an iconic curved rail bridge next to the road bridge taking a rail line to Ilfracombe but it was demolished following the Beeching cuts which left both Ilfracombe and Bideford without a rail service. If a north Devon tramway does come to fruition, it should really be extended to Ilfracombe, a town which was "created" by the

coming of the railway in 1874 and which became famous as the terminus for the Atlantic Coast Express and the Devon Belle.

A new Ilfracombe line could attract large numbers of tourists if its scenic potential was exploited.

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

## Crewe mess-up

It seems that by altering the Crewe to Euston service, West Midlands Trains is already treating its passengers as badly as London Midland did.

Train operators have messed around with the Euston-Crewe service since its inception.

This has particularly affected Northampton, which has always had an inadequate service. Since electrification the only northbound trains went to Birmingham, initially once an hour, now three a day. The introduction of the Euston-Crewe service was much welcomed, as it gave connections at Stafford, Stoke and Crewe.

After a few years LM decided to miss out Northampton and send the trains via Weedon. This doubtless helped LM save a few bob and may have helped with scheduling stock movements, but it gave Northampton a much

inferior service. Passengers now have to change at Rugby. Connections are not held, so you may have to leave about 30 minutes earlier to be sure of catching the train at Rugby.

Trains are usually crowded. LM often seem incapable of running more than four coaches.

I have used LM trains to get to Manchester, changing at both Crewe and Stoke. Faster trains are certainly to be found at Stoke, probably cheaper for the whole journey too. This facility will now apparently be lost.

Peter Fleming, Lovers Walk,  
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## Go and stop

It is interesting to compare the actions of the British and French governments. In June, the French launched Paris-Rennes and Paris-Bordeaux high speed rail operations. In July, the British decided not to extend Great Western electrification as far as Bristol Temple Meads and Swansea.

Professor George Huxley  
Oxfordshire

## Godsend fares

Tim Mickleburgh, in his letter in the October edition of *Railwatch*, states that the elderly "are not automatically the poorest section in society, and would benefit more from better train or bus services than free fares."

There are some very wealthy pensioners, and if Tim is one of them, good luck to him! However, most OAPs are barely getting by, and concessionary fares are a godsend.

His views on children's buggies taking up luggage space and reducing railway companies' profits, if carried out, will only discourage parents from using trains and drive more cars on to our already congested roads.

I think Tim is a member of the wrong organisation. Instead of Railfuture, he should join the Association of Train Operating Companies.

Michael Paine, Willingham by  
Stow, Gainsborough DN21 5LD

## Send your letters and emails to:

The Editor, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU  
Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk  
*Railwatch* also welcomes articles and pictures  
Please use email if possible but include your postal address

# Rail needs to be more dynamic and respond to growing demand

Report and pictures  
by Steve Jones

The population of Leicester grew from 20,000 to 200,000 in the 19th century largely thanks to the railway.

But the modern railway needs to provide new and better links to encourage the economy of both the city and the wider East Midlands region to develop.

That is the view of city mayor Sir Peter Soulsby, who opened Railfuture's Dynamic Triangle conference on 4 November.

He said the Government's announcement that it will not electrify the Midland main line was a dreadful decision. In fact, the case for the Midland was much better than that for the Great Western.

"The GW did not have such a business case," he said.

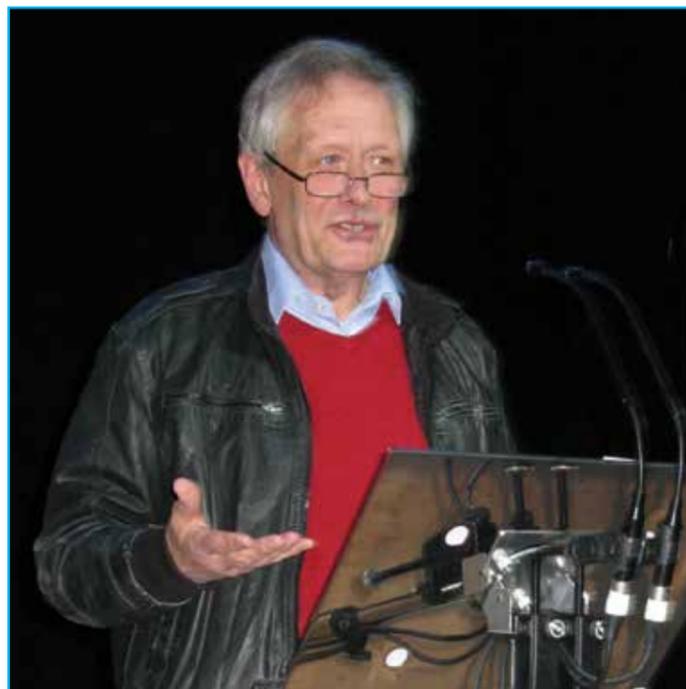
"If the Government had gone ahead with the Midland before the GW, they would not be in so much trouble now."

It was crucial Leicester could market the city worldwide by saying that it was less than an hour from London by rail. At the moment, the normal journey time is just over an hour.

Nottingham also needed to be able to say that you can get there in 90 minutes from London.

The obvious priority was the Midland main line but east-west rail links were sadly lacking.

Upgraded links to Peterborough and Stansted Airport are needed, and people need to get to Coventry and other parts of the West Midlands. He said Leicester benefited from the Nuneaton West Coast main line flyover but the



LEICESTER CITY MAYOR Sir Peter Soulsby

city had no direct rail link to "our nearest neighbour" Coventry. He said the National Forest line from Leicester to Burton upon Trent would have been reopened to passengers by British Rail but the process was halted by rail privatisation.

"We are still arguing the case for reopening that line," he said.

"It has a stronger business case than any other currently freight-only line."

Councils are keen to see capital investment but they cannot afford to subsidise rail at the expense of local buses. He said he learnt an enormous amount

about the value of investing in rail when, as an MP, he sat on the House of Commons committee examining the Crossrail Bill. "It was the most interesting and productive time in my career as an MP," he said.

It was vital to increase investment in the existing rail network, as well as in HS2.

"We want investment in conventional rail now. We must not be distracted by HS2 or bimode trains. Rail is vital to the economic wellbeing of cities like Leicester."

The conference was held at the Curve Theatre in Leicester.

Titled Dynamic Triangle – The East Midlands' Crucial Role in National Rail Connectivity, the event heard from a range of speakers from the rail industry and local authorities on the past, present and future importance of railways to the East Midlands.

The Dynamic Triangle refers to the three cities of Leicester, Nottingham and Derby.

## East Midlands Trains

Jake Kelly, managing director of East Midlands Trains, picked up the theme of rail growth and development.

He highlighted the changes brought about by East Midlands Trains during the first 10 years of its franchise. The company had inherited an unfortunate legacy, especially with its rural and inter-regional routes, and set about a change in culture and expectations. The result has been strong growth and improved customer satisfaction.

He said three new stations had opened during the franchise: East Midlands Parkway, Corby and Ilkeston.

As the current franchise nears its end, the challenges now relate to overcrowding and capacity plus the development of the Midland main line, especially following the cancellation of electrification.

## Electrification

Rob Daffern from Furrer+Frey, a major supplier of electrical equipment to the rail industry, outlined the benefits of electrification along with some innovative solutions being developed to reduce the cost.

Advances in battery technology



Railfuture's Ariadne Tampion whose daughters Sophie and Isobel helped with the conference organisation

offer a possible future alternative to diesel bimodes, at least for branch lines. Battery trains have proved highly successful in tests and can have a range of 60 miles.

In some instances, they might be able to re-charge their batteries at station stops.

In questions to Mr Daffern, Steven Waring from Halifax said it was vital that Railfuture speaks up in favour of electrification as crucial to improving the environment and combatting climate change.

## Rail leasing

Passengers looking out of the window as they leave Leicester towards the north will have noticed the collection of elderly diesel locomotives, some of them in immaculate condition, at the locomotive depot. This is the base of UK Rail Leasing. Its chief executive, former banker Mark Winter, said he redeemed himself when he joined the railway.

He explained how UKRL had become well established as an innovative specialist locomotive engineering business and a growing employer in the centre of Leicester.

A new diesel loco could cost £3.5 million whereas a re-engined version could be had for £1.6 million. UKRL has designed a new coupling system which could save on using translator vehicles when moving new rail vehicles.

Rail requires large amounts of money and is a deeply frustrating place to try to establish a start-up company, he said.

Cash flow is a big problem and most businesses go bust in the first year.

The rail industry needs to address skill shortages. His firm was taking on apprentices and Network Rail had 200.

## Great Central

Tom Ingall of the Great Central Railway described the project to reconnect the two parts of this premier heritage railway at Loughborough. Much work is under way on the planning, design, authorisation and, where it crosses the Midland main line, construction of the various elements of the "missing link". As well as appealing to enthusiasts of steam railways, the Great Central is a major asset to the community generally. Engagement with local schools, for example, adds to the value of this exciting scheme.

## Ilkeston reopening

Value to the community was also central to the project to reopen Ilkeston station, the newest addition to the East Midlands rail network.

The conference heard from Jim Seymour of Derbyshire County Council how the project had



Derbyshire's Jim Seymour who worked on the Ilkeston station reopening project

been carried through from initiation to completion, ending Ilkeston's reputed status as the largest town (with a population of 40,000) on a passenger railway but with no station.

Mr Seymour said station promoters should "follow the money" which might come from local enterprise partnerships, rather than direct from the Department for Transport.

The reopening had been dependent on three different transport secretaries. Geoff Hoon had kick-started the idea of reopening the station, while Justine Greening had created the New Stations Fund that paid a significant part of the £10 million cost of Ilkeston.

Then Patrick McLoughlin showed a genuine interest and managed to get the New Stations Fund to emerge again from the dark recesses of Whitehall.

The new rail service meant that Nottingham was only 15 minutes away, Alfreton 13 minutes,

Chesterfield 23 minutes and Sheffield 43 minutes.

Everyone knew that rail was a premium product compared with the bus and when HS2 comes to Toton, Ilkeston will be only five or six minutes away.

But these days, transport benefits alone are not enough to justify a new station. Increased housing in the area is also important, and will give the local council a bigger tax-take.

Early signs are promising in terms both of usage of the station and its effect in giving an over-shadowed area a lift in its economic fortunes.

There has been a good public and media response and the station even has its own Facebook and web page.

The hope now is that it will attract higher quality businesses to Ilkeston. The former closed-down Co-op store in the town centre is already back in use.

It is also hoped to attract tourists to the town, which has listed buildings, and the 1877 wrought-iron lattice-work Bennerley viaduct over the Erewash Valley is being restored and incorporated into a new Sustrans cycle path.

■ The conference was hailed by those attending as a great success and will help to focus Railfuture's campaigning efforts during a time of great change in this central part of the national rail network.

The conference was chaired by Ariadne Tampion of Railfuture's East Midlands branch. In closing the conference, she said: "The East Midlands has a crucial role in national rail connectivity between all points of the compass, but is unfairly neglected as a recipient of rail investment. I hope this conference can raise the profile of our region and help improve the situation."

## Get on with this essential rail reopening scheme



COALVILLE CHAMPIONS: Councillors John Legrys and Dr Terri Eynon

The conference reinvigorated the calls to reopen the Leicester to Burton upon Trent freight line to passengers as the National Forest Line.

Railfuture East Midlands' Ariadne Tampion said: "We want to get the line up the national agenda."

She said there was still an option to reinstate the necessary curve at Knighton Junction, despite redevelopment in the area.

Councillor Dr Terri Eynon, the Labour group leader of Leicestershire County Council, said rail provided an alternative to the overwhelming dependence on car commuting in the county.

John Legrys of North West Leicestershire District Council said Job Club members were being sanctioned because they have no public transport option to get to potential jobs.

Both councillors pointed out that freight trains from Bardon Hill and new trains from Bombardier's factory at Derby regularly pass through Coalville, which has not had a station since 1964.

Houses have already been built in the Coalville area in the expectation that the line would reopen. More land is still available in Coalville which could help to solve Leicester's housing problems if there was a reopened rail link.

Many people are now so unimpressed by Leicestershire County Council's failure to get on with reopening the line that they are beginning to look at alternatives that ignore Leicester, possibly from Bagworth to Burton and Birmingham. Conventional heavy rail may not be the only answer. Tram-train technology may be more affordable and flexible.

## RAILFUTURE RAIL USER GROUP AWARDS FOR 2017

By Roger Blake

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Friends of the Far North Line and the Tarka Rail Association each won a *Best Newsletter* Gold Award for their magazines, in this year's Railfuture Rail User Group Awards.

The *Best Website* Gold Award went to Stourbridge Line User Group. Marlow-Maidenhead Passengers' Association was awarded Silver, and a Commendation went to South East Northumberland Rail User Group.

Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group won the Oliver Lovell Award for *Best New Group*, while Hadley Wood Rail User Group received a Commendation.

The Gold Award for *Best Campaign* went

to the Melksham Rail User Group. Hadley Wood RUG picked up the Silver Award, while Chesham & District Transport Users' Group and Chinley & Buxworth Transport Group each received a Commendation.

The *Clara Zilahi Award for Best Campaigner* in 2017 went to Francesca Caine, from the Hadley Wood RUG.

This year's *Judges' Special Award* went to The New Stations Fund, for enabling 10 stations to be added to the national network and bringing access to rail services closer to local communities.

You can see the background and awards presentation at [www.railfuture.org.uk/RUG+Awards](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/RUG+Awards)

Seven of Railfuture's vice-presidents,

together with honorary president Christian Wolmar, adjudicated between this year's 18 nominations across six award categories and eight of Railfuture's 14 branch areas.

Paul Abell, Ian Brown, Roger Ford, Chris Green, Stewart Palmer, Lorna Slade, and Stewart Stevenson MSP had been able between them to visit almost every one of this year's contenders.

Roger Ford gave Railfuture some welcome advance publicity in his online *Informed Sources*: "Sitting on the judging panel gives me a useful insight into the grassroots railway. As Hadley Wood is just down the line, I popped over to meet the local group organiser who showed me round the station. It was a real eye-opener."

steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk

### ■ ■ New hope for Walsall-Wolverhampton

For the past two years, Railfuture West Midlands has campaigned with local council officials to reinstate direct passenger services between Walsall and Wolverhampton, although the local and national elections forced a hiatus in these proceedings. The campaign is now reinvigorated. The Railfuture team were able to review progress on the project with a Walsall transport officer. West Midlands Trains have expressed a desire to run services between Wolverhampton and Walsall subject to a feasibility study, as part of a commitment under the new franchise. Recent studies indicate there is a much better business case than previously thought, especially with new stations at Willenhall and Darlaston (James Bridge). So Railfuture West Midlands appears to be pushing at a half-open door. They are concerned, however, that a viable service is provided with at least two trains an hour. We have agreed to assist Walsall Council officers at future consultation events. We will soon be asking for volunteers. Railfuture can take credit for re-activating the project through our meetings with Walsall and Wolverhampton council officers over the past two years. We will be doing our best to sustain WMT's interest.

### ■ ■ Shake-up for CrossCountry services

Railfuture West Midlands' committee members joined other stakeholders and other volunteers in October at Department for Transport pre-consultation workshops on the CrossCountry franchise post-2019. The aim of these sessions is to identify key issues and possible solutions for the future CrossCountry franchise. The DfT told the meeting that 57% of current passengers travel for leisure, 28% are business travellers, while only 15% are commuters. Ridership has grown from 32 million journeys in 2009, when the present franchise began, to 38 million in 2016, and only 10% of delays encountered by CrossCountry Trains are attributable to the train operator. Transport Focus presented relevant findings from its most recent passenger satisfaction survey, showing that ticket pricing and seat availability were the most important issues to CrossCountry passengers. The DfT representatives then posed the workshop participants an interesting question. Should the CrossCountry franchise remain broadly as it is, or should it split up so as to provide a long-distance quality express service serving only main centres, with a separate section to provide inter-urban and local services, possibly in alternative franchises? The workshop participants were divided, although there was some agreement that local services between Birmingham and Leicester and on to Stansted should not be part of a future CrossCountry franchise. The present problems are obvious. Trains too short, with insufficient seats and poor seating configuration (not enough four-seat bays and seats not aligned to windows), expensive walk-on fares, and inadequate on-board refreshments.

### ■ ■ Nuneaton's art escape

Nuneaton's station has been adopted by the Art Alert group, which is enabling people who enjoy sewing to work on individual and collaborative projects through the Escape Arts Sewing Group. Sewing workshops are now being held every second Monday of the month in the Old Station Cafe on platform 1, from

10.00-13.00. Anne Taylor, secretary of Art Alert and member of the Nuneaton station adoption team, said: "We urge people to make a trip of discovery to enjoy and learn from the creativity by Art Alert artists John and Becca's special exhibition at the station."

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www.railfuture.org.uk/West Midlands Branch

## Severnside

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### ■ ■ Metro costs being cut

Many of Railfuture's concerns about inflated cost estimates for improving local rail services in the MetroWest Phase 1 project are being addressed by North Somerset Council, which is leading the project on behalf of the four unitary authorities of Greater Bristol. An initial hourly passenger service on the Portishead line would require significantly less engineering work than was envisaged in the original proposal for a half-hourly service. In its latest Portishead Rail Services newsletter, the council says it will not be necessary to increase line speed from 30 to 50 mph or provide a double lead junction with the main line at Parson Street. Also removed from the scheme are a section of double tracking in the Bower Ashton area and alternative road access at Ashton Vale Road. North Somerset Council launched a second formal consultation in October. The Railfuture response reaffirms support for the pragmatic reopening of the line. We welcome the decision to build platforms at Pill and Portishead long enough for five-car trains, although three-car sets will be used at first. We also support a simpler design for Portishead station.

### ■ ■ Better bus links to station

Campaigning by Railfuture and our member Cam & Dursley Transportation Group has borne fruit with a dramatic improvement to bus links from the Gloucestershire station in September. Stagecoach West services 60 and 62 now call hourly at Cam & Dursley station on their route from Dursley and Gloucester. The average waiting time for a train to Bristol is now seven minutes and to Gloucester 25 minutes. Rail connections to Bristol are also shown in the bus timetable. David Smith of CDTG commented: "We are pleased with this service and it appears that people are beginning to use it. We are publicising it on the Dursley Matters section of Facebook." This represents an encouraging outcome of points Railfuture made at a meeting with the managing director of Stagecoach West in 2014. Car parking remains a concern at Cam & Dursley but the improved bus services should persuade more rail users to leave their cars at home.

### ■ ■ Bigger car park needed at Freshford

Railfuture welcomes GWR's enlargement of the car park at Kemble and its announcement to extend the one at Gloucester, both of which we called for in a BBC Radio Gloucestershire interview in 2014. Railfuture Severnside has now written to GWR asking whether it can provide designated parking spaces at Freshford, north-east Somerset, where the station seems to be attracting commuters who have difficulty parking in Bath. According to the Office of Rail and Road, recorded journeys at Freshford grew from 18,000 in 1997/98 to 43,000 in 2015/16 but the station approach is crammed with cars.

### ■ ■ Faster trains may aid reopening plan

We support the campaign to reopen the station at Saltford, in the Bath & North East Somerset

unitary area. Railfuture member Saltford Parish Council recently met Councillor Mark Shelford, the B&NES cabinet member for transport, who said the council required an assurance from Network Rail that there were paths for trains to call at the station. Parish Council chair Chris Warren advises that this assurance was given by the Halcrow consultancy a few years ago. Railfuture Severnside's initial stance is that there would be less potential conflict with inter-city services in the Bristol-Bath corridor when 90 mph class 165 and 166 trains take over local services in the next few years.

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## Wessex

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### ■ ■ Not quite there yet

We are only a few weeks into First/MTR's tenure of the South Western franchise, but there are signs that timekeeping across the network has deteriorated. The new operator can point the finger at Network Rail for most of the delays but cannot escape responsibility for trains turned out in a dirty condition or with minor faults such as internal doors not working. South Western Railway must also take the rap for lack of a trolley service on Waterloo-Exeter trains. Most worrying is a complaint from one of our members who, along with many others, had to stand on a journey of 1h 40min because a single five-car unit ran a service normally operated by a 10-carriage train. There have been few attempts to erase Stagecoach branding from trains or stations, so perhaps we have to wait a little longer for the new South Western Railway to get into its stride.

### ■ ■ Timetable ambitions

More encouraging is SWR's active engagement with rail users over its innovative timetable for December 2018. Railfuture Wessex will be coordinating Railfuture's response to the consultation and in the meantime members have been attending meetings to discuss options with SWR managers. On close study, the alluring promise to "accelerate journeys on a number of routes" means cutting station stops and compromising timetable resilience, so difficult choices have to be made. This dilemma highlights chronic problems with infrastructure across the network. Inadequate power supply and poor track geometry prevent trains reaching their maximum speed potential, while flat junctions and single-line sections lead to regular delays. We want the best service possible on the network which SWR inherited. In addition, we need to press for greater investment in infrastructure if we are to achieve real improvement in capacity and journey times.

### ■ ■ Options for the Island Line

SWR has published a 20-page brochure *Developing a More Sustainable Future for the Island Line*. The document is full of options but somewhat vague about what needs to be done. However there is a determination, expressed by the managing director in his foreword, to seize the moment and secure the line's future. Stakeholder meetings are promised and consultees will need to respond by the end of December.

### ■ ■ AGM 2018 will be in Southampton

Looking forward to 2018, we have booked a venue in the centre of Southampton for our AGM on the afternoon of Saturday 10 March.

■ ■ www.railfuture.org.uk/Wessex+Branch  
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## NEW BOOK

# Rail, vital for the Raj and a new nation

*Railways and the Raj*

by Christian Wolmar

Published in November 2017

Here, Christian reveals why India's railway are so fascinating for British readers

There is something very special about India's railway network. It is not only the fact that it is heavily used, by 25 million people per day, or that it was conceived and built by the British during the colonial period, or even that it is still the most important part of the nation's infrastructure.

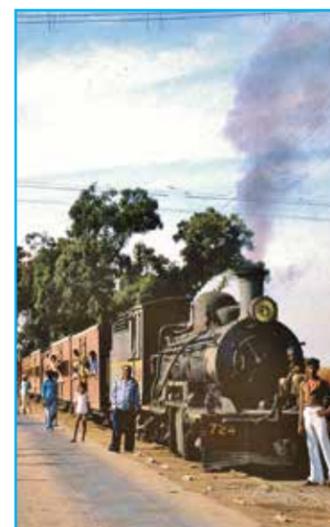
No, it is more than that. Railways are such an integral part of the nation's transport system that it is impossible to imagine the sub-continent without them.

Indeed, that is one of the reasons India continued to expand its rail network while other countries were cutting theirs. India has never had a Beeching type period. Quite the opposite.

Soon after independence in 1947, despite the backlog in repairs caused by the war and the horrors of the separation of Pakistan and India, the government began to build new lines.

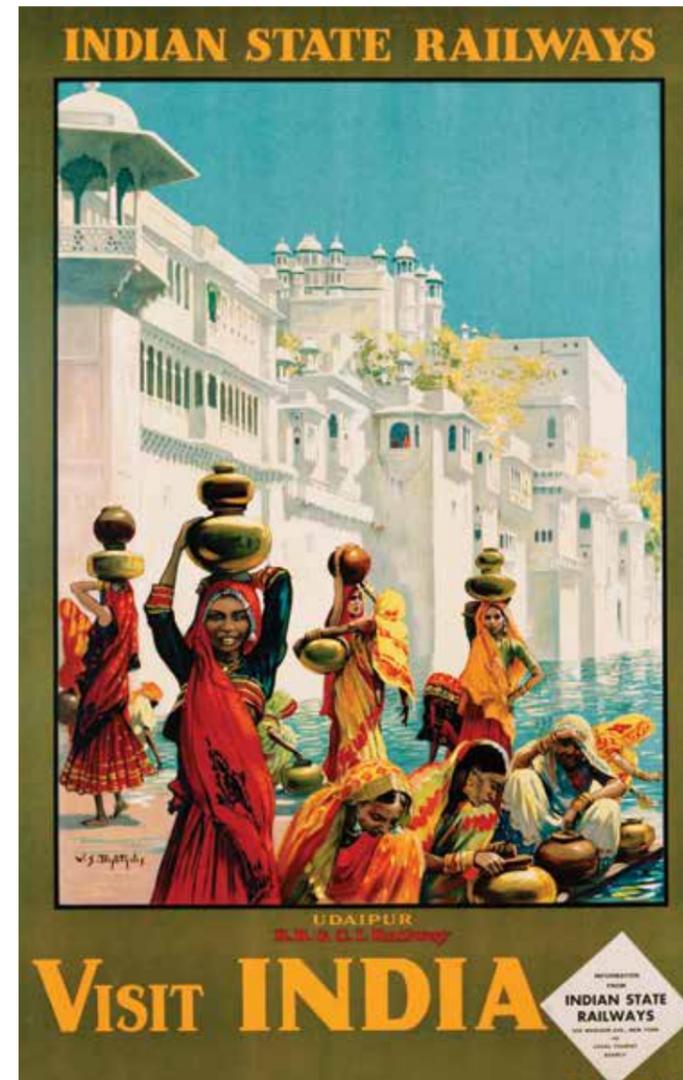
This was partly because the roads were so poor that regions without railways were effectively cut off, but it was also a result of the fact that the system left by the British was not big enough for such a vast country.

The network was started in 1853 by the British who went on to develop them continually. While this has been presented by imperialists as a benevolent



1983: Barsi light railway

◆◆◆◆ Join Railfuture online at [www.railfuture.org.uk/join](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/join)



ROMANTIC IMAGE: A publicity poster for Indian State Railways

gesture towards its colonial possession, there is no doubt that the development of the Indian railway system was initiated and carried out for British interests.

After a slow start, expansion accelerated rapidly following the 1857 mutiny, which could be seen as the start of the independence movement which achieved its goal 90 years later.

In response, the British realised that the railway was the best way of moving troops around the country, and was essential in retaining control as it would have been far too costly to have large barracks stationed in every town and city.

The pattern of lines also favoured British interests. All the early routes connected ports with the hinterland to facilitate the easier and cheaper transport of raw materials to the UK, as well as making it easier to distribute British imports.

There is one little-known fact ignored by the imperialists. Most of the network built in the first 30 years or so was constructed by private rail companies based in Britain who were given a guarantee of five per cent on



2013 REALITY: Passengers at Chennai station wait for trains

their investment, very generous terms. Because most of the lines were not profitable, or did not reach that threshold, it was Indian taxpayers – mostly very poor – who had to make up the shortfall. So although the British built the lines, the Indians effectively paid for them.

My book examines all aspects of the development and expansion of the rail network.

For example, it considers how the Indian passengers in third class were ill-treated for many years by the rail companies and yet contributed the lion's share for their upkeep and their profits, most of which found their way back to Britain.

The greatest travesty was the fact that India was not allowed to develop its own supply industry for the railways, even though the expertise was clearly available as a few examples show.

Instead, virtually all the locomotives and rolling stock were imported from Britain until independence, when one of the priorities of the Nehru government was to create railway workshops which have subsequently produced thousands of locomotives and tens of thousands of carriages.

The last chapter of my book includes an account of my first couple of days travelling around the Indian rail network, including a trip along the Konkan railway on the west coast, built as recently as 1993.

Nothing matches a rail trip in India – it is like none other in the world. Put it at the top of your bucket list.

■ You can email Christian to reserve a signed copy of *Railways and the Raj* at a specially discounted rate of £18 inc p&P for Railfuture members: [christian.wolmar@gmail.com](mailto:christian.wolmar@gmail.com)

## RENEWABLE TRACTION PROJECT

A renewable traction project at Imperial College London aims to connect solar panels directly to the lines which provide electricity to trains, with the

aim of bypassing the grid. The car company Jaguar Land Rover has the biggest solar PV array in Britain and can supply 30% of its Staffordshire factory's demands.

Network Rail has access to 18,000 kilometres of track. Installing solar PV on half of that could meet 40% of its annual traction power demand, said

research associate Dr Nathaniel Bottrell. Solar panels have an added advantage for rail. They produce power at around 750V DC, as used by third rail trains.

### Thames Valley

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#### ■ ■ Parking levy for public transport

Oxfordshire County Council is considering the introduction of a workplace parking levy to fund public transport investment, following the example of Nottingham. The council's vision for a futuristic Oxford includes tunnels under the city centre for buses, driverless pods, and the reopening of the Cowley line. We can welcome the reopening of the Cowley line, but the other proposals are from fantasy-land. Apart from damage to archaeological remains below street level, subways for buses or trams require access ramps at each end which would take up a lot of road space in narrow streets, and the stations would require escalators and lifts to bring passengers up to street-level. In the middle of the High Street, perhaps? As for pods (similar to those at Heathrow Terminal 5), these have limited capacity and are unsuited for mass public transit, unless they are coupled together to form trains!

#### ■ ■ Progress in Buckinghamshire

Railfuture Thames Valley has had a useful meeting with Buckinghamshire County Council's new transport officer James Gleave, who has been asked to produce a strategic plan. He seemed interested and keen to listen to us. During our discussion, we suggested that Oxfordshire County Council's transport strategy could become an exemplar or template for other counties. In the meantime, Atkins has been commissioned to redesign the junction

at Bourne End to enable a half-hourly through service between Maidenhead and Marlow. Derogation from Network Rail's high standards for main lines may be necessary, because of the restricted site.

#### ■ ■ Ideas for post-HST2 services

In response to the Railfuture passenger group's request for ideas on train services on existing lines to complement HS2 services, the Thames Valley branch committee's initial aims are:

□ Reintroduce CrossCountry trains between South Coast/Thames Valley and Scotland via the West Coast main line.

□ More capacity between Coventry and Birmingham International to allow two CrossCountry trains per hour to serve those stations, instead of one train per hour non-stop via Solihull.

□ Some CrossCountry trains to run via Milton Keynes to avoid overcrowding on trains via Birmingham.

□ More West Coast main line trains to stop at Milton Keynes.

#### ■ ■ Stratford-Honeybourne

Railfuture Thames Valley has met Railfuture West Midlands committee members to discuss proposals to reopen the Stratford-Honeybourne line. West Midlands has greater priorities elsewhere in the region and one problem is access to Stratford from the South. It was agreed that our top shared priority should be the Cotswold line – redoubling at both ends and a turn-back at Hanborough.

■ ■ [www.railfuture.org.uk/ThamesValleyBranch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/ThamesValleyBranch)  
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### Devon and Cornwall

#### ■ ■ Disintegration

The closure of Exeter's bus station, planned for October, is postponed until the New Year, following the collapse of funding for the associated city centre redevelopment. The chaos of temporary stops distributed around city centre streets has been avoided for a bit longer. In a letter to the city council in April 2016 Railfuture warned that the new bus station, further from Exeter's railway stations, would disadvantage rail passengers travelling on to places such as Sidmouth, Chudleigh and Ashburton. Railfuture also suggested that connectivity could be improved by joining bus services together, such as Sidmouth to Exeter with Exeter to Crediton and running via Exeter St David's rail station.

Bus-rail integration was also hit in May when a three-week sewerage upgrade for

student accommodation closed the road between the entrance and exit of St David's station, and as the forecourt road is one way, no buses could call, except inbound from Bude and Okehampton. We contacted the bus company and Great Western Railway to ask for a temporary two-way operation through the forecourt. The bus company said it would like to, but passengers were left confused and some were faced with expensive taxi journeys such as £45 to Okehampton. Passengers by car and taxi from the north side of Exeter were diverted 2.5 miles through Exeter's busiest streets to the station. To avoid this diversion we made a request by phone to Devon County Council for nearby roadside parking to be made free for 30 minutes, during the closure period.

The council expressed concern for its revenue protection and the final response was: "This is something that should be arranged via the utility company which would have to pay for it." Earlier contact with the utility company had revealed no concern for bus-rail connections.

#### ■ ■ MPs back rail

Torbay Tory MP Kevin Foster had a "positive" meeting with Rail Minister Paul Maynard in an attempt to speed up plans for a £13 million station at Edginswell, to serve Torbay Hospital, Torquay, as well as businesses and shops in the area. Torbay Council has already spent more than £500,000 on the station project. Labour MP Luke Pollard (Plymouth Sutton and Devonport) has called for £30 million to be spent to cut the rail journey time from Plymouth to Exeter.

### North East

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#### ■ ■ Daring plan for Darlington

An ambitious scheme to rebuild and enhance Darlington Bank Top station includes the construction of another island platform and, controversially, the separation of the Bishop Auckland line trains from those going towards Middlesbrough and Saltburn, which have run through without any visible difficulty for decades. Opposition to this separation is already evident, and increasingly vocal.

#### ■ ■ New trains needed for Metro

Negotiations continue at NEXUS (Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive) to obtain funding for replacement electric trains for the Metro, which carries 40 million passengers annually (a figure equal to that just reached by Greater Manchester's Metrolink). The present fleet is over 30 years old, and is showing its age. Unless new trains come soon, there will have to be reductions in service levels because the trains are becoming unreliable. Provision of a 25kV AC capability may be included on any new trains, as well as the 1.5kV DC used now.

#### ■ ■ Better Sunday trains on the Coast line

The Sunday service along the Newcastle to Middlesbrough section now starts over an hour earlier and finishes later. The timetable improvements we thought would not begin until May, in some cases, begin with the December timetable change. Most trains now extend 4.5 miles from Middlesbrough to Nunthorpe, giving James Cook Hospital a near-hourly service. Also from December, the Bishop Auckland-Darlington line's frequency is doubled to hourly every day except Sunday. The improvement was achieved by extending Darlington-Saltburn journeys, as requested by Railfuture and the Bishop Line community rail partnership.

#### ■ ■ Hexham station refreshments

Tyne Valley community rail partnership has been instrumental in reopening the refreshment kiosk at Hexham station. The facility is run by Journey Enterprises, a charity that finds work for those with learning difficulties. Judging by early newspaper reports, the reopened kiosk has been warmly welcomed.

#### ■ ■ Inter-city boost for Morpeth

Railfuture welcomes the improved inter-city service at Morpeth that comes with the December timetable. A more local, but useful, Sunday service between Newcastle and Morpeth is now offered by Northern. However, efforts to introduce a local service north of Morpeth are meeting with varying success, though several local councils along the intended route actively support the idea. Efforts to get buses to use the turning circle at Morpeth station, referred to in earlier issues of *Railwatch*, have still not always been successful, and publicity for them at the station is non-existent. Looking to the east of the area, the South East Northumberland Rail User Group is awaiting the outcome of Network Rail's GRIP 3 (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) study over reopening the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne rail lines.

■ ■ [www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthEastBranch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthEastBranch)  
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## THE CAMPAIGN FOR RAIL FREIGHT

# Rail freight cuts pollution and danger

By Lee Davies

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Thousands of tonnes of materials needed to construct a major new mine in North Yorkshire could be transported by rail.

The first train for the new £1 billion Woodsmith mine near Whitby was loaded with aggregates for A V Dawson's Teesside freight terminal near Middlesbrough. It will be transported by lorry from Middlesbrough, 30 miles to the site of the mine.

"Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of aggregates are needed for a project of this size," said Neil McShane, the rail manager for A V Dawson. "We are keen to promote rail wherever we can for the increased efficiencies and environmental benefits it can provide."

Some of the material being brought in by ship, road and rail will be stockpiled at Teesside until it is needed for the Sirius Minerals mine project.

A covered conveyor belt is being built to carry 20 million tonnes of polyhalite a year from the 1,500 metre deep mine to Teesside where it will be made into a multi-nutrient fertiliser called POLY4 and exported to many countries around the world.

#### ■ Teesport £6m crane

A new £6 million Liebherr crane has speeded up container handling at Teesport, five miles from Redcar. The crane was co-financed by the European Union's *Connecting Europe* facility. Container volumes at Teesport have grown 12% a year for the past seven years. Direct rail links to both north and south of the UK have enabled the port to cut costs, save road miles and reduce emissions, according to chief executive officer Frans Calje.

#### ■ Doncaster's iPort

A £500 million freight terminal is being built at Rossington, five miles from Doncaster, which will provide freight train links to major British ports and the



Picture: RAILWAY GAZETTE INTERNATIONAL

## An opportunity to clean up the air in London

**GB Railfreight has signed a three-year contract to manage the movements and preparation of all trains running in and out of the DP World London Gateway Port, which began operations on the Thames estuary in 2013. John Smith, managing director of GB Railfreight, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity to develop**

**our services in London and ensure that the economy continues to function effectively." The deal has the potential to lower air pollution in London by reducing the number of lorries. The picture shows the first intermodal train from the new port in September 2013, carrying containers to Trafford Park, Manchester.**

Channel Tunnel. iPort is expected to be operational in the New Year and will be able to handle trains up to 775 metres long, including continental gauge wagons. An Amazon depot is on part of the site.

#### ■ Glass on the go

The first trainload of bulk glass cullet ran from Tilbury, Essex, to Encirc's factory at Elton, Cheshire, in October, part of a process to give the glass a new life. The 1,200 tonnes of glass is the product of a new recycling facility set up at Tilbury by URM Ltd. The cullet is produced from glass collected across the south of England, including kerbside collections and bottle banks. The port has been reconfigured to create a dedicated bulk materials rail terminal for recycled and construction materials. Peter Ward of the Port of Tilbury said:

"It is great to see bulks leaving the port from Tilbury's dedicated railhead. We and URM have invested significantly in the new processing recycling hub. We expect to see many more rail loads of glass cullet from the port throughout the year."

#### ■ Jumbo train

The first "jumbo" train with 2,300 tonnes of building materials in 34 wagons ran from Cardiff to Acton, London, in September. The train carried limestone from Wenvoe and Taff's Well quarries for use in producing asphalt and concrete in London and south-east England. Train operator DB Cargo UK said transporting the materials by rail was the equivalent of 80 lorryloads.

#### ■ Demand management

The line from Ipswich to Felixstowe is to be improved to clear the way for more freight trains. Enhancements will be completed in 2019 and are part of a plan for a strategic rail freight network. They will allow another 12 trains in and out of the port each day, a 36% increase on the existing 33 daily rail freight services.

Philippa Edmunds, Freight on Rail Manager, said: "These additional rail freight services can be filled almost immediately as shippers have been demanding additional rail services on the parallel rail route to the A14 corridor for years. Increasing rail

freight will reduce road congestion, road crashes and pollution. "These additional rail services will remove 840 large lorries each day off the route which is the equivalent of around 3,360 average cars. We urge the Government to prioritise further work on this key corridor, as part of its industrial and emissions strategies, to improve productivity and reduce air and carbon dioxide emissions."

#### ■ Unfulfilled potential

Eurotunnel has carried 25 million lorries on Shuttle freight trains since the service began in 1994. The rapid growth in e-commerce, between 20-30% per annum, shows how essential the Channel Tunnel has become in the transport and logistics infrastructure linking the UK to continental Europe. Approximately one million e-commerce packages go via the Channel Tunnel every day. Consultants EY, in their research paper *Economic Footprint of the Channel Tunnel*, published in November 2016, estimated that goods linked to express and courier services transported through the Channel Tunnel have a value of around £27 billion per year and are responsible for 272,000 jobs across Europe. The tragedy is that much of this freight travelled by rail only through the Channel Tunnel. It should go by rail for the whole journey.

## Five trainloads of stainless steel

Four trains a week, each carrying 1,300 tonnes of stainless steel, are running from Sheffield to Immingham, thanks to a 40-year-old partnership between DB Cargo UK and Outokumpu which operates in 30 countries, including Finland, Sweden, Germany and Britain. The steel goes on from Immingham by ship and rail to factories in Avesta and Degerfors in Sweden. Another trainload of stainless steel runs each week to Liverpool for export to America. Sonia Hampton of DB Cargo UK, said: "We are celebrating 40 years of working with Outokumpu. DB Cargo UK also transports millions of tonnes of finished metals and raw materials across the UK and into continental Europe."

◆◆◆◆ Rail User Express can be downloaded from [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk)

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■ ■ Electrification progress

Balfour Beatty has been selected to wire the Great Western main line between Bristol Parkway and Cardiff, excluding Patchway and Severn Tunnels which have already been completed. After a pause in mast and wiring work since March, October saw wiring between Newport and Cardiff to coincide with closures for bridge work. The entire project should be completed by late 2018 and will include the four-track sections between Severn Tunnel and Cardiff.

At Cardiff, the four-track main line was lowered this autumn at the rail intersection bridge east of Central station where it crosses the feeder to the city's docks. For different periods, the main line and then the relief lines were closed. Train services between Newport and Cardiff were reduced during these closures. There were complete closures on two weekends for bridge demolition and replacement work at Mardy and Splott.

■ ■ Welsh affairs committee

Railfuture has responded to the inquiry of the Welsh affairs committee of the Westminster Parliament into the cancellation of plans to electrify the 60 miles between Cardiff and Swansea in favour of "better value for money" bi-mode trains.

■ ■ Wales and Borders franchise

A summary tender document of the requirements for the franchise bid was issued by Transport for Wales on 29 September but it provided very little information on expected service levels. There were only two indications of improvements, which were Sunday services on all lines and 15-minute interval services on some Cardiff valley lines. Further devolution of rail powers is still awaited as is confirmation of the financial settlement. Rather than follow the traditional model for procuring a rail service, with the issue of a set specification that companies bid for, the Transport for Wales approach is to allow new ideas to be explored and collaborative working relationships to be developed – setting the tone for the new service. Proposals for the South Wales Metro are being developed alongside the Wales and Borders service to aid development of an integrated transport system in the region. The deadline to submit final tenders is 21 December 2017. In October, German-owned Arriva announced its withdrawal from the new franchise bid. The three remaining bidders are from the Netherlands, France and China.

■ ■ Metro proposed for Swansea Bay

A metro system linking Swansea with its surrounding towns has been suggested by Professor Mark Barry of Cardiff University. Already known for the South Wales metro based on Cardiff, the Swansea Bay version would cost over £1 billion. He points out that a similar sum will buy only 14 miles of new motorway around Newport. Some additional lines and stations could lead to new rail services, supplemented by buses feeding into stations such as Llanelli and Gowerton. The most dramatic feature is a new line between Swansea and Port Talbot. This would be faster and shorter than the existing tortuous route via Neath, and if the curvaceous line between Cardiff and Bridgend is upgraded for at least 100mph, Professor Barry thinks journey times between Swansea and Cardiff could be reduced from 55 to 30 minutes. Railfuture cautiously welcomes the concept



**Manchester's three main railway stations were connected for the first time on 9 November when the Ordsall Chord bridge was opened. Rail minister Paul Maynard installed the final rail clip to mark completion of the Network Rail project which will link Piccadilly, Victoria and Oxford Road stations. It will reduce congestion at Piccadilly station and clear the way for new services. Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham and Salford mayor Paul Dennett joined Mr Maynard to walk across part of the bridge. The first service is scheduled for December.**

but wants to see more details and costings before giving support. We need to be sure existing services to West Wales and along the Heart of Wales line do not suffer. Professor Barry's new line would bypass Neath. We are not convinced that a 30-minute journey time between Swansea and Cardiff is achievable at a viable cost. However, the proposals could potentially bring huge benefits for Swansea's limited rail network, which it needs.

■ ■ £50m station planned for Llanwrn

A new £50 million park and ride railway station is planned for Llanwrn, according to the Welsh Government's draft budget for 2018-19, unveiled in October.

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North West

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■ ■ North-South divide affects Wirral line

Services on many Arriva Trains Wales lines have doubled over the past 10 years, while the glaring exception is the Borderlands line between Wrexham and Bidston which remains an hourly service. This service runs mostly in Wales, but affects a key travel route in Merseyside. Services within and into Cardiff have increased by 128% from 2004 to 14,237 in 2017, while those between Cardiff, Swansea and West Wales have increased 125% to 1,697 in the same time period. In contrast, Marches line services increased by about 19% while North Wales line services increased by 5%. The Wrexham-Bidston service remained the same over the same period. Despite this, passenger numbers on the Borderlands line have grown. Excluding the end stations where other services terminate, numbers travelling through all of the other stations on the line have grown from 811,001 in 2004/5 to 1,122,686 in 2014/15 – an approximate 38% increase over the 10-year period. ATW passenger numbers increased 66% over the same period, from 18 million to 30 million. Network Rail and the Welsh Government have invested significant sums in South Wales,

but smaller amounts in the north with the Wrexham-Chester re-doubling. Railfuture North West wants to see the new franchisee address this imbalance between north and south.

■ ■ New disruption plan needed

Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester rail lines group (STORM) is calling on Network Rail to revise its disruption plan after Storm Ophelia caused cancellations and disruption in October on the Calder Valley line from Manchester to Rochdale and beyond. On Monday 16 October, a significant number of afternoon/evening trains were cancelled or terminated short at Rochdale. STORM believes that, following the opening of the Todmorden curve, it would be possible for trains to reverse there, giving more passengers a chance to finish their journey beyond Rochdale. Changes to signal control arrangements could also help to improve options for Littleborough passengers.

■ ■ Poor ticket gate plans

STORM is concerned about Northern's plans to introduce ticket gates at ground level at Rochdale station. Currently the ticket office is at the top of the stairs.

■ ■ Mid Cheshire line service doubling

Following passenger counts before the letting of the new Northern franchise, Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association was invited to make submissions on the proposed timetable for the line from Manchester to Chester via Altrincham, from May 2018. The proposed doubling of the Sunday service from the present two-hourly to hourly should lead to big improvements in patronage. MCRUA joined other stakeholders to protest to Northern about the "awful" Monday-Saturday service. Northern drew up a revised draft timetable after consulting MCRUA.

■ ■ Halton Curve work under way

Work was under way in November to install a crossover at Frodsham Junction to allow trains to move in two directions from the main line to the Halton Curve. The £18 million project aims to improve rail travel from Liverpool into Cheshire and North Wales. [www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthWestBranch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthWestBranch)  
[Twitter @RailfutureNWWest](https://twitter.com/RailfutureNWWest)

Picture: NETWORK RAIL



COMMUNITY RAIL

By Chris Austin  
christopher.austin@railfuture.org.uk

Rewards for innovation

This year's Community Rail awards again highlighted the best achievements of this remarkable grassroots movement. I can only touch on the huge range of imaginative and innovative projects that I was privileged to see as one of the awards judges.

From a Railfuture point of view, it was good to know that the first prize in the Innovation category went to Purbeck Community Rail Partnership for the restoration of the Wareham to Swanage service after 45 years. The restored link successfully carried 13,000 passengers in its first 60 days of operation this year, and the operating season for next year will be extended by 50% to 90 days.

When it comes to station gardens, the bar has been set high for the past 10 years by Hindley near Wigan, where the station friends group has won many awards, and where station use has more than doubled to 333,000 passengers a year since the group started work on the station. This year, Hindley won Gold in the stations category, as well as second prize in the "small projects" category for a display of the local area's mining heritage. To cap it all the Hindley Friends' secretary Sheila Davidson was rightly recognised as providing the Outstanding Volunteer Contribution of the year.

Children and young people are the future of the railway, so it is right that one of the awards should be for projects that involve them in community rail lines. This year the winner was the talented and innovative Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership with a Carbon Reduction Challenge. Local schools in the Looe and Tamar

Valleys rode on their local trains and then started to work on the carbon savings achieved by using train rather than car, producing posters, a book, video debates and spreading the word on Facebook.

At Smethwick Rolfe Street between Birmingham and Wolverhampton, initiated by the customer service adviser at the station, a mural and garden project brought together a diverse community to create them. They also improved the station, with a smartly presented historical display area which can also be used as a room for community events.

Other award-winning projects included marketing campaigns, some stunning community art schemes, fantastic station building restorations, landscaping, bug hotels, information presentation and carol singing. There was a moving First World War tribute by Swalerail community rail partnership that brought a high-speed Javelin train to Sheerness, decorated with poppies to commemorate the important role of ambulance trains and their dedicated crews.

The Department for Transport makes an award each year for the organisation which has made the most outstanding contribution to community rail, and the overall winners this year were Community Rail Cumbria, who look after the Cumbrian coast, Windermere and Furness lines. This year they also won an award for "involving diverse groups" at Green Road station where station improvements were carried out with the charity Turning Point, who help people overcoming drug or alcohol addiction. Another award came for their work in arranging a Santa Special for



Picture: PHIL DOMINEY

**RINGING IN THE CHANGES: The Swanage Town Crier points the way ahead as the Swanage Railway rejoined the national network in June. Winner of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships photographic competition, the Swanage Link also won this year's Innovation award**

vulnerable children from West Cumbria. The train ran from Maryport station and was supported by Northern, DRS and the local authority. The third award came for the Rail Room at Millom, an interactive display about the railway's role in the town's industrial past. An award for outstanding volunteer contribution went to Tim Owen for work with both Furness and Lakes Line community rail partnerships. Tim is also an active volunteer

with the Friends of Cark station and chairs the Furness Railway Trust.

Finally, the Association of Community Rail Partnerships made a well-deserved lifetime award to Professor Paul Salveson MBE, who started off the community rail movement in 1994. The movement continues to go from strength to strength, and Paul continues to drive forward innovative and challenging ideas and to enrich the lives of everyone he meets.

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A lifetime of service

Paul Salveson waving from the cab of a steam engine at Bolton engine shed in the 1960s. He said: "A little group of us developed an early approach to 'community rail' by adopting the shed and spending our Sundays cleaning Black 5s and 8Fs."



◆◆◆◆ Please remember Railfuture in your will: [www.railfuture.org.uk/legacies](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/legacies)

## Election clarification

It is possible that members may have misinterpreted the article in October 2017 *Railwatch* concerning the Board Election process described on page 3. The Election Returning Officer is of course completely neutral in the matter of which candidates members should vote for. He does not "approve" any candidate. He may however, as has been done in the past, append a note to a candidate's election statement, where a matter of fact might influence members' decisions on which candidate to support. In this particular case, if an individual who is standing has NOT availed themselves of the opportunity to have a discussion with the Vice Presidents panel, the ERO may append a note to that effect with the candidate's election statement.

## New £13m station

Work got under way in September on a £13 million new station at Maghull North, on the Ormskirk branch of Merseyrail's Northern line. Merseyrail is also working with Lancashire County Council on providing a new rail link to Skelmersdale and a new station at Headbolt Lane in Knowsley in a £300 million project.

## High speed college

Doncaster's new £25 million National College for High Speed Rail officially opened its doors in October. HS2 engineers are likely to be trained there.

## Railfuture name

Railfuture has been the campaigning name of the Railway Development Society since 2001. But from 1 January 2018, Railfuture will be the official name too. The change of name was approved by the annual general meeting in May. The name of our not-for-profit company will be notified to Companies House and



**BLETCHLEY:** This is an artist's impression of what Bletchley station might look like if the East West Rail route is built. The EWR station would be built on the 1960s concrete flyover with a footbridge connection to the existing station on the West Coast main line. According to a report in *New Civil Engineer*, the cost of the East West Rail project has been cut by a third and construction work should start next year

the name of our bank accounts are also being changed. Many changes will have to be made to our documents and website but historical documents on the website will not be changed.

## Corby electrification

Despite cancellation of the Midland main line electrification, work is going ahead to electrify the line from Kettering to Corby. Transport Secretary Chris Grayling was questioned by the House of Commons transport committee in October about why electrification schemes had been cancelled.

## Network Rail bonus

Network Rail chief executive Mark Carne is in line for a £50,000 bonus on top of his £683,000 salary. Network Rail has been criticised for failing to implement electrification schemes properly, leading to the Government scrapping several electrification

schemes this year. Mr Carne is a former vice-president for the oil company Royal Dutch Shell.

## Engineer honoured

Carolyn Griffiths was appointed this year as president of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. She was the first woman in all nine of the jobs she held during her career.

## Christmas invitation

Railfuture members could buy Railfuture membership as a Christmas present for a friend.

## Railfuture draw

Results of the Railfuture 2017 draw were announced at the Dynamic Triangle conference in Leicester in November:

£500 - John Rice, Halsall, Ormskirk L39 8RJ  
£200 - Peter Turner, Halstead, Sussex

£100 - Mr C Brown, North Hykeham, Lincoln LN6 9ZP

£50 - Hathaway, Isle of Islay PA48 7UE

£20 - Graham Lund, Girvan KA26 9BG

£20 - N Bray, Gloucester GL3 3TE

£20 - Eric T Smith, Leeds LS11 7NN

£20 - J Harris, Wrexham LL11 3DA

£10 - Philip Smart, Ipswich IP3 0PU, Mr K Montague, Attleborough NR17 2AS, Ian & Jo Jackson, Lichfield WS13 8AD, Philip Bissatt, Taunton TA1 4JT, E V Smith, Lytham St Annes FY8 1JY, Peter Clark, Ayr KA7 2TJ, Ralph Coulson, LN8 3DR, S Jones, Market Harborough LE16 7DE

The draw was organised by Chris Bates who reports that there was a net profit of £1,549, after ticket sales of £2,559.

## RAILFUTURE AGM 2018

Notice is hereby given that the 14th annual general meeting of Railfuture Ltd (formerly known as the Railway Development Society Ltd) will be held at Holyrood Hotel, 81 Holyrood Rd, Edinburgh EH8 8AU on Saturday 12 May 2018.

There will be a morning session starting at 10.45 with two guest speakers followed by a break for lunch. The formal AGM will commence at 14.00.

Nominations for election to the board of directors must be sent to Railfuture Returning Officer, 12 Valley View, Great Bourton, Banbury OX17 1QJ to arrive by Thursday 1 February 2018.

Nomination forms can be obtained from the same address or from the Railfuture website [www.railfuture.org.uk/elections](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/elections).

Election and AGM paperwork, including a booking form for the optional buffet lunch, will be produced for the printer by 28 February 2018 and should be received by members around mid-March.

Motions for discussion at the AGM must be sent to the Company Secretary, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Ipswich, Suffolk IP9 2ND to arrive by Saturday 28 April 2018. They should be posted in typed format or emailed to [CompanySecretary@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:CompanySecretary@railfuture.org.uk).

By order of the board, I Butler, Company Secretary. Railfuture is the campaigning name of the Railway Development Society Ltd. More info about the AGM: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/>

# A high-speed visit to Bonn

By David Bosomworth

[dabos16@btinternet.com](mailto:dabos16@btinternet.com)

A party of Railfuture members enjoyed an autumn trip to Bonn, starting with a journey from St Pancras to Brussels (230 miles) on the 10.58 Eurostar, one of the original Alstom units.

We went forward to Koln (144 miles) on the latest type of Deutsche Bahn Inter City Express heading for Frankfurt.

Finally, over the last 21 miles up the Rhine to Bonn, we arrived on time at 17.12 on the oldest type of inter-city train, 10 or so coaches push-pulled by an electric locomotive.

Bonn was the capital of West Germany from 1949 until 2000 when unification determined that Berlin should resume that role, so there was much of interest in the city to see. Celebrated are Bonn's two famous sons, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) and Dr Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967).

Apart from the pleasure of taking refreshment and conversing in the warm September sun, the group made two excursions.

The first was to the one-time government administrative centre at Bad Godesberg. We crossed the Rhine to the east bank, to Königswinter, from where a metre-gauge rack railway ascended the Drachenfels.

This rock gave superb views south into the Rhine gorge and northwards on to the plain where, we were told, Koln cathedral, some 22 miles away, could be seen.

The one-mile-long rack line itself was of great interest. Opened in 1882, electrified in 1955, and modernised in the mid-1990s, it contained a well-presented museum at the lower station.

Transport for the day was by U-Bahn, a heavyweight tramway sometimes in the street, at other times in shallow tunnel, which operated frequently with speed and precision and which catered very well indeed for the travel needs of the citizens. The ticket machines speak English.

The second excursion, next day, centred on a paddle-boat ride southwards, up the Rhine gorge. After an 80-minute journey on an all-stations, privatised, electric train through Koblenz along the busy railway on the west bank of the river, the group alighted at Bad Salzig to await the paddler *Goethe*.

Although built in 1913 and still propelled by paddle wheels, the ship was diesel driven. So it looked original, vast and opulent, but had an out-of-character smell and rumble. The voyage



**THE FLEXIBILITY OF LIGHT RAIL:** Route 66 in Bonn travels underground in the city centre, but surfaces on segregated tracks in the suburbs, and as seen here in Königswinter, on a single track, sharing space with road traffic

past the Lorelei Rock to Kaub on the east bank lasted 100 minutes with the ship unable to make much speed against the current. For the next two hours the group was surrounded by "transport" with busy railways on either side

of the river each carrying a procession of trains, and many large barges and passenger vessels on the Rhine – Europe's greatest artery indeed. A local electric train took us back along the east bank line, which carries most

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**Advertising:** Full page: £190. Half page: £95. Quarter page: £45. Small ads are free to members. Otherwise: 30p per word.

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## JOIN RAILFUTURE

**Membership** £18 per year (special offer). Pensioners, students and unemployed: £14.

Joint: £23. User groups, community and parish councils: £21  
You can join using PayPal via [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk) or by post, please contact Railfuture Membership, 1 Queens Road, Barnetby le Wold DN38 6JH. Email: [membership@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:membership@railfuture.org.uk)

## RENEW MEMBERSHIP

**Renewals and other membership queries:**

Use PayPal on the website or send a cheque to Railfuture Renewals, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND. Email: [renewals@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:renewals@railfuture.org.uk)

**Elections** Board elections held annually. Nomination forms can be obtained from [www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=Elections](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=Elections)

**Who's Who** Many other useful contact details can be found on the Railfuture website: [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk)

of the freight traffic, to Koblenz where we changed on to a double deck train for the 5000 horse power dash to Bonn, noting that stairs in a railway coach hardly help short station stops.

Some of the group sped north to Wuppertal to see the famous suspended tramway, the Schwebebahn, whose cars hang under a steel viaduct high above the street or river.

The journey home was marred by border delays in Brussels where a large number of passengers meant the 18.57 Eurostar ran 25 minutes late, giving us more time to further consider the pros and cons of Brexit.

We left with the impression the Germans are "very good at public transport".

No apparently impossible problems with electrification (their network is largely finished using unobtrusive posts and span wires) and the country does not seem beaten by the cost and disruption of installing tramways. But they are behind us when it comes to modernising stations and cleaning the outside of their trains. There appears to be little difference in reliability and time-keeping.

German inter-city trains spend more time in stations than ours do but they have to contend with different platform heights and gaps, fewer doors per car and very small seat numbers which luggage-burdened passengers find difficult to locate.

The supply of new trains seems much the same as at home and there are few locomotive-hauled passenger trains.

On the freight side our wagon fleet, such as it is, is generally cleaner than DB so rail freight looks better in the UK, but it is thinner on the ground.

Trevor Garrod organised and conducted the visit so the writer thanks him on behalf of those who took part for his initiative, hard work and kindly attentiveness to our needs.

Similar trips are planned for 2018. There is much to see and much to learn from our neighbours.

## Railwatch welcomes articles and pictures from rail users and rail user groups

Send your material to: The Editor, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU

Email: [editor@railwatch.org.uk](mailto:editor@railwatch.org.uk)  
Please use email if possible but include your postal address

# Brighter electric future for Breich

The Scottish Transport Minister has intervened to prevent Network Rail closing Breich station on the Glasgow-Edinburgh line via Shotts. Humza Yousaf said the station would be retained after the “overwhelming response” to a survey was in favour of keeping it open.

Mr Yousaf said talks would also be held on whether more services could stop at the station, which is currently served by one service a day in each direction, six days a week.

The future of the station was under review as part of an electrification project on the Shotts line. It would have been the first closure of a Scottish station for 31 years - after Balloch Pier in 1986.

Rail campaigner Graham Larkbey said: “This is a victory for opponents of closure by stealth.

“It’s a pity Chris Grayling wasn’t so robust with Network Rail over Pilning as his Scottish counterpart was over the exact same situation at Breich!”

Despite losing its footbridge a year ago to make way for overhead wires, thus reducing its service to one-direction-only, usage at Pilning this year is already well up on the total for 2015/16, thanks to promotional activity by the station’s user group.

You can check out the video and “Footbridge Demolition First Anniversary Song” and buy a T-shirt at [www.pilningstation.uk](http://www.pilningstation.uk)

## Night trains

Night trains have a role to play as part of an international or long-distance network, enabling rail to offer an alternative to the plane and long-distance coach, writes Trevor Garrod.

The French region of Occitanie is subsidising a night service.

In November, the Back-on-Track network of organisations and campaigners went to Perpignan in south-west France for a meeting and visit organised by local activists, to learn from each other’s experiences.

This is to be followed by a conference aimed specially at decision-makers at the European Parliament in Brussels on Tuesday 30 January. Details: [www.back-on-track.eu](http://www.back-on-track.eu) or contact Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ. [trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk)



Pictures: JOHN LEATHERDALE

CEREMONY: Francesca Caine and Andrew Sidgwick watch Will Pike cut the red ribbon

## A great ‘step’ forward for rail passengers

More than 100 Hadley Wood residents gathered at the Hertfordshire station earlier this year to celebrate a rare achievement – the official opening of the accessible step-free entrance to the northbound platform.

The impact of initiatives like this on people’s lives was described by Will Pike who performed the opening ceremony. Will uses a wheelchair since he was caught up in the 2008 terrorist attack on the Taj Mahal hotel in Mumbai.

The speech by Francesca Caine, chair of Hadley Wood Rail Users Group, was punctuated by the occasional train, each heralded by Will waving a flag. The achievements of the user group were recognised in Railfuture’s 2017 rail user

group awards. Hadley Wood RUG picked up the Silver Award for Best Campaign while the Clara Zilahi Award for Best Campaigner went to Francesca Caine.

Also at the event was Andrew Sidgwick, GTR’s programme manager, who was said to be the prime mover in the project. Francesca thanked GTR for their help in providing the new entrance, the first on this route within Greater London, and many other improvements made in collaboration with the user group. Elsewhere on the rail network, much needs to be done to make stations more accessible. Further up the East Coast main line at Biggleswade, disability campaigner Emily Brothers had to take two taxis, one from Hitchin to Biggleswade and another from the station

to the venue where she was to speak. She told the local paper, the *Comet*: “Being at an unmanned station at night when you are disabled and blind and there are fast freight trains rushing past is quite a scary experience.

“It is a disgrace that Biggleswade station is a ‘no go’ place for disabled people. Travel for work or leisure is a fundamental right, but disabled people are still excluded by inaccessible buildings and policies. Companies like Govia/ Great Northern need to do better and be less rigid in their response to difficulties.”

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