

Give rail a big push

LOCAL ACTION

With this *Railwatch*, you should have also received Railfuture's election manifesto, compiled by Norman Bradbury.

We hope you find it interesting but Railfuture would also like your help in campaigning for a better railway.

Please send the Railfuture manifesto to one of the general election candidates in your local area. It will have more impact if you can include a short personal letter asking the candidate to read the manifesto and saying why rail is so important to you.

Details of your local candidates can be found on the political parties' websites. Labour and Conservative are probably the main parties to target but do not forget the Liberal Democrats, the Greens, Plaid Cymru and the Scottish Nationalists or others you think are crucial.

If you would like to send copies to more than one party, you can download copies from www.railfuture.org.uk/tiki-index.php?page=General+Election+2010

Now could be a key time in the run-up to the election to make our presence felt. We need to ensure that rail projects are protected from

the expected cuts in public expenditure. Rail projects are better than most other schemes in giving a good return for money invested, they help regeneration and job creation, as well as creating a greener future with less road traffic and less pollution.

"It's paramount we do not deprive future generations of a lasting legacy of good transport services," said Louise Ellman, chairman of the House of Commons transport committee. "Investments made now or in the near future should reflect long term needs of the economy and society."

The transport committee's report *Priorities for Investment in the UK Railway* has identified the Manchester Hub rail project and electrification as top priorities.

Conservative shadow transport secretary Theresa Villiers however has warned that "many railway projects and plans will come under review".

She added: "The real issue is affordability, and I cannot give a guarantee that any scheme would go ahead under a Conservative government until we have applied the value for money test."

railwatch

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Elections Board elections held annually. Nomination forms can be obtained from Returning Officer, PO Box 7690, Hinckley LE10 9WJ. You can also download a form from www.railfuture.org.uk

Who's Who: Many other useful contact details can be found on the Railfuture website

Wales

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Future railway infrastructure

Railfuture was delighted with the publication in January of a report into *Future Railway Infrastructure in Wales* by the National Assembly's enterprise and learning committee. I appeared before the committee as a witness in October and many of the points Railfuture made (see *Railwatch* 122) were incorporated into the January report. You can download the report from <http://www.assemblywales.org/cr-ld7872>

Through service restored but still more needed

The Welsh branches have for years campaigned for reinstatement of through services to the south coast and west of England. There were once through services from Wales to Penzance and from Manchester via Abergavenny to Portsmouth Harbour. The branches made these views known once again in their submission to the Great Western rail utilisation strategy, a copy of which was sent to the Welsh Assembly Government. A slight improvement from December has seen the introduction of services from Cardiff to Paignton and Plymouth.

Electrification given the go-ahead

The Welsh branches welcomed the announcement of the electrification of the South Wales main line to Swansea. The branches previously compiled a report *The Progressive Electrification of the Welsh Rail Network* which has been submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Transport Consortia. The report is on Railfuture's website and has been received favourably by officials in Wales.

Severn Tunnel improvements

The remodelling of Severn Tunnel Junction, part of the Newport East improvement work, has caused considerable disruption to passenger services to and from South Wales. The Severn Tunnel was closed on Saturdays and Sundays from 21 November to 20 December with some trains diverted via Gloucester. A complete closure took place from 22.30 on 24 December until 03.30 on 4 January with no trains between Newport and Bristol and Gloucester, and this was followed by Saturday and Sunday closures of the Gloucester line from 8 to 24 January. First Great Western provided a few through services from Swansea to London Paddington via Hereford. It was the first time a passenger-carrying IC125 train has worked from Newport to Abergavenny. A new platform 4 on the London-bound tunnel line was brought into use at Severn Tunnel Junction on 4 January.

New signalling centre

The first stage of the South Wales control centre was brought into use on 4 January, controlling lines between East Usk, Newport and Patchway. The centre is on the site of the former milk depot, west of Cardiff station and on the opposite side of the main line to Cardiff Canton depot. The Network Rail and Arriva Trains Wales controllers covering the whole of Wales have already moved into this centre

Ferry sailings withdrawn

The Stena ferry services were at a low ebb in January when there were no sailings between Fishguard Harbour and Rosslare Harbour nor between Holyhead and Dun Laoghaire. There is no indication of these service withdrawals in the Arriva Trains Wales timetables. The Welsh branches have submitted evidence to the Welsh Affairs committee's investigation into Welsh ports drawing their attention to the deteriorating quality of the ferry services. They have also brought the issue to the attention of Welsh Assembly Government.

Last of the aluminium freight trains

The last train of aluminium left Anglesey Aluminium at Holyhead on 31 October. There have recently been proposals for a rail-connected container terminal at Holyhead but the site of the previous container terminal has been converted for road use.

Docks traffic returns

There has been a revival of rail traffic to and from Cardiff Docks. An imported consignment of steel slab was moved by rail to Margam, and steel coil has been brought from Llanwern and Margam for export. In addition, billets and steel products have been conveyed locally from CELSA Cardiff for export.