

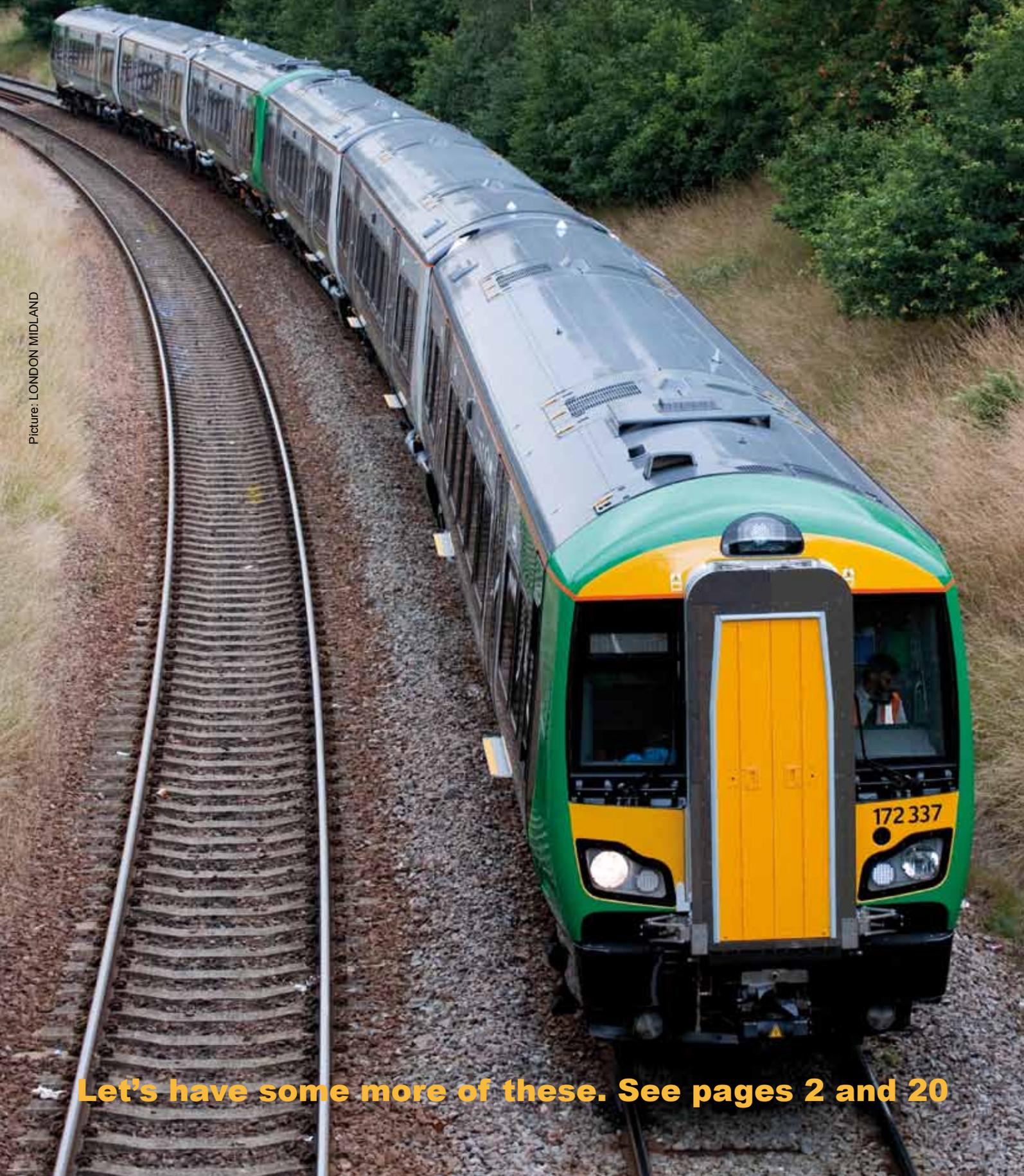
railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

No 129

£2

October 2011



Picture: LONDON MIDLAND

Let's have some more of these. See pages 2 and 20

Page one picture

Our cover picture shows the new train London Midland is introducing on routes around Birmingham.

Built and designed in Britain, the class 172 has a proven track record, with electric and diesel variants providing reliable and comfortable service.

It is the train that could transform the lives of people who are currently shuffled around the railway network in crowded and unsuitable trains like the 138 Pacer units.

Virtually every train operator in Britain does not have enough good trains to meet demand and nowhere is this more obvious than around our big cities and on branch lines.

On some routes, particularly those operated by East Midlands Trains around Nottingham and Sheffield, the problem of overcrowding is severe. Bombardier could be asked to produce a range of two, three, and four car trains which

would allow the national diesel fleet to be upgraded to meet modern demands.

Recently, Bombardier's electric trains have transformed rail travel for millions. The company provided Capitalstars for the London Overground, Electrostars for c2c, and Turbostars for Chiltern Railways to expand its fleet.

Southern and SouthEastern commuters welcomed Electrostars as replacements for the old slam-door trains.

Some Thameslink passengers are already lucky enough to travel on Bombardier's Derby-built Electrostars, while most have to make do with the old class 319s operated by First Capital Connect.

Building more class 172s would be a good way to relieve the problems of unsuitable Pacers and overcrowded Sprinters. It could also secure Bombardier's future in Britain.

See also pages 14 and 20

railwatch

ISSN 0267-5943 www.railwatch.org.uk

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Printed by Print-Out, High Street, Histon, Cambridge CB4 4JD

Tel 01223 232709

Railfuture members receive Railwatch free

Non-members can subscribe by sending £8 (cheque payable to Railwatch) to: Alan Cocker, 11 Franklin Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 9DX

Copy deadlines: For the next issue, to be published in December, copy must be emailed to editor@railwatch.org.uk by 5 November. Paper copy can be sent to 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU but will need to be earlier.

Advertising: Full page: £190. Half page: £95. Quarter page: £45. Small ads: 30p per word. Free to members.

Railfuture

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£21 per year. Family: £21 plus £2 for each extra person. Pensioners, students and unemployed: £14. User groups, community and parish councils: Please apply for rates.

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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/tiki-index.php?page=Elections

Who's Who

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

Rail gives good value for money

By Ian Brown

ian.brown@railfuture.org.uk

When Sir Roy McNulty's "value for money" report was published, one of the headlines read: "A billion pounds can be cut from rail costs without cutting services".

There was much dialogue and, indeed, acknowledgement within the railway business of the potential to make savings while Sir Roy was preparing his report.

But by the time the report was published on 19 May, now nearly five months ago, the dangers were recognised.

How can savings be delivered by an industry that created the current cost structure – without resort to cutting back on services and thwarting future developments?

Well so far, silence – certainly no urgency. The rumblings around the establishment of the Rail Delivery Group are positive, although the jury remains out in terms of the industry delivering these savings. The exercise will need drive and a degree of independence if it is to create momentum. What happened to the McNulty "Change" team? Do we care? Well yes, we should care. There are a couple of choices which I think we should contemplate. The first is that the Government thinks rail is too expensive. A lot of investment has gone and is still going into the industry at the moment.

A start is being made on electrification, and then there are major projects such as Thameslink and Crossrail, and Network Rail's approach to a UK-wide signalling control strategy.

Great, but the big gap in investment is in the area of the social railway, where investment in new trains such as replacement diesel multiple units is essential.

Failure to demonstrate value for money will hit the social railway sector hardest as the case for reinvestment will be weak.

The second choice is cost reduction versus growth. Our social railways are scoring well in terms of increasing passenger numbers.

The second task is therefore to accommodate this growth without the linear cost increases that seem to go with growth in the rail industry. As an alternative to a 30% cost reduction, if we were

to stabilise the industry's current costs but absorb 30% more passengers within the existing cost structure, we would have implemented Sir Roy's recommendations. As rail is such a minority player, growth is essential if we are to capitalise on the social and economic benefits of providing rail service in terms of investment in the social railway.

Accommodating growth is also essential if rail is to be considered seriously on environmental grounds.

Rail must counter the RAC Foundation's strongly projected argument that road is so dominant in market share that the only way forward is investment in more and more roads. Rail must grow and grow fast.

Indeed market forces are producing more efficient cars producing fewer pollutants, raising the spectre of rail's natural environmental advantages being eroded by over-specification of power requirements, excessive standards, and excessive weight. If we do not invest in new equipment properly specified for the social role, this trend will continue, and yet the business case is difficult to present. The pre-nationalisation private sector companies addressed this by cascading equipment on to the social railway, the branch and secondary lines.

This won't work in the current scenario, although there is certainly a cascade from well-thought-out electrification such as the North West incremental electrification scheme.

A similar approach should also be applied to the West and South Yorkshire region.

So we know addressing these issues is important for investment and growth and we know there is scope.

My worry is in the area of incentives. Who is incentivised to make all this happen in the social sector? Isn't the default position to cut back rather than grow?

Many readers will remember Soviet days when efficiency and production targets were issued to the local tractor factories from the centre. This approach is as unlikely to work in the social railway sector here under a Tory government as it did in the Soviet Union.

The classic way of addressing this problem in a market econ-



WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN A RAILWAY: Cyclists on the Cambridge to St Ives guided busway before it became operational in August. The busway was built on the trackbed of the former railway, even though most people wanted the railway reopened. Campaigners and the railway industry failed to convince the policy makers that public money would have been better invested in a railway. Now we hear that local councillors were bullied into approving a similar busway on the former Luton-Dunstable rail line

omy is to have a customer (a client) and competition for service and investment delivery.

We miss the competition point altogether in the rail industry, pretending this is achieved by franchise competition.

Rail is, however, competing for investment against other modes.

My previous articles in Railwatch looked at Transport for London and the English city regions, the passenger transport executives and the integrated transport authorities.

These, along with Transport Scotland, have been very very successful in investing in, and developing, the social railway, evidenced by the tally of station openings and reopenings. Devolution is therefore, in my opinion, essential in providing the client for the social railway.

Devolution can also bring in the missing competition element, not just between a franchise competition but in making choices between investment in main line rail or in light rail, in road-based solutions or in providing integrated transportation, making best use of rail. This potentially forces the issue in terms of rail value for money.

If rail does not rise to the occasion, then other solutions will be found. In a city context, interestingly, even with rail's current

project "processes from hell" and high cost structure, these bodies have seen fit to invest in rail in a big way, particularly where they have had the critical mass to set up an effective client organisation such as in the PTEs.

Where they have not set up competent client organisations, project fiascos and escalating costs have occurred just as much in the light rail and road sectors, for example Edinburgh's ineffective client management of the tram scheme.

Something similar has happened in the Cambridge segregated bus scheme fiasco.

Rail need not be afraid of entering a world of the "informed client" and subjecting rail projects and service specification to local choices.

Painful? Yes probably, but certainly effective in seeing rail subject to the market forces that could result in the renaissance of the social railway into a relevant and growing modern network, capable of addressing the environmental, social and economic issues before us.

Currently many of these issues are outside the rail-cost equation.

■ Ian Brown CBE spent his working life on the railway. As head of London Rail, he expanded the Docklands Light Railway and oversaw the redevelopment of the East London Line.

LOCAL ACTION

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes
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■ ■ Electrification alternative

A plan to electrify the line between Leeds, York and Harrogate using ex-London Underground trains has been put forward by the Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce to Transport Minister Theresa Villiers. The idea is to install a modern low-cost ground-level electrification system, similar to that used on the Docklands Light Railway. The chamber believes this should be more reliable and much simpler and quicker to install than a conventional overhead electrical system and less intrusive on viaducts. The Chamber says the scheme would enable more frequent services to be run (a 15 minute frequency Leeds-Harrogate-Knaresborough and a 30 minute frequency York-Harrogate) and around 40% higher seating capacity plus significant proper standing room for short journeys. For more information: www.harrogatechamber.org/harrogateline.htm

■ ■ MP calls for stations to aid regeneration

During a debate in Parliament in June, Leeds West MP Rachel Reeves urged the Government to make progress on reopening Kirkstall Forge and Apperley Bridge stations as a way of kick-starting the regeneration of the area. Commercial Estates Group wants to build 1,000 flats, 246 town houses, 13,500 sq metres of offices, retail units, bars, restaurants, a hotel and community facilities.

■ ■ Reopening campaign wins a boost in York

Dr Paul Salvesson was speaker at a meeting in July to launch the York branch of the Minsters Rail Campaign which wants to reopen the line between Beverley and York, closed in 1965. George McManus, a former mayor of Pocklington, who chairs the campaign, said: "It's great news that members in the York area will now have a focus for local activities which will play a major part in our ambitious campaign."

"I'm delighted that local members have taken the initiative to establish their own branch. Building a campaign over a 34-mile long swathe of countryside requires local organisation, supported by local members, which is why this new branch is so important." More information: www.minstersrail.org.uk/

■ ■ Settle-Carlisle line anniversary celebrations

Rail campaigners were celebrating two anniversaries in July which marked 25 years since local services were restored on the Settle-Carlisle line, together with the reopening of eight stations. It is also 30 years since the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line was founded. An outdoor "birthday" party was held at Armthwaite station, with entertainment from the Carlisle City Jazz Band.

FOSCL has made a tremendous impact over the years and its success was an inspiration for many other rail user groups which have sprung up since. Their latest offering is a 2012 calendar by campaigner and professional photographer Pete Shaw. In the Friends' latest journal, Pete writes: "Like many people at that time, I was sceptical, thinking that if British Rail and the Government wanted to close it, what could anybody hope to achieve by opposing them?"

"But then I handed over my £2 and joined the Friends. I became enmeshed in the campaigning to save the line from closure, was elected on to the committee, became secretary, then was honoured to be appointed a vice president."

For more information: www.foscl.co.uk.

North West

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

■ Sunday trains victory for Leeds-Morecambe

Pressure on train operator Northern has led to the introduction of a full, year-round, Sunday service of four trains each way between Leeds and Morecambe from autumn 2011. Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group took action because there were only two afternoon/evening trains each way from mid-September until Easter. The variable date of Easter each year meant that there might be no Sunday morning trains until late April, as this year. LASRUG has long been pressing for a full service throughout the year, and this was taken up by the community rail partnership.

This change will benefit the guided walks programmes organised by Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line and the Friends of Dalesrail, which up to now have been restricted to the summer months. LASRUG produces a leaflet listing all the walks arranged by both groups from stations on the Leeds-Morecambe line which can be downloaded from <http://tinyurl.com/3hxqmat>

The improved frequency will be welcomed by students at universities in Lancaster, Leeds and Bradford and many others. Since the early 1960s the Sunday service has been changed several times with economies and line closures, and journey times have varied. Since privatisation in 1997, it has been four trains each way in summer and two in winter.

The last enhancement to the Lancaster-Skipton timetable was in 1995, when British Rail introduced one extra train each way, Mondays to Saturdays. Though one is a very early working to Lancaster to provide the unit for the first train to Leeds and does not carry huge numbers, it is useful for people making early connections at Lancaster both north and south. Getting to and from Lancaster for work by an improved weekday frequency is LASRUG's main aim, and a later direct train from Leeds than the present 16.39, last direct train. Information from John Bearpark, LASRUG. Email: johnbearpark@yahoo.co.uk

■ STORM of protest over time-wasting buses

Passengers are annoyed that replacement buses on the line between Todmorden, Rochdale and Manchester Victoria take considerably longer than the train. Northern Rail has been asked to use faster buses than those employed for the August Sunday closures during engineering work commissioning the new Rochdale West signalbox. The approach to the train operator was by STORM (Support the Rochdale Oldham Manchester rail lines group).

The bus journey time for the 20 miles from Todmorden to Manchester was 105 minutes compared with 38 by train, 53 minutes for the 11-mile Rochdale to Manchester bus journey compared to 21 minutes by train. The earliest arrival time in Manchester from places like Littleborough or Todmorden was 11.00. There is only one all-stations bus which runs between Rochdale and Manchester Victoria that gives an earlier arrival time before 10am. Information from Richard Greenwood of STORM. www.stormrail.info/

■ Skipton-Colne in plea for regional growth funds

An application for £40 million has been made to fund the reopening of the Skipton to Colne line by the Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership which has been campaigning for 10 years to reinstate the 11 mile route. If the grant is made from the regional growth fund (round two), the Pennine Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Development Group will be formed, made up of representatives from the rail industry, county councils, private companies, SELRAP and other interested parties.

Reopening the railway would bring great social and economic benefit and would enable people to travel further to study, work and leisure activities. Fewer car journeys would be an additional benefit. Freight is also expected to be an important part of the plan. The link would also clear the way for passengers to travel to Pennine Lancashire from Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester, as well as encouraging more tourists to travel by rail and stay in the area. Information from Jane Wood, media officer SELRAP. For more information: www.selrap.org.uk

Railway to Europe

By Trevor Garrod

trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk

Railfuture's international committee has been discussing developments in rail and other public transport services to connect with ferries and planes.

We were angered by the cancellation of the Airtrack scheme for Heathrow airport and urge that a link be built between Staines and Terminal 5 at least.

It is encouraging that a new station has been built at Southend airport and we shall monitor its effectiveness following its official opening in September.

In 2012 we hope to update our report on Airport Links. In preparation for this, Howard Thomas wants to be kept abreast of developments, and good and bad experiences, which can be sent to him at 24 South Primrose Hill, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 2RG or email: passenger@railfuture.org.uk

Peter Walker has a similar brief for ferry links. He can be contacted at 26 Devon Crescent, Billingham, Teesside TS23 4BP or email: pj.walker@zen.co.uk

He has been in contact with TravelWatch Isle of Man over co-ordination between trains, boats

and buses. We have also learned from Dr Mark Gleeson of Rail Users Ireland that retiming of trains between Dublin and Ross-lare should make the rail-sea-rail journey via Fishguard more feasible and be an incentive to reintroduce sail-rail tickets.

RDS Group Travel: Every year since 1994 rail trips to the continent have been organised for Railfuture members, families and friends. Following this year's successful seven-day trip to Munich, we are considering a visit to Barcelona or Amsterdam by train for the spring of 2012. Details will be in the December *Railwatch*, and booking forms should be sent out at the beginning of January. If you would like information as soon as it is available, please send an SAE to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

Cross-Channel Tube

Eurotunnel is said to be considering introducing a Calais-Ashford passenger shuttle in response to demands from people who work one side of the Channel and live the other. The idea has been dubbed the Cross-Channel Tube. Nord Pas de Calais council supports the scheme.

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Profit motive is a loss for passengers



The more I look into what the train operators are doing and saying, the more dubious seems the message.

I feel passengers are suffering from the application of double standards. While they have to brace themselves for big fare rises, based on RPI plus 3%, train operators seem to be protected from the worst effects of the "market".

Wherever you look, the "information" seems to be unreliable and some train company statements unbelievable and contradictory. Take Virgin for example. The headline may have said "Virgin sees 29% cut in profits", but when I look further into the detail, it seems the loss results from Network Rail performing better. As a consequence, NR is paying less compensation to Virgin.

Call me old-fashioned, but in my eyes, it is good that Network Rail is not paying so much public money in compensation to Virgin. Yet in Virgin's eyes, this is mysteriously called "adverse movement in franchise payments"! This strange financial state of affairs is portrayed as a reason for the fares increases!

Likewise Stagecoach was awarded an additional £100 million after a dispute with the Department for Transport over from what date it received its support grant.

Commenting on its court case victory over the DfT, Stagecoach said the £100 million should enable its UK rail division to remain in profit. I liked the word should!

Arriva reports a drop in profits but is meeting the prospect with decisive management. All good stuff. There is similar doom and gloom from Go Ahead and others. But they hope that more revenue will come rolling in once the fare increases bite – in January next year. FirstGroup

is so strapped for money over Great Western, it is baling out of the franchise early and thus saving £800 million.

Of course, put another way, the poor old taxpayer is having to make up the loss.

The whole idea of rail franchising is a failure and a farce. Journalist Christian Wolmar often makes a nuisance of himself by asking the awkward questions: Why do we have rail franchising? There is always a deathly silence.

If the Government was trying to create a more cost-effective railway, it has failed. The railway costs five times more to run now than it did in BR days.

But the bandwagon is running. Or is it the gravy train?

Stagecoach is on the short list for the East Anglia franchise and Virgin and First Group are shortlisted for the new West Coast franchise. Privatisation has certainly been a success for some. I wonder at all this talk of

falling revenues and the need for fare increases and set it against the £51 million windfall bonus that Sir Brian Souter will get from Stagecoach.

Well so long as he pays his tax and that money goes to fund "infill electrification", maybe we can stop polluting diesels running from Manchester to Scotland. Mind you, even where we already have electrification it does not guarantee common sense. At the moment, diesels run all the way from Birmingham to Glasgow under the wires.

So let's face it, fares will go up and drive people away where they have a choice.

As a consequence those rail services that are lightly used will become questionable, clearing the way for a McNulty or Beeching style plan to be implemented.

Closing station booking offices and reducing employees' wages is not going to transform railway

finances. More fragmentation as proposed by McNulty is not the answer to problems caused by fragmentation.

Meanwhile the DfT will continue to manage micro issues like rolling stock allocations, and possibly make more messes similar to the Crossrail and Thameslink provision. Comparisons will be more difficult to make in future and mistakes more difficult to spot because Network Rail is being reorganised. NR will have regions. Well what a surprise that! Now where have I heard of regions?

A famous railwayman once wrote; "When you reorganise you bleed." Sadly Gerard Fiennes' remark is as valid today as it ever was because experience, what there is left of that valuable commodity, goes out on early retirement.

On the positive side, the railway is normally running well, with services for the most part reliable although not timed tightly enough.

Most rail journeys can be undertaken with a degree of certainty. My worry is there is no one looking strategically at the network.

We have lost a valuable east west link with the conversion of the Cambridge-St Ives line into a busway.

The Luton Dunstable busway will close yet another strategic opportunity for rail to provide a link between the Midland and the West Coast main lines.

We need a strategic look at the whole network.

But while there are rich pickings to be made out of the railway and constant shuffling of ministers and civil servants, there seems little incentive to look at other, better models for our railway.

■ Peter Rayner is a former British Rail operations and safety manager.



WASTE OF ENERGY: A Reading-bound diesel train at Newcastle about to travel 100 miles under the electric wires

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Railfuture board: Colin Elliff has resigned from the Railfuture board, which is considering co-opting a member to take his place. Any member who wants to be considered should contact the company secretary, saying what you have to offer in about 100 words, in the format of a CV or an election statement as if you were standing for election. The co-option would be for six months when an election is likely to take place. Company Secretary, Railfuture, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Ipswich IP9 2ND. Email: companysecretary@railfuture.org.uk

2011 Railfuture prize draw: If you wish to take part in the Railfuture 2011 draw, you

must ensure that your tickets are sent in to Chris Precey by 3 November. Any monies received after 3 November will be regarded as contributions to Railfuture.

Cash for campaigning: Railfuture's Fighting Fund has made contributions this year to the campaign to reopen Woodhead Tunnel and to the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group.

RailTeam survey: The European Passengers' Federation is conducting an on-line survey of international journeys made with RailTeam, the group of train operators which run high speed trains across nine countries, and forwarding to the operators regular analyses of the results. If you use, or have recently used,

these services, please log on to www.epf.eu and complete the short questionnaire. The EPF Bulletin contains preliminary findings of a RailTeam survey. You can read the Bulletin on the EPF website www.epf.eu or obtain a copy from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

Community rail boom: Most community railways around the country are booming, as reported in newspapers during August. This stemmed from an Association of Train Operators press release which has the statistics for the fastest growing lines and can be found on www.atoc.org. Chris Austin's community rail column will be back in the next issue.

◆◆◆◆ Railfuture rail users conference in Manchester 5 November 2011 <http://bit.ly/iHuaDc> railwatch october 2011 5

Wales

By Rowland Pittard rowland.pittard@railfuturewales.org.uk

■ ■ Choppy waters for Welsh ferry passengers

Arriva Trains Wales doubled the capacity of the 11.23 and 17.30 trains from Holyhead to Birmingham International during the summer. These two services provide the connections for the ferry services from Ireland. Stena withdrew the fast ferry service from Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire from 13 September to the beginning of April but unlike last winter Stena will not replace it with a smaller, fast ferry as it did last winter. The reason given for the withdrawal of the service is the high cost of fuel. This will result in no ferry services using Dun Laoghaire and its future use must now be in doubt. Foot passengers will have to use the more inconvenient Dublin Port services with earlier morning departure times. ATW also doubled the capacity of the train services to and from Fishguard Harbour during the summer. Fishguard Harbour has five additional services on weekdays from 12 September. Unfortunately the new timetable does not provide for day visitors wishing to visit West Wales.

■ ■ Maesteg remembers Railfuture's reopening battle

A plaque was unveiled at Maesteg station on 10 August to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the opening of the railway line in the town. Gareth Howells, the Mayor of Maesteg, who is a Railfuture member, thanked all concerned in the provision of the plaque and the organisation of the event. Passenger service was restored to Maesteg in 1992 and Gareth mentioned the campaigns by Railfuture to restore and improve rail services. Railfuture held a reopening conference in Maesteg in 1993.

■ ■ Too few trains to cope with summer demand

Three friendly rugby internationals were held in Cardiff in August at a time when additional ATW stock was required in the holiday areas of west and north Wales as well as on the Cambrian lines. All available stock was in use but there was considerable overcrowding on main line services into Cardiff.

■ ■ Evidence gathering but what about campaigning?

The passenger transport users committee held its second meeting in Llandudno Junction on 20-21 July and continued its evidence gathering of transport information. It is not apparent whether the committee intends to campaign for better transport services in Wales or whether this will be left to be carried out by existing organisations.

■ ■ Electrification sparks calls for more improvements

Electrification should be accompanied by incremental upgrades of the south Wales main line to allow for faster Cardiff to London services and new services from Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Bristol to Heathrow airport, by constructing a new electrified western rail link to Heathrow Terminal 5, according to recommendations in a report by Mark Barry for the Cardiff Business Partnership and the Institute of Welsh Affairs which also called for Great Western to be integrated with HS1 and the proposed HS2 to allow for through services to Europe. The report also calls for a South Wales metro system, based on electrification of the Valleys network, to provide a frequent turn-up-and-go service. The Heathrow link is also backed by the Great Western Partnership, whose members include Cardiff, Newport and Bristol councils. The partnership is also calling for a high speed rail service from London to south Wales.

■ ■ Birdwatchers track down rare ospreys

With live video cameras provided by Network Rail, birdwatchers have been able to keep an eye on an osprey nest 30 yards from the track near Dovey Junction for the past three years. Nora, the female osprey, laid three eggs which hatched in July this year. The chicks were expected to migrate 3,500 miles to Africa by the time this *Railwatch* is published. The ospreys are breeding in Wales after a break of more than 400 years.

More info: www.montwt.co.uk/dyfospreys.htmlwww.railfuturewales.org.uk

Railway boost for high tech Britain

By Peter Wakefield

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The giant Microsoft corporation is moving its Cambridge research centre to be closer to the railway station.

Staff have told Microsoft they want to be near the centre of the city and close to the station – so they can get to London fast.

For the past nine years, they have been based at a business centre in West Cambridge and close to the M11 motorway.

But now Microsoft is moving into a new building which is going up at 21 Station Road and described as a "future global business location". Whether older generations like it or not, the highly skilled, younger workers of Cambridge's high tech industries want easy access to the capital.

They like the quality of life Cambridge can offer but they also want to be able to get to London easily. London offers the buzz of a really big city. For younger entrepreneurs in particular, this is irresistible. Indeed, some prefer to live in London and commute to Cambridge for work.

The shared labour market allows Cambridge to benefit from and contribute to the agglomeration effects generated by a very much larger city.

London also offers Cambridge access to specialist marketing and management skills which are difficult to source locally.

The ancient university city of Cambridge is growing apace and is increasingly important in the world of computers and high technology. Nearly a third of the 163,000 jobs in and around the

city are now linked to high technology which also sustains 1,400 companies. The significance of this and its link to railways was revealed in a report published this year called the Cambridge Cluster at 50. The cluster refers to the high tech companies around the city.

Although Cambridge is a significant centre, the report reveals that much of Cambridge's success depends on its links to London. London has developed as a world city and its industries are the market for much of the output of Cambridge's industries. London also usually provides the finance for high tech innovation and is also a cultural centre which is a magnet for young people. The Cluster report was commissioned by the East of England Development Agency.

What it found can be applied to other towns, especially in the arc of high technology stretching from Cambridge across the south Midlands through Bedford, Northampton, Milton Keynes, Oxford, Swindon, and the Thames Valley through Reading and Newbury.

The importance of the railway came out in interviews with companies and their staff who stressed the importance of the 45-minute journey on trains which run between Cambridge and London every half an hour.

West Cambridge is difficult to get to by public transport but by contrast the rapidly growing bio-medical campus in South Cambridge, adjacent to Addenbrooke's hospital, has a good bus link from the station. This site will soon have 9,000



Picture: PETER WAKEFIELD

Construction work at Cambridge station in July: Trains provide the infrastructure which allows high-tech business to flourish

bio-tech jobs, in addition to the thousands of medical jobs. It is no accident that just 45 minutes away by train will be the proposed £600 million UK Centre for Medical Research and Innovation at London St Pancras, under construction and to be completed in five years time.

The Cluster report highlights the poor public transport links to the major industrial area in the north of the city which generates tens of thousands of car movements per day on to the adjacent A10 and A14 roads.

The county council and the chamber of commerce are keen for £1 billion to be spent on the roads to "cure" the problem but staff and companies say their major concern is the lack of a station on the nearby railway.

A new station has long been mooted and the county council has been trying unsuccessfully to find national funding for it for a long time. The nearby Science Park is one of the largest high tech sites in the UK.

If plans for a station at Chesterton Park go ahead, maybe as part of the new East Anglia rail franchise, it would provide direct services to Norwich, King's Lynn and Peterborough, as well as to London and a plethora of large settlements in between.

It will also give a three-minute journey time to the city station business area. The equivalent bus journey takes up to 40 minutes, so it will be more than just an overflow car park for the city station. Even the much-maligned guided busway could find a function as a feeder to Chesterton Park station.

The Cluster report reveals that the death of face-to-face social-business interaction is highly

exaggerated, even with the growing importance of online networking.

Railfuture believes the fast rail link to London is fundamental to Cambridge. Train operators must recognise this. There is always a temptation to tinker with a well-structured timetable. We see this with First Capital Connect adding stops to peak shoulder services and slowing them down, undermining the easily understood 15 and 30 minutes past the hour departures from both ends.

New stations must be provided to serve new industrial and settlement areas more quickly than at present.

Bus and other links to the railway station are important but have limitations. New railway routes must be provided.

It is incredible that a new rail route has not been established westwards from Cambridge to link up with high technology sites in and around Bedford, Milton Keynes-Northampton, Bicester-Oxford, Reading and Swindon.

Such a route could serve West Cambridge and fast-growing new settlements nearby. The case has been proven in report after report since 1995. The roads west out of Cambridge are some of the busiest in the country and according to the Highways Agency, failing.

High tech industry is international so good rail links to airports and High Speed One, 45 minutes away at St Pancras, are vital. Stansted Airport is well linked to Cambridge, although an extra service every hour would be welcome. A through service to Gatwick Airport will hopefully be the gift to the city from the Thameslink programme.

Severnside

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

■ ■ Bristol alliance

The branch is supporting efforts by Portishead Railway Group, Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways and Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance to expedite reopening of the Bristol-Portishead line to passenger trains. The secretary wrote to the West of England Partnership, which represents the four Greater Bristol unitary authorities, asking the WEP to include the line in this year's funding bid to the Department for Transport. In

reply, James White, Group Leader Transport Policy, said the rail project would not be included as it was at a less advanced stage than WEP's bus rapid transit schemes. He did, however, confirm that WEP supported

North Somerset Council's bid to the Regional Growth Fund for £43 million to reopen the line. He added that RGF used different criteria to those of the Department for Transport in assessing bids and that a decision was likely this year.

■ ■ Joint campaigning

A joint meeting of Severnside and Wessex branches at Yeovil on 28 May discussed issues concerning the Bristol-Weymouth and Exeter-Waterloo lines. Referring to a 163% increase in passenger numbers on the Weymouth line in six years, Wessex chairman John Friedberger considered this gave cause for optimism. This view was shared by Andy Hutchings of the Heart of Wessex Community Rail Partnership, which published 35,000 leaflets a year to promote the route and had recently organised a "food train" on which local produce was offered to passengers. Severnside co-chairman David Redgewell sounded a note of caution by suggesting that a more basic train service might result from First Great Western's intended surrender of the franchise in 2013.

Rolling stock was identified as an acute problem for the Weymouth route. DfT had refused to allow FGW to hire in loco-hauled sets. It had also declined to underwrite a Sunday service between Swindon and Weymouth, although this was funded by six Wiltshire organisations and was to operate from 17 July to 28 August 2011.

On the Exeter-Waterloo route, John Friedberger considered that a 2005 report by the South West Rail Passengers Committee had influenced the decision to provide the dynamic loop at Axminster which came into use in 2009. Noting that Network Rail was planning a £20 million signalling upgrade west of Basingstoke, he said the money had now been committed and was safe from any cost cutting which might arise from the McNulty Report. Concern was expressed that resignalling might compromise further double tracking if structures were placed on the formation. Other ideas discussed included a half hourly service between Exeter and Yeovil Junction as well as reinstatement of South West Trains services west of Exeter. Railfuture Severnside website: www.railfuture-sw.co.uk/severnside.html



A tunnel on the Bristol-Portishead line

Picture: WIKIMEDIA



Your letters



High speed survey

I attended Railfuture's high speed rail conference at Bletchley and I cannot remember coming away from a conference so depressed! In my naivety I fondly believed that most members of our society would wholeheartedly approve of the Government's plans. As a lifelong Labour supporter I find that a Conservative Government, for heaven's sake, has not only embarked on a rolling programme of electrification but has seriously put forward proposals to develop a high speed rail network for this country. After years of the Labour Government doing nothing but talk, what is the response from Railfuture – a sort of grudging mealy-mouthed reception attended by a load of ifs and buts?

Perhaps we should change our name to Railpast! Judging by those attending the Bletchley conference you'd have thought the Government was proposing to close lines rather than build new ones.

One guy in front of me was bouncing up and down like a two-year-old kid every time an anti comment was made. With friends like that, the RAC hardly needs to make its anti case.

If you want to see what we are up against, read the transcripts of the select committee investigations on the proposals, to understand the antagonism to spending any money on railways at all, never mind high speed lines. Surely we should not be adding grist to their mill?

If you think money earmarked for the high speed line could instead be spent on upgrading the existing network, think again. It will be spent on more motorways which many people in the country would rather have. There is enough hostility to the scheme already without Railfuture adding to it! Just imagine the effect if a government scheme to build

a new motorway network alongside the present one, as is being talked about by some people, was opposed by the RAC on environmental and business case grounds. I wonder if the good citizens of Buckinghamshire would kick up such a row about that!

How about Railfuture conducting a survey of all its members to find out what our collective view is: for or against? If Bletchley indicated the generality of our members I cannot see the point of my membership!

*Michael Weinberg, Giffard Park, Milton Keynes MK14 5QL
michael.weinberg@btinternet.com*

Editors' note: Raifuture is currently preparing a questionnaire for members to find out what their views are, particularly on the current and future state of our railway system.

HS2 opportunity

I notice that some people appear a little vexed by the proposed HS2 project, and not just those living in rural Buckinghamshire.

According to my rough calculations, for the price of this London-Birmingham link, adding in £500 million for the rebuilding of New Street station, we could afford instead some 4,000 new suburban stations. Alternatively, 2,000 new stations and many miles of new track.

I know in the Leeds area alone we need at least six new stations to fill gaps through some densely populated areas. Probably other large towns and cities around the country could claim many more places where 100,000 passengers annually would board and alight, making each new station a good investment. The result would be a much happier and better connected Middle Britain.

*Peter Yates, All Saints View, Leeds LS26 8NG
scribe1@graduate.org*

New stations

May I add a little to Ian Brown's review of new stations in the

metropolitan regions outside London (*Railwatch* 128)? The main programme in Greater Manchester ran in the 1980s, with some activity before and after. The context was that the Picc-Vic scheme for a Central Manchester tunnel linking suburban rail corridors had not been approved by central government. Similar schemes had been approved in Clydeside, Merseyside and Tyneside.

Options – resulting eventually in Metrolink, the Windsor link and Salford Crescent station and the airport link and station – were under study.

In the meantime, the local authority wanted to safeguard and upgrade the network, some of which had been built mainly for freight, with affordable schemes. West Yorkshire had shown the way with a programme of simple, new, unstaffed stations.

Ian Brown's review draws on Railfuture's book *Britain's Growing Railway*, the fifth (2010) edition of the *A-Z Guide to Rail Reopenings*.

However, I have noticed an omission from the book – Godley on the Glossop line. This station opened in 1986 as a replacement for Godley Junction. The new station is sited where the line crosses the A57 road, a visible and accessible location. The previous station's location at a rail junction had become irrelevant once the other line had closed. In this respect, Godley is similar to Derker on the Oldham-Rochdale line, which opened in 1985 to replace Royton Junction.

A Metrolink expansion programme is currently underway. Obviously, the completely new lines (Ashton, Chorlton-Manchester airport) have new stations. The lines using former railways (Chorlton-Didsbury) also have new stations on a mix of old and new sites.

The line being converted to Metrolink from heavy rail (Oldham-Rochdale) again includes some new stations, just as the North Tyne Loop did when it was converted to form the Tyne-Wear Metro.

In the 1980s, we identified potential new stations between Manchester and Oldham, but we were advised against them because of timetabling issues and gradients. With Metrolink, these problems go away. Manchester-Oldham-Rochdale will be pretty much a new line

when it reopens as Metrolink. More on the 1980s programme can be found in an article in *Modern Railways*, August 1985.

*Keith Rogers, Chair, 1980s New Stations Working Party, Greater Manchester Council
rogers691@btinternet.com*

Rail in Romania

I travelled by the Romanian State Railways when on holiday in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, last September. Making day-long excursions by train from that city, I was very surprised by the overall standard and general comfort of the service provided. All railway stations I visited were staffed with a station master and booking clerk, including even the stations in the smallest of places.

It was possible to obtain a travel ticket with seat reservation at the ticket kiosk for a train departing that same day, even just a couple of hours hence, and all at a fraction of the price one would pay for an equivalent journey length in this country.

Furthermore the guard on the train would take you to where your reserved seat was if you happened to be sitting/standing in the wrong place. The carriages were always very comfortable with most of them, as far as I could see, having corridor and compartment stock for standard class, something which went out from the railways in Britain many years ago.

Moreover, unlike in this country, the trains seemed to run all night. The timetables were painted up on the walls of every station I visited, even those serving a village, stating that trains would be departing at 2, 3, 4am. There seemed to be a great deal of luggage space in the carriages. I even witnessed a farmer unloading his produce by the sackload after alighting from a train at Cluj-Napoca one evening.

Importantly, all the trains I used seemed to run on time, albeit to a slow schedule, and there were no irritating fanfare announcements over a tannoy to interrupt one's peace.

*Nick Hunter, Marchmont Street, Edinburgh EH9 1EL
nicholashunter@hotmail.com*

Station usage

It is good to look at the success of rail reopenings in our major conurbations, as reported in *Railwatch* 128. However, categorising new stations on the

grounds of passenger usage is a somewhat simplistic approach. Obviously a station in the centre of a big city is going to have a greater footfall than one elsewhere.

But at the same time, it costs a good deal more to construct and operate somewhere like Manchester Airport compared to, for instance, Walsden in West Yorkshire which reopened during my time at Hebden Bridge. In these unenlightened times, cost-effectiveness is important in getting the pro-rail message across.

*Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby DN31 2JP
timmickleburgh2002@googlegmail.com*

London traffic

It is many years since "the fact" became established that "of all train journeys in Britain, two thirds start or finish in London". It is no longer true.

The station usage report at the Office of Rail Regulation website shows in table 3-1 that there were a total of 1,065 million entries into stations (thankfully exits match exactly), and shows in table 3-4 that 378 million passengers entered the "big" London termini.

So the proportion going to London is about 1/3 of the total. Of course the 378 million people going to the big stations excludes those who go from lesser London stations, but these are the stations that tend to be implied by "going to London". Even if it were true that "of all train journeys in Britain, two thirds start or finish in London", common sense and observation show that the idea that "everything centres around London" is untrue.

Let us think ourselves in Glasgow Central. Are two thirds of the passengers going to London? Of course not! Likewise for Manchester Piccadilly. Likewise again for Birmingham New Street.

If we think ourselves in Euston or any other big London terminus, do the passengers all look as if they have come

Send your letters to:

The Editors, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU
Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk
Railwatch also welcomes articles and pictures
Please use email if possible

a long way? Of course not! They are local people making local journeys. Their journeys start and finish in London. This so-called "truth" simply reflects the fact that London is a big city and relies more than most on its railways. Is this what is called "spin"?

*Michael Bell, Forest Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne NE12 8AR
michael@beaverbell.co.uk*

Pacers sell-by date

A recent visit to Exeter reminded me how absolutely bizarre it is in 2011 that "these buses" are still the staple diet of many regional services, particularly in the Northern and Great Western franchises. Given their age, and that they must have been paid for even by the terms of the horrendous leasing arrangements, why on earth have the "banks", their owners, not been shamed into get rid of Pacers and provide these two areas with trains worthy of the century. Bombardier could do with the business.

*Councillor Geoff Heathcock, Queen Edith's Way, Cambridge CB1 8PW
geoff.fire9@hotmail.co.uk*

Bikes on Thameslink

I was very interested to read Phyllis Hardie's letter in *Railwatch* 128 pointing out the help and facilities provided on German trains (ICE trains are the glaring exception) for passengers travelling with cycles.

Having recently travelled with a cycle on Deutsche Bahn internal services in and around Berlin I can only endorse her comments. By the way it is now possible to take a pre-booked cycle from London to Germany using Eurostar to Paris (efficient but expensive) and the DB night services from Paris.

Compare this with the problems in this country resulting from the fragmented services. For more than 18 months I have been trying to persuade First Capital Connect to ensure that a bicycle/wheelchair logo is displayed on the appropriate coach on all their services, a feature that is missing from many of their Thameslink services using the Sutton loop.

After raising the issue with FCC direct in the first instance and receiving a dismissive response, I contacted ATOC who advised me that this was entirely a matter for the various

individual companies. My next step was to pursue the matter through London TravelWatch who advised that they agreed with my complaint and would take up the matter with FCC on my behalf.

After 12 months, however, absolutely no progress has been made on such a simple matter to resolve and FCC have made clear to London TravelWatch that they are not prepared to donate any time or money to assist passengers.

I suppose the next step will be to take up the matter with the Department of Transport, but I have little confidence that they will have any influence over a company that is clearly more concerned with the interests of its shareholders than its passengers.

*Peter Randall, Banstead Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 4DW
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Fares are big issue

Having recently read a copy of *Railwatch*, which I obtained from the Ian Allan bookshop at Waterloo, I would be interested to read more about upgrading the rail network for the future, renovation of stations and the big projects like Thameslink, High Speed Two and Crossrail.

As a regular user of the rail network, I would also like to see more about fare structures. As a single person who does not qualify for railcard reductions, other than the Network card, I believe it would be helpful to have a yearly national railcard.

I also believe it is a retrograde step that the all-line Railover does not now cover peak travel to and from the main line termini.

S P Vince, Snowdon House Meadow Road, Sutton Surrey SM1 4NF

Publicity

Mr Peter Kennard (*Railwatch* 128) raises points about Railfuture publicity. In answer to his question about the book *Britain's Growing Railway*, review copies were sent to many periodicals and some of them published reviews.

In March, the Railfuture board voted by a majority to disband the publicity team which it had suspended six months earlier. I voted against disbanding it.

The board has now decided that all adverts and leaflets will be initiated by branches or specialist committees, with

finance from the recently formed Information, Publishing and Communications Group. Any branch or committee wishing to do this should email: ipc@railfuture.org.uk

I expect the board to review the effectiveness of this new system before it decides the 2012 budget on 26 November.

In response to two of Mr Kennard's other points:

The board is ultimately responsible for policy decisions, but these are usually based on detailed study and discussion within branches and committees first.

The annual general meeting can also make policy decisions, which it is the responsibility of all Railfuture members to implement. The board has accepted my proposals to make the AGM decision process more effective in 2012.

Our membership does not just consist of individuals but also many local affiliated rail and other public transport users' associations, so we actually represent more than the number of members shown in the annual report.

*Trevor Garrod, Railfuture board member, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ
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Africa calling

I am now in South Africa and of course fighting the cause of rail here. *Railwatch* still goes to my poste restante address in Leeds but this means I may not see it for nine months.

Can it be sent to my South African address instead? If there is any extra charge, please let me know.

I get two other magazines sent every week or two. It would help a lot to receive *Railwatch*. I am very grateful for the excellent coverage of *Railwatch* which I read almost cover to cover.

Rowland Dale, Fish Hoek 7975, Cape Town, South Africa

EDITORS' NOTE: Rowland's *Railwatch* will now go direct to him in South Africa.

More letters: Page 18

Can a new 'Northern' escape from its dismal Pacer past?

By Malcolm Chainey
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Readers in the North of England will be aware that the Northern Rail franchise is drawing to a close. The scheduled end date was September 2013, but this has now been extended by the Government to April 2014.

The current franchise was let in 2004 on a standstill basis. Northern Rail was asked to operate the existing timetable with the existing fleet. This rather poor deal was struck at a cost of £2.2 billion in subsidy over the course of the franchise.

Despite the standstill nature of the franchise, passenger numbers have increased significantly since 2004 and there is serious overcrowding on commuter services into the principal cities of the North. According to the Northern Route Utilisation Strategy recently published by Network Rail, passenger numbers are forecast to rise even further.

It is hardly unreasonable to expect the new franchise to accommodate the growth in passenger numbers that has occurred since 2004 and to make provision for the increase in numbers that industry forecasts predict. The big problem, of course, is the price tag. It can be predicted with confidence that there will not be £2.2 billion on the table in 2013.

The rail industry is in a state of flux at present. Government has consulted on franchise policy, and the McNulty review of industry costs has reported.



THE NOTORIOUS BUS ON RAILS: A two-car Pacer unit at Prudhoe on the Newcastle-Carlisle line last winter

We expect to see Government proposals following these reviews in a Railways White Paper due to be published in the autumn. The policies in the white paper will shape the new Northern franchise.

The recent announcement of a timetable for forthcoming franchise competitions raises the intriguing possibility of reshaping the franchise map. Robert Forsythe considers below how this might work in the North East.

The current franchise

On the whole, Northern has performed creditably, with reasonable levels of punctuality and reliability. The franchise came through the Northern services review in 2005 with a clean bill of health. And in the past two winters, when snow brought most other forms of

transport to a grinding halt, Northern's trains were often the only form of transport running. Some aspects of the franchise have disappointed. Mostly these are down to its design.

Pacer trains are unpopular and have limited capacity at peak times. Timetable development has been limited, and there is no scope to run additional services where existing ones are overcrowded. And the treatment of passengers at times of disruption is as bad as it was before the franchise began.

Finally, there is a lack of ambition at times of predicted peak demand. This is visible every year on the Tyne Valley line when the Northumberland County Show takes place at Corbridge on the May bank holiday Monday. It was even more visible in May of this year

when the Radio 1 Big Weekend was held in Carlisle. Northern Rail posters warned that the number of travellers expected would exceed the number of seats that could be provided.

A public transport system that was genuinely responsive would have foreseen the demand and would have the resources to meet it.

What is Tyne Valley Rail Users' Group looking for?

Some of the features that we want to see in the new franchise will be shared with other groups, such as a timetable responsive to local needs, decent rolling stock, improved punctuality and reliability, and smarter ticketing. At rock bottom, we are looking for services that will carry people to their destinations at the times that they want to travel.

Like every other group, we have specific objectives, but what we think is needed ahead of the upcoming franchise competition is a concerted campaign by user groups across the North. This would embrace engaging with passengers, lobbying MPs and other opinion formers, getting our points across in the press and other media, and building alliances with businesses and other interested parties.

If other groups are interested in joining a broad-based campaign for better local rail services across the North of England, the Tyne Valley Rail Users' Group would like to hear from you.

■ Malcolm Chainey chairs the Tyne Valley Rail Users' Group

Picture: ROBERT FORSYTHE



MORE THAN 20 YEARS OLD: A Northern Rail Pacer on the single platform at Hartlepool station in August last year

North East franchise could be the way forward

By Robert Forsythe

robert@forsythe.demon.co.uk

I attended a meeting in September 2010 which led me to reflect that something different to Northern is needed to provide a good service for Northumbria.

I blogged about this then and subsequently here (<http://robertatforsythe.blogspot.com/2010/09/york-northern-timetable-development.html>).

The proposition is very simple. Northern may be very convenient for Whitehall in that it is the single point of entry for all English local trains north of Lincoln, Nottingham and Chester.

It is an entity which has become dominated by the Humber-Mersey axis and the four adjoining integrated transport authorities therein.

You only have to be in Manchester or Leeds to appreciate the point. The major investment promised in the Northern area going forward is the North West local trains electrification.

Where does this leave the North East? It is a straightforward fact that Heaton depot (near Newcastle upon Tyne) represents an

operating island. There are no Northern local services south of Darlington to York and there are connections but very few cross-Carlisle services.

The experience of the Northern and predecessor franchises is that local management for the North East can best be described as patchy. The Northumberland Show at Corbridge, and the Bishop Auckland-Whitby Sunday through train should have been opportunities but have revealed weaknesses.

Important issues for us are the Leamside or Ashington line reopenings, new stations at Peterlee or Ferryhill, other ambitions like commuter services to Alnwick or ensuring Berwick upon Tweed and Morpeth have linking trains. But they don't make much of an impression on the agenda of Northern as a whole.

As I have written about and researched this for nearly a year now, time and time again it comes down to could local management make a difference?

Would more time spent by senior management of a North East

franchise have more success at finding funding partners to improve north eastern local services? I think politicians, policy makers and railway managers should test this idea.

Ask whether all of Heaton local train services as far down as Whitby and across to Carlisle should be operated as one franchise centred on north eastern business and institutions.

Would a partnership founded like this be able to deliver something more effective than what we have had? Could it rid us of the Pacers?

Could it actually get new schemes expanding the network off the ground again? Could it work better with the community rail partners who are now present in the North East like the North York Moors Railway and the Weardale Railway? Reflect on what Regional Railways North East and the Future Rail North East report envisaged in 1991. How much of that has been achieved?

Being ambitious for just one moment, could we specify a new generation of local trains, for our

new local train maker at Shildon to make? One that met all necessary environmental criteria but did not employ unnecessary technology?

Why do local trains need power external doors? Do electronic toilet door locks add to the experience? Is air conditioning necessary as against manually opening windows? Can we get back to having train comfort without every aviation technology?

Keep your aluminium bodies if that gives life but ensure the product is comfortable. The Leyland National Pacer does have impressive technology but that has become its Achilles heel.

Its aluminium body has enabled it to last, but who would want to repeat 26 years of these local trains? My ears would not.

■ Robert Forsythe is a transport and industrial heritage historian and consultant. He has created a vast archive of transport publicity at the National Railway Museum in York. The Forsythe Collection is accessible for consultation there, via the "search engine" archive. See also www.fionnconsultancy.co.uk and www.specialistauctions.com/shop.php?userid=101813.



A Pacer at York ready to go to Leeds in 2009



MORE COMFORTABLE: A plug-door 158 at Hebden Bridge en route to Blackburn

Picture: ROBERT FORSYTHE

North East

By Peter Kenyon
peterkenyon@yahoo.com

■ ■ High speed rail

The branch contributed to the Transport Activists Roundtable submission to the Department for Transport consultation on *High Speed Rail: Investing in Britain's Future* expressing strong support for the proposal. At the same time, a more urgent approach to the delivery of the Y route and of a truly national high speed network was recommended.

■ ■ East Coast salute

Continuing its policy of liaising with train operators, Neal Smith, head of communications at East Coast, was invited to speak at a Railfuture North East meeting in September. Neal outlined the situation faced by the operator when it took over the franchise and the improvements which culminated in the introduction of the new ECML timetable. The operator is very proud of its new complimentary First Class meals policy. Overall passenger figures, staff morale and passenger safety had improved. He was appreciative of the constructive input from Railfuture North East and the area users groups. Railfuture members questioned the value of terminating the work of East Coast and beginning all over again with a new franchise company. www.eastcoast.co.uk/

■ ■ Campaigners urged to make their franchise demands

Branch committee member Malcolm Chainey has stressed the importance of responding to the proposals for this new franchise when details are available. He is encouraging all rail user groups to take the task seriously and get in early.

■ ■ New East Coast timetable blamed for missed trains

CoastLiners report that connections along the Saltburn corridor are being missed, especially at Darlington, following changes in the East Coast timetable. They are combining with the Saltburn Line Users Group to make representations about this. More information: www.necoastliners.com/

■ ■ Rail users chalk up their successes

The South East Northumberland Rail Users Group are to be congratulated on the improvements it has won to rail services at Morpeth by their well-informed, polite persistence. The town now enjoys two, rather than one, direct early morning trains on week days from Morpeth to London. It is now possible to arrive in London on a weekday by 09.40 travelling on the Flying Scotsman. Previously the earliest possible arrival time was 10.40. Two direct evening trains (Monday-Thursday) now run from London to Morpeth, compared to one previously. There is also now an opportunity to return to Morpeth from London (Monday-Thursday) at 18.30 by direct train or 19.00 changing at Newcastle, thus giving an extra two hours in London. Previously the latest return train was at 17.30. A direct weekday evening train now operates from Morpeth to London, when previously passengers had to change at Newcastle.

Three Sunday afternoon-evening services now run from London to Morpeth, compared to one previously.

Also a direct evening return service is available from Aberdeen, which compares with the former practice of making a dash round the building works at Waverley Station to make a connection. This train complements the morning direct service to Aberdeen. www.senrug.co.uk/

■ ■ Plans for Teesside

CoastLiners report that Tees Trains, "a company interested in the community", wishes to introduce more local services in and around the conurbation and to reopen the stations at Hart and Blackheath. More detail should emerge after their October meeting. More information: <http://tees-trains-cic.socialenterprisehartlepool.co.uk/>



High speed rail and the reality of 'cheap' flights

Railfuture's high speed rail conference in July attracted not only rail supporters but some diehard opponents of the plan for HS2.

The opponents who joined Railfuture members at Bletchley were keen to highlight the problems which building a new railway from London to Birmingham would bring to their neck of the woods, Buckinghamshire and Warwickshire.

But few were prepared to accept that high speed rail solves many environmental and economic problems.

Little mention was made of one of the biggest problems which high speed rail can help to solve – the growing air pollution and nuisance caused by the growth of air travel and "cheap" airlines in particular.

And few were prepared to accept the horrendous damage that road building had already caused to the Chilterns and the other supposedly "unspoilt" areas of the country which they are keen to defend.

Amazingly some, including the Murdoch press, are still calling for motorway building in the area. Professor Andrew McNaughton, chief

engineer of HS2, made it clear that if economic growth is to be accommodated without motorway and air travel increasing, railway capacity had to increase and the best way to do that was to build HS2 which is more energy efficient than the classic railway.

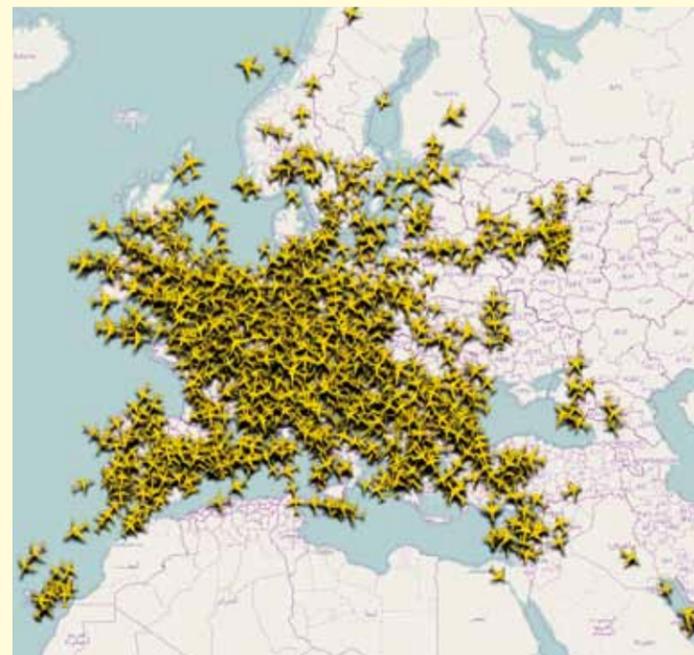
Railfuture London member Roger Blake reminded the conference of the importance of a proper link between HS1 and HS2 across London, especially to link into the European high speed network.

Lizzy Williams of Stop HS2 said it was more important to relieve congestion in the cities than to build HS2.

But Stephen Joseph of the Campaign for Better Transport said it was important to get away from car-based development and also to get away from a dependence on oil.

HS2 needed to be a part of a wider transport policy which expands the conventional railway.

He warned against local authorities' obsession with having rail stations with massive car parks, and against newspapers which gave a distorted picture of the costs of driving, going by train and flying. He warned that there are powerful forces around that



Picture: FLIGHTRADAR24

AIR POLLUTION: This is a computer image of the planes in the air over Europe at one moment on an ordinary day in July. Computer users can see live the extent of plane use in their area by downloading a free piece of software called *Flightradar24*

want HS2 scrapped so they can go ahead with motorway building.

Railfuture member David Harby also reminded the audience that Midland main line electrification was essential even if HS2 went ahead. Another member, Graham Nalty, urged that the Government should concentrate on not just HS2 but on creating a high speed network. Jonathan Tyler said a

good public transport system was an essential part of a civilised world.

Railfuture chairman Mike Crowhurst said that Railfuture members were rail users but also environmentalists.

He warned that for high speed rail to have an even more beneficial effect, the Schengen agreement needs changing so that it is easier for domestic rail travellers to use international services.

Ice cream reward for growing group of station supporters

By Susan van de Ven
susanvandeven@yahoo.co.uk

Station adoptions and community rail partnerships are commonplace in some quarters, but as yet unknown in the First Capital Connect patch.

A bit of inspiration from two National Express stations in Cambridgeshire – Ely and March – was the impetus for first steps at three First Capital Connect stations on the Cambridge-King's Cross line.

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton are now festooned with flower tubs, bird boxes, butterfly and badger habitats, and a flower and veg garden on the site of the old stationmaster's garden at Meldreth. The success of bringing these gardens to life has been down to the willingness and interest of dozens of local businesses and residents, who have provided donations of all necessary materials plus ongoing donations of time. Virtually all local primary and secondary

schools have got their hands dirty, and garden tending has become a rival to the after-school Xbox. Certainly the most tantalising contribution has been free ice cream, provided by the Meldreth Sidings ice cream distributor Gocold.

This was served up at the three stations' birthdays on 9 July, when the gardens were formally launched, and must have had something to do with the draw of many hundreds of people who came in support. By late summer, courgettes, tomatoes and cucumbers were the draw. This tremendous local support is rooted in historic interest in the railway, but also in the knowledge that the rail network on our rural doorstep is a public transport gateway to pretty much everywhere. With Cambridgeshire County Council's recent decision to scrap 100% of its bus subsidies – the most draconian bus subsidy cuts in England – access to rail is more important than ever.



DIG-IN: Susan van de Ven

The Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group, which sponsored the gardens project, is now anticipating First Capital Connect's plans on formalising station adoption and/or community rail partnerships.

Both ideas have been included in Cambridgeshire County Council's revised local transport

plan and in the council's bid to the Department for Transport's local sustainable transport fund.

Unfortunately, the bid was recently turned down, because the DfT refused to bail out the council in the wake of its total elimination of bus subsidies.

Of course, access is everything. The rail user group will be organising winter planting of the new platform tubs and vegetable garden, but in so doing it expects to add weight to its continuing campaign for better access to rail, disabled access where platforms are inaccessible to many, elimination of parking charges in villages with few public amenities and a safer environment for pedestrians at Foxton, famous for a notoriously difficult level crossing. Watch this space!

■ Susan van de Ven is chairman of Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group and is a Cambridgeshire County Councillor for the Melbourn division.

London and South East

By Roger Blake
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■ ■ Electrification

Electro-diesels which were built in the 1960s could be given a new lease of life, it was revealed at the Railtex exhibition at Earls Court. A class 73 loco is to be modified by fitting a pair of new Cummins diesel engines. The work is being carried out by Derby-based Railway Vehicle Engineering Limited in conjunction with its American partner, the National Rail Equipment Company. Network Rail is interested in the design as a go-anywhere rescue vehicle. But if the rebuild is successful, the locos could be used, pending the Ashford-Ore infill electrification, with a short rake of Mk 2 coaches on Brighton-Ashford International services. This could then release Southern's two-car class 171 diesel multiple units to strengthen the Uckfield line services. The same set-up on Reading-Gatwick Airport services could release some First Great Western Turbostars for other uses. This would fit in with Railfuture's campaign to end diesel operation over electrified routes.

■ ■ More trains needed to cope with Marsh Link growth

Following passenger counts at Winchelsea and Three Oaks stations in July by Railfuture's Coastway division, it seems that more trains will be needed soon on the line, which is called Marsh Link. The weekday and weekend counts show that patronage is growing. Less than a year after the stations' regular alternate-hourly services were restored, patronage is already nearly back to what it was six years ago before the extension of the service to Brighton led to the loss of the stations' regular hourly services. On the Saturday, our counters noted that most daytime trains were full to standing. Coastway division and other local groups such as Marsh Link Action Group, Bexhill Rail Action Group, St Leonards & Hastings Rail Improvement Programme, Three Oaks & Winchelsea Action for Rail Transport, Winchelsea Station Adoption Group and Sussex Community Rail Partnership are all in their different ways advocating improved and higher-capacity services in response to rising demand.

■ ■ Officials lose their grip on thousands of passengers

Passenger counts which a Railfuture volunteer carried out at Chiltern's two Sudbury stations in July suggest that patronage is much higher than official estimates. Our counts suggest that Sudbury & Harrow Road may have around 22,000 passengers per year compared with the Office of Rail Regulation's latest estimate of around 13,000. Similarly Sudbury Hill Harrow probably has around 64,000 passengers per year compared to the ORR's latest estimate of around 35,000. From the September timetable change, Sudbury Hill Harrow has five extra weekday peak services but Sudbury & Harrow Road has two fewer which leaves the station with a hopelessly inadequate service.

■ ■ Change of attitude needed on rail interchanges

Railfuture members came up with a series of ideas to improve South West Trains services in the Farnborough area, including a new flyover and a new chord, a new station and a modified station. They also highlighted the information about connections in both the GB Timetable and on the London Connections map. Neither are really reliable or clear for passengers planning journeys. What seems like a poor connection is actually often easy and very useful. The rail industry is missing a trick here, failing to promote in a consistent manner useful links which are misrepresented by distortions of distance on the maps and even of walking time in the timetable.



West Midlands

By Peter Cousins
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■ ■ Chiltern Mainline

Railfuture West Midlands has welcomed the launch of Chiltern Railways' new "Mainline" service between Birmingham and London. The company is now offering an hourly service between Marylebone and Birmingham Moor Street taking just 100 minutes on weekdays. Some services will be operated with the loco-hauled, spacious Mk III coaches which the company has acquired and these are expected to be very popular with passengers on this line. Birmingham booster: <http://tinyurl.com/3j3elgv>

■ ■ Two Together railcard tried out in West Midlands

A new "Two Together" railcard is being trialled in the West Midlands. This railcard, which offers the usual 34% discount for two named passengers when travelling off peak, is valid for journeys anywhere across the national network but will currently be available only from staffed stations in this region. There are no age restrictions but the trial is open only to applicants living in one of the five West Midlands postcode areas: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

More information: www.twotogether-railcard.co.uk/

■ ■ Funding for new parkway station at Stratford

Railfuture West Midlands has welcomed the announcement by the Department for Transport that the Local Sustainable Development Fund will contribute £5 million to the cost of building a new parkway station at Bishopton, north of Stratford-upon-Avon. When it opens in 2014, this could be the first new station in the region since Coleshill in 2007.

■ ■ Cotswold upgrade paves way for more regular service

The re-doubled track and upgraded signalling on the Cotswold line which will be completed this autumn will bring a more reliable and regular service to those Worcestershire and Herefordshire residents who want to travel to Oxford and London. Members of the branch who attended the launch of the first phase of the Cotswold line upgrade in August found an impressive new three-platform station at Honeybourne, which also has a large car park.

■ ■ British-made trains for Snow Hill passengers



Picture: LONDON MIDLAND

Railfuture West Midlands members were invited to the launch of London Midland's new class 172 diesel multiple units, above, which will be progressively introduced on the Snow Hill lines from September to December. The £93 million fleet of new trains, built by Bombardier at Derby, offer a major change in comfort and ambience compared to the class 150s which have served the region for over 20 years. The new two-plus-two seating layout will be welcomed by many passengers, although we are concerned that more people may have to stand on some shorter peak-hour journeys.



Picture: KENNETH BRYANT

DEFYING THE RAIN: Brompton Dock managing director Mark Antwis at Guildford with Corinne O'Loughlin of Stagecoach enjoying her first time on a Brompton bike. Inset: The Dock

Challenge to the car

Bikes and trains can rival the door-to-door advantages of a car. So it is good to see an initiative by Brompton bikes and South West Trains to promote the advantages of both.

A new "dock" was opened in July at Guildford station in Surrey where you can pick up a Brompton folding bike.

You need to pre-register and pay a £50 annual membership fee.

This gives you a smartcard which you use to release the bike and you then pay a fee based on your use of the bike, varying from £1.60 to £4 per day depending on how long you keep the bike.

The Brompton can be taken as luggage on to a train, unlike

"normal" bikes which face restrictions at peak times and on some trains.

The 80-bike capacity Brompton Dock at Guildford is solar-powered and uses up only one car parking space.

Phil Dominey of SWT said: "Brompton bikes have already proved to be a success on our network. This is the first time in the UK that Brompton bikes will be available from a self-service dock and we believe this will make it easier for people to cycle to or from Guildford station. It is another step to encourage more passengers to think of alternatives to the car." For more information: <http://pilot.brompton-dock.co.uk/index.php>

Follow-up to Eurostar survey

Thanks to members who completed the Eurostar survey, to Simon Hope for analysing the replies and to Chris Brown for drawing conclusions from the mystery shopper exercise carried out by members. Some respondents were starting their journeys from as far away as Caersws and Montrose, and continuing to a large range of destinations on the continent, and it seems some

train operators fail to provide adequate information about connections to Eurostar. Railfuture's international committee is producing a report, which will be sent to all stakeholders. We hope it will be available at the rail users conference on 5 November. You can also order it from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ (send large SAE please).

OXFORD CAMBRIDGE RAIL CAMPAIGN

The East West Rail Link has been adopted as a priority by the South East Midlands and Oxfordshire Local Enterprise partnerships.

Transport Minister Theresa Villiers has also recognised that the link has a good business case and will be seriously considered for government funding.

The East West Rail Consortium has met MPs along the route and it is hoped the MPs will form a support group.

The final West Coast main line route utilisation strategy has registered the increasing support for the East-West project and the potentially strategic importance of the route, first recognised in 1850 when the line opened!

Railfuture was planning to meet with the EWRC for an update on 6 October. It is encouraging that Transport Minister Norman Baker expects reopening costs to be cut as Network Rail seeks to concentrate on value for money.

Meanwhile Transport Secretary Philip Hammond has received the inspector's report into Chiltern Railways' plans for an Oxford to Marylebone service along part of the East-West route.

East West Rail made the headlines of *Eastern Daily Press* on 3 September following lobbying for government investment in the new rail link to bring East Anglia into much closer contact with business centres along the corridor to the West Country. The

paper reported strong support from East Anglian MPs and business leaders following a report by leading economic forecaster Oxford Economics, who made a strong case for the multi-million pound investment.

The report stated that implementing the Oxford to Bedford section alone could generate more than £38 million for the UK economy and address the slowdown in job creation along that corridor.

Local MPs Elizabeth Truss (SW Norfolk), Chloe Smith (Norwich N), George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) and Brandon Lewis (Great Yarmouth) spoke of their enthusiasm and support for the investment saying they saw improved communications such as these to have great benefit to local business and tourist economies.

The investment would also enable a link with innovation centres in the golden triangle of London, Cambridge and Oxford and would encourage new enterprises to relocate into the area.

Equally supportive was Nick Bond, head of tourism at Visit Norwich, who said increased rail connectivity from Oxford to Bedford and Norwich would help local tourism businesses.

Caroline Williams, chief executive of Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, said: "Investment in the railways makes good sense and the availability of travelling east to west by rail would save businesses time and money."

Euro journey planner

By Trevor Garrod

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How do you plan a multi-modal journey, especially when it involves more than one country? Indeed, how does your travel agent plan it?

There are some good online travel planners in some countries and Thomas Cook's European Rail Timetable remains an excellent reference work for many train journeys.

The European Transport Commissioner Siim Kallas wants to see a Europe-wide journey planner and in the spring he launched a consultation exercise. The European Passengers' Federation responded to this consultation and so did Railfuture.

The Railfuture submission, sent at the end of May, drew upon the work of our international committee and its studies of rail and bus links to airports and seaports; and also how easy, or otherwise, it is to access Eurostar from places outside London.

Ease of information and booking for such journeys is not only important for British people going abroad, but also for visitors to our country.

Our submission to the European Commission urges an incremental approach, building on what is already there. Thus we state, "The existing system for printing out details of a journey between two National Rail stations in Great Britain needs to be studied and enhanced, as do those of other European countries, no doubt, so that they can in stages be merged or harmonised to create an international system."

Such a system also needs to develop ways of capturing planned disruptions and real-time information.

Information needs to be included for people with reduced mobility. We suggest a private/public partnership could develop a European travel planner which could be implemented over a five-year period.

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright
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■ ■ Perverse government

Chiltern Railways continues to impress its passengers and rail campaigners with a string of improvements. It is pioneering a new ticketing system app for smart phones, providing 45 extra car spaces at Banbury, upgrading stations at Wycombe, Princes Risborough and Aylesbury, providing another class 121 shuttle and faster train services with Evergreen 3 from September. The Department for Transport, however, chose to fine Chiltern £350,000 for timetable changes and late delivery of some projects. Railfuture Thames Valley made representations to the DfT which helped secure a £150,000 reduction in the fine. Little inconvenience was caused to passengers by Chiltern's "offence". How perverse can the DfT become?

■ ■ Successful train chief set for retirement

Chiltern's Adrian Shooter is planning to retire at the end of 2011 after running a most progressive train company and he will be much missed.

■ ■ Millions to be spent on station upgrades

Milton Keynes Central station is receiving £2.7 million of improvements to improve access for pedestrians, cyclists, buses and taxis. Milton Keynes rail users had an input into the plans. The new Milton Keynes offices for Network Rail are progressing well and on schedule to open next year with 3,000 staff based there. Work has started on a new £2.2 million station for Wolverton, thanks to two separate government grants, the Communities Infrastructure Fund (£400,000) and the Growth Area Fund (£1.8m). The station is expected to open early next year but currently is only staffed part-time so it may be closed much of the time. Quite why it took so many years to come to fruition and why it costs £2.2 million is unclear!

Three million users of Didcot Parkway station should benefit from a multi-million pound upgrade which has been approved by Oxfordshire County Council. Work was expected to start in the autumn and should be completed in 18 months. Reading station remodelling is well under way and should be completed by 2015, a year early, with improvements to ease congestion and improve reliability.

■ ■ County council fights high speed rail plan

The Government's plan to build a high speed rail line is being opposed by Buckinghamshire County Council. Cllr Tett appeared in July at the Commons Transport Select Committee to oppose the plans. Oxfordshire County Council has opposed the plans on the grounds that the money would be better spent on other projects.

■ ■ Cotswold upgrade

The partial redoubling of the Cotswold line is nearing completion and has led to extra services which started in September. It should also bring improved reliability. The Cotswold Line Promotion Group, an affiliate of Railfuture, campaigned hard for the improvements, and provided funds for an initial study.

■ ■ Railfuture objects to railway land takeover

Railfuture joined the BRB (Residuary) and the Waste Recycling Group in successfully objecting to an application by villages in Buckinghamshire to register former railway land between Woodham and Greatmoor as a "village green". Buckinghamshire County Council rights of way committee rejected the application. If the case had been lost, other parts of the rail network would have been vulnerable to villages making "village green" takeover bids.



East Anglia

By Nick Dibben
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 and Trevor Garrod
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Change at Ipswich

Up to June this year, a third of passengers changing between London and East Suffolk line trains at Ipswich found the process unsatisfactory, according to a survey by the East Suffolk Travellers' Association. Although the situation improved from February, many passengers found six minutes too short a time to change trains and National Express East Anglia's connection policy was not clear. Sometimes East Suffolk trains have been held for late-running trains from London, and sometimes they have not. ESTA has urged the company to put in writing how long connections will be held.

A key date was 6 June, as the long-awaited extra footbridge and passenger lifts were opened then. This has eased the problem, but ESTA is continuing to monitor it. If you have difficulties changing at Ipswich, you can post a comment on the ESTA's website at www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk or write to Rod Lock, Secretary ESTA, The Beehive, Hall Road, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft NR32 3AW.

Hope for new Chesterton station for Cambridge

Railfuture was delighted to see Transport Minister Theresa Villiers visit Cambridge in September to confirm that the Government is interested in plans for a new multi-million pound rail station for the city at Chesterton. She said the Government would consider including the new station in any future franchise. She also pledged to look at the ideas put forward by MPs Elizabeth Truss, Henry Bellingham and Steve Barclay to improve the Fen line from Cambridge to King's Lynn. Network Rail is to investigate how it could provide a train every half an hour. BBC report and video: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-14845920. EDP report and video: <http://tinyurl.com/5txxy9t>

Devon and Cornwall

Torbay hopes new rail station will promote development

Four new rail stations could be opened in Devon, at Marsh Barton, Exminster, Kingskerswell and Edginswell. Edginswell is expected to be a focal point for development in the north of Torquay and could serve a new business park, Torbay Hospital, the Willows Shopping Centre and the residential areas north of Torquay. Railfuture supports the new stations for Kingskerswell and Exminster but believes there are operating problems which need to be considered carefully in providing a station at Edginswell (Torbay Hospital). The issues are dealt with in Railfuture's *South West Rail Strategy: A Discussion Document*.

Torbay Council is working in conjunction with Network Rail and First Great Western on a plan for Edginswell station and the Department for Transport has been asked to support it. Devon County Council meanwhile is working on feasibility designs and a preliminary economic assessment for the Devon metro project which would involve four new stations.

Devon metro information: www.torbay.gov.uk/implementation-plan.pdf www.devon.gov.uk/eldf-devonmetroappraisal.pdf

Railfuture's ideas for an Exeter metro: www.railfuture-sw.co.uk/Exeter%20Metro.htm

Railfuture: www.railfuture-sw.co.uk/devon&cornwall.html

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



European white paper

By Trevor Garrod

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In *Railwatch* 128 we summarised key points from the European Commission's White Paper on Transport, published in March.

There has since been much discussion on the issues. Three members of the European Passengers Federation met key MEPs in Brussels on 21 June and listened to a debate of the Parliament's transport committee, chaired by Railfuture vice-president Brian Simpson MEP.

We have also discussed it with other key players in the transport industry.

Three points in particular have emerged from our discussions:

The aim of the White Paper to reduce carbon emissions by 60% by 2050 is an admirable one, but we need to see more short-term targets and planned steps in the next few years to achieve this aim.

There have been calls from some quarters to invest large sums of

European money in developing electric cars and the infrastructure to service these.

While there is of course a role for such vehicles, they still take up space and cause congestion, just like cars driven by the internal combustion engine.

It is therefore important to keep a sense of perspective and also invest enough European money in developing public transport, particularly electric and hybrid systems.

The White Paper states that "curbing transport is not an option." Certainly, it is important that all citizens can access transport to enable them to seek work, do business and pursue studies – but is every journey currently made absolutely necessary?

Members of the European Parliament are due to debate possible amendments to the White Paper in November. Now is the time to contact your own MEPs and give them your views. I have already written to mine.

60 years of success

For the first time, the Heritage Railway Association held a reception in the House of Commons for MPs and Peers in June.

The meeting was hosted by Nicky Morgan, Conservative MP for Loughborough, who had been impressed by the benefits brought to her constituency by the Great Central Railway.

The aim of the meeting was to bring together the member railways and their MPs as well as Peers with a heritage railway interest and to promote the value and achievements of heritage railways in terms of both the local economy and of encouraging volunteering.

Significantly, Transport Minister Theresa Villiers attended and in her speech recognised this, praising the volunteers who had achieved so much. Government's role was to encourage and facilitate.

The reception has led to the formation of an All Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Railways, chaired by Nicky Morgan and with Lord Faulkner of Worcester, president of HRA, as one of the vice chairmen and your correspondent as secretary.

Extending the network

Main line links successfully introduced this year have been:

Spa Valley Railway at Eridge, Peak Rail at Matlock, Ecclesbourne Valley Railway at Duffield. And, of course, the Welsh Highland Railway triumphantly reached Portmadoc to link with the Ffestiniog.

Meanwhile the Bluebell Railway continues to remove refuse blocking a cutting on the extension to East Grinstead. 14,500 tonnes has so far been moved by rail to a landfill site in Bedfordshire, and a further 25 trains are planned to run to a site near Didcot.

A further £2.7 million needs to be raised to complete the job, which must be finished by March 2012, before Landfill Tax starts to be payable. See www.bluebellrailwaytrust.org.uk for details of how to donate.

In Staffordshire, more special trains are to be run by the Churnet Valley Railway to Caldon Low in October, while work has started on clearing the line from Leek Brook Junction to Endon on the way to Stoke. The objective of owners Moorland & City Railway is to run passenger services via this route and an extended CVR to Alton Towers.

This winter will see serious work on the trackbed on the three miles between Carrog and Corwen on the Llangollen

Railfuture winners

MULTIPLE entries to the Railfuture lottery certainly increase your winning chances – just ask Nigel Perkins! He took two prizes in our June draw.

You too could be part of the lottery, with a top prize currently standing at £40 and five further prizes paid out each month.

Entries cost just £1 per month each and half of the money raised is returned in prizes while the remainder goes into Railfuture funds. Join using PayPal at

www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery/ or for more details, email lottery@railfuture.org.uk or write to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND. Recent prize winners are:

February: Colin Rayner, Roger Webster, John Ward, Jane Vokins, Fred Golding, Timothy Fearon.

March: Hans Hammerschmidt, Mark Edgell, Edward Partington, Garth Smith, John Johnson, Hugh Freeman.

April: John Bissett, AT Hill, Steve and Sue Boulding, David Porter, Janet Cuff, Neville Bramhall.

May: Gerald Neale, Anthony Cleveley, Mike Kewell, Alan Taylor, Mark Edgell, Michael Groll.

June: Andrew Carr, Roger Blake, Roger Goring, Graham Smith, Nigel Perkins (twice).

July: Brian Balmain, Keith Porter, Mike & Lesley Kneen, Philip Bisatt, Brenda Sampson, Harry Maughan.

August: Janice Uphill, David Miller, Michael Breslin, Alan Koolman, Jane Vokins, Alan Boulwood.



Transport Minister Theresa Villiers, left, with Lord Faulkner, MP Nicky Morgan and HRA chairman David Morgan

Railway, allowing track to be laid next year with completion by the autumn. Next year should also see track upgrade works between Norden and Wareham on the Swanage Railway and Network Rail, with resumption of regular passenger services pencilled in for 2013. Currently, a few charter trains run on this link to the Isle of Purbeck.

Most railways have worked hard to attract passengers in a recession this year, and most have been successful in maintaining traffic levels by promoting themselves actively

to "staycationers", people holidaying in Britain.

The grey market has come into its own, too, with grandparents taking children for a steam train ride.

In the 60th anniversary year of railway preservation, the movement has come a long way and has not run out of steam! The original seven miles of the Talylln has extended to over 500 miles of preserved railway, and next year I look forward to reporting on further extensions and developments.

Wessex

By David Brace

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Basingstoke upgrade

Railfuture welcomes the news that South West Trains has let a £1 million contract to replace the booking hall and ticket office at Basingstoke.

The new buildings will have a stainless steel and glass frontage at ground floor level and the clock tower will be renovated. Redundant offices at ground floor and platform level will be removed. The first station opened in 1839.

Part of the second (1851) station still forms part of platform 4. The part of the station on the town side was completely rebuilt in 1903 when the tracks were widened from two to four. Efforts are being made locally to list the remaining buildings although this will not stop the current works. Basingstoke is the second busiest station in our area with around 4.9 million passengers per year and the works will, we hope, enable it to handle increasing numbers of passengers and to make platform access easier. Congestion was specifically noted at Basingstoke in the recently published draft network stations rail utilisation strategy.



NEW LOOK: How Basingstoke station will be remodelled

Gauge enhancements clear way for more freight

Railfuture salutes Network Rail's gauge enhancement work for 9ft 6in containers to be taken on the direct route from Southampton via Winchester to the West Midlands. The project is now complete and has cost less than £60 million, £11 million below budget. Network Rail has now turned its attention to the southern diversionary routes via Romsey, Laverstoke and Andover to join the main route at Basingstoke. This will require a combination of bridge raising (17 bridges) and track lowering (11 sites) as well as alterations to platform canopies at three stations. The work is already under way and will be completed by 2013. All these works will ensure that container traffic has a suitable route during engineering works or if there are operational problems on the main line. It will also provide additional paths in the future.

Network Rail's London and South East rail utilisation study, just published, indicates a likely increase from 20 freight trains a day each way to 50 by 2031. Network Rail has therefore initiated a further study to find the infrastructure required to accommodate 750 metre long trains at the southern end of this route. Railfuture is delighted to see containers passing through Basingstoke on uniform level wagons and with maximum use of capacity on each train!

Network Rail builds for a regional future

Network Rail has announced that it is to build a new Wessex region headquarters to house some 1,500 of the 3,000 staff working in the devolved structure for operations, maintenance and some renewals. This will be built on the north side of the line at Barton's Mill, just east of Basingstoke station.

Scotland

■ Villagers petition to get their station reopened

More than 600 people in the Kincardineshire village of Newtonhill, six miles south of Aberdeen, have signed a petition to have their local railway station, closed in the 1950s, reopened. They have sent their petition to Scottish Transport Minister Keith Brown and written to MSPs asking for support. Local councillor Ian Mollison said: "Aberdeen must be one of the few city conurbations in the country that does not have a commuter rail service."

■ Birdwatchers welcomed to station on tidal basin

Viewing points have been installed at Montrose station in Angus so people can enjoy the nearby wildlife, thanks to a partnership between ScotRail and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. The tidal basin is internationally important for migratory birds, including pink-footed geese and red knot.

■ Extra seats on offer thanks to new electric trains

ScotRail added extra carriages to peak-hour trains from Larkhall, Motherwell, Lanark, Dalmeir and Milngavie into Glasgow in September. The extra rolling stock is available thanks to the introduction of new class 380 electric trains in Ayrshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire. ScotRail managing director Steve Montgomery said: "Demand for rail travel continues to grow and our priority is to deliver more trains and more seats where they are needed most."

■ Passengers to be surveyed over better rail services

The Dornoch Rail Link Action Group is carrying out a survey to assess passengers' attitudes to the idea of rail upgrades and major journey time reductions on the Inverness to Wick and Thurso line. More information: www.dorlag.co.uk

■ Scots fares to go up – but England and Wales fare worse

ScotRail issued a press release in August reassuring its passengers that it is not subject to the retail price index plus 3% increases on regulated fares which the Government is imposing on people in England and Wales in January. Scottish fares will rise by RPI plus 1%.

■ Electrification could be the spark for new Crossrail

Network Rail is planning to electrify the City Union line in Glasgow so north Clydeside electric trains can get to Shields maintenance depot under their own power. Railfuture believes this £20 million project could be a first step to restoring a "missing link" to the passenger network and creating a Crossrail. It would save many people having to walk between Glasgow Central and Queen Street stations and could be completed in time for the Commonwealth Games in 2014.

Contact details for Railfuture Scotland:
mike.harrison@railfuturescotland.org.uk
www.railfuturescotland.org.uk

Lincolnshire

■ Railfuture display helps to spread the word

Railfuture Lincolnshire took its display stand to the Grantham Rail Show on 3 and 4 September. Recent press interest in demands for better links from Lincoln to King's Cross resulted in branch chairman David Harby appearing live on Radio Lincolnshire. David was also interviewed by Lincs FM about concerns that some of the local station booking offices could be closed.

■ £2.2 million investment in passenger information system

Passengers in Lincolnshire benefited this summer from new information systems at Lincoln, Spalding, Sleaford, Wainfleet and Gainsborough. The £2.2 million investment by East Midlands Trains and Network Rail was welcomed by Railfuture.

Contact details for Railfuture Lincolnshire:
lincolnshire@railfuture.org.uk



Reopening Chard

David Bosomworth suggests that Railfuture should beware of reopening Chard Junction, as "little used country stations should be avoided at all costs" (Letters *Railwatch* 128). We are not suggesting wholesale reopening of village stations, but are seeking to put right a major anomaly.

The reopening would serve Chard three miles away, which is the largest town between Yeovil and Exeter (population about 13,500). The nearest stations are about eight miles away at Axminster and Crewkerne.

The fact that most journeys to stations in rural areas are made by car is an argument for, not against, reopening stations such as Chard Junction. Long-term uncertainties about oil supplies suggest that planning should aim at reducing the distance people need to drive to a railhead.

A reopened station at Chard Junction would be about the same distance that Bodmin Parkway is, on the Cornish main line, from Bodmin. Since the 1960s no one has ever suggested that Bodmin should be served by railheads at Lostwithiel and Liskeard, so why should Chard continue to rely entirely on Axminster and Crewkerne? Chard Junction was closed in 1966 and in that decade there had even been a suggestion to close Yeovil Junction and use Sherborne as the railhead for Yeovil. The article in *Railwatch* 127 did not

suggest stopping the existing hourly Exeter to Waterloo service at Chard Junction. The idea was to identify additional train paths needing only a minimum of new double track. The time-distance graph in *Railwatch* 127 shows that additional services must stop to pass at Chard Junction, so why not let passengers on and off?

Stopping at Chard Junction does not decrease line capacity as suggested by Mr Bosomworth. These extra trains could only pass through at the 85mph line speed in one direction and then only if held at Axminster for additional minutes. Those using the loop must in any case slow to 25mph with approach control. Unless we promote new services then there will never be any justification for any double tracking. It is only when we have substantial lengths of double track, with suitable signalling, that faster services will become possible. To provide faster services with fewer stops would at the moment reduce line capacity.

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Playing trains

Among the more encouraging items in *Railwatch* 128 was the report of the growing public transport role of Weardale Railway both for passengers and freight. This was reinforced by the reported plans for the Aln Valley and, in the London and South East Newsletter, of the expansion of the Spa Valley Line to join the national network

at Eridge and the continued progress of the Bluebell Line towards East Grinstead.

There have also been similar accounts of planned or actual links between Heritage Railways and public transport over recent years in many parts of the country including Wales, Yorkshire and the west of England. This is not new. Back in the 1950s as I used mundane Southern Region electric trains to get to school in Worthing, I was envious of some of my contemporaries in Kent who used the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch for the same purpose and the term heritage railways had not been coined then. Several preserved lines have always had direct connections with the main rail network, the North Yorkshire Moors, the Severn Valley and the Keighley & Worth Valley lines to name only three.

Some heritage rail projects will always be isolated from the rest of the rail network and even have poor bus connections. All will look largely to the tourist and nostalgia markets for their passengers. Indeed, among the children taken on Thomas Days and Santa Specials some will come to recognise the more general benefits of rail travel and become the regular train users of the future. However, those that can will develop a public transport role. The common, and sometimes justified image of Heritage Rail of men playing with trains should now change.

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Double vision

David Bosomworth suggests that the railway "no longer operates" in the little-used country station market (Letters, *Railwatch* 128). He should get down to the West Country more often.

Those quaint country stations that survived Beeching are now bulging at the seams, and the lucky handful that have reopened since have proved equally busy. An excellent example is Templecombe on

the Salisbury to Exeter line. Like Chard, Templecombe has little in the way of population nearby, but it turned out to be one of the most successful reopenings in our part of the world.

David also suggests that the A303 trunk road is a viable alternative to the Salisbury to Exeter line's 46mph average speed. Again, I can only assume he is looking at the countryside through rose-tinted 1970s spectacles.

Try driving from the centre of Salisbury to the centre of Exeter in one hour 50 minutes! Very unlikely, even well away from the morning and evening peak, but that's the rail schedule all day long. A future Chard Parkway would add a few minutes, but now that the line has hourly trains, there would be no need for ALL services to stop there.

Many trains currently stop to use the passing loop anyway. David's energies would be better spent arguing for full re-doubling of this very busy line.

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Rotherhithe reply

I was puzzled by David Bosomworth's observation of regret at the reopening of Rotherhithe East London line station (*Railwatch* 128 Letters). I was able to help support Railfuture's promotional desk at the station on the official reopening day and can attest to the great cheer among the local population of that heavily residential area of their pleasure at the reopening of the line.

As a Dalston resident, being able to get to Croydon in under an hour thanks to the new line feels to me as if I am a passenger on Concorde compared with the previous nightmare journey. The residents of Rotherhithe may be only some 300 metres from Canada Water, but in terms of social mobility that might as well be 300 light years.

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◆◆◆◆ Argentina and Uruguay have agreed to create a rail line between the two countries *railwatch* october 2011 19

East Midlands

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Picture: ROGER BACON

■ Campaigning pays off at Loughborough Midland station

After nearly two decades of campaigning by Railfuture East Midlands, work on the new road access, car park and bus station at Loughborough Midland, pictured above, is finally well under way. In addition Network Rail has started extending the platforms and building foundations for a new passenger bridge with lifts, which will allow the old Victorian footbridge to be removed to a new home with a heritage railway. All works are expected to be completed early next year, ready for the arrival of the British and Japanese Olympic teams to prepare at Loughborough University.

■ Worries over Government response on main line upgrade

In a written response to a request for £27 million for track re-alignment at Market Harborough and freight loops at Desborough, both designed to improve the speed of passenger trains, Transport Minister Theresa Villiers suggested the regional growth fund as a potential source of finance. There is concern however within Railfuture East Midlands that RGF funding, controlled not by the DfT but by the Department for Business Innovation & Skills, appears narrowly focused on providing immediate jobs such as those recently announced for building vans at Luton, and not on railway infrastructure. Another concern was the minister's written comment that future investment decisions in respect of the Midland main line will have to take into account High Speed Two Ltd's options for serving the East Midlands and South Yorkshire from the early 2030s, and the potential shift of passengers to the high speed network that will, in theory, release substantial capacity on current parallel routes.

■ Taxi drivers angered by station improvements

Network Rail has applied for listed building consent to improve the entrance to Leicester station. It plans to pedestrianise more than half the covered forecourt, which would improve disabled access to the station. However, the plan to allow vehicle access only from Conduit Street, at the side of the station, rather than London Road at the front, has angered taxi drivers who are concerned that Conduit Street would become too congested.

■ Passenger boom in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Rail passenger numbers at Nottingham have increased by 86% in the past 15 years, while the rise has been 219% in the rest of Nottinghamshire. The rise has been consistent at large and small stations, and is attributed to service improvements, including reopening of the Robin Hood line from Nottingham to Worksop, doubling of the frequency of Nottingham-London trains, introduction of direct Nottingham-Leeds and Nottingham-Matlock trains, extra trains at some of the county's smaller stations and improved reliability of services. In Derbyshire, the Derwent Valley line to Matlock has seen a rise of 86% in passenger numbers in just four years. The line is connected to two heritage services, Peak Rail from Matlock to Rowsley and the Ecclesbourne Valley line from Duffield to Wirksworth.

■ Ripley rail reopening plan runs into trouble

Earlier this year we reported on an ambitious proposal to reopen the branch line linking Ripley to the Midland Main Line at Little Eaton. The plan ran into serious problems and prospects for a reopening now look further away than ever, as Network Rail has started lifting the track.



Is this the future for Britain or is there a better way?

This was the dramatic moment in 2008 when London Midland unveiled the new Siemens trains it was planning to operate on the West Coast main line, pictured left.

Three years later, it looks as though Siemens has landed another £1.4 billion train order in Britain – for Thameslink.

When Siemens started winning orders for trains in Britain, passengers were not too worried.

The trains seemed reasonably comfortable and we all assumed that the competition for orders was fair.

But it now appears that Siemens' good fortune could spell the end of train building in Britain. More than 1,000 of Bombardier's 3,000 workers at Derby have been told they will lose their jobs.

And the reason: Siemens has a better credit rating in the murky world of finance than its competitors which means that it can borrow money from international financiers for less and its trains can be cheaper. After a recession caused by clever international financiers bundling up dodgy assets, the Siemens train deal no longer looks fair.

Bombardier's trains, built and designed in Britain, are just as good, if not better than the Siemens option, which are designed and built in Germany.

But the rules of international finance mean that Britain's workers lose out and the future of train building in Britain looks bleak.

All new trains might have to be sourced abroad.

And it won't be long before Siemens itself faces strong competition from China which is already selling trains successfully on the international market.

The Government must find a way to avoid Britain losing its train-making capability – by ordering a lot of new trains now. We certainly need them.

Plan A-plus could bring big benefit

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg hinted in September that the Government, under pressure to devise a Plan B, might at least resort to a Plan A-plus.

He said that bringing forward capital infrastructure projects could stimulate the economy.

Railfuture believes that the railways are crying out for capital investment and would be the best candidate for spending.

By embarking on an accelerated train building programme, the Government could help to meet the growing demand for rail travel and rescue Bombardier's threatened Derby train factory.

Bombardier could be asked to build about 100 electric power cars for the diesel Voyager and Meridian trains – used by Cross-Country, East Midlands Trains and Virgin – so they use electric power when they are travelling "under the wires". And Southern, which already operates Bombardier Electrostars, wants 30 more units to meet an expected

increase in passengers. Other electric fleets crying out for replacement are Great Northern's class 313s, ScotRail's 314s and East Anglia's 315s.

The three-car 313s could be replaced by new Bombardier fixed-formation six-car units, based on the Capitalstar design.

Three-car 314s could be replaced by four-car Capitalstars.

The 30-year-old four-car 315s could be replaced by fixed formation eight-car units based on either the 378 Capitalstar or the 379 Electrostar.

As well as ordering new trains, the Government could give the go ahead to a series of much-needed "shovel ready" rail projects, like the East-West link which could quickly be implemented from Oxford to Bedford if the political will was there.

Reopening the Leamside line between Darlington and Newcastle would provide much-needed additional capacity. Electrification of the Midland

main line as far as Corby would make it easier later to complete the Midland main line electrification which will be needed, with or without HS2.

Transpennine electrification from Manchester to Leeds should also be a candidate as well as full 25kV electrification of the Leeds-Harrogate-York line, rather than the hotch-potch suggestion based on using old London Underground trains.

Of course electrifying Gospel Oak-Barking and Ashford-Ore would clear the way for efficiency savings.

Building through platforms at Manchester Piccadilly is also essential if our Northern network is to operate effectively.

And if road user charging was introduced as advocated by Business Secretary Vince Cable, the Government would have enough money to start upgrading the railway – and providing a truly sustainable public transport system for Britain.

You can download information from www.railfuture.org.uk

ISSN 0267-5943



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