

railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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Picture: CROSSRAIL

Cutting edge of Crossrail: See Page 2

Railfuture launches first awards for rail user groups



Susan van de Ven **Tony Smale** **David Shaw** **Peter Marshall** **Derek Potter** **Peter Wakefield**

Railfuture President Christian Wolmar presented the first-ever awards to local rail user groups for their various contributions to rail campaigning.

Mr Wolmar said: "These new awards recognise the special contribution rail user groups and their volunteers make to campaigning for improvements to railway services and stations. Too often their efforts pass unremarked and unrewarded. As the national independent champion of railway development and rail users, Railfuture has commendably taken the initiative with these innovative awards."

The presentations were made at Railfuture's annual conference for rail users in Birmingham, with nine

awards being presented in categories for best newsletter, best website, best campaign, best new group, best campaigner, and a Judges' Special Award.

The judging panel comprised Christian Wolmar and vice presidents Ian Brown, Barry Doe and Adrian Shooter.

The gold award for best newsletter went to the Cotswold Line Promotion Group and was accepted by Derek Potter. The silver was collected by Peter Marshall of the Huddersfield-Penistone-Sheffield Rail Users Association and a commendation went to the Friends of Denton Station, which was collected by David Shaw. The gold award for best website went to the Meldreth-Shepreth-

Foxtan Rail User Group and was collected by member Peter Wakefield, with silver going to the Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group.

The Cotswold Line Promotion Group also took home the award for best campaign, while the Meldreth-Shepreth-Foxtan Rail User Group captured the award for best new group.

The best campaigner was judged to be Susan van de Ven, Chair of the Meldreth-Shepreth-Foxtan Rail User Group. The Judges' Special Award went to Tony Smale, the Railfuture member who edits the *Rail Users Express* newsletter and compiles the Directory of 300 Rail User Groups nationwide.

Pictures: JERRY ALDERSON

50 years of progress

By Chris Hyomes

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Next March marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of *The Reshaping of British Railways*.

It was written by Richard Beeching who was appointed chairman of the British Railways Board by the Government whose Minister of Transport was Ernest Marples.

In his brief to Beeching, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan had called for the railway to be of a size and pattern suited to modern conditions and prospects.

The report was accepted by the Government and sparked an outcry from communities that would lose their rail services, many of which, especially rural communities, had no other public transport. The Government mistakenly argued that buses could provide many services more cheaply.

Annual railway line closures, which had been running at about 150-300 miles per year between 1950 and 1961 peaked at 1,000 miles in 1964.

Labour was elected to office in 1964, after campaigning strongly against the report, but changed course and continued to implement closures. Systematic closures, however, came to a virtual halt by 1970.

One of the last major railway closures was the 98-mile Waverley route between Carlisle, Hawick and Edinburgh in 1969. Work begins next year on reopening a 35-mile section of this line, thanks to the Scottish Parliament.

While many still view the *Reshaping* report as the death knell of our railway, many people woke up to the value of the railway and have fought to retain what was left and even expand it.

The Treasury, however, wanted more cuts than Beeching prescribed. In 1961 it recommended the closure of 75% of the network by 1969. The Beeching report reined in these radical proposals, although we still lost approximately 30% of the rail network.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the BRB was forced to go cap in hand to the Government annually to beg for money to maintain and run the existing network.

The result of this short-termism was massive reductions in passenger and freight capacity and stagnation. This mood began to change only in the mid-1980s with a more business-orientated BR and a more pragmatic political framework. This all changed once again with the privatisation of the network in 1994.

Next year gives Railfuture the opportunity to celebrate the success of our rail network over

the past 50 years and, even more so, the past 30 years. Highlights include the reopening and success of many local stations, the electrification of the East Coast main line, the forthcoming electrification programme, the success of the Kettering-Corby reopening and the phenomenal success of the Ebbw valley line, the Manchester Airport link, Heathrow Express, cycle hubs such as that recently opened at Leeds and not forgetting the successful battle to save the Settle-Carlisle line proposed for closure in 1983.

It is not just the successful reopenings we will be celebrating but how railways are once again a key component in mobility and commerce.

As our organisation's name suggests, we will be looking to the future and how we can help reshape our rail network over the next 50 years.

Key issues for passengers are cheaper and simpler fares, capacity, customer service, modal integration, network connectivity, better and faster schedules, investment to reduce costs, a level playing field with other modes, and fewer interfaces and improved team work.

Plans to mark 50 years of pro-rail development are beginning to take shape within Railfuture. My own branch, Yorkshire, has plans at an advanced stage of development, starting with our AGM in Skipton on 23 March 2013.

Skipton is closely associated with the celebrated battle to save the Settle-Carlisle, but it also has the most modern rolling stock in Yorkshire, a strong reopening campaign, Skipton-Colne, and may soon have a direct rail link to one of Yorkshire's most popular tourist destinations, Bolton Abbey.

We are putting together an exhibition of the developments that have taken place in Yorkshire over the past 50 years.

I have been given the privilege of leading the new special projects group of Railfuture. My first major assignment is to shape the way we celebrate the railways at a national level, but also to assist branches to formulate their own local strategies.

I shall be contacting branches soon to begin this process, although I hope everyone is already thinking about it.

High profile opportunities to celebrate and promote rail development do not come along very often, and I would urge everyone to exploit this to its full potential.

Chris Hyomes is chairman of Railfuture Yorkshire.



LOCAL ACTION

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes

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E-campaign to reopen Malton-Pickering

A campaign to reinstate the missing rail link between Malton and Pickering is being supported by Whitby town councillor Phil Trumper. He launched a petition that he is hoping could draw the Department for Transport's attention to the missing stretch of line which would allow Whitby residents a direct rail link to York, and further afield. It would also open up Whitby to more visitors and so provide a boost to the local economy. Mr Trumper said: "Mouchel did a study of the line in 2000 and at the time it was going to cost £18 million. The line is still there and it would not be any problem, so it is definitely feasible."

The study by Mouchel said that although a number of buildings and obstacles stand in the way of the route, these difficulties could "reasonably be overcome". The route from Rillington Junction, on the York to Scarborough line, through Pickering on to Whitby was closed to passenger trains between Rillington and Grosmont on the Esk Valley line in 1965. You can support the campaign by going to <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/40539>

Halifax battle over station staffing

The McNulty report, which encouraged train companies to close ticket offices to save money, has prompted a row at Halifax. Halifax & District Rail Action Group is calling for a proper level of staffing to be maintained in the evening. Seven operators, named in the House of Commons in June as wanting to cut back on ticket office hours: Chiltern Railways, East Coast, East Midlands Trains, London Midland, Northern Rail, Southeastern and South West Trains. Northern Rail was proposing to reduce booking office hours at three stations in Yorkshire: Thorne North, Mexborough, and Halifax. HADRAG was not consulted and the station hours were indeed cut. The office now closes at 20.00 instead of midnight. About 20 trains call at the station after the office, waiting room and toilet have closed.

Now some women are saying they are reluctant to use the station at night if there are no staff present. HADRAG has contacted Northern's managing director Ian Bevan and Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin calling for a rethink. HADRAG said: "We are not saying the booking office must be staffed all evening. A better idea might be a person in a high-vis jacket with a customer service-security role. They could help people with the ticket machine, help people up the stairs, and help protect revenue. Yes, costs must be cut; trains are a commercial operation – for which people pay high fares – but also a public service supported from taxes. Penny pinching on station staff ignores vast sums that go to the various intermediaries in the complex privatised structure of 'GB Rail'. It is also quite simply a retrograde step when rail use shows massive growth that will continue. The new generation of train passengers expects high quality service. So yes, Halifax station should have staff in attendance until the last train has gone."

Stanley King – a grand chap

Rail campaigners in Yorkshire were saddened by the death of Stanley King, former chairman of West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority, and mayor of Bradford. Veteran campaigner Paul Salvesson said: "Stanley was a Conservative of the old school, representing the very best of that political tradition which numbers Oastler, Disraeli and RAB Butler.

"Stanley was a dedicated rail and tram crank and wrote several important books and articles on transport. His book on Keighley Corporation Transport (1964) is detailed, knowledgeable and well written. He had a well-honed Yorkshire sense of humour. I can remember him appearing at one of the early TR&IN conferences and filling in his registration form in his usual punctilious manner. The section on any special dietary requirements led to the request for jam roly-poly with custard."

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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

Page one picture

Another tunnelling operation has been launched as London's £15 billion Crossrail project makes progress.

Our page one picture shows a 550 tonne tunnel boring machine, named Elizabeth, lowered down a 40 metre shaft at Limmo Peninsula, east London, in October.

Elizabeth's job is to cut a tunnel under the river Lea to Canary Wharf where a new Crossrail station is being built.

Another TBM, named Victoria, will be boring the second tunnel from Limmo to Canary Wharf. From Canary Wharf, the two machines will proceed via Whitechapel and Liverpool Street to Farringdon.

Two other TBMs, Phyllis and Ada, have been hard at work under London, heading in the other direction, west to east, from Paddington to Farringdon.

They are expected to reach Farringdon late next year.

Crossrail chief executive officer Andrew Wolstenholme said: "When Crossrail is completed it will dramatically improve transport in east London and bring places like Custom House and Abbey Wood to within 20 minutes of London's major employment areas." The spoil from Limmo

will be taken to nearby ships which will then deliver 1.2million tonnes of earth to Wallasea Island where a new bird and nature reserve is being created. Eight TBMs will eventually be used to excavate 13 miles of twin bore tunnels for Crossrail.

The whole line will not open until 2018 but its significance is rapidly being recognised. It is suggested that Heathrow and Stansted airports could be linked to make them a dual hub, avoiding the need for a new airport.

The idea comes from Ken Shuttleworth, founder of the architectural practice MAKE.

Apart from its obvious transport advantages, Crossrail is expected to boost property values along its length by £5.5 billion.

Rather than merely going into estate agents' pockets, Dave Wetzel, the former Greater London Council leader who got the original Thameslink project going, believes a land value tax should be introduced. At a conference in London in November, he outlined how proceeds of the tax could be used to build affordable housing.

More information: www.labourland.org www.crossrail.co.uk

North West

By Arthur Thomson
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■ ■ Leeds-Morecambe

The Lancaster & Skipton Rail User Group is pleased that the Government has designated the line a community rail service. Community Rail Minister Norman Baker said: "I want to encourage communities to become more closely involved with their railways to help create the services and stations passengers deserve." Richard Rollins, chairman of the Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe Community Rail Partnership and co-chairman

of LASRUG said: "This is excellent news. Designation will enable the community rail partnership to work together with the local community to make significant developments along the line." Co-operation with train operator Northern Rail had already secured a trial service of four trains a day on Sundays throughout the year, enabling passengers from Yorkshire to enjoy a day out in the area.

He added: "Inter-regional rail lines, such as the Leeds-Lancaster-Morecambe are often the Cinderella of rail services, compared with the lines to and from London. This recognition that links between cities outside London, and the towns along their path, require efficient rail services, is important for regional development."

■ ■ Floral Friends of Hindley Station are the Best

Friends of Hindley Station have won more awards for their hard work in creating and maintaining an attractive station platform. They gained second place in October at the 2012



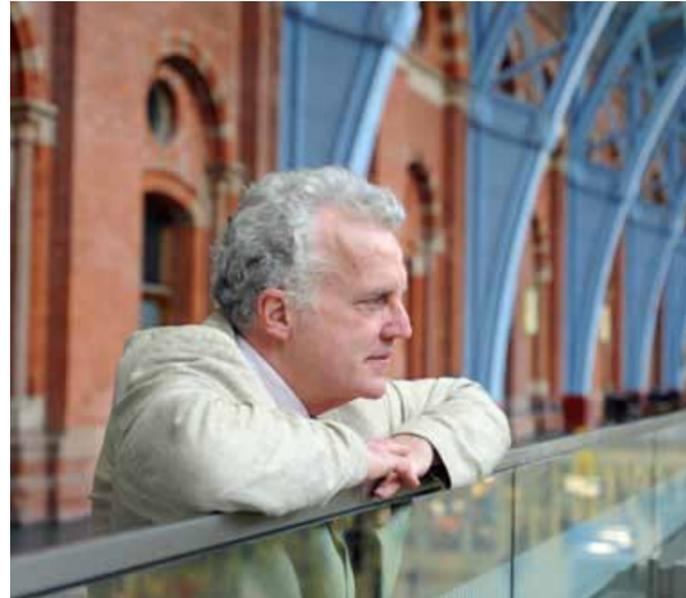
Community Rail Partnership Awards for the best kept station and floral display. Later in the month at the North West in Bloom Royal Horticultural Society event in Southport, they achieved level five in the It's Your Neighbourhood contest and also won the accolade of Best Railway Station.

■ ■ Stalybridge to Huddersfield campaigners make their bid

The Stalybridge to Huddersfield Rail User Group which has four stations in its area, Mossley, Greenfield, Marsden and Slaithwaite, met with Transport for Greater Manchester to set out their priorities for future improvements. Top of the list is two trains per hour, followed by through trains to Leeds from the group's four stations. SHRUG is worried by Department for Transport proposals for services from Hull and Selby to "skip-stop" at its four stations from 2016.

SHRUG campaigners are also worried that one result of implementing the Northern Hub proposals is that their trains will be overcrowded from Manchester Piccadilly. SHRUG is also keen for more action on its request for an extra service from Manchester Victoria and Ashton-under-Lyne (Charlestown) which has not been given anywhere near the weight it deserves. TFGM has agreed to try to address connection problems and morning peak gaps in its timetable reviews and to examine fare anomalies.

Real economics and rail's big contribution



Picture: PAUL BIGLAND

COUNTING THE COST: Christian Wolmar at St Pancras station

By Christian Wolmar

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A constant argument used against the railways is that they receive vast amounts of public subsidy. Yet, the headline figures presented by politicians are misleading because they do not provide the full picture.

Norman Bradbury of Railfuture and a number of colleagues have tried to dig up figures to provide a wider and more thorough analysis of the real situation on the railways.

They talked to various railway managers and while their findings are necessarily crude because the precise figures are very difficult to get hold of – and indeed what to include or not is contentious – the lesson is very clear: the real subsidy to the railways is far lower than generally realised.

There was, in fact, a missed opportunity when Sir Roy McNulty produced his report on the economics of the railways last year since he failed to consider the wider picture of the real finances of the railway.

Figures available on the Office of Rail Regulation website show that government support for the railways reached a peak of £6.3 billion in 2006-7, although McNulty says £6.8 billion.

The ORR figures show support has gone down to just under £4 billion at the moment (all in real money).

As the work by Norman and his colleagues shows, the real picture is very different, as shown in the table, right.

Take Network Rail, which employs around 36,000 people. As can be seen, there are vari-

ous ways in which Network Rail contributes to the Exchequer. The main ones relate to employment, but there is, significantly, the £200 million payment made to the Government to pay for the guarantee that Network Rail gets on its borrowing.

There are a variety of odd ones such as £4.2 million on the aggregates levy, £2.5 million on climate change levy, £2.2 million on insurance premium tax and even £600,000 on stamp duty and £83,000 on air passenger duty – all those executives flying up to Scotland, I presume!

I have left out corporation tax, which was only £3.5 million in 2010-11 because of a rebate, although this could actually amount to much more in future years.

Nor has value added tax been included because most VAT is reclaimed, although there may well be some net contribution.

For the train operators, who employ 47,000 people, there is corporation tax on their profits, as well as the employment taxes.

There are also the rolling stock companies which do not directly employ many people but pay some corporation tax, though much of their tax burden is offset by capital allowances.

The Roscos, though, face higher taxes because of complex changes in the way their assets are treated. The tax take looks set to rise to as much as £120 million by the end of the decade.

In fact, all these figures are approximate and can be argued over, although in every case a conservative estimate has been made. The key point remains. The railways are making a signif-

Balancing the books

The amounts the rail industry contributed to the Exchequer in 2010-11 (millions of pounds)

	£m
Network Rail	
Employers National Insurance	121
Landfill tax	11
Local business rates	91
Fuel tax and other duties	12
Government loan guarantee	200
Climate change levy/ aggregates tax	19
Income tax	267
Employees National Insurance	110
Network Rail Total	831
Train operators	
Corporation tax	200
National Insurance (employer and employee)	280
Income tax collected	470
Train operators Total	950
Rolling stock companies	
Corporation Tax	20
Employers National Insurance	2
ROSCOs total	22
Other (75,000 employees)	
NI and Income Tax	600
GRAND TOTAL	2403
Subsidy in 2010/11	3960
So a possible alternative figure for net subsidy	1557

icant contribution to the Exchequer which is not recognised in the subsidy figures bandied about by politicians and commentators.

Outside of the three groups listed in the table, there are something like 75,000 people employed in the industry supplying Network Rail and the operators.

I have estimated that they contribute something like £8,000 each in terms of tax and national insurance, which is fairly conservative given the high level of skills of many jobs in the industry.

The insurance premium tax of £2.2 million paid by Network Rail is interesting because it suggests that the overall bill for insurance is £44 million. That is an extra cost resulting from privatisation because British Rail was self-insured and therefore did not pay insurance premiums.

I recognise that this is largely back of the envelope stuff. But then so are many of the business cases used to analyse rail projects which would actually benefit from this type of wider analysis. Take, for example, a big construc-

tion scheme such as the rebuilding of stations like Reading or Birmingham New Street or the laying down of a new line such as Crossrail.

Typically, say, two thirds of the budget will go on manpower, a third on materials. Then, as an average, crudely, in a £1 billion scheme, about 30% of the total wages for tax and national insurance – say £220 million – and 20% (VAT) of the materials cost – say another £65 million – goes back to the Exchequer. That does not include the tax paid by labour on supplies from Britain and therefore it is quite reason-

What price these benefits?

Of course, Railfuture believes rail's contribution to the real economy is even greater when non-user benefits are taken into account. Rail is now recognised by most economists as a major engine for regeneration and various attempts have been made over the years to quantify its financial contribution to tackling the pollution, noise and health problems caused by road and air transport. For every passenger or tonne of freight diverted from road or air to the railways, the nation as a whole – and every individual – benefits, both socially and financially. If more people and freight forwarders use the railways, Britain can avoid the cost of new roads and the high cost of repairing road surfaces smashed apart by heavy lorries.

able to assume that the headline cost of all major projects should be reduced by at least a third.

This obviously should be applied to the ailing business case for HS2, even though, as readers may know, I have my reservations about that particular scheme.

Yet none of this is taken into account. Quite the opposite: the Treasury insists on increasing the expected cost of projects with an "optimism bias" figure ranging from 30 to 50% – to compensate for the tendency of project promoters to give low estimates of the ultimate cost and to pay for contingencies.

Worse, remember the way that the Treasury used to add tax foregone as a cost when assessing schemes – in other words, if a rail scheme managed to get people off the road, then the Treasury scandalously, until Andrew Adonis stopped the practice, used to put the non-payment of the fuel duty as a cost of the scheme?

Well, one way of looking at the fact that the railways employ 159,000 would be to say that they are keeping that number off the dole and contributing to their pensions – which at a conservative estimate would surely be worth say £10,000 each, so a cool £1.6 billion.

What these crude calculations demonstrate is that this type of analysis needs to be taken up more widely by the industry itself.

The industry should commission studies into the real economics of the railway in order to counter some of the crude analysis that featured in the McNulty report and has been used as a stick to beat the industry.

Railfuture has done a great job in starting the ball rolling, but these figures need filling out and, crucially, should be used widely in order to boost the industry's case for investment.

■ A longer version of this article appeared in RAIL 710.

Not-for-profit aim for Wales?

By John Rogers

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The three Welsh branches of Railfuture are delighted by news that the Government in Cardiff hopes to establish a not-for-profit rail company by the time the Arriva Trains Wales franchise ends in 2018.

Railfuture Wales proposed just such a plan to the Welsh Government two years ago.

Railfuture's plans received good media coverage and were also sent to the rail unions and local government transport consortia.

Labour and Plaid Cymru have adopted the general principle as their official policy, and the Welsh Liberals may soon be coming on board.

The Welsh Government plans were revealed by Transport Minister Carl Sergeant, at a Cardiff conference in October.

Speakers discussed every possible option, from retaining the present franchise system to a vertically-integrated Rail Wales, but it was clear that the Minister's preferred option was for a Government-owned, not-for-dividend company.

I was pleased by the reception I had as a Railfuture representative and also by the general feeling among delegates that a not-for-dividend company made sense. The franchise system is well and truly discredited.

One of the speakers was the boss of Glas Cymru, the profitable not-for-dividend Welsh water company which could be a model for our vision of a new Rail Wales.

Railfuture's plan envisages both Network Rail Wales and ATW being taken over by the Government-owned company, with London services continuing to be run by whoever has those franchises, although we would not rule out joint services.

We would also like to see the Welsh Government accepting our proposals for vertical integration, emulating Ireland.

Wales

By Rowland Pittard
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■ ■ Freight traffic

Railfuture welcomes the continued expansion of freight traffic in Wales. The Kronospan chipboard factory at Chirk is now receiving logs from Carlisle, Ribbleshead, Teigngrace and Baglan Bay (Neath-Port Talbot).

■ ■ Signalling upgrades

Railfuture is delighted to see further progress on upgrading signalling. Another phase of the Cardiff area resignalling was completed on 28 October when the section of line between Severn Tunnel Junction and Awre Crossing transferred from Newport panel to the Cardiff signalling centre. Newport signal box and the crossing boxes at Lydney and Caldicot closed. Resignalling work in South Wales continues for the next three years and is seen as an essential foundation for the electrification of the Great Western line from the London area to Swansea.

■ ■ £48m to replace viaduct and upgrade track

Work has commenced on a £48 million project to replace the 240 yard long Loughor viaduct, pictured right, over the estuary between Swansea and Llanelli, with a new double track bridge. The line between Swansea and Gowerton will also be upgraded with six miles of new double track, to provide extra capacity and flexibility for passenger services on the main line to and from West Wales. Gowerton's eastbound platform will also be reopened. Sections of the existing bridge which is a timber structure, will be preserved in the new structure.

■ ■ Train upgrades improve services in Wales

Refurbished mark 3 coaches, powered by a push-pull class 67 diesel, are now being used on the Holyhead-Cardiff premier service which runs at 05.33 from Holyhead to Cardiff and 18.21 return, Mondays to Fridays. The class 158s and 142s operated by Arriva Trains Wales have all been refurbished at either Crewe or Cardiff. Work has started on the class 150 Sprinter units.

■ ■ Railfuture Wales Development Plan

The third revision of Railfuture Wales' development plan is being prepared for consultation with adjoining Railfuture branches in England. The section on light rail proposals is being expanded and there is a new section on electrification developments, plus an enhanced bibliography.

■ ■ £5m station will boost Llandudno regeneration plans

Work started in October on the £5.1 million upgrade of Llandudno station which should be completed in 2014. The new station frontage, right, will be in keeping with the Victorian architecture of the town. Network Rail's Mark Langman said: "The project will regenerate and revitalise this area of the town."

www.railfuturewales.org.uk



Blame the politicians for wasting millions

It has been good seeing my *Railwatch* as a reader, rather than a columnist, and I have been able to sit back and not worry about my own contribution.

I have enjoyed watching the way we are going and there is so much for us to be proud about: the electrification link-ups, the battles albeit on-going against busway mania, and even being able to welcome pro-rail government action on High Speed Two.

However, things are getting sticky again. I predict there will be massive ripples from the muddle over the West Coast franchise.

In addition, the confusion gives the oil/road lobby the opportunity to rubbish the railway with the cry "The system is broke".

Railway campaigners would dispute that the railway is broke but would probably agree that the franchise system is broke and needs fixing.

Whilst we are fixing the franchise system, we could also put right one or two other things.

Let us acknowledge that the improved performance of the West Coast service is thanks to the £8 billion plus engineering upgrade and not to the Virgin PR machine.

I cannot knock Mr Branson's PR. It is infinitely superior to anyone else's which is why he can persuade 170,000 people to sign an online petition to enable him to keep making money on the West Coast main line operation.

"A remarkable performance by our team," Mr Branson calls it.

But he conveniently forgets that his trains' performance is largely dependent on the infrastructure they operate over.

When I ran the WCML we had basically two lines down the Trent from Rugby to Armitage. No doubt purists will correct me in the Brinklow/Nuneaton area, but please accept the principle.

The biggest infrastructure improvement we were allowed was the installation of an extra signal inside Kilsby tunnel which allowed us to shorten the gap between trains.

But let us not complain about progress. I am proud today to ride the WCML when it is going well.

Mr Branson has said it is running so well that Virgin Trains will soon be returning some money to the taxpayer!

We must not forget the East Coast

chise, it is well run by Directly Operated Railways and returns money to the taxpayer at the same time as Virgin continues to extract millions.

The whole process is a farce and the system of franchising flawed whether we like it or not.

First and Virgin spent £15 million each on their bids to run the WCML.

I could think of quite a few better uses for £30 million and so could most Railfuture members.

We could have improved junctions, and better speeds over junctions.

We could have got rid of some of the old non-crashworthy trains much sooner, particularly as we have a number of trains over 30 years old still running.

I have little respect for either WCML bidder.

First walked away legally from the Great Western franchise and saved itself £826 million. Put another way, the taxpayer paid up an extra £826 million.

So why did the franchise selection process go wrong? One reason was the decision by the Government to save £1 million on consultants' fees. It seems the process is so complicated and convoluted it cannot be done without the use of financial consultants.

This is the first time no financial consultants have been used.

In the past apparently the Department for Transport paid millions to PwC, Ernst & Young or KPMG.

The knock-on effect of what is portrayed as a Branson PR machine success and a defeat for First Group in fact has far reaching effects well outside those two companies.

Over the next five years, 95% of UK leased rolling stock is expected to be re-leased during a series of planned re-franchising procedures.

The West Coast re-franchising process has now been paused and an initial franchise extension given to Virgin.

This will be followed by a short two-year franchise before a long-term franchise is let.

As the Greater Western and Northern re-franchising process has now also been paused while we wait for the outcome of Richard Brown's investigation, it seems quite possible these two will end up in a similar situation to the West Coast, as indeed

RAYNER'S REVIEW

By Peter Rayner



OUT OF THE SHADOWS: Is East Coast Trains an example of how the rail industry should be run? Unlike Virgin Trains on the West Coast main line, it has been making regular payments to the Treasury. It has also been certified as one of Britain's top employers for 2012 by the independent CRF Institute. East Coast Trains is run by the Government-owned Directly Operated Railways and carries 18 million passengers annually

Greater Anglia did before. This means that the re-franchising gets pushed into an even smaller time period (95% in three years).

The alternative is to delay the rest of the re-franchising further.

This would have the effect of also delaying the provision of new trains, with the obvious result that older trains would have to run for even longer.

Some of these older trains may then have to undergo expensive modifications to comply with new regulations.

By 2020, all trains will have to comply with accessibility legislation.

Current plans to implement the works are based around the re-franchising process, but if the re-franchising process is delayed, the ability to plan and carry out all the work required to achieve compliance with accessibility legislation becomes harder to schedule.

Let us therefore not blame the civil servants, let us blame the politicians who have been told time and again that the arrangements are ridiculous and unworkable.

As Ian Brown said in *Railwatch* 131, Sir Roy McNulty was not a modern-day Beeching. His report was a careful analysis which concluded that our railways are too expensive. What McNulty focused on was staff costs, station staffing and the

introduction of more technology in the shape of ticket vending machines. That will indeed save train companies money but will not draw attention to the obvious fact that the whole industry is a costly shambles. Franchising is at the centre of it.

To return again to the problems of accessibility, we need to criticise McNulty for his recommendations on staff reduction and booking office closures.

We need to join with other protest groups and make the point that people will not travel if they feel threatened or unprotected, or cannot make the ticket vending machines work, or have no human assistance if they have difficulty with boarding.

Unless campaigning organisations are strong, we shall lose the battle to improve the railways.

If there had not been people challenging the Government, the North Warwickshire line would have been shut in the 1960s and we would not now be talking about Stratford-upon-Avon to Honeybourne reopening. The same can be said of the Settle and Carlisle struggle in the 1980s.

And what about the Woodhead line now? Do we need more protests on the ground?

It may sound harsh but we need to campaign as well as lobby. The two are different.

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

London and SE

By Roger Blake
roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

■ ■ Fifty years of progress

As rail passenger numbers soar, we can now celebrate the opening or reopening of 50 stations and 100 miles of railway in and near our region since the bleak days of 1960s closures, mostly prompted by the Beeching report. Campaigners in Railfuture and its predecessors are proud to have had a hand in most. We believe our Railfuture roots go back to 1954 and the Society for the Reinvigoration of Unremunerative Branch Lines in the UK, which was formed in reaction to the closure of the Kent and East Sussex Railway and was supported by Poet Laureate and campaigner Sir John Betjeman. SRUBLUK members wanted rail lines preserved so they could serve their communities rather than be operated as heritage lines.

■ ■ One campaign succeeds and another takes off

London and the south east escaped the worst ravages of station and line closures which plagued other areas, in the 1960s to 1980s. But the Uckfield-Lewes line did close and Railfuture is campaigning today to bring that line back to life. See the Railfuture website for the latest news on our *Bridge the gap*: Link up Sussex campaign: www.railfuture.org.uk/Uckfield+Lewes

Other lines, such as the North London line, were threatened with complete closure but vigorous campaigners were so successful in their advocacy that services on the North London and East London lines are now better than they ever were. From December 2012, London's orbital railway is completed with the opening of London Overground's Clapham Junction-Surrey Quays link. Railfuture is fortunate to have Ian Brown CBE who oversaw the establishment of London Overground as a vice-president and *Railwatch* contributor. Those new services will help offset the loss of the South London line service between London Bridge and Victoria, enforced by Thameslink Programme works at London Bridge. Railfuture campaigners were at the forefront of the struggle to save and revive the line's services and stations. London Overground is now a fine example of what Railfuture advocates as the model for London's suburban services. Despite the current re-franchising hiatus we shall continue to campaign for Transport for London to have more influence or even control over future franchises such as London services run by Greater Anglia, South Eastern and Great Northern.

■ ■ Battle still to be won over London electrification scheme

An all-electric London Overground remains incomplete while the Gospel Oak-Barking route remains diesel-operated, as shown in the picture at Harringay Green Lanes, right. We will continue to argue for electrification of the line to be reinstated and included in the programme in Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan for 2014-19 which will be published in January. www.railfuture.org.uk/Barking-Gospel+Oak



An all-electric South East network also remains incomplete, because of three other key gaps between Ashford International and Ore, Hurst Green and Uckfield, and west of Reigate towards Guildford and on to Reading.





Euro links needed

In principle I fully support high speed rail, in particular where serious competition can be applied to aviation, which is one of the most serious contributions to climate change.

I have always supported rail as the most environmentally benign form of mass travel. High speed rail could have huge benefits for direct inter-continental rail travel from principal British points of departure.

However we appear to have stagnated with direct services operating only between London and Paris/Brussels. Eurostar services, or the equivalent, need to be opened up to serve more European destinations directly.

The proposed HS2 link is however, questionable. We already have 'high speed' rail services in excess of 100mph. Taking into consideration the relatively small size of the UK, do we really need to travel any faster?

On another point, Simon Norton raised the issue of feeder services for HS2 in *Railwatch* 131.

Simon mentioned five possible routes, all serving the central hub near Birmingham, and suggested five possible destinations from Birmingham.

He did not mention two very relevant destinations: Birmingham to Brighton and Birmingham to Dover. For travellers living in Surrey, Sussex and Kent, there is the need to cross London when travelling further afield in Britain. This can be quite a stressful experience.

Until a few years ago there were two Manchester-Brighton trains a day and a service from the North of England to Kent. This took pressure off the London terminus as well as benefiting the traveller.

CrossCountry decided to axe these services presumably on the grounds they were unprofitable. This was a

retrograde move and we need to campaign for the reinstatement of valuable services such as this and for them to be expanded.

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Irish lament

The references to Beeching in *Railwatch* 133 reminded me that in Northern Ireland we had our own Beeching, in the shape of Henry Benson.

Benson was a London accountant who was hired by the Stormont government and the Ulster Transport Authority to do a hatchet job on the UTA's railways and this he did very successfully.

His report was issued in 1963, the same year as Beeching's, and it appeared just four months after the British Railways one. Benson recommended the closure of virtually all railways in Northern Ireland, except a few Belfast-based commuter lines.

Barely a year and a half after his report, major closures took place early in 1965, when the Ooraghwood to Warrenpoint and Portadown-Londonderry lines closed, the latter closure leaving the large counties of Tyrone and Donegal rail-less.

The other route from Belfast to Londonderry was saved, and is presently closed for renovations between Coleraine and Londonderry.

Apart from the latter line and the return of trains to Newry by the opening of a station on the Belfast-Dublin line, the Benson closures remain.

Benson advocated the ending of rail freight and that has been carried out.

Northern Ireland Railways is now fully equipped with new trains made by CAF and many station platforms have been extended to take six-car trains. Despite the sufficiency of rolling stock, however, the Lisburn-Antrim line remains mothballed.

With a railway system of barely

200 miles, it seems to be necessary to have three major depots in Belfast, all this for a passenger-only railway.
R A Hunter, Barn Road, Carrickfergus BT38 7EO

Electric priorities

I was so thrilled that at long last the Government has approved several railway routes for electrification. We must ensure that this programme is implemented.

However, in my view, some of the schemes are more urgent than others. The top-priority schemes should include the Great Western main line to Bristol and Swansea, including the new Heathrow link, and the Midland main line.

Furthermore, there are several routes that have not been approved for electrification which I feel are more urgent than my other "second priority" schemes which are already approved.

Most of these routes are in the London and South East region where there is a higher population density.

They are:

- The Uckfield line, if Uckfield-Lewes is reopened, will give much-needed extra capacity for the Brighton main line.

- Ashford-Hastings could provide improved connections for Eurostar services for passengers coming from Sussex, Hampshire and Dorset.

- Gospel Oak-Barking would complete electrification of the London Overground network and would eliminate more diesels in the capital.

- Redhill-Wokingham would give improved and more reliable connections for Gatwick Airport from Reading.

- The Chiltern lines.

I was also interested to learn that all the electric trains being ordered from Hitachi will be fitted with at least one diesel engine.

These bi-mode trains will provide self-rescue capability in the event of failure and will also be able to serve non-electrified destinations.

Bi-mode traction has apparently been developed in several other European countries and should also be developed more widely in the United Kingdom, no matter whether electric-diesel, or electric with both third rail and overhead equipment.

The few bi-mode examples in the UK include the class 92

locomotives which can operate on both third-rail and overhead electric lines.

Bi-mode locomotives would be particularly useful for freight trains starting their journey on third-rail territory, which involves much of the former Southern Region of British Rail and finishing up either at a non-electrified destination or one electrified on the overhead system.

Much of the Greater London region would benefit from having such locomotives which would eliminate the use of diesel on the many electrified routes in the region, and of course bi-mode locomotives would also help reduce carbon dioxide emissions, with fewer diesels operating under the wires or on third-rail lines.

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Electric option

With the announcement of further electrification around the country, is it time for Railfuture to press the Department for Transport to approve only future middle and greater distance diesel multiple units which have electric traction motors and a 25kV pantograph?

This is a standard feature of the latest generation of around 300 French "diesel" multiple units, allowing both optimum use of energy for powering, and through working where only part of the route is electrified. They can also operate in electric mode with a substantial batch of similar electric-only multiple units. Time for some joined up thinking in Britain?

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

Victim of squabble

The Government's electrification package is indeed very welcome (*Railwatch* 133), but regrettably it omits some modest but crucial "infill" schemes which could make a big difference if they were included. A notable example is Barking-Gospel Oak, 13 mostly unelectrified miles surrounded by electrified routes.

This means that the line's increasing numbers of freight trains have to be diesel-hauled throughout – even if most of their journey is over electrified tracks – and the line's London Overground passenger service

requires its own dedicated diesel fleet, with all the operational inconvenience and extra expense that that entails.

There is widespread agreement across the industry on the case for the line's electrification, and fortunately it has an active rail user group campaigning hard for it to be added to the Government's programme. All it needs is for the Department for Transport and the London Mayor to stop squabbling over who should foot the bill and agree to share it between them.

Graham Larkbey, Carr Road, London E17 5ER graham.larkbey@googlemail.com

Missing

The excellent map on the front and back covers of your last edition makes clear the stupendous new electrification plans. I look forward to seeing them finished – with crossed fingers!

However it also emphasises the gap between March and Spalding in the would-be freight line (the GN/GE Joint line) between East Anglia and Doncaster. The line was a victim of past cuts.

Would it perhaps make a lot of things simpler if this line could be reinstated, rather than building that expensive dive-under at Peterborough, even though I know that small sections of the trackbed have been built upon?

With best wishes and much stamina/patience to all of you at Railfuture!

John Gilbert, Pixiefield, Cradley, Herefordshire WR13 5ND john@ejgilbert10.plus.com

Geography lesson

When I phoned National Rail Enquiries to find out how to get from Winchester to Abergavenny, they told me to go via Stockport! My Canadian relatives, lacking knowledge of British geography, nearly went that way until I put them right.

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Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk
Railwatch also welcomes articles and pictures
Please use email if possible



OLD: The A train

NEW: The S8 train

NEW AND OLD: The interior of the S8 trains on London Underground's Metropolitan line, above, and the retired A trains, left, which gave good service for 50 years and were much admired

Are these new trains good enough for long journeys?

Transport for London has now withdrawn its A stock trains which gave 50 years of good service because they were simple, well-designed, beautifully coach-built by Cravens and easy to operate and maintain. Farewell to the best electric train I ever drove.

New S7 trains should be fine for passengers on the Circle and Hammersmith and City lines, but the new S8 trains are an insult to passengers on the Metropolitan line. They have 30% fewer seats, far fewer transverse seats, no luggage racks and no coat hooks. Transport for London says passengers will have as many seats because there will

be more frequent trains. But that cannot happen until the Met line is resignalled. This has been delayed until 2016, and possibly as late as 2018.

The Metropolitan main line is an outer suburban railway. Journey times on peak-hour Aldgate trains are 54 minutes for Watford, 56 for Uxbridge, 62 for Chesham and 66 for Amersham. The resignalling will reduce these times by only a few minutes. Passengers deserve racks, coat hooks and as many transverse seats as they had on the old trains.

Hugh Jaeger, Park Close, Oxford OX2 8NP hugh_jaeger@hotmail.com

Welcome photographers

Railwatch is always looking for good photographs to publish in the magazine and on the Railfuture website to illustrate the exciting developments on Britain's railways. If you or your friends take pictures of the modern railway, please consider sending them to *Railwatch*, preferably by email, to editor@railwatch.org.uk

If you are happy to be commissioned, without any financial reward, to take occasional pictures of rail developments in your area, please let us know.

More letters: Page 18

Why the electrification strategy needs to go further

By Mike Crowhurst

Railfuture chairman until 2012

Now I am no longer chairman nor a director I can indulge in some "blue sky thinking" on the Government's electrification scheme, as outlined in *Railwatch* 133, right.

The following critique is mine only, and does not always represent Railfuture policy. I apologise if I inadvertently tread on any sensitive toes.

We do not have a good record of progress on electrification in this country. Since the Review of Mainline Electrification in 1981, which suggested wiring as much as possible of the rail network as fast as possible, Britain has electrified only one main line route, the East Coast.

The 1981 report assumed that Manchester-Blackpool would be quickly added to the electric network. It might at last be done by 2016, 35 years later!

In the corridors of power electrification programmes have regularly been chopped by the Treasury bean counters.

Hence progress was stopped for years at places like Royston, Bishops Cleeve, Ore and Rock Ferry. Swansea has been on, off and now on again. Stirling was on and then off. Screamingly obvious infills like Ashford-Ore and Barking-Gospel Oak still languish on the back burner.

So though we may criticise the details, we must welcome the electrification programme announced by the then Transport Secretary Justine Greening this summer as excellent news. Let us hope it actually happens.

Great Western

Now let us look at the details, starting with Great Western. The scheme is comprehensive, including both routes to Bristol, and now that Swansea has been reinstated the case for the whole South Wales valleys network was much easier to make.

In the Thames Valley the Marlow, Henley and Windsor branches are all included, but curiously Greenford has been omitted.

Either this is simply an oversight, or since it is entirely within Greater London, possibly like the Gospel Oak line, the Government is waiting for Transport for London to pick up the tab.

Oxford makes sense as a commuter terminus, Newbury rather less so. Its inclusion is perhaps a surprise, as half the



trains currently continue to Bedwyn. This is not a logical terminus either and Westbury is too far beyond the commuter area, but Pewsey is nearer to hand and there are sidings suitable for reversal and stabling a little further on at Woodborough, 80 miles from London.

Basingstoke was not included in the scheme originally published, but it is part of the proposed north-south spine.

I suggest that Basingstoke, Greenford and Pewsey should be included in the main GW scheme. The extra 40 miles or so would be well worth while.

Midland

The basic route from Bedford to Sheffield via Derby, plus branches to Corby and Nottingham, are in the scheme, but not the routes north out of either Sheffield or Nottingham. Fine for starters, but some additions suggest themselves. Once Sheffield station is wired, it is likely that South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive will look seriously at wiring its spinal Sheffield-Doncaster-Moor-thorpe route, just as West Yorkshire did the Leeds NW network once Leeds was wired. The issue of who pays no doubt explains the omission of the Doncaster link from the main scheme.

Current service patterns would not justify doing the Erewash valley route out of Nottingham, but as traffic builds up the case for separating the Derby and Sheffield services at least in peak, begins to make sense, and at that point wiring the Erewash route adds up.

North West

Both Manchester termini are in the plan, and the route via St Helens, but only the branch to Blackpool North. Electric trains will serve only Blackpool and



THE FUTURE IS ELECTRIC: Wires will soon be going up on rail lines throughout Britain but some important links have been left out

of course Scotland, and it is not yet clear which will run via Hull, York, Scarborough, Middlesbrough and Newcastle. The line to Newcastle is of course already wired, as will be the western termini at Manchester Airport and Liverpool, but present thinking seems to be that only Newcastle or York services will be electric, the rest, currently over half, remaining diesel. That would fail to exploit fully the newly electrified route.

First priority ought to be the relatively short branch to Middlesbrough, giving a second hourly electric service to and from the airport.

The prospects for Hull are also reasonably good. Given wires from both Selby and Doncaster, there would be interest in electric services from Sheffield and London as well as Manchester, Liverpool and York.

North TransPennine

The North TransPennine route from Manchester (again both termini) to Leeds and York, is a logical follow-on from the North West scheme, although no dates have yet been set.

There is a suggestion that the Stalybridge-Manchester Victoria section may be brought forward.

The extension to Selby, no doubt at the behest of West Yorkshire PTE, will enable the Leeds-York-Selby local services to be included, possibly to and from Bradford Forster Square.

But there is no clarity yet about

the eastern extensions. At present, TransPennine services run to Hull, York, Scarborough, Middlesbrough and Newcastle. The line to Newcastle is of course already wired, as will be the western termini at Manchester Airport and Liverpool, but present thinking seems to be that only Newcastle or York services will be electric, the rest, currently over half, remaining diesel. That would fail to exploit fully the newly electrified route.

First priority ought to be the relatively short branch to Middlesbrough, giving a second hourly electric service to and from the airport.

The prospects for Hull are also reasonably good. Given wires from both Selby and Doncaster, there would be interest in electric services from Sheffield and London as well as Manchester, Liverpool and York.

The difficult one is Scarborough, and it looks as if for the time being this will be covered by extending the Blackpool-York (via Calderdale) diesel service.

I feel that all the eastern extremities should be included in electrification as soon as possible.

CrossCountry

Of the four main CrossCountry routes radiating from Birmingham, the one to Manchester and beyond is already electrified.

A second, to Yorkshire and the North East, would be partly

covered by the Midland and TransPennine schemes. Once the South Yorkshire gap is done, only Birmingham-Derby would remain, and including this would open up the possibility of a spur from High Speed Two at Lichfield pending northward extensions.

But before any CrossCountry services can be fully electric, one or both routes south of Birmingham need to be wired. The Department for Transport plans include the route to Reading, with overhead as far as Southampton but oddly not Bournemouth (another oversight?) A Manchester-Reading electric service would then be an easy option.

The fourth arm, to Bristol and the SW, will on current plans be wired only as far as Bromsgrove, but the section from Bromsgrove to Bristol Parkway should be seriously considered once the main GW is completed, so that Manchester-Bristol services can go electric.

The final section beyond Bristol would need to wait until the route to the south western peninsula from Newbury to Paignton, Plymouth and Penzance gets its turn, probably some years away.

Just as the north-east arm has much shared route with the Midland main line, CrossCountry's south-east arm has much shared with Chiltern, which will

be the only non-electric main line out of London. Chiltern chief Adrian Shooter has hinted that he would be interested in principle in electrification, and the case for Chiltern would clearly be strengthened by wiring CrossCountry.

It would be stronger still if the Moor Street and Snow Hill local network in Birmingham were also done, thereby completing the West Midland suburban system.

Freight spine

The DfT has evidently noticed that there is also synergy between certain cross-country routes and the freight sector, hence the "North-South spine" proposal, but this plan shows clear signs of not having been thought through, and it appears there has been little consultation with the freight operators.

The route to the West Midlands at Coventry and Nuneaton is fine, but the route to the North East is confused.

For a start, freight on the Midland does not terminate in Sheffield station, nor does it usually run via Derby. In practice it uses the Erewash Valley line, then bypasses Sheffield to the east and continues to Normanton and Leeds and York and beyond via Castleford and Pontefract.

In the North East, routes to and via Teesside are mostly used. On present plans none of these lines

Picture: NETWORK RAIL

will be wired. Nor in the foreseeable future will the vital fifth cross-country route, Felixstowe to Nuneaton.

No wonder the freight operators are sounding distinctly underwhelmed by the whole idea!

That is before taking on board issues about availability of suitable electric locomotives. I fear they would want to see all the obvious parallel freight routes like the Lincolnshire Joint line, Settle-Carlisle and Nithsdale under the wires before they give it serious consideration.

Meanwhile, it would be better to start by plugging obvious gaps like the Felixstowe branch, Gospel Oak, and access to the upcoming "London Gateway" port at Thameshaven.

The choice of the reopened Oxford-Bletchley route as the connection between the north east and Southampton seems odd. Sure, it would be lovely to have the restored east-west passenger service electrified from the outset (a Bristol-Bedford-Northampton service could serve several reopened stations on the GW main line), but should it really have priority over the more usual freight route via Solihull and Burton-on-Trent?

The proposal to convert the Basingstoke-Southampton section from third rail to overhead also seems to have been insufficiently thought through. OK, it is only a "trial". Really? Will the DC supply be kept in situ? Or will South West main line services have to change over at Basingstoke (if calling) and back again at Southampton or vice versa? Have we not just gone to some trouble to eliminate just this practice on the North London Line?

From the freight point of view, given that the alternative route via Salisbury has just been cleared for freight gauge, would it not have been preferable to put the overhead up on that route, including both the Eastleigh and Redbridge routes into Southampton (with dual supply on this short section), and leave the DC on the Winchester route alone?

From the passenger point of view, that would have the advantage of getting electrics to Salisbury from both London and Portsmouth, as a precursor to wiring the two routes further west. But it would not help CrossCountry, which really needs wires on the direct route

at least to Bournemouth, as it is unlikely it will be willing to equip the whole fleet with DC capability for this small part of its system.

Third rail conversion

Indeed just how realistic is talk of wholesale conversion of the Southern third rail network to overhead anyway? Is the expense really likely to be worthwhile, given that technical solutions to problems of icing points and autumn leaves either already exist or are within reach? It might just be worth it on a smaller network like Merseyrail. I would suggest that on Southern there are two specific groups of routes where it might merit consideration.

One is those routes where the extra power availability would assist the fastest services in particular, such as the main line from Waterloo as far as Basingstoke or the Hampshire coast, and the Brighton main lines out of Victoria and London Bridge. The other is those routes with significant elements of non-local traffic, such as CrossCountry to Bournemouth, freight to Southampton and the North Downs route to the Channel Tunnel, much of which is still unelectrified anyway.

I cannot see the South London Metro network being converted, and it would be crazy to install anything but DC to Uckfield or Ashford Coastway. What is more, as with gauge enlargement, there might be a risk of unconverted lines atrophying.

Scotland

Finally in this geographical review, what about Scotland? Here enthusiasm has suddenly turned to retrenchment, and the ambitious Edinburgh-Glasgow scheme has been cut back to just the main line via Falkirk High and the Cumbernauld branch. Stirling, Alloa, Dunblane, Falkirk, Grahamston and Grangemouth have all been deferred to after 2019 (officially nothing is cancelled), along with various curves and flying junctions. Nor is it clear if the Cowlairs curve and the link to Coatbridge are included.

Until recently Scotland has been ahead of the game with both reopening and electrification, wiring the restored through route via Bathgate and latterly the Paisley Canal branch. I feel the whole scheme will be completed in due course even if it takes longer than planned, so we should not be pessimistic.

North East

By Peter Kenyon

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■■ Tynemouth station restoration gets an Angel Award



Tynemouth station after restoration and, below, before

The successful restoration of Tynemouth station was selected in October from over 200 applications to receive the award for the best craftsmanship employed on a heritage rescue. The station was built in 1882 but by the time Tyne and Wear Metro was inaugurated the canopies and ironwork were in a sorry state and a long campaign for restoration began. A partnership between the council and private developers gained an English Heritage grant in 2010 and the difficult work of restoration was completed within three years. Two central platforms are used by Metro trains, while other areas will be developed for markets and community events.



■■ Volunteer award for Hartlepool station ambassadors
A volunteer group inaugurated in 2012 by the late Tom Cliff of Grand Central Trains, informs passengers about train running on Sundays when the booking office is closed. For keeping the station user-friendly, Station Ambassadors gained second place in the passenger matters class at the Association of Community Rail Partnerships awards ceremony in Swindon. A similar group has extended the service to Eaglescliffe.

■■ Coastliners welcome improved services

Coastliners, the user group for the Newcastle-Sunderland-Hartlepool-Middlesbrough line, report that Grand Central is now running five services a day Monday to Saturday to the North East. The group also liaises with First TransPennine.

■■ Campaign to reopen Hadrian's Wall station
Tyne Valley Users Group is supporting a campaign to reopen long-closed Gilsland station which is at the point where Hadrian's Wall crosses the Newcastle-Carlisle line. A new station would attract both local and tourist patronage. Funding is being sought from local sources. Both Northern Rail and the Hadrian's Wall Heritage Trust support the idea. TVRUG increased its membership with a recent recruitment drive with leaflets aimed at regular passengers.

■■ 'Could do better' verdict on Morpeth improvements
A public meeting in Morpeth organised by South East Northumberland Rail Users Group heard Councillor Stephen Reed outline the council position on rail. Morpeth station has gained lifts, information screens and a bigger car park but complaints were made about other facilities, outdated rolling stock and patchy train services. The council is supportive of the plans to reopen the Ashington line and has sent a feasibility study to the Department for Transport. It will call for an hourly Ashington service in the next franchise.

■■ How to develop freight traffic for the future
The closure of the Alcan foundry has released capacity for other freight traffic. Railfuture North East's December meeting heard from the commercial director of the Port of Tyne how rail freight traffic will be developed in future.

The way ahead for Railfuture

By David Berman

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As the tightrope walker once said: "So far, so good." Since I became chairman in May a lot has needed to be done in a very short time.

Railfuture is a great organisation and it is a privilege to be leading it, but it also needs to change, modernise and adapt.

In the past six months we have had a plethora of franchise consultations and bid processes, only to be left with the franchise programme dead in the water.

We have had the Government's plan for the next five years, the high level output specification.

We now await the publication of Network Rail's strategic business plan in January, explaining how it will convert the Government's requirements into reality.

Then there is the localism agenda and the continuing saga of High Speed Two.

When I became Railfuture chairman I undertook to realign and modernise the way we work as an organisation.

The corporate governance review is well under way and the first outward signs of that work are the revamping of the committee structure and the new "demand responsive" budgets for branches.

From January, groups will replace all existing committees. This is more than just a name change, as groups will be required to adopt new ways of working that are more responsive to the needs of the society and its members.

They will also be required to demonstrate that the resources they use represent value for money. Three new groups have

also been formed, research and intelligence led by Howard Thomas, special projects led by Chris Hyomes, and media, marketing and communications led by Chris Page.

The new demand responsive budgets mean that branches will no longer have to make do with the set subventions allocated each year, but will be able to bid for resources they need for campaigning work and to expand their activities, including more members' meetings and better newsletters.

The corporate governance review is looking at ways to update and implement the society's business plan with a more organised and dynamic annual work plan.

Our articles of association, our legal framework and constitution are being reviewed.

We are increasing the number of books on sale and revamping the society's four websites. An online system for booking places at conferences, membership applications and renewals is now up and running.

In addition, we are starting to exploit social media in a more systematic way, making full use of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn.

We are in the process of revamping and re-launching Rail Activists Briefing as Rail Action, and launched our new Rail User Group Awards in November.

We need to improve the transparency of our decision-making, improve the way we work with other organisations, attract new members and widen our influence. There is a lot to do and, as always, so little spare time to do it!

Team work way to progress

The Railfuture board has approved the replacement of the existing committee structure with new, more dynamic groups. Full members of committees will continue in their membership of the successor groups, and corresponding members will become consulting members.

The heads of the two new groups have already started their work and will be seeking new members in due course. If you are interested in working in or with these new groups, please get in touch with the appropriate head of group via the website.

We are particularly interested in finding volunteers to serve as secretary to the following groups: research and intelligence (headed by Howard Thomas), special projects (Chris Hyomes), policy (Norman Bradbury), media, marketing and communications (Chris Page), international (Andrew MacFarlane). The other groups are finance and corporate governance (Jerry Alderson), networks (Ian McDonald), freight (Peter Wakefield), passenger (Chris Fribbins), and Railwatch.

The new research group will monitor key websites, compiling summaries and suggested content for consultations, conducting specialist research, advise other groups on national responses and initiatives, support branches for local consultations and provide data for local and national campaigning. The special projects group will conduct national campaigns, support branches in local campaigns and run national programmes.

Wind power is just one way to give stations a power boost

By John Stanford

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The resolution adopted at the Railfuture AGM calling for the maintenance of frontline staff at stations (*Railwatch* 133) recognised that the duties of staff may need to change to reflect wider developments.

How could the management and functions of stations, and the railways more widely, be adapted to achieve improvements?

First consideration is the overall ownership and management of individual stations. Southend Airport station, which opened about a year ago, was built and is operated by the Stobart Group which also operates the airport.

The rail station is staffed on a 24 hour basis and the ticket office is open from early in the morning until late evening, seven days a week.

This might be seen as further fragmentation of the system, but it seems to be working well here.

The circumstances in which this particular model could be followed would be rare but could there be situations where, say, a town centre management company could enter a partnership with a train operator to manage the station?

The second consideration is the skill of station staff, particularly those in ticket offices.

Railways are not the only area in which jobs are being lost or reduced for short-term financial reasons to the detriment of service and in which the staff have a public service ethos.

Would it be possible for some ticket offices also to be sub post offices or tourist information offices? Training would be essential but the skills required might not be that different.

The third question is what scope is there for additional services at stations? The McNulty Report approach to increasing efficiency was to cut costs.

An alternative is to increase revenue without further financial squeezing of passengers. One, idea would be for stations to act as parcel collection points. Internet shopping can have very real advantages for consumers in terms of lower prices, but there can be problems in accepting



This wind turbine is supplying sustainable energy to Horwich Parkway rail station as part of the Ticket to Kyoto programme. It was officially switched on in September by the Mayor of Bolton Councillor Guy Harkin who is pictured with David Hytch of TfGM, left, and Councillor Andrew Fender, chair of the TfGM committee, centre

delivery of the purchases, particularly for families who commute to work. There are ways round this, but for some commuters the station is the one place in the neighbourhood outside their home that they use on weekdays. The savings on the purchase would outweigh the cost of a pound or so to pick up the parcel from the station. It might be worth a pilot.

There is also the matter of energy generation. Accrington and King's Cross are both said to have been equipped with solar panels to provide electricity.

There must be considerable potential for this to be spread more widely around the network.

Not only would this reduce the electricity bills attributable to stations, enable platform canopies to be maintained or re-installed and lighting around stations to be improved.

Solar power is not the only possibility. A few months ago Transport for Greater Manchester brought a wind turbine into operation at Horwich Parkway. Arrangements could be made for any income from the sale of energy to the National Grid to be ringfenced to pay for station staff.

There is no "silver bullet" to be applied in all circumstances but a variety of options could be developed. So far, the need for them and the funding to pay for frontline staff do not appear to have been adequately considered.

Making cuts seems to be the default position for people who cannot see the bigger picture.

Picture: TfGM

Severnside

By Nigel Bray

nigel.bray@railfuture.org.uk

■■ Through trains pledge

Through trains between London and Weston-super-Mare will continue after electrification reaches Bristol, local MPs have been assured by Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin. Concerns arose because the direct trains were not specified in the Department for Transport's invitation to tender for the new Great Western franchise. Railfuture has argued that withdrawal of through trains to Weston would damage the resort's economy and remove seating capacity during the Bristol commuter peak. Our response to the GW franchise consultation suggested that electrification should be extended to Weston and that a new Cardiff-Exeter semi-fast service would provide faster trains to Highbridge and Bridgwater.

■■ Demand for rail travel underestimated in report

Railfuture members George Bailey and Daniel Casey had a meeting on 30 August with Councillor Roger Symonds, transport cabinet member for Bath & North East Somerset Council, to discuss the Halcrow report which the council had commissioned into possible reopening of the Radstock-Frome line. The report has produced detailed estimates of operating losses for a service from Radstock to Bristol via Westbury and Bath while completely ignoring the obvious potential of the line to connect Radstock with London, the far South West and the South Coast. The report has also greatly underestimated the catchment area for a reopened Radstock station on the assumption that very little car parking space would be provided. Railfuture and Radstock Action Group will continue to challenge these misconceptions.

■■ 'Funding agreed' for new station at Ashton Gate



Site of former Ashton Gate station

Picture: Greater Bristol Metro Rail

The massive attendance at the Ashton Court Balloon Festival in August created enormous road congestion, particularly on the Saturday. This prompted David Wood, Railfuture member and *Bristol Post* columnist, to take up a suggestion from Nigel Bray for

a temporary station at Ashton Gate, pending the reopening of a permanent one when passenger services are restored to the Portishead line. David Wood wrote to Councillor Tim Kent, Bristol City Council's transport cabinet member, pointing out that one of the original platforms alongside the existing Portbury freight line could be made fit for trains during the annual four-day festival. Although the suggestion does not seem to have been adopted, Councillor Kent later advised him that the council had secured funding for a new Ashton Gate station to open in 2016.

■■ West leads scheme for cheaper fares

Since September, a one-year pilot scheme sponsored by the Department for Transport in conjunction with First Great Western has allowed concessionary bus pass holders (mainly pensioners and disabled people) to buy off peak rail tickets at 34% discount on the Swindon-Worcester and Westbury-Weymouth routes between 09.30 and 23.00. These tickets are valid on all trains within the geographical limits of the scheme. The outcome of the experiment will be important because many people who need to secure cheaper tickets are deterred from using trains by the cost of buying a railcard.

Eye on Europe

■ ■ Railfuture's airport report identifies problems

The aim of Railfuture's International and European Union committee is to ensure that people can travel between countries on public transport, preferably rail, with minimum inconvenience, writes *Damian Bell*. International ticketing and problems crossing borders are key issues for us. We recognise that for some journeys, there is no realistic alternative to air travel and we have produced a report on rail and bus links to airports, which raises several concerns.

It should be made easy for air travellers to Britain to continue their journeys by public transport. At some airport stations, the range of destinations to which tickets can be purchased is very restricted. Amazingly at Heathrow, for example, rail tickets are available only to London!

Fares to airports are not always attractive. Train operators should ensure there are good value tickets available for air travellers. Some rolling stock has only minimal luggage space. In the refranchising process, would-be operators must be urged to take more serious account of the needs of air travellers. All train operators and airports should strive to give good and reliable public transport information.

Further research on an airport-by-airport basis into the access needs of airport workers and meeters/greeters would be valuable. We are not aware of any such surveys but would be interested to learn of any that have been undertaken in recent years.

Our report was compiled from information gathered by the committee and by Bus Users UK. Nearly 200 replies were received covering 24 airports, ranging from Stornoway and Inverness to Exeter. The report lists each airport which was investigated and includes a summary of findings. A copy will be sent to the manager of each airport surveyed, to train operators who serve airports and to relevant politicians. You can download it at www.railfuture.org.uk/dl445

You can also obtain a copy by sending a self addressed envelope with a large letter stamp to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 1RQ

■ ■ European Passengers Federation in Parliament
EPF is planning to give a breakfast presentation at the European Parliament in Brussels in December on the topic *What passengers expect*. This will be available to read on the EPF website www.epf.eu

■ ■ Conference in city where three countries meet
EPF will hold its annual conference in the UNION cultural centre, Basle, Switzerland, on 15-16 March 2013. One of the themes will be *Mobility without Borders*, and there will be speakers from France, Switzerland and Germany dealing with successes and challenges. Basle can be reached from London now in about six hours by train from London via Paris thanks to the opening of the French high speed line between Dijon and Mulhouse (LGV Rhin-Rhone). Full details of the conference will be on the EPF website or in paper form from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

■ ■ EPF is coming to London
The EPF Council will meet in London on 19 January 2013. The council rotates its meetings between various European cities and the last time it met in London was in 2008. Many members from other countries are keen to see how public transport in London has improved.

Railfuture AGM notice

Notice is hereby given that the annual general meeting of the Railway Development Society Ltd will be held at County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL on 11 May 2013. There will be a morning session with one or more guest speakers followed by a break for lunch. The formal AGM will commence at 13.30. Nominations for chairman and to the board of directors must be sent to Railfuture Returning Officer, PO Box 7690, Hinckley, Leicester LE10 9WJ to arrive by 31 January 2013. Nomination forms can be obtained from the same address or from the Railfuture website at www.railfuture.org.uk

Motions for discussion at the AGM must be sent to: David Berman, BM Box 7659, London WC1N 3XX to arrive by 28 April 2013. They should be posted in typed format or emailed to chairman@railfuture.org.uk Further details and a booking form for the buffet lunch will be sent to members later. By order of the board, L Butler, Company Secretary. Railfuture is the campaigning name of the Railway Development Society Ltd. More info: www.railfuture.org.uk/AGM+2013

Double green for new route

Chiltern Railways has been given the green light to create a £130 million new rail link between Oxford and London Marylebone.

The two trains per hour service, which has been supported at two public enquiries by Railfuture, should start operating in 2015.

The link will be built and funded by Chiltern Railways, the operator of Marylebone-to-Birmingham services, under a 20-year franchise.

As part of the Evergreen 3 project, Chiltern Railways will build new stations in Bicester and in north Oxford.

The new parkway station in north Oxford will be at Water

Eaton and will be a multi-modal interchange, linking trains, buses, cars and bikes, allowing passengers to avoid the congestion of central Oxford.

Bicester Town station will also be redeveloped providing a gateway to the town next to the popular Bicester Village fashion outlet centre.

"The Oxford to London link is the latest in a long line of innovative Chiltern-led projects to upgrade the rail infrastructure, fuelled by our understanding of rail's potential to make a significant contribution to economic growth and prosperity," said Graham Cross of Chiltern Railways.

The line from Bicester to Oxford will also be used by the East West

to Oxford and East West rail

Rail project which has been given the go-ahead by the Government.

Chiltern Railways will work in partnership with the East West Rail team and East West services could start in 2017.

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin approved a Transport and Works Act order allowing the project to proceed after accepting proposals to protect bats in Wolvercote Tunnel in Oxford.

A public inquiry into the project was held in Oxford in 2010-11. It was reopened earlier this year to hear further evidence on measures to protect the bats and other wildlife near the line. Eventually in October, consent was granted with 19 pages of conditions, with many relating to noise. Work on

options east of Bedford is still continuing. It is possible that at the Cambridge end, a route could be found through a new development if the planning authorities could be persuaded.

Railfuture is considering the options. One alternative route could be via the Midland main line and Luton which has been the subjects of previous studies. A new line could run from Luton Airport to a point just south of Hitchin.

At Bedford, Railfuture will resist any attempt to undermine the scheme's connectivity by building an out-of-town station. Problems with the original route east of Bedford include housing and land designation.



Fine examples to follow

The annual Community Rail awards held at STEAM museum at Swindon at the end of September, provided a great opportunity to showcase some of the ideas that are helping to transform local railways around the country.

So many good ideas were rewarded that it is hard to choose which ones to highlight, but here are a few.

If you want to see the others, visit the Association of Community Rail Partnerships' website at www.acorp.uk.org.

Train operator Northern embraces the greatest number of community rail partnerships (18), and it was good to see them as overall winners.

Top of my list was the transformation of Northern's Glosop station, which the Friends group had planned with Network Rail and the train operator as well as the Railway Heritage Trust.

Improvements included refurbishing and repainting the glazed station canopy, and bringing back into use many of the empty rooms in the station that were last opened 50 years ago. The result now makes the station an impressive gateway to the town.

Southern launched its station partnership scheme just six years ago with three adopted stations. Already this number has grown to 26 which Southern

has achieved through working with the Acorn Centre, which provides vocational training for people with learning difficulties, helping them to gain qualifications and experience. They won first prize for Best Station Adoption Group.

Five years ago, Dronfield was in a sorry state with few trains and fewer passengers. Now it enjoys both an hourly train service and many more passengers as a result of the work of the Friends of Dronfield station who have made it more welcoming and used derelict land to create a stunning station garden, rightly recognised as the best in this year's awards.

The Bodmin & Wenford heritage railway received an award for the Signal Box café at Bodmin Parkway. What better introduction to Cornwall as you step off the train from Paddington or Manchester than this traditional railway building with the smell of fresh coffee and a warm welcome?

Youngsters are the railway's future, so it was good to see this recognised in the awards. Cambrian Railways partnership has focused on safety for schoolchildren who use the railway's line in great numbers, particularly to Harlech.

The DVD the partnership produced provides sensible advice on using the train safely, and also guidance on conduct so that other passengers can enjoy



PRIZE PHOTOGRAPH: Simon Clarke's winning picture in the Community Rail Awards, entitled *Tomorrow's passengers, showing children at Mill Hill station near Blackburn*

their journey along this spectacular piece of railway as well! Personal awards are important too, recognising the special contribution from people like Councillor June Player, the driving force behind improvements at Oldfield Park station in Bath, or Jason Townsend who works for Northern Rail at Blackburn. The Mid Cheshire Line Partnership won the teamwork award for the work of volunteers in decorating all 12 of their stations for the North West in Bloom competition.

Hearts and minds

Following the awards, a community rail festival sponsored by First Great Western took place the following day at Bristol.

Highlight of this was the rare opportunity to ride on the Portishead branch, returning via Temple Meads for a circular tour via Henbury to Avonmouth and back via Clifton Down. User groups, local councillors and rail staff were able to see the lines at first hand and discuss steps towards reopen-

ing, while FGW staff served an excellent buffet lunch and hot drinks, a rare but welcome example of train catering on the Severn Beach line!

Four trips were run, and were so popular that the last round trip of the day was strengthened to five cars. FGW's generous provision of the train and catering was much appreciated by those who travelled.

Avocet takes off

The Department for Transport played its part too, with the designation of the Avocet line as a community rail service being announced the same day as the awards.

The line joins six other local branch lines which are promoted as part of the successful Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership. An early win for the user group and the partnership is that Sunday services will be doubled to half hourly for the six weekends running up to Christmas. This could be made permanent when the success of the Christmas trial has been measured.

LOCAL ACTION

Thames Valley

By Chris Wright

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■ ■ East West Rail linked to Oxford go-ahead

East West Rail was the subject of the October branch meeting in Bletchley. The East West Rail Consortium reported that on 12 October, the new delivery board had met at the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre at Quainton Road and ran a special train to view the accessible parts of the route. Iain Stewart, MP for Milton Keynes South and chair of the East West Rail Link All Party Parliamentary Group, attended. The Department for Transport emphasised the strategic importance of the route and Network Rail its commitment to maximise the benefits of the scheme and to show how rail can drive economic growth. The meeting firmed up the roles of the organisations and aims to have services running by 2017. It is hoped that work on the EWRL can be aligned with work on the proposed Oxford-Bicester upgrade. First Great Western noted the potential to develop services to Reading and Bristol.

■ ■ Backing for reopening to Bourne End

High Wycombe to Bourne End reopening is back in the news with further developer proposals to breach the track bed. The Wycombe Local Plan and Buckinghamshire Transport Plan support the protection of the route for future transport use but an earlier public inquiry ruled this was inadequate as no firm proposals or indication of use had been indicated. Railfuture Thames Valley should have been more proactive although excellent work has been done by the Wycombe Society and the Marlow and Maidenhead Passenger Association to promote the potential. Buckinghamshire County Council suggests the EWRL will improve links to Wycombe and the Thames Valley. An option ignored is that Crossrail could be linked to Wycombe by the route.

■ ■ New station on Windsor-Slough line backed by council

Chalvey, on the Windsor-Slough line, is being suggested as a possible new station site. Slough Borough Council has run a public consultation on the proposal.

■ ■ Stratford reopening viable, says new report

Oxfordshire County Council helped fund the study into reopening the Stratford-Honeybourne line. The possibility of a service to/from Oxford was examined and found to be viable, although capital funding and subsidy need to be secured.

■ ■ Franchise wrangle could halt improvements

Milton Keynes Rail User Group may be disappointed that the West Coast main line franchise problem has delayed rail service improvements, as First had promised extra stops which Virgin Trains have resisted.

■ ■ New bid to get Bedford-Northampton part of Thameslink

The reopening of Olney station is suggested by a new group that is calling for restoration of the Bedford-Northampton line. The London and South Midlands Multi Modal Study in 2003 suggested the line could be an extension of Thameslink services, was viable and would justify the capital costs.

■ ■ New station may be axed thanks to McNulty 'reforms'

Wolverton's new £2 million station, which opened only this year, was the subject of a protest in October, as the new booking office was closed due to staffing problems. There are fears the new building may be de-staffed and closed if London Midland tries to follow the recommendations of the McNulty report to close station ticket offices.

■ ■ Heritage rail in bid to link with National Rail

Princes Risborough continues to be the subject of ongoing discussions between the Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway Association Line, Network Rail and Chiltern Railways on how the preservation group can gain access to the station.

LOCAL ACTION

East Midlands

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

Derby line-up marks train upgrade milestone



Picture: EMT

East Midlands Trains put its fleet on show for a unique photocall in September. The diesel trains, one from each class, were lined up at the company's Etches Park depot in Derby. The photocall was to mark the completion of a £30 million refurbishment programme which started in 2008 with its class 158 trains. Now 93 trains have been upgraded, including the company's InterCity 125s (also known as HSTs), Meridians, class 153 and class 156 trains. Etches Park is the main depot for the class 222 Meridian and 156 fleets. The other trains are "regular visitors". East Midlands Trains runs frequent trains on the Midland main line to London St Pancras International as well as key destinations throughout the East Midlands, including Leicester, Derby, Sheffield and Nottingham, as well as Manchester and Liverpool. By 2019, the diesel trains at Derby will be joined by electrics, following the Government announcement in July that the Midland main line is to be electrified. Railfuture has been campaigning for the line to be electrified for more than 20 years. At franchise award in 2007, EMT received a motley collection of diesel trains in various stages of repair. Railfuture East Midlands branch will campaign to ensure that the effort, time and money spent by EMT will continue to benefit the region in the years ahead. Also in July, EMT carried out 125 mph test runs to see if it could raise the current top speed of 110 mph on the MML line. The aim is to cut the London-Sheffield journey time to under two hours in December next year.

New package of upgrades for Wellingborough station

East Midlands Trains plans further station improvements at Wellingborough. The station will be repainted, given new cycle and waiting shelters and a new low-counter ticket window. It is a year since a new footbridge and lifts were installed, providing step-free access between station and platforms for the first time. The extra work will be completed by the end of the year and is part of a £10 million programme of station improvements across the network.

Passengers to get better mobile phone reception

Passengers in class 222 Meridian trains have long suffered poor mobile phone reception but are set to benefit from improvements, following a partnership with Vodafone where special equipment will boost the mobile phone signal for passengers using the trains to and from London St Pancras International, Sheffield, Chesterfield, Derby, Nottingham, Loughborough, Leicester, Market Harborough, Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. The programme is scheduled to be completed by early 2013.

MP backs campaign to speed up train service

The average speed of trains from Northampton to London is just 67 mph, compared to 98 mph from Rugby and 83 mph from Milton Keynes, according to a survey by Northamptonshire County Council. Brian Binley, MP for Northampton South and chairman of Northampton Rail Users' Group, has responded to this news by demanding a better commuter service from the town. He also pointed out the important role of the proposed High Speed Two in providing more capacity on the West Coast main line. Northampton's annual passenger count has increased from 1.7 million a decade ago to nearly 2.5 million now. Preparatory work has begun on the construction of a new station building, to be completed in 2014, double the size of the existing station.

By John Stanford

john.stanford@railwatch.org.uk
Nicola Moss, London Midland's head of franchise management, was upbeat when she spoke at Railfuture's Birmingham conference on 3 November.

She outlined LM's achievements including new trains on the Snow Hill lines leading to greater customer satisfaction and useage, and a 25% growth in use on the Trent Valley line.

She also spoke of the development of London Midland's Project 110 which will increase the speed and frequency of services on the main line from Euston.

The first effects will be seen in this month's off-peak timetable changes and will be fully introduced in 2013. The measures being taken to increase driver recruitment and training to

counter problems of cancellations over parts of their network was raised and was, along with London Midland's planned reduction in ticket office hours, the subject of critical questions from the floor.

Around 100 Railfuture members gathered at the Carrs Lane Church Centre in central Birmingham for the 2012 Rail Users Conference.

The theme of the day was *Railways in the Heart of England - how well are we doing?*

Opening remarks came from John Baimforth, chair of West Midlands branch and Christian Wolmar, Railfuture President, who chaired the conference.

The morning session included presentations from three of the train operating companies serving the region. Richard Gibson,

RAIL USERS CONFERENCE

Railways in the Heart of England - how well are we doing?

CrossCountry Trains head of communications also referred to changes carried out in the first five years of the franchise including the re-engineering and design of most of CrossCountry's trains.

He outlined the twin pressures of increased passenger use for both short and longer journeys, where there had been significant modal shift from motorways, and the capacity limitations in the absence of additional trains.

As the company has no station responsibilities, it has prioritised the training of onboard staff and introduced innovative booking and reservation services. The third of the operator trio was

Richard Harper, head of network development for Chiltern Railways. He followed the other speakers in reporting continuing passenger growth: 86% up over 15 years with a notable break in the previous link with GDP during the past four years. The final approval had just come through for the next phase of their Evergreen 3 programme so that a service from Oxford to Marylebone should be open in 2015.

He concluded by arguing that the achievements of Chiltern in improving services and widening passenger choice made a case for long-term franchises.

The morning ended with a brief outline by Railfuture's Chris

Brown of the report on rail access to airports by the Railfuture international committee. This is available on the Railfuture website. www.railfuture.org.uk/dl445

After the lunch break, the Railfuture draw was made, followed by presentation of the first Rail User Group Awards.

The next speaker was Mick Miller, Network Rail's senior sponsor for the Birmingham Gateway Project which is rebuilding New Street Station both for the benefit of the rail industry and passengers, and as a major source of regeneration in Birmingham.

When completed there should be more space, better access, improved waiting areas, the latest information systems and more light. This is being carried out with the commitment not to cause any train cancellations. The first major stage of this project will come into operation in April next year.

Toby Rackliff is the railway development manager for Centro and also works with the West Midlands Regional Rail Forum representing a wider area including neighbouring shire counties.

Among the topics being considered were connectivity, improving journey times, filling in gaps and simpler ticketing. He considered that High Speed Two could be a game changer, enabling better services on intra-regional and

local services as well as better services between Birmingham and London.

He too reported continuing rail growth - more people now travel to work in Birmingham by train than by bus - and considered that there were many reasons, including cost and congestion, why this would continue.

He emphasised the value of working with local authorities and local enterprise partnerships to influence Government, and the potential for regional devolution of transport policy.

Finally Phil Bennion MEP gave a European perspective on the West Midlands rail scene. He pointed out that European Union infrastructure funding was available for major routes, several of which crossed the region and could be available for some of the freight line improvements that were planned.

He also considered that both these and loans from the European Investment Bank could be available for HS2. Despite some personal concerns over the proposed connectivity of HS2 with the rest of the network in Birmingham and with HS1 in London, he considered that HS2 would be good for the West Midlands and the country.

Special thanks were given to William Whiting, the conference organiser.

Railfuture 2012 draw winners

The winners of the 2012 Railfuture draw, made at Birmingham on 3 November were:

£500 Roger Blake, Dynevor Road, London N16 0DX.

£200 A Hindley, Comonside, Crowle, Lincolnshire DN17 4EX.

£100 Mrs J C Adams, Lockington Crescent, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 1DA.

£50 Mark Collins, Woodmancote, Dursley, Gloucestershire GL11 4AJ.

£20 Mrs A Chaffey, The Village, Hamstead Marshall, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 0HN; Dale Edwards, Newbor-

ough Street, York YO30 7AS; Peter Wilson, Stoney Croft, Leeds LS18 4RB; Joan Davies, Plas Helyg Avenue, Penharcan, SY23 1QR.

£10 J Rice, Summerwood Lane, Halsall, Ormskirk, Lancashire L39 8RJ; G Forse, Marshall Street, Leicester LE3 5FB; Ann Edes, Baronsfield Road, Twickenham TW1 2QT; Eric Smith, Dalton Avenue, Leeds LS11 7NN; D M Pearson, Windermere Avenue, Wembley HA9 8RY; J Lewis, Longden Road, Shrewsbury, SY3 7EY; Mr Paul, St Peters Street, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 2LU; Leonard Humphries, Greenwood Avenue, Acocks Green, Birmingham B27 7QH.

Railfuture monthly lottery winners

A Lottery win can be most welcome. Two recent winners wrote to express their delight at receiving their prize, with one adding "a most welcome supplement to my pension"! You too can enter our lottery. Tickets are just £1 per month each and there is a top prize of £40 with five further chances to win. Half of the money raised, after expenses, goes back in prizes with the remainder supplementing Railfuture's funds.

To join, visit www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery/ or you can email lottery@railfuture.org.uk or write to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND.

RECENT WINNERS - **June:** Colin Palmer, Roger Goring, William Emmeron, P D R & J Gardiner, Tony Footitt, H R F Mills. **July:** David Miller, David Stocks, Graham Smith, Peter Clark, Mike Kneen, David Barr. **August:** Robert Burrows, John Ward (two prizes), John Fancourt, Philip Bisatt, Mike Kneen. **September:** Roger Lucas, David Townsend, Jane Vokins, Roger Blake, Walter Richardson, Kenneth Lovell. **October:** Susan Demont, David Brady, Andrew Marsh, Brian Houghton, William Morton, Peter Wilson.

National strategy needed on missing links

Some heritage lines thrive as tourist attractions, but no longer serve a transport demand, while others have the potential to become important links in the national rail network again.

One such is the Dartmoor Railway, once part of the double track Southern main line from Exeter to Plymouth.

It illustrates the truism that if the branches are pruned, the trunk will die.

Lines to Bude and Padstow closed in 1966, with the Plymouth line north of Bere Alston closing two years later, but the residual service from Okehampton (not included in the Beeching Report) could not survive on its own and passenger services ended in 1972.

Now Meldon Quarry, which closed last year, has been put up for sale by its owners Aggregate Industries, along with the 18-mile branch line to Coleford Junction "to test the market."

The quarry had kept the line open for British Rail ballast trains and in 1993 it was sold to Camas Aggregates, together with the railway.

Dartmoor Railway started operating passenger trains in 1997, along with summer Sunday trains from Exeter to Okehampton and connecting bus links over Dartmoor.

Dartmoor Railway was taken over by British American Rail Services in 2008.

Plans to extend to Exeter, or even just to Yeoford to connect into Tarka Line trains, have not progressed, although as recently as April this year, plans for a park-and-ride station on the A30 near Okehampton were announced.

Ownership of track is as complex as is the history of train operations.

The line forms part of an alternative route which could again link Exeter and Plymouth, providing a back-up route to that via the coast at Dawlish, although it would have the disadvantage of missing out Torbay and Totnes.

With plans by developers Kilbride to extend the National Rail Tamar Valley line north to Tavistock, just 15 miles would separate the two ends of the line.

However, the land ownerships on the whole route are fragmented between Network Rail, Aggregate Industries, the Meldon Viaduct company, Devon County Council, West Devon District Council and private owners.

To complicate matters further, between Okehampton and Lydford the route is used by national cycle route 27, developed by Sustrans.

The success of the Tarka Line, where passenger numbers have increased by 157% over the past 10 years has given the lie to the nickname "the withered arm" for the Southern lines west of Exeter, so called



Picture: Dartmoor Railway Supporters Association

SELLING THE FAMILY SILVER: A quarry company has put up for sale the 18-mile branch line which is used by heritage and special trains, like this Dartmoor Sunday Explorer train near Coleford Junction in Devon in July 2011.

after the macabre story by Thomas Hardy. The busy heritage railways nearby (West Somerset and South Devon) give an idea of the potential of the Okehampton line.

The sale notice reveals an amazing lack of strategic thinking about the need to safeguard railways or to promote reopenings as rail continues to grow. This goes beyond the remit of Network Rail. The Association of Train

Operators is a trade association not a planning agency and Devon County Council has gone the extra mile to support the existing lines.

But this is a route of national strategic significance and requires action from Government.

The Department for Transport is not geared up to manage such a task, so the need for a proper rail planning agency becomes ever more important.

Scotland

Back to the Borders

Railfuture is delighted to see that work will start next year on rebuilding the Waverley rail route, following an agreement signed at Newtongrange between Network Rail and the Scottish Government. The Borders Railway project will be complete by 2015, with a 30-mile railway and seven new stations, in addition to three existing stations between Edinburgh and Tweedbank. The capital cost will be £294 million, a reduction of £60 million on the original estimate. Scottish Transport Minister Keith Brown said the Borders Railway will support 400 jobs during the construction phase and act as a catalyst for increased business development and housing opportunities within easy commuting distance of Edinburgh. The seven new stations will be at Shawfair, Eskbank, Newtongrange, Gorebridge, Stow, Galashiels and Tweedbank. Journey times from Tweedbank to Edinburgh are expected to be less than an hour at peak times. Network Rail has already been involved with extensive advance works, like clearing vegetation and demolition of buildings and bridges. The Borders Railway project received a loan of £100 million from the European Investment Bank in 2011.



Scottish Borders Council leader David Parker said: "I would like to thank the Campaign for Borders Rail and the many Borderers who have campaigned to make today's announcement a reality. The efforts of CBR and other community representatives have been critical in achieving the return of rail services to the Borders. This is a project that has spanned five council administrations and three council leaders; it has required numerous studies, an Act of Parliament and a significant amount of work by Scottish Borders Council, Midlothian Council, City of Edinburgh Council, the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and Network Rail."

A 2012 book *The Waverley Route: the Life, Death and Rebirth of the Borders Railway* by David Spaven is available for £14.99 from www.railfuture.org.uk/books/

Campaign to speed up electrification of Crossrail route

Railfuture Scotland is contacting a cross-party group of Glasgow MSPs, as part of its campaign to get the city's Crossrail project implemented quickly. Railfuture's Ken Sutherland said: "Although referred to as a Glasgow Crossrail project, it really constitutes completion of Scotland's 'missing link'. The main thrust of the current Crossrail case is based on the logic of electrifying this very short route of an existing railway, as a direct follow-on from the current Network Rail electrification of the 4.5 miles of the adjacent Paisley Canal Line." Plans for a Glasgow Cross Station, on the Crossrail route, is now included in the recently approved Calton Area Development Framework Planning document. Crossrail would also have new stations at Gorbals and West Street.

Plea to extend concessionary fares from bus to rail

Railfuture is concerned that in Scotland, and probably in England and Wales, the Government's "user free" concessionary bus travel has the effect of creating unfair competition for rail routes. Railfuture Scotland has renewed its call for the concessionary fares scheme to be extended to rail. As a compromise, Railfuture believes the concessionary pass could give pensioners and disabled passengers a ticket, discounted to 66% of the ordinary single fare. This makes economic sense as many rail routes are already subsidised by taxpayers' money. See also *Sevenside*: Page 13.

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Changing times

John Barfield's article in *Railwatch* 133 about Railfuture's early history evoked memories of my time as a member of the London area committee of the Railway Development Association. I was recruited by Owen Prosser on a rail tour to the Welshpool and Llanfair Railway. On one occasion at Liverpool Street station, I had to convince the booking clerk that I wanted to travel to North Woolwich, with a change of trains at Stratford. With the North London line now so busy, it seems incredible that the Beeching report proposed to close the line between Camden Road and Richmond.

It is tragic that the growth of towns like Bedford, Milton Keynes, Luton and Dunstable was never considered. At last, after years of campaigning by Railfuture, approval has been given for reopening Bletchley-Oxford. But of course we also have the Luton-Dunstable misguided busway.

Martin Smith, Bath Street, Abingdon OX14 1EA

Oh for a champion

I have just discovered *Railwatch* online. Surely it is no coincidence that rail improvements announced such as Oxford-Bedford reinstatement, electrification to

Sheffield, Bedford via Oxford and from Manchester to Liverpool/Blackpool just happen to be in or near constituencies of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Chancellor.

Oh that we could all have one of them as our constituency MP. Obviously Richmond MP William Hague is not in this select group as I have been unable to engage him in reinstatement of the Northallerton-Ripon-(Harrogate)-Wetherby-Leeds/Church Fenton lines as part of the national rail system. He only supports one campaign and that is the 20mph Wensleydale railway.

Funds are being raised for an updated study into the costs and benefits of the Ripon reopening, although this proposal has not been widely publicised. It will be in summer 2013 if the study is favourable. North Yorkshire County Council, West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority and all local councils in the corridor except Harrogate support the idea in principle but are unable to contribute financially due to Government cuts.

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Costs and benefits

John Barfield's article in *Railwatch* 133 set me thinking. Can we hazard an estimate of the money that Railfuture, its predecessor organisations, and its constituent members (such as rail user groups) have saved the nation over the years?

Your letters extra

Taking the Felixstowe branch as one small example, the financial loss to industry of having no rail access to the port would have been enormous compared with the cheese-paring savings of closing the passenger service.

Then there are the costs borne by all the small towns and villages which would have suffered from the equivalent lorry traffic, spreading over a large part of the country, not to mention the cost of additional road building.

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Green roads?

I support Peggy Gledhill who despairs in *Railwatch* 132 at seeing the Government's capitulation to pressure from the road haulage lobby and European Union to allow yet bigger lorries on our roads. So much for encouraging the transfer of freight from road to rail, the "greener" alternative.

In April this year, David Cameron claimed he led the "greenest government ever". How does that square with what is happening now?

It is also interesting to note where we long-term pro-rail campaigners are now receiving support from. Two recent examples I have noted are in a CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) newsletter concerning the design of new housing developments which noted the need for "access to good public transport, rail-based where possible".

More surprisingly, but pleasing! The air travel and the environment section of the direct.gov.uk website suggests rail as an alternative to flying. It says: "On average, travelling by rail results in around one third the carbon dioxide emissions of the equivalent domestic or European short-haul flight. Travelling by train is often as convenient."

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Train speeds

On a recent weekend trip back from York, I found myself sitting in front of a seatback TV on the First Great Western service from Paddington to Reading, and spent the time playing with it.

News and sport were of no interest and I did not have time to watch a film, so I looked at the information pages. The rail network map was useful, but

mostly I watched the real-time map. Somewhere around Slough, I noticed that in the top corners were altitude and speed, which was 109 mph at the time.

Between there and the first stop at Reading it went steadily down. I think it was under 100 by Maidenhead and in the 60s by Twyford. I did not notice any deliberate speed changes, so my guess is that there were no temporary speed restrictions, and we were not held up behind a stopping train.

That suggests the timing was very slack and that the driver did not want to arrive too early at Reading. In terms of fuel economy and passenger psychology, that was the right thing to do. It uses less fuel than thrashing to Reading and then sitting either at the platform or outside the station, and passengers are happy when moving at a reasonable speed, but fret when the train stands still. My train was timed to take 27 minutes, whereas I remember it taking around 20 minutes in the 1980s. I assume this is just another example of "defensive timetabling". It is not very impressive when a 125mph train is planned to take nearly half an hour to do 36 miles.

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Costly choice

An item in *Railwatch* 133 refers to a survey carried out by a Railfuture member which estimates the cost of reopening 6000 miles of the national railway network as £20 billion.

A speaker at the recent Railfuture Birmingham Conference quoted the likely cost of High Speed Two as £32 billion. One would not expect either of these figures to be penny-accurate, but assuming they are of the right order of magnitude this means that the former project could be realised at two-thirds of the cost of the latter.

Given the extent to which possible rail reopenings are subjected to cost-benefit analysis, I would venture to suggest that reopening appropriate large swathes of the conventional network would be of greater benefit to far more of the ordinary travelling public of this country than a white elephant covering only a fraction of the mileage.

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◆◆◆◆ Opinions do not necessarily reflect Railfuture policies. Letters may be edited

East Anglia

By Nick Dibben and Trevor Garrod

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Station counters check on bus links

Railfuture members carried out a passenger count at Halesworth station on the Ipswich-Lowestoft line, with help from members of the East Suffolk Travellers Association. The count took place before the introduction of a full hourly service in the December timetable change, and the branch plans to carry out another survey next year to see what impact the improved service has made on passenger numbers. The number transferring between trains and the 520 Southwold bus was also noted.

While at the station members checked the station facilities and drew up a list of suggested improvements for train operator, Greater Anglia, and local authorities. Following a previous station count at Newmarket, our comments resulted in local media coverage, and a meeting of local stakeholders, including Railfuture, was held at the station to agree improvements. Part of the disused platform length has now been cleared allowing longer three-car trains to be used on race days.

Discussions over next Greater Anglia franchise

Three Railfuture members attended a Suffolk County Council conference on 26 October to consider what stakeholders should expect in the the new Greater Anglia rail franchise, which is scheduled to start in the summer of 2014.

Revived branch line welcomes main line train

East Midlands Trains operated a service between Norwich and Dereham, over the volunteer-run Mid Norfolk Railway, on 20 October. The line closed to passengers in 1969. Between 1978 and 1988, as part of its reopening campaign, the Railway Development Society ran 17 charter services on the line, in co-operation with predecessor bodies of the MNR. Since the MNR began operating, it has welcomed excursions from National Rail as well as some freight trains.

East Anglia celebrates anniversary

Railfuture East Anglia celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2012. To mark the occasion a special leaflet was produced which looks back at what we have achieved over the years and what we hope to see in the future. Copies have gone to all the region's MPs, key local councillors and local media contacts.



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MISSING STATION: The site for Surrey Canal station, with Millwall football stadium nearby and the city skyline beyond. Delays to a major development has meant that the station cannot be opened in time for the start of train services on London Overground's newest line. The developer of the Surrey Canal Triangle, Renewal, has pledged £10 million for the station but the development has been delayed. It is now hoped work could start in 2013 and London's latest station might open in 2015

London's ringrail completed at last

London's newest railway will begin operating this month after a short stretch of track near Millwall stadium was rebuilt to link existing lines.

Overground trains will run every 15 minutes in both directions, from Surrey Quays to Clapham Junction.

The service is scheduled to start on 9 December and will provide the final link to the Overground, making it an orbital network around London.

From Clapham Junction, trains call at Wandsworth Road, Clapham High Street, Denmark Hill, Peckham Rye, Queens Road Peckham, Surrey Quays, and all stations to Highbury & Islington.

With its existing service from Clapham Junction to Highbury and Islington, it will mean that Railfuture's long campaign for a main line orbital railway to complement London Underground's Circle line will be realised.

More than 12 million passengers are expected to use the new route each year. It will increase the frequency of trains between Surrey Quays and Dalston Junction from 12 trains an hour to 16.

OVERGROUND 'BLUEPRINT' FOR NATIONAL RAIL

The creation of an orbital route is a major achievement for London Overground which, along with Merseyrail, is now being seen as an example of how the National Rail network could be run, following the collapse of confidence in the current franchising system.

Passengers have been quicker than the Government to notice that the Overground service is excellent and its stations are better than nearby stations run by franchised train operators.

London Overground not only specifies the train services but demands high standards of the operator. The operator pays penalties if it does not maintain those standards.

The London Overground franchisee is a consortium of companies and does not have to guess future revenues. It is in effect paid a fixed fee for running the railway.

The inherent weaknesses in the National Rail franchising system have been obvious for a long time and it has also been criticised as a licence for private companies to print money.

Now the system is in meltdown, prompted by the West Coast main line dispute involving Virgin and First.

It exposes the dangers of entrusting a rail franchise to private companies for 15 years. Eurostar chairman Richard Brown is conducting an inquiry into franchising and is expected to report to Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin by the end of December. Rail unions complain that the Government

has not allowed Mr Brown to investigate renationalisation of the rail network, which they say would be cheaper and more efficient than "casino franchising".

"Opinion polls and online surveys now show that between 70 and 90% of the British people support full renationalisation of the railways," said Bob Crow of RMT.

Caroline Lucas of the Green party warns that the cost of rail travel has risen by 17% in real terms since privatisation, while the cost of running the railways has increased by two to three times. She said Greens want an end to private ownership of the railways, which would save over £1 billion a year of taxpayers' money.

Labour's Maria Eagle has welcomed a thinktank report this summer that advocated a return to public ownership. She believes the railway operating subsidy is about four times higher since privatisation than under BR.

Rail campaigner Paul Salvesson hopes Ms Eagle will call for an end to franchising.

He says the InterCity network should gradually be recreated and brought back into direct public ownership.

He believes even the London Overground and Merseyrail "concession" 1

system is not ideal for running railways. He says: "If the public body is taking all the risk and putting all the investment in to the network, why bother with

franchising at all? It is costly managing the bidding process and it still needs careful management and supervision once the franchise is let.

"And, crucially, the successful franchisee is not doing it for now. They expect to make a profit and that goes back to the shareholders. In the case of Merseyrail, for example, that's Serco and Dutch (state-owned) Railways.

"So why not cut out the franchising process and set up arm's length not-for-dividend companies, where the public sector body (be it Merseytravel, Transport Scotland, Transport for London, or Welsh Government) has a controlling interest? And all the profit (surplus) goes back into the railway."

He added: "Taking Merseyrail as an example, or Northern, you could run the entire operation from tomorrow as a not-for-dividend company with the same management team – and get better results."

Taxpayers and staff are not even mentioned in the current franchise bid process.

Of course further delays will cause big problems for train builders. Railfuture president Christian Wolmar has repeatedly asked: "What is franchising for?"



Scan this graphic with your smartphone to go straight to the Railfuture website

