

# railwatch

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Picture: BEDFORD TODAY

**Ian Cook: Time for the railway to become user-friendly to match the very positive image of the leaflet, right**

## Access now!

Ian Cook has had a lifetime of struggling to use Britain's railway network since contracting polio when he was a child. So he is launching a campaign to ensure that every railway station in Britain is upgraded so every passenger can board and alight from trains safely.

Since 2010 he has been experiencing the effects of post-polio syndrome, which means that muscles previously used to overcome his mobility problems are weakening. He now has to walk with a crutch and has a stair lift at home.

He travels frequently to London's St Thomas' Hospital for treatment but like many other people he struggles to negotiate steep steps at his nearest station, Flitwick on the Thameslink line in Bedfordshire.

He told *Bedford Today's* reporter Hayley O'Keefe: "Councils can apply for a grant to make alterations, but that only happens every five years, and they have to pay to make a bid. It should be universal and funding should be made available.

"Some of my friends who are in wheelchairs cannot use Flitwick station. At Flitwick they do put on a taxi, but that takes you to Luton Airport Parkway, which puts an hour on to the journey. It seems a very odd way to solve the problem."

Frustrated by years of slow and inadequate action, Mr Cook has launched a national petition calling for funding for accessibility at all stations.

He is considering setting up a crowdfunding campaign, and is in talks with the Disability Law Service. He has appealed to his MP Nadine Dorries, and received tweets of support from paralympian Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson and football star Gary Lineker.

If the signatures on the petition reach 10,000 the Government has to respond, and if it reaches 100,000 signatures it will be debated in Parliament. Sign it here:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/266721>

Mr Cook added: "The Government has a budget for improving accessibility but it is tiny compared to what is needed to ensure step-free access on the network. I think that people without mobility problems are making decisions, which leads to misunderstanding and no knowledge of what is actually needed.

"I have contacted Thameslink and they say that the infrastructure is from the Victorian age. Queen Victoria died in 1901, so the railway network has had 118 years to become user-friendly."

**Making rail accessible**  
Helping older and disabled customers

**West Midlands Railway** **London Northwestern Railway**

Operated by West Midlands Trains

**Access for All: Centre pages**

# Ivanhoe campaign banks on community backing

By Geoff Bushell

Since it began on a Thursday evening at the Railway Inn, Swadlincote in December last year, the campaign to reopen the Burton to Leicester railway line (Ivanhoe line) to passenger services has come a long way.

We are gathering support from the public and our Facebook invitation-only group has increased in membership from 55 to 1,050.

We have formed a properly constituted community voluntary group and established a working committee of committed and able people.

We have held meetings at the Railway Inn in Swadlincote and this has become our spiritual home.

A major turning point in the campaign occurred on 23 May when the group gave a presentation to an audience that included local MPs Heather Wheeler, Andrew Griffiths and Andrew Bridgen, the Leader of Leicestershire County Council Nick Rushton, Edward Funnel of Abellio and various other councillors from all three counties.

The meeting was a success and all the parliamentarians present gave their support. The picture shows committee members with their guests. We have been active in support of local events, attending in Swadlincote both the Festivals of Transport and Leisure and most recently the



Picture: RICHARD AUSTIN

**ON TRACK:** (left to right) Ivanhoe campaigner Carl Benfield, who is also a Green councillor for North West Leicestershire, Nicholas Rushton (leader of Leicestershire County Council), Heather Wheeler (MP for South Derbyshire), Andrew Bridgen (MP for North West Leicestershire), Ivanhoe campaign chairman Geoff Bushell, Andrew Griffiths (MP for East Staffordshire – Burton and Uttoxeter), Ivanhoe campaigners Bruce Wakley, Douglas McLay, James Parkes and Kim Coe

Overseas gala, and we intend to attend many more events in communities along the line.

This line would be an asset to the community, reducing congestion on our overcrowded roads, reducing harmful emissions and creating a healthier environment, regenerating communities by boosting tourism and attracting investment, and providing people with an improved commuting experience.

We have lobbied hard to get our point across and the breakthrough came this week when the leaders of

Leicestershire County and Leicester City councils each pledged £10,000 towards a fresh feasibility study for the line.

This funding is dependent on other councils along the line making similar donations. The group must ensure that we retain control and we will seek a meeting with stakeholders to move things forward.

Work is also ongoing to identify station sites and to work with local councils to ensure that they are protected and entered into local plans. The Campaign for the Reopening of the Ivanhoe

Line (CRIL) is also in discussion with HS2 as part of the consultation process for HS2b.

We are always on the lookout for volunteers in our various sub committees. Anyone interested in our cause should contact chair@ivanhoeline.org.

Further details can be found on our website [www.ivanhoeline.org](http://www.ivanhoeline.org) or our Facebook group "Campaign for the Reopening of the Ivanhoe Line".

All things considered this has been a very busy and successful first six months for the group.

# Rail to rescue us from climate emergency

By Phil Smart

Our history is rich in irony and the climate emergency provides a perfect example.

The 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway is just six years away. The technology that once burned carbon to carry more carbon from pit to port began a transport revolution that transformed the world in the 19th century.

Yet in its modern form, rail technology is called upon to help save the world in the 21st.

Lovers of historical irony will also observe that Greta Thunberg, who graced the cover of *Railwatch* 160, shares a common trait with locomotive pioneer Richard Trevithick in that both refused to go to school.

At Railfuture's recent AGM we put Climate Emergency at the heart of our campaigning, secure in the belief that the railway is an indispensable component of any low carbon transport policy.

In *Railwatch* 160 Ian Brown expands on this theme but raises two areas of concern. First that our arguments need to be rational and evidence-based, and second that the railway is at risk of being caught up, or even overtaken, by research investment in decarbonising road and even air transport.

In familiarising ourselves with supportive arguments I recommend *Sustainable energy without the hot air* by the late David McKay, who was a member of Railfuture.

His book is available as a copyright-free download. As its title suggests, it is primarily concerned with energy policy, but since transport consumes about one third of all energy requirements and about a quarter of our carbon emissions, understanding the relative efficiencies of transport modes will be the key to closing the energy gap as well as striving for carbon neutrality.

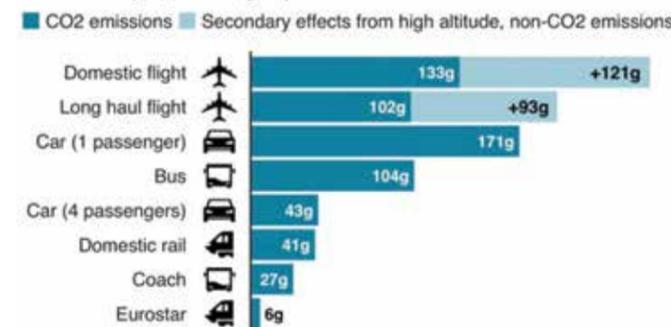
The book contains many enlightening tables, including one which shows the energy consumption of different modes in kiloWatt hours.

The poor energy performance of hydrogen vehicles results from the amount of energy required to make the hydrogen in the first place.

While research budgets are devoted to demonstrating hydrogen trains, we have to ask how much we are prepared to pay to be green and how many seats we are prepared to give up to make room for storing this fuel. Aviation requires about

## Emissions from different modes of transport

Emissions per passenger per km travelled



Note: Car refers to average diesel car

Source: BEIS/Defra Greenhouse Gas Conversion Factors 2019

BBC

40kWh per 100 ton km just to stay off the ground and, because of the distances travelled, needs fuel with a high energy density.

The technology to electrify our railways, however, has been around for over a hundred years. Our problem is not how to do it. We have just forgotten how to do it cheaply.

### Freight

A similar table deals with freight and shows that rail is 10 times more energy efficient than road and 16 times more efficient than air. So if we are to consume less energy we need to choose our mode with care.

### Carbon

Switching to low carbon transport is a complex process but it is pretty clear that a combination of electrification and energy efficiency is the way to go. So what are the possibilities?

Electric cars are well on the way. Current models have a range of up to 200 miles, plenty for most people to get to work and back or to their nearest rail station.

Their demand on the national grid can be surprisingly low because they can be charged overnight and smart charging (vehicle to grid) allows the unused power to be fed into the network in the evening peak and recharged again in the early hours. About 7kW per vehicle per day should be enough.

Buses are more of a challenge. Tram systems are initially expensive but surely must be rolled out in more towns and cities in future. Rural bus transport is more difficult.

Rail transport is the clear winner for both passenger and freight but more electrification will be needed and an increase in generating capacity, either renewables or nuclear, inevitable.

Road freight is probably the

most difficult to convert to electricity because of the amount of batteries required. Lorries burn at best 62 grams of carbon per ton kilometre.

Rail by comparison on average burns about 15 grams and, if electrified, almost nothing.

Local distribution can be by electric van.

Shipping burns about 10 grams and is surprisingly efficient because of the size of vessels now in use. Those calling at our major ports are large enough to fit an aircraft carrier inside them. It is difficult to see a low-carbon alternative for international freight, although nuclear ships could be the way forward.

Of all forms of transport aviation is the most difficult, being dependent on internal combustion.

### Tax

How are the various modes of transport taxed? Most have a fixed element (ownership) as well as a distance travelled element (distance moved). Arguments between modes tend to focus on one element and ignore the other, depending on who is arguing the case.

Car drivers pay 20% fuel tax but the rate has been frozen for years and electric car drivers pay only 5% VAT.

Bus companies can claim VAT back and can claim a not-very-generous bus services operator's

grant. Lorry companies can claim VAT back and of course fuel duty is frozen for them too.

### Aviation

Aviation is the most polluting form of transport available to the public. It is often argued that taxing aviation is a non-starter as it would require international agreement, but is this sustainable?

Do we really believe that with European Union-wide agreement, airlines would fly to (say) Zurich rather than Frankfurt? Would people stop flying to America given the option of a tax-free return flight?

There are those who argue that taxing aviation amounts to a "sin tax". But if we believe that the "polluter pays" for other forms of environmental damage, then why not aviation?

We tax alcohol, road fuel, tobacco and more recently sugar, not just to raise revenue but to change behaviour. The landfill tax is a successful example.

Growth in air travel has levelled off over recent years while rail grows to bursting point. We need transport taxes to fund the supporting infrastructure.

Should we continue to expand airports ("sinrastructure") at a time of rising environmental awareness or invest in less polluting schemes?

### How much would it raise?

Research in this area is not straightforward as much depends on assumptions about changes in behaviour by airlines as well as passengers, and the calculations required start from estimates. But we might raise £11 billion of tax revenue a year.

HS2 will probably cost £50 billion, the East West Rail central section £3 billion, Northern Powerhouse rail £21 billion, Crossrail 2 £32 billion. Completing 200 kilometres of electrification each year at £1 million per single track kilometre would add up to £0.2 billion a year.

The issue of aviation tax is rising up the international political agenda. What should be Railfuture's response?

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## Chair's column: The prospect of rail goodies – if we can believe it

Our new Government has set a populist agenda with promises of new money in many areas including health and education, and for rail a new high speed Leeds-Manchester route. There is, however, no indication of where the money will come from, giving rise to expectation of a snap election and doubt that these promises will be fulfilled.

On the other hand, the Government has set up a review of HS2 by Doug Oakervee, a former chairman of HS2 Ltd, to establish whether HS2 is value for money and how it should be phased. It has also published the advice of Allan Cook, the recently appointed chairman of HS2 Ltd, that the current scheme cannot be delivered within the current budget or timescale. Curiously this may be a way of taking HS2 out of contention in a general election so that it does not become a political pawn.

I am not going to try to second-guess the outcome of the review.

Railfuture advocates continuing with HS2 to provide the extra rail capacity needed to enable modal shift away from more polluting road and air travel. However better connectivity with local rail services must also be provided so that travellers can access HS2 services easily.

Cost escalation has occurred in part as a result of expensive solutions to overcome objections, some environmental, including the tunnel between Old Oak Common and West Ruislip at the behest of the one-time London Mayor and local MP. Better governance is required to ensure that decisions which impact cost are fully scrutinised and that the programme is planned for the optimal timescale to minimise overall cost.

In the north of England, Railfuture calls for a doubling of rail capacity. We welcome the promise of a new Leeds-Manchester route, which must carry integrated services

between the major cities of Chester, Liverpool, Preston, Manchester, Sheffield, Bradford, Leeds and Hull as well providing connections across the whole region.

The winner of the West Coast franchise/management contract award has been announced and stated to be in line with the conclusions of the Williams Review – before those conclusions are published! Indications are however that Railfuture advice to beef up Network Rail to take ownership of strategic rail decisions of a technical nature, as part of its System Operator role, has been heeded.

Following our input to the fares review, there has been some movement, with trials of contactless payment announced on Govia Thameslink Railway and of single-leg pricing on LNER. Railfuture is still pressing for the rail industry to control its costs so that fare inflation can be linked to



Railfuture chair Chris Page

the consumer prices index, rather than the retail price index.

Finally, thank you to those Railfuture campaigners whose effort has borne fruit with news of funding for reopening to Portishead and Levenmouth, and progress on light rail network extension in the West Midlands.

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### A bunting welcome for the new Anglia Flirts

Monday 29 July was a momentous day for Greater Anglia as the first train in its total fleet replacement entered service between Norwich and Lowestoft and Yarmouth, stations being adorned with bunting and new station signs to announce the arrival of the Flirt trains. This is the first new rolling stock to enter service in Norfolk and Suffolk since steam days. The Stadler class 755 bimode trains provide a major step forward. They are air-conditioned, have clear information screens, low noise levels, a smooth ride, fast acceleration and step-free access from standard-height platforms. The three and four carriage trains will provide many more seats than the one, two and three carriage trains they replace. They have since entered service between Norwich and Cambridge, with more at Cambridge, the Mid-Norfolk Railway and Norwich being readied for service.

### Jockey Club welcomes rail upgrade plans

Railfuture East Anglia presented its *Newmarket Rail Vision* at the Jockey Club on 6 September. Among those present were local MPs, Network Rail and the Department for Transport. Our proposals, including reinstatement of the west curve, double tracking of both the Soham-Ely and Newmarket-Cambridge lines, and the future arrival of East West Rail, were warmly received. These proposals also form part of our response to the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority's draft local transport plan, currently out for consultation. We welcome the plan's support for rail, including Wisbech reopening, new stations at Soham and Cambridge South as well as support for both East West Rail and the Felixstowe-Nuneaton freight upgrade. Our supportive response will however, draw attention to some important omissions.

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

### Loops will open the door to more trains

The new freight loops at Trimley on the Felixstowe branch line, together with bi-directional signalling at Derby Road, will increase the number of trains from around 34 to 45 per day in each direction and achieve more reliability for the passenger service. These loops became operational in July and will mean additional trains can be introduced in the autumn timetable. Of these, some 22 will go via London but the rest, and all future growth, will be cross-country via Ely.

Haughley Junction, a single lead junction where the line to Ely and Cambridge joins the main line to Norwich, is in need of double tracking for both freight and passenger benefits. It is part of the business case for a whole line upgrade including three or four-tracking between Ipswich and Haughley. The need for this junction is so urgent that it is now the subject of a separate business case being developed with finance from the Suffolk Growth Programme Board. The eventual project is estimated to cost around £15 million and will improve line speeds as well as creating capacity for 48 freight trains each way per day, plus extra passenger services. Further east, following the fourth stage of the Sizewell consultation, Railfuture East Anglia calls on the Government and Network Rail to ensure construction materials come by rail.

### Longer trains to match the longer platforms

Railfuture East Anglia welcomed the announcement by the Department for Transport that it is funding platform extensions at Waterbeach and Littleport. These will enable eight-car trains to run on the Cambridge to King's Lynn line, helping to alleviate the chronic overcrowding. It includes money for extra carriage sidings at King's Lynn.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia)  
Twitter: @RailfutureEA



Picture: DAVID FURSDON

### Rail users in Kettering were treated to cup cakes to launch the EMR franchise

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### East Midlands Railway franchise

Abellio East Midlands Railway replaced Stagecoach East Midlands Trains as the operator of the East Midlands franchise on 18 August. The following day, EMR held a launch event, starting with a stakeholder reception at Leicester station. This was followed by presentations from numerous speakers at the Roundhouse conference centre in Derby, after which a re-liveried Meridian train was unveiled at Derby station. Invited guests, including several members of the Railfuture East Midlands branch committee, travelled on the train to Nottingham and some continued to St Pancras, at each of which further media events and presentations took place.

Many stakeholders, including rail industry bodies, user groups, Midlands Connect and East Midlands Councils were present. The event was a good opportunity to meet senior EMR management and other officials, and to represent Railfuture and associated user and lobby groups. It set the scene for what we trust will be a constructive working relationship with our new train operator.

An important feature of the new franchise is the partnership between the Department for Transport, EMR and Transport for the East Midlands (part of East Midlands Councils). TfEM/EMC will monitor the franchise operation jointly with the DfT and will work with EMR on enhancements beyond the franchise agreement. Railfuture East Midlands branch will be seeking to develop our good working relationship with TfEM/EMC, as well as with EMR.

### Market Harborough reconstruction

Steve Jones, chair of Harborough Rail Users (and branch secretary of Railfuture East Midlands), was invited to meet Rail Minister Andrew Jones when he came to see the improvements at Market Harborough on 27 June. The track has been realigned to allow higher speeds for through trains, and the new platforms and footbridge have been installed. Work is continuing on a 200-space extension to the car park. However, we await the new cycle hub, and Steve also pointed out the need for further enhancements to accessibility, toilets and platform canopies — and of course, electrification. Steve then travelled to Leicester with the minister for the handover of the Strategic Outline Business Case for the £2 billion Midlands Rail Hub proposed by Midlands Connect to improve connectivity in the region.

### Model railway event

Railfuture had a stand at the Great Central Railway's model railway event on 14-16 June, with East Midlands chair Ariadne Tampion present on all three days with a succession of helpers from among the branch membership. This was a useful opportunity to raise awareness of Railfuture. Many model railway enthusiasts have real trains as their preferred mode of travel. We are now hoping to produce a map banner, showing the East Midlands rail network and the additions we would like to see, for display at future events.

### Questions for Dales campaigners

A strategy day in July organised by the Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership was attended by 18 people, including a good showing from Railfuture, with representatives from the Peak District National Park and Derbyshire County Council among others. The county council representatives asked MEMRAP to answer these questions:

1. What is different now compared to 2004 when re-instatement of the Dales line was last considered?
2. How to create regional support as Derbyshire falls between Transport for the North and Midlands Connect responsibilities. The project must be on both agendas.
3. How do you propose to finance the project?
4. How to overcome planning issues north of Rowsley (specifically, within the national park and replacing the Monsal Trail).
5. How to create the required political support, as there is no appetite or resource within the county council for this project at the moment.

MEMRAP has started walking surveys of possible routes to replace the Monsal Trail but does not have answers to all the questions. It plans to produce a discussion paper for the county council and an action plan. MEMRAP now has to consider whether it can upgrade its role from campaigner to consortium leader. It is seeking meetings with Tarmac (which has lime and cement interests in Derbyshire) and the heritage operation Peak Rail.

**Commons call for trains to Ollerton**  
Mansfield MP Ben Bradley told the House of Commons in July of the need to extend the Robin Hood line from Mansfield to Ollerton, with trains calling at Shirebrook, Warsop and Edwinstowe.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Midlands+Branch)  
Twitter: @RailfutureEMids

# East Midlands Railway takes off

Electric trains will start running north of Bedford on the Midland main line next year, but only as far as Corby.

The new electric service from London St Pancras to Corby will call at both Luton and Luton Airport Parkway, and will be part of the new East Midlands Railway franchise.

The Corby service will use refurbished class 360 commuter trains from London Liverpool Street services.

From December next year, two trains an hour will run Corby-London St Pancras with an average journey time of one hour seven minutes.

More comfortable 2+2 seating will replace the 3+2 seating of the trains while they were being operated by Greater Anglia.

Because full electrification of the Midland main line was axed by the Government in 2017, the franchise's 33 new inter-city trains will be bimodes from Hitachi, similar to those already operating on the Great Western.

By 2022, they will run as electrics from St Pancras to Kettering, and maybe as far as Market Harborough, before switching to diesel engines to serve the cities of Leicester, Sheffield, Derby and Nottingham and the towns of Chesterfield and Lincoln.

So East Midlands Railway will have three separate fleets: electric trains to Corby, bimodes for inter-city services and diesel trains for regional destinations between destinations such as Liverpool, Ely, Norwich and Ipswich.

Kettering will become a key interchange point and is having its platforms extended. An extra platform is also being built at Wellingborough.

EMR says it will increase capacity by 80% into St Pancras and 40% into Nottingham.

EMR is owned by Abellio which in turn is owned by the Dutch national railway, Nederlandse Spoorwegen. It won the eight-year contract after Stagecoach (which ran East Midlands Trains from 2007 until August this year), was disqualified from bidding for the new franchise because it refused to take on pension liabilities.

Corby rail campaigner David Fursdon said EMR has no plans to increase services from Corby via Oakham and Melton Mowbray. Currently there is a limited service on this route. He said: "Many passengers at Corby tell me they want a more frequent service this way and greater journey opportunities. As a dedicated Corby campaigner for 40 years I will continue to add pressure to introduce more northbound trains."

Gloria Ellington of the Corby Business Group is concerned that Corby station car park is full by 10.00 on a weekday and needs more spaces.

The franchise has committed to creating 912 extra car parking spaces throughout its area, with 1,050 extra cycle spaces.

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



Picture: STEVE JONES

**HIGH HOPES:** Julian Edwards, who is deputy managing director of Abellio UK Ltd and interim managing director of East Midlands Railway, with (right) Dominic Booth, managing director of Abellio UK Ltd, and a class 222 Meridian train in the franchise's new livery before the train's inaugural run from Derby to Nottingham and London



Picture: DAVID FURSDON

**ABOVE:** Corby rail campaigner David Fursdon, left, and Corby rail user Rhys Beard were guests at the launch of the new rail franchise at London St Pancras International

**RIGHT:** A class 222 Meridian diesel train in the new livery of EMR pictured at Corby station on the launch day of the new franchise, 19 August. Next year, Corby will be served by electric trains, refurbished class 360s which have been operating on Greater Anglia services out of London Liverpool Street



Picture: RHYS BEARD

# Ambitious plans for South Yorkshire

Railfuture vice-president Paul Abell reviews an exciting document

Rail campaigners were impressed when the Sheffield City Region launched its Integrated Rail Plan in July.

Mayor Dan Jarvis was justified in proudly announcing: "This is a landmark moment for our region. It will revolutionise rail travel."

The plan does indeed promise much for the area, and has much of interest for local rail passengers in general, and Railfuture campaigners in particular.

The plan identifies the present network's shortcomings succinctly: "Despite these good existing north-south connections to Doncaster and Sheffield, the Sheffield City Region is let down by connections to our adjacent city regions in Leeds and Greater Manchester, to the Midlands and the Humber, as well as poor connections within the City Region itself."

While acknowledging the current improvement schemes for the Hope Valley line, the plan is particularly critical of the fact that Northern Powerhouse Rail aspirations are now for a 40-minute Sheffield-Manchester journey, rather than the original 30 minutes.

## National implications

Probably the most spectacular and controversial proposal in the document is the diversion of the East Coast main line south of Doncaster to serve Doncaster Sheffield Airport, which is actually located at Finningley, next to the Doncaster-Lincoln line. This would give direct rail access to the airport from the south, and is prompted by the thought that the airport has the capacity to handle 250,000 tonnes of freight and 25 million passengers annually, compared with its present 1.25 million.

Current proposals are that High Speed Two Leeds trains will not deign to stop in South Yorkshire. However the Sheffield plan envisages a Barnsley Dearne Valley station at Goldthorpe, midway between Barnsley and Doncaster. Served by Northern Powerhouse Rail, and also offering passengers a 95-minute journey to London via HS2, this would encourage development in the area, and also reduce car commuting. Part of the HS2 Leeds line would be used for four fast trains per hour between Sheffield and Leeds, offering passengers a 28-minute journey.

Unfortunately, full electrification of the Midland main line from London St Pancras to Sheffield has apparently now become merely "an aspiration" for the Sheffield City Region. But London passengers are promised the planned electrified HS2 spur to Chesterfield and Sheffield, with three-tracking between Dore and Sheffield to give the necessary increase in line capacity.

## The next five years

Naturally most of the improvements expected in the near future have already been announced, but the chronic overcrowding of TransPennine services should be alleviated by sufficient rolling stock for six-car trains being made available. Passengers are promised developments in smart ticketing, with account-based travel expected to be introduced within the next four years to enable passengers to make contactless bank card payments for fares.

Only 2% of commutes within the Sheffield



Picture: PAUL ABELL

**TODAY'S REALITY: Barnsley station is still served in 2019 by the much-derided Pacer train which is expected soon to have made its final departure. Specific plans for 2019-24 include developing a business case for extending the Midland main line London-Sheffield service to an improved Barnsley station**

City Region are currently made by train (3% if Supertram is included), compared with 71% by car.

Hopefully the train percentage will increase with the replacement of the controversial Pacers, while the plan mentions five transport corridors around Sheffield for which "appropriate mass transit options" are being considered, together with longer routes to Hoyland and Barnsley, and to Dronfield and Chesterfield.

## Hopes for the longer term

The plan's aspirations for the late 2020s include the Sheffield-Manchester service offering passengers four trains per hour over an upgraded Hope Valley line.

However the necessary line capacity is apparently jeopardised by the difficulty of installing signals inside Totley tunnel.

Nevertheless an hourly Midland main line service connecting Barnsley with London and the East Midlands is expected, and a new main line station for Rotherham passengers, reflecting progress with Northern Powerhouse Rail.

More locally there will be a new station east of Woodhouse on the Sheffield-Worksop

line to serve the Advanced Manufacturing Park and adjacent housing at Waverley, while the Parkgate tram-train service could be extended to Swinton, and perhaps to Doncaster as well as Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

Possibilities for "further investigation in the next five years" include a number of interesting new lines and reinstatements.

A potential new line to Manchester is planned as part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail project, and there are also thoughts of the reinstatement of the direct Penistone-Sheffield line, the reintroduction of a Barnsley-Royston-Wakefield service, and the reintroduction of passenger services on the line through Barrow Hill and Beighton.

Apparently Government forecasts still envisage UK air passengers increasing from 248 million to more than 430 million by 2050, with little obvious regard for climate change.

The single-figure spot heights on the nearby roads show that the airport could be vulnerable to any significant rise in sea level.

Space only permits a brief summary of this thorough document, which is well worth reading in full. It is available at <https://bit.ly/2Y6s6vu>

## Railfuture is front page news

July's inflation figures were released on 14 August, setting the level of January's fare increases, and Railfuture was in demand for comment. We made the front page of *The Guardian*, where Railfuture spokesman Bruce Williamson was quoted: "It might be that we've now reached the point where we cannot simply put fares up and expect passengers to take the hit. They will just give up and refuse to pay. They will either find another job or another form of transport."

Similar quotes appeared in *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, *Independent*, *Financial Times*, *Metro*, *Scotsman*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Record* and many more titles. We were in demand by broadcast media too, appearing on ITV's *Good Morning Britain* as well as the breakfast shows of LBC and talkRADIO, BBC Radio Bristol, and in the news bulletins of Forth 1 and BBC Radio Five Live. More examples of Railfuture's media coverage can be found on our website. Search: railfuture news

# New rail links are long overdue

By Graham Nalty

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There are good reasons why a glass of wine is not filled to the top and there are good reasons why rail networks need spare capacity.

During the 1960s and 1970s rail passenger numbers declined as more people drove cars. Many rail lines were closed and the Government spent vast amounts of money on new roads, including motorways.

Since the 1990s, rail travel has increased rapidly, but the Government has not responded by building new railways to accommodate this growth.

It encourages rail operators to run more trains but the result is, despite good management by rail professionals, a service that is becoming less reliable on a very congested network.

A few lines have been rebuilt with great success, such as the Robin Hood line from Nottingham to Mansfield, and the Borders line in Scotland.

The Oxford-Cambridge line is at last being built but it is disappointing that this will be the only through east-west line in over 100 miles between Hampstead (London) and Melton Mowbray.

Railfuture vice-president Christian Wolmar recently wrote in *RAIL* magazine about a study by the Centre for Economic Performance that showed how towns cut off by rail closures enjoyed less growth than similar but rail-connected towns.

As more lines were closed in the Midlands and North than in London and the South East, this has been one of the causes of the growing economic division between North and South. The corollary is that reopening closed lines in the Midlands and North would be a very effective means of reducing the economic divide.

In Wolmar's *RAIL* article he quoted three measures recommended by Lord Adonis – reopening stations at population centres on existing routes, reopening freight lines to passenger trains and building new routes to connect large towns to the rail network.

This would produce valuable quick wins but is not ambitious enough. Rail is unquestionably an essential part of the nation's transport fabric, not simply an add-on service for people without cars, the view of many in the 1980s.

Rail is essential for people to get to work, first choice for many business and leisure occasions, and large cities need rail to function efficiently. Rail is now far more relevant to people's lives and rail development and expansion needs to reflect that fact.

Airports need good rail connections to towns and cities throughout Britain, not just to the nearest city. All big football grounds and hospitals should be served by rail.

Our large cities must be allowed to make decisions locally on how to expand rail and tram networks.

Many cities need links to similar cities, not just London. The Liverpool-Nottingham rail journey needs a radical speed-up. We must also bring the unconnected towns and villages into the rail network where the benefits are clear. Connecting Mansfield has been very successful, but there are many other towns that should benefit.

The Government response must be more positive and less dependent on "business cases" which always favour the busier routes, rather like a welfare system in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

◆◆◆◆ Increase Railfuture's lobbying power: Recruit a new member



Picture: CRRSC

**ON TEST: The new LEO Express trains arrived in the Czech Republic in September**

## China's black train noses into Europe

The first passenger trains made in China will be operating in the European Union later this year. Three electric multiple units are based in the Czech Republic but will be operating international train services to Slovakia, Poland and other countries in central Europe.

The three trains have been built in Zhuzhou by the world's largest train maker, China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation, for the Czech open-access operator LEO Express, which has an option to buy another 30 trains. Czech studios and European contractors contributed to the design. To travel in those countries, the trains have to triple voltage, 3 kV DC, 15kV AC and 25kV AC.

LEO Express said there will be a buffet, space on the trains for parents with buggies and people in wheelchairs, as well as room for luggage and bicycles. The company has been carrying passengers on main railway routes in the Czech Republic and Slovakia since 2012 in its own trains. The LEO Express fleet includes

long-distance Stadler Flirt five-car electric multiple units.

LEO is competing with Regiojet, another open-access operator, which also operates sleeping car trains between Prague and Kosice in Slovakia. CRRSC has already sold trains to Macedonia, Georgia and Turkey, which are outside the EU.

■ The European Rail Supply Industry Association has called on the European Commission to ensure a level playing field between China and Europe. It says European access to the Chinese market is increasingly restricted and the market is also distorted by unfair state aid. It says about 400,000 jobs in Europe are at risk as a result of this imbalance.

■ 20% of rolling stock company UK Rail is owned by CKA, a property business based in Hong Kong but incorporated in the Cayman Islands. CKA is owned by multibillionaire Li Ka-shing.

## More branches beckon for the Shooter D-Train

By Paul Abell

The shape approaching me in rural Bedfordshire was familiar. But there were only two coaches, half the doors had been filled in, and the interior looked smarter than anything I remembered on the District

Line. This was the D-Train, brainchild of Railfuture vice-president Adrian Shooter, chief executive of Vivarail. His company has used the Underground bodysell, bogies and traction motors as the basis of a conversion to provide trains for lines

which are unlikely to see electrification. A new diesel "power pack" provides power for the traction motors. From April, three trains provide the Marston Vale line Bedford-Bletchley service. The only obvious drawback is that the D-Train is limited to 60mph.



Picture: PAUL ABELL

**The D-Train at Bedford, ready to leave for Bletchley**

Vivarail is now producing a batch of five three-car trains for Transport for Wales. These will be diesel-battery hybrids, and are planned to enter traffic on the Wrexham-Bidston Borderlands line later this year. And then?

The D-Train is being spoken of as perhaps being the future for lines such as Middlesbrough-Whitby, and the Cumbrian Coast north of Barrow.

railwatch October 2019 7

## Bikes on meathooks

I was pleased to see Julian Langston calling for Railfuture to be more concerned with making it easier to carry bikes on trains (*Railwatch* 160).

Julian Langston could not be more right. We damn well should be!

It is ludicrous that we are being told to be more "green" and to stop using our cars so much while modern trains, including the new Hitachis which now serve my station of Hungerford, Berkshire, have been designed to make taking a bike onboard fraught with huge obstacles.

My bike is a pannier-loaded tourer as opposed to a folding or racing bike.

People will return to using their cars, as taking a bike onboard a train has been made so discouraging. It is a humiliating struggle for anyone like myself who is not physically strong enough to lift a bike – even an unloaded one – up on to the "meathooks" provided within the minuscule cubby hole that is supposed to be the space for a bike on the new Hitachi trains.

It is even harder trying to fold a folding bike in a horribly cramped space, which can often be made worse if there is also someone with a baby buggy needing to occupy the same space.

It has been made very difficult to manoeuvre a bike to hang it in the cubby hole, as well as trying to get to a door to get off the train.

It is surely not an impossible job for designers to restructure a train interior layout, so that there is adequate space to accommodate touring, loaded bikes, as well as providing space for baby buggies. Ideally, space should be provided in more than one carriage. Or perhaps one carriage could be dedicated as bike parking space, and fitted with folding seats for passengers, similar to what was provided on the former South West Trains blue Desiro trains.

Finally, I would be more than happy to pay to take my bike onboard, if I was guaranteed a decent space.

I cannot understand why the train operators cannot see this as a good way to get more revenue.

*Catherine Barber, Hungerford, Berkshire  
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## Planning deficit

I attended the Examination in Public of Central Bedfordshire Council's Local Plan at Chicksands in July.

I was astounded to learn of the co-operation and level of liaison between CBC and Highways England regarding the strategic road network, but the lack of a



**ELECTRIC CHARGE:** A quick charge keeps Aarhus' new bus going until it can get back to base

## Overhead gantries for a new generation of Danish buses

Everywhere you look now, there are reports of electric buses, cars, ships and even planes vying for a role in an environmentally conscious future.

Which is particularly galling for rail campaigners who have seen the British Government ditch several rail electrification schemes, despite paying lip service to the existence of a "climate emergency".

The latest area to benefit from an electric bus service is the 15km long route from Aarhus to Frydenlund in Denmark where our correspondent Erland Egefors sampled the new mode.

The Volvo-built low-floor buses were ceremonially opened for business in August by Alderman Ango Winther, a former bus driver. There is an immediate saving on diesel fuel and carbon dioxide pollution because the engines are not consuming fuel when

stuck in traffic. When the bus stops at a re-charge point, a mechanism automatically connects the power.

If the bus is behind schedule, the driver can skip a recharge stop because the batteries have enough power for a 60km run. The bus gets a full charge overnight in the garage.

Erland reports: "I expected a silent bus, but was disappointed, because the air-conditioning fans in the roof are noisy. The driver told me that he could not do anything about it, because only the staff at the garage were able to regulate the system.

"The system was adjusted to 19° Celsius, which of course is not necessary. Most people would be happy with a temperature around 22° Celsius. The fans were noisy enough to be a nuisance."

similar stance with the rail industry – Network Rail, train operators and the East West Rail Company.

In front of the Planning Inspectors, it seemed that CBC officers lacked knowledge of rail.

This is deplorable, given that three main lines go through Central Bedfordshire and East West Rail is proposed along the Marston Vale (Bedford-Bletchley) line.

Central Bedfordshire includes Leighton Buzzard station, served by London Northwestern on the West Coast main line, Arlesey, Biggleswade and Sandy, served by Great Northern on the East Coast,

main line as well as Harlington and Flitwick, served by Thameslink on the Midland main line.

The Inspectors sought clarification and further explanation in respect of several matters, even requesting a definition of a "public transport interchange".

It is all too evident that interchange improvements at key railway stations have a low priority, despite new housing allocations and other land-use planning imperatives.

The recent failure of the "Access for All" bid at Flitwick station reinforces this ongoing problem. One expert said there was little or

no correlation between allocated sites and the railway network – despite National Planning Policy Framework and planning practice guidance on this.

I feel Central Bedfordshire has done little in the last decade to follow best practice.

The failure to deliver the "Station Travel Plan" for Flitwick and Harlington is yet more proof of a deplorable state of affairs.

I am hoping the Planning Inspectors will be critical of the transport elements of the Local Plan – and that cognisance will be taken of the fact that the local

Picture: ERLAND EGEFORS

authority has failed to update its Local Transport Plan in line with the Local Plan. It is essential that land use and transport planning go hand-in-hand.

*Andrew Long BA (Hons) Geography and Land Use Planning, MSc Transport Planning, FCILT, Member, Transport Planning Society  
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## Bus and train

I was interested to see a picture of the Welsh Highland line in *Railwatch* 160. The journey from Porthmadog to Caernarfon is a wonderful trip but is very slow (it takes three hours) and expensive. I would advise getting a single ticket and catching the T2 bus back – a 50-minute ride.

One journey I will not be making is on the Nottingham tram, because the system, like Manchester, bans dogs. I believe banning a well-behaved dog amounts to discrimination.

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

## Nuclear option

I was concerned to see the remarks about the construction of Sizewell C nuclear power station, and the part rail could play (*Railwatch* 160). Many of us who support a growing rail industry are opposed to nuclear power on environmental grounds. Chernobyl proved once and for all what could happen if things go wrong, and that is a risk we should not take.

*Tim Mickleburgh, Boulevard Avenue, Grimsby DN31 2JP  
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## Sail rail

My daughter has used the Rail and Sail service on the Fishguard-Rosslare route for many years. This month though when she tried to book her ticket she was told that this facility no longer existed so she had to drive to Dublin. Why is this service no longer available? Surely the Great Western line (via Didcot and Swindon) should be able to offer a rail service to Fishguard, meeting the ferry to Ireland?

*Barbara Micklem  
bmicklem@googlemail.com*

## Ferry appeal

While I wholeheartedly agree with Nigel Perkins' call for integrated ticketing (*Railwatch* 160), citing a Portsmouth to Newport (Isle of Wight) bus connection using the Fishbourne vehicle ferry is a poor example because there are passenger services with some joint ticketing. Although primarily a vehicle ferry, there are no restrictions on foot passengers using this route.

Foot passengers destined for

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



Picture: LECLANCHE

**ELECTRIC ELLEN:** The new ferry for the island of Aeroe could point the way for Scotland

## First all-electric ferry enters service in Denmark

The world's largest all-electric ferry began carrying passengers in Denmark in August. The *Ellen* sailed 10 miles from Fynshav to Soby on the island of Aeroe and is expected to do the trip seven times a day.

The revolutionary £27 million vessel can carry 30 vehicles and 200 passengers and is powered by a "breakthrough" lithium-ion battery system from the Swiss company Leclanche.

In one year, the *Ellen* will prevent the release of 2,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, 42 tonnes of nitrogen oxide, 2.5 tonnes of particulates and 1.4 tonnes of sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere, compared to a diesel-powered ferry.

It is also said to be free from noise, vibrations and diesel fumes and can sail up to 22 nautical miles between charges.

Grants from the European Union were crucial in launching the new all-electric ferry service for the island of Aeroe and the EU wants to see 100 other e-ferries by 2030. Denmark's new Social Democrat government has recently increased the country's

emission reduction target from 40% to 70% compared to 1990 levels, one of the world's most ambitious environmental policies.

A global cap on sulphur in marine fuel is being implemented next year.

Denmark already operates some electric ferries which have diesel back-up generators, such as the *Auror* and *Tycho Brahe* on the Helsingor-Helsingborg route.

*Ellen* is recharged during the night in Søby.

Danish windpower stations now produce at certain times more electricity than the grid can accommodate.

Denmark has 330 inhabited islands with many ferry services, but Scotland, the Isle of Man and the Greek islands could also be candidates for future conversion to electric ferries.

Anil Srivastava of Leclanche, said: "This project shows that we can replace fossil fuel thermal drives with clean energy and thus contribute to the fight against global warming and pollution."

Newport from Portsmouth have two choices. One is to use Hovertravel's hovercraft (the world's longest commercially operated hovercraft passenger service) which has a Stagecoach operated and branded Hoverbus linking the mainland terminal with Portsmouth city centre, as well as Portsmouth & Southsea and Portsmouth Harbour railway stations. The Ryde terminal is close to Ryde bus and rail interchange.

The alternative is the Wightlink catamaran service from Portsmouth Harbour transport interchange (rail and bus including National Express) to Ryde Pier Head, then train or walk to Ryde

Esplanade interchange station. Ryde interchange has six buses per hour during the day, including one service which was introduced in response to a suggestion from Railfuture corporate members, the Isle of Wight Bus & Rail Users' Group.

There is integrated ticketing to use both the catamaran and the hovercraft between mainland and Island Line railway stations. Hovertravel has joint ticketing between National Express and Southern Vectis and day tickets for Stagecoach south coast services.

Five of the six ferry routes to the Island have good connections with Southern Vectis buses which meet

almost all of the sailings, the one exception being the Portsmouth-Fishbourne route which, as previously mentioned, has better alternatives for foot passengers. The Solent Go Card and app is offered by all bus and most ferry operators in the Solent area but sadly not yet by train operators, although South Western Railway is working towards being able to do so during its current franchise.

*Stuart George, Chair Isle of Wight Bus & Rail Users' Group  
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**More letters: Page 18**



ABOVE: Passengers at Norton Fitzwarren boarding the GWR shuttle to Taunton on the second Saturday of operation, 3 August. BELOW: Rail campaigners at Minehead on their way to Bishops Lydeard to connect with the GWR shuttle to Taunton on Saturday 27 July



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### Rail link to steam line and national park

The long-awaited Great Western Railway experimental service linking the national network at Taunton with Bishops Lydeard on the preserved West Somerset Railway started on 27 July, with the first train being flagged away by Taunton Deane MP Rebecca Pow. The train was expected to run on seven Saturdays up to 5 October. It was originally planned to run on Sundays also but GWR said it did not want to risk cancelling trains it might not be able to resource. GWR managing director Mark Hopwood welcomed Railfuture's offer to help publicise the service and said further dates of operation might be possible in December to connect with the heritage line's seasonal services. Minehead Rail Link Group placed an advertisement in the *West Somerset Free Press* to encourage local people to take a day trip to Taunton via the 10.05 Minehead steam train and the GWR shuttle. The new service received favourable coverage on regional TV and in the local press.

By the first day of operation, the ticket office at Taunton station was displaying prominent notices showing the times of the shuttle service. Tickets were issued on the steam-train line by WSR staff, who also distributed survey forms asking passengers where they had travelled from, their final destinations and whether they would like to see the service run on more days. WSR has said it will evaluate use of the service to determine whether it is worth running in future

10 railwatch October 2019

years. The GWR connection allows West Somerset residents to spend up to 3.5 hours in Taunton. In the opposite direction, using the 09.39 from Taunton would allow people to spend about four hours at Minehead. We will continue to campaign for a more regular operation of the shuttle and for eventual through running of National Rail trains to Minehead. The new service is branded *The Exmoor Gateway*, and we hope it will develop sustainable travel to the national park.

### Early train for Cheltenham commuters

An earlier local train from Bristol to Gloucester has been promised by GWR from December 2019. This follows representations by our member Cam & Dursley Transportation Group and in the Railfuture response to GW franchise consultations. The current first stopping train suits normal office hours in Gloucester but not in Cheltenham or beyond.

### Plea for better bus links to stations

We have asked North Somerset Council to reinstate the recently withdrawn X7 bus service which linked Clevedon with its nearest station at Yatton. While buses to Clevedon pass Nailsea & Backwell station, the latter has minimal passenger accommodation, unlike Yatton which has a waiting room and cafe. Another gap in bus-rail connectivity is access from Taunton station to Musgrove Park Hospital. We have asked for rerouting of the town's park & ride buses to improve things.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/Sevenside Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Sevenside Branch)  
Twitter @RailfutureSSide

Twitter: @railfuture

Pictures: MINEHEAD RAIL LINK GROUP

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### Making a difference

In the weeks since the Railfuture Wessex AGM in Portsmouth, we have raised a number of timetable and service issues with train operators. For example, in advance of the recent four-day strike on South Western, we were worried about the lack of trains or any replacement bus service at a number of our stations which we feel should have been served under the emergency timetable arrangements.

Mike Southgate was elected chair of Railfuture Wessex at the AGM, and he has been working behind the scenes to encourage people to put in Delay Repay claims, no matter how small, when their rail travel is disrupted. Mike said: "Once you have set up a delay repay, it is really a simple matter to make further claims." Through his MP, he has raised the matter of compensation for other instances of poor service such as overcrowding or lack of toilets.

Proposals for transforming rail services in the South under the Solent Metro banner are moving forwards. We have a degree of influence on developments through our contacts with the various people involved, and we take every opportunity to make the case for the reintroduction of passenger services on the Waterside line serving Marchwood and Hythe. We have also been calling for a commitment to some much-needed infill electrification schemes, which currently appear to be stalled for technical reasons as well as the usual lack of funds.

### D-Day for City station

South Western Railway decked out the concourse of Portsmouth & Southsea station with bunting for this year's D-Day commemoration events in the city. Thirty years of accumulated grime was steam-cleaned off the walls as well as the roof over the high-level platforms. Rail users are delighted the structure is now reasonably clean. Should it have taken a major event to persuade the operator to carry out routine maintenance work?

### Heritage railway connections

At last, the Swanage Railway's efforts to achieve a regular passenger service on to the main line at Wareham are bearing fruit. One of the two heritage units required to operate the service is finally back from its extensive overhaul, and the inspection pit at Corfe Castle is now ready for use. This will be needed for daily maintenance of the units.

South Western Railway's summer Saturday diesel service on to the Swanage branch has seen good loadings on those Saturdays when it was able to run, but sadly many return workings were lost due to strike days, staffing problems and unit unavailability. On the other hand, the diesel-hauled excursion trains from London to Swanage, operated by UK Railtours on successive summer Sundays, were a runaway success.

The Watercress line in Hampshire has been severed just short of its main line connection at Alton since January. The line was due to reopen fully in the summer, but this has now been delayed until the end of October because of extra work on a new road bridge.

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

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

# Doubtful claims in uncertain times

Many Railfuture members will have read, and would not have been surprised by, newspaper coverage of research by the left-wing think tank Institute of Public Policy Research on planned spending on rail.

The headlines are that the north of England is set to receive £2,300 less per person in transport spending than London.

In relative terms, the Government's planned spending for London is almost three times more per head than the north unless investment in the Northern Powerhouse goes ahead.

In Yorkshire and the Humber or the North East this comparison rises to 7 to 1 in favour of London (Source IPPR North)

The gap has widened over the past 10 years, when it should have narrowed.

Per person, Londoners will receive £3,636 per year, while in the North the figure is £1,247.

The Government's reaction was that they do not recognise these misleading figures, alleging that the Government is spending more on transport per person in the north than anywhere else.

A Government spokeswoman said: "We are committed to reversing decades of under-investment in northern transport including providing a record £13 billion by 2020 to improve transport networks in the North.

"As the Prime Minister recently set out, this Government wants to drive growth across the north including through Northern Powerhouse Rail, giving local leaders greater powers...."

Let us dissect this for a moment from a transport perspective. Nobody is really surprised that the figures are inconsistent. However, reality on the ground in terms of committed projects would suggest that the IPPR is nearer the mark.

### Northern Powerhouse Rail

There are other messages in this. The Government seems to recognise that the Northern Powerhouse has been smoke and mirrors so far, but the Prime Minister has latched on to the combined strength of the northern economy being similar to London and so announced a high speed rail link, between Manchester and Leeds, in his first week. He is aware that this is shorter than Crossrail, so a similar logic should apply, although the Pennine range is somewhat different demographically and geographically than central London! Note that this is not being branded as HS3 as it once

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IAN BROWN



was. All the arguments about integrating such a link into the north's transport network still apply and Railfuture will campaign strongly to ensure that such a link results in a significant increase in the capacity and resilience of the north's rail network, for regional and local passenger journeys, and increasingly importantly, for freight.

HS2 has benefited from such an approach, now widely accepted as a capacity, rather than solely a speed project, with integration into the rail network bringing



essential economic benefits to whole regions.

Indeed, if we treat HS2 (and HS3) together in development planning terms, there are serious possibilities of bringing such benefits to other cities, Liverpool in particular.

Northern Powerhouse Rail, to realise the potential in the north, must be more than a high speed link between Manchester and Leeds. For there to be no effective high-capacity rail link between Manchester and Sheffield, for example, is untenable in this context.

A further inference in this is that devolution in the north might actually happen. This means power to determine, plan and invest in the north's rail network should be vested in the north, including rail concessions, replacing franchises organised by the Department for Transport.

None of this Northern Powerhouse talk has yet achieved any meaning, and will not do so unless the budgets go with it. Transfer of the budgets and the funding will be the test

of whether the Government is taking the North seriously.

**The West Coast franchise and the Williams Review**  
Remember the Williams Review? Railfuture and many others contributed to the consultation exercise.

Now we have witnessed the DfT awarding the West Coast main line franchise to First-Trenitalia.

That means 76% of Britain's railways are operated by national railways of European Union countries, through subsidiaries. No waiting for Williams here, for the most significant, if not the largest franchise in Britain. There is a strong message here that the DfT has no intention under Williams to make significant change to the franchise system.

If the DfT intended to act in accordance with the Williams recommendations, it would not have made the announcement.

To be fair, the pressures to have a delivery partner for HS2 probably made not waiting for Williams inevitable.

In fact Williams has been delayed as well. There are two tweaks in this announcement of the West Coast Partnership which give an insight into what will emerge branded as Williams.

After the ritual handing-back of the keys on the East Coast franchise, as regular and predictable as a partial eclipse of



the sun, the DfT needs to keep the franchise model looking viable.

There is now far more attention paid to the subject of revenue prediction and regular monitoring to allow the existing system to continue.

The DfT cannot afford for the West Coast franchise to go under as the East Coast has done, because it is inextricably linked to the development of HS2.

There is now also increased involvement of stakeholder bodies in the governance of the

franchise to ensure the franchise matches the needs of both stakeholders and passengers.

Only time will tell how significant this will be in putting the customer at the heart of the operation.

### Rail reopenings rise up the political agenda

Another area that has moved to centre stage is rail reopenings. Railfuture, through our infrastructure and networks group, has established strict criteria in terms of supporting reopening proposals designed to ensure we focus on those which are sustainable . . . potentially viable against economic, social and environmental criteria.

In this context Railfuture works with and supports local groups. The go-ahead for rail projects to link Portishead (population 22,000 increasing to 30,000), and Pill (population 3,500) to Bristol illustrates that rail can play a significant role.

The same factors affect Levenmouth and Cameron Bridge to Kirkcaldy and Edinburgh (catchment area 33,000) showing that the argument applies throughout Britain.

In both of these cases, the argument was won by sustained campaigning citing a strong business case, and the existence of a competent client-side team to ensure the project is delivered.

It was North Somerset Council and Transport Scotland in these two examples.

### Future role of Railfuture

Railfuture does not work in a vacuum. Through our branches, Railfuture works with stakeholders and industry partners, the train operators and Network Rail in campaigning for improvements to our railways.

We have chosen to do this by positive engagement advocating sustainable development.

This can be through statutory consultations and subsequent dialogue as with the Williams Review, but it is clear that local campaigning is an area where Railfuture is increasingly recognised as effective.

Stakeholders are listening and we have successes to record. It is clear that the future of the rail industry is moving, albeit slowly, towards recognising that railways are not just about running a few trains, but are an essential element in the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the country. This is a massive opportunity for Railfuture and its members. Let us increasingly make our voices heard.

railwatch October 2019 11

# Patience running thin in long Access for All wait

By Paul Abell

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Perhaps lost in the Brexit turmoil, the Department for Transport announced on 4 April which 73 stations were to benefit from the £300 million of Access for All funding previously announced.

In the words of the announcement: "Selected stations will, subject to a feasible design being possible, receive an accessible route into the station, as well as to and between every platform."

The funding is for Network Rail control period 6 (2019-2024), so the improvements should be completed by March 2024.

A word of caution here: 46 stations were additions to the programme, but no fewer than 27 of the 73 stations were actually carried over from CP5.

Hopefully this will not happen again. Now the question for everyone is how do we get hold of the money next time?

Railfuture campaigners hoping to add their station to the list for CP7 may like to study the Access for All CP6 nomination form, still available on the internet. Much of the information requested is routine, such as which Department for Transport category the station falls into.

Least busy of the 46 winners this year is Tenby, with 123,000 passengers, which leaves Chinley, with 120,000 passengers hoping to be added to the list if work at any of the 46 stations cannot be carried out.

It has to be a matter of concern that 16 of the 46 stations used by more than one million passengers each year still have restrictions on access.

Other questions may well benefit

from campaigners' input: "How many passenger assists are roughly booked at the station per year? Such as request for ramps on to trains, etc."

The form asks for a brief description of the station, and also for the current access to platforms, recognising that you could have "ramp to all platforms but not compliant due to steep gradient, etc."

The form asks what provision is being requested (such as a new footbridge with lifts, or lifts added to an existing footbridge), and whether any development work has already been done.

## Local circumstances

The name, distance, journey time and service frequency of the nearest fully accessible station is matched with any local factors within 800 metres of the station which might result in a greater proportion of people

with disabilities using it, such as hospitals, disability schools or army rehabilitation centres. Nearby housing developments or new commercial zones in the area can also be mentioned.

Four questions look for evidence of stakeholder support from the train operators, local disability groups, the local authority and the local MP.

## What next?

As long as the present five-year cycle of Network Rail control periods governs project planning of railway infrastructure, campaigners for better access are going to be frustrated for the next couple of years.

But it is worth remembering that there are already signs that the cycle may be made more flexible. You may not have a spade-ready scheme, but it is always worth having clear proposals, with substantial local support.

## Setback but Needham Market station relaunches its Access for All campaign

By Peter Feeney

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The access difficulties at Needham Market railway station – midway between Ipswich and Stowmarket in Suffolk – have been of long-standing concern to the local community.

Not only is the station unstaffed and the only entrance (by ramp) too steep to be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act, but the Ipswich-bound platform can be reached only via 49 steep steps and a subway, meaning accessing or exiting this platform is impossible for wheelchair users and is difficult and risky for those with limited mobility, buggies, toddlers, heavy luggage or bicycles.

A campaign was launched in 2017 to achieve proper access. Since then many local residents have given their support, together with local businesses, district and county councils and cross-party councillors.

The campaign is supported by Railfuture East Anglia and by the Mid-Anglia Passenger Association. Train operator Greater Anglia has also been positively engaged in discussions to address the issue. Media interest has been ongoing, including coverage of the campaign's two visits to Westminster last year to present the urgency of its case to the then Transport Secretary Chris Grayling, Nusrat Ghani who was the transport minister responsible for accessibility and Jo Churchill, MP for Bury St Edmunds.

A petition for Government funding stood at over 2,200 signatures when a control period six (2019-24) funding bid was submitted by Greater Anglia last autumn.

Co-ordinator and lead petitioner for the Needham Market campaign Jen Overett, who is a Railfuture member, said: "Of course we are disappointed not to be one of the 73 stations set to benefit.

"However, we were pleased at the announcement of £20 million the Government has put aside 'to re-launch the Mid-Tier Access for All programme.'

"Needham Market seems to fit perfectly into this category, especially given local people's



NEEDHAM MARKET: Stairs block wheelchair progress for Terence Carter, vice-chair of the Mid Suffolk Disability Forum

Picture: JOHN MATTHESEN



NEEDHAM MARKET: (left to right) MP Jo Churchill, Jen Overett, Terence Carter, the then Transport Secretary Chris Grayling and former district councillor Wendy Marchant (now retired)

preference for the cheaper, more pragmatic solution of ramp access to the Ipswich-bound platform rather than a 'bells and whistles' lift option."

Another argument for funding is that the town is growing rapidly (potentially 1,400 new homes in various stages of planning and a second large industrial estate). A visitor centre is expected to be built at Needham Lake, which abuts the station land and attracts around 400,000 visitors annually.

Jen added: "A direct link to Needham Lake from the station would make this popular attraction much more accessible.

"There is so much interest now in adopting greener lifestyle choices, and with the extensive media coverage of messages promoted by Greta Thunberg

and Extinction Rebellion, this is the perfect time for our station's facilities to enable more people to leave their cars at home and take the train.

"£20 million is a relatively small amount and we do not underestimate that there may be considerable competition for funding.

"However, the Access for All group believes passionately in its cause and we have no plans to give up!

"So we are picking up the campaign again in advance of the new bidding process, building further on current offers of match funding and adding to our petition signatures, as well as keeping local people up to date through social media, newspaper, radio and TV coverage."



LONDON: The problem of stairs remains at Cambridge Heath

Picture: RAILWATCH

## The Assisted Travel Scheme and how it could help YOU

By Graham Collett

Vice-chair, Railfuture Yorkshire and Accessibility Officer, Passenger Group

If you thought the assisted travel scheme was just for disabled people, then read on.

### Disabled People's Protection Policies

It is a requirement, under the terms of their operating licence, for each train and station operator (including Network Rail) to establish and comply with a DPPP.

This applies both to those passengers who book assistance in advance and, where reasonably practicable, those who want to travel at short notice.

Despite the title, assistance can be requested by anyone who needs it, not just disabled people. Whenever I am at York station, I see elderly passengers struggling with heavy luggage when help could be made available.

The current DPPP guidance requires that operators produce two documents:

A) A passenger-facing document entitled *Making Rail Accessible: helping older and disabled passengers* (a leaflet)

B) A policy document entitled *Making Rail Accessible: guide to policies and practices*.

The previous guidance for operators on writing their DPPPs was issued in 2009 by the Department for Transport but the responsibility for approval and monitoring train and station operators' DPPPs transferred to the Office of Rail and Road

in October 2013. In 2017 ORR published the results of its extensive research into passenger experience and awareness of assisted travel. At the same time it consulted on the key areas identified in the research for improvement: passenger awareness, reliability and staff training and what further monitoring they might undertake.

### Major review of assisted travel scheme

Towards the end of 2017, the ORR issued a consultation on a review of the scheme. I had experience of booking assistance for a friend and also have another friend who uses the scheme, so I offered to provide a Railfuture response on behalf of our passenger group.

Following the consultation, the ORR published our response, alongside a summary of all other responses and an outline of how they intended to take forward the issues identified.

<https://bit.ly/2IMjSeB>

This included the creation of an advisory group to support work on potential updates to the guidance the rail industry uses to form accessibility policies.

<http://orr.gov.uk/news-and-media/press-releases/2018/assisted-travel-advisory-group-created-by-rail-regulator>

Since June last year, at ORR's invitation and with the agreement of Railfuture's passenger group, I have attended two guidance review workshops in London on the DPPP and submitted comments to a third meeting which I was unable to attend.

I also submitted Railfuture's response to the formal consultation (25 questions) and all responses were published by ORR at: <https://bit.ly/2raoudx>

### A new accessible travel policy

These workshops culminated in the issue by ORR on 27 July of a new accessible travel policy and revised and updated DPPP: <https://bit.ly/2kA3nIM>

Alongside this document it also published revised guidance, together with regulatory and equality impact assessments.

To meet their licence obligations, operators must adhere to the document structure when producing their accessible travel policy, which must include station and rolling stock accessibility information.

### Passenger leaflet

Changes to the passenger leaflet *Making Rail Accessible: helping older and disabled passengers* were addressed separately, and in May 2019, I attended a separate Office of Rail and Road workshop in London to consider these. The results of Office of Rail and Road's consultations are awaited.

### Operator liaison

As part of my role as accessibility manager, I have held meetings with the accessibility managers of both TransPennine Express and London North Eastern Railway.

It was noticeable that LNER does seem to be ahead of the game in this issue, with a very keen manager who is strongly supported at senior level.

I hope to arrange meetings as time permits with the other train operators who serve Yorkshire and strongly recommend that Railfuture branches should contact the accessibility managers of their local train operators to ask about funding for accessibility improvements.

Funds for such works are available from three main sources: The DfT's Access for All fund, the Customer and Community Improvement Fund and the Minor Works Fund.

It is also worth contacting local organisations who are involved in campaigning for improved access at the stations in your area or to the rolling stock run by your local train operators.



LONDON: A lift transforms lives at London's newest station, Meridian Water

Picture: RAILWATCH

About 200 of Britain's 2,563 stations are fully accessible but others have a confusing mixture of lifts and ramps.

An interactive map of stations and their accessibility facilities is available at: [www.networkrail.co.uk/communities/passengers/station-improvements/access-for-all/](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/communities/passengers/station-improvements/access-for-all/)

[martin.smith@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:martin.smith@railfuture.org.uk)

### Didcot-Oxford anniversary boosts Railfuture

The 175th anniversary of the opening of the Didcot-Oxford railway was celebrated by events and exhibitions in June at Didcot, Appleford, Culham, Radley and Oxford. Railfuture Thames Valley had a display at the main event in Oxford, where we made useful contacts with the public, and enrolled new members.

### Slow progress on Oxfordshire rail plans

Several members of the Railfuture Thames Valley committee had another meeting with County Councillor Yvonne Constance and county rail officer Adrian Saunders in July. We were reassured that rail improvements are coming, although very slowly. The reopening of the Cowley branch for passenger services is going to stage one of the Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) procedure, for which funding is available. However we do not know how long it will take to go through all the other GRIP stages. Phase one of the rebuilding of Oxford station, bay platforms 1 and 2 for Chiltern trains, is complete. Phase two will be a new down platform 5, dependent on rebuilding Botley Road bridge. Phase three will possibly be an additional through platform on the London-bound side. The public were invited to comment on an artist's impression for a new Oxford station, but detailed plans were never produced. Plans for a new Grove/Wantage station have been deferred again, to control period 7, after 2024.

### Response to 400% growth at Hanborough

A new prefabricated station building with a waiting room and toilet has been installed at Hanborough. It will be staffed from 07.00 to 13.00, and the waiting room will remain open in the afternoon. The growth of traffic since Beeching times when it was reduced to a halt results from changes in population and travel patterns. Over the 20 years from 1997 to 2017 there has been a 400% growth in traffic at Hanborough, which now enjoys 40 train services a day. It is regrettable that some West Oxfordshire District councillors have opposed plans for a new car park at Hanborough on the spurious grounds that it will attract more people to live in the area, when it is the council which has permitted housing developments.

### East Witney needs better public transport links

Railfuture Thames Valley has contacted West Oxfordshire District Council with comments on new developments east of Witney. Proposals to find alternatives to car use are insufficient. No dwelling in the new developments should be more than 400 metres from a bus stop, and the roads leading to Hanborough station should be upgraded for feeder bus services. Bus timetables should be improved to connect with all trains, including evenings and Sundays. Developers should provide a bond to subsidise bus services from the beginning of construction for a minimum of 10 years, so new residents can make location choices with the certainty that bus services will be there. Railfuture wishes to see a long-term plan for a rail service linking Carterton, Witney and Oxford. Surviving sections of the former railway line should be protected from redevelopment.

### Network Rail says No to two reopening ideas

Network Rail has rejected the possibility of reopening the line from Didcot to Winchester which was not suggested by Railfuture. We accept Network Rail's verdict that reopening the Witney branch for heavy rail is not feasible, but light rail should be considered.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/Thames Valley Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Thames_Valley_Branch)  
Twitter @RailfutureTV



Picture: RAY BREWIS

**REGENERATION:** Work started in May on the car park for the new Horden station which is expected to open in spring next year. Durham County Council, the North East local enterprise partnership and the Department for Transport's new stations fund are investing £10.5 million in the station on the Sunderland-Hartlepool coast line. Local surveys show backing from 99% of the public

[peter.walker@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:peter.walker@railfuture.org.uk)

### Rebirth of the Railways conference

Councillor Heather Scott, the Tees Valley Combined Authority Cabinet lead for Transport, opened Railfuture's *Rebirth of the Railways* conference in June. She pointed out that 50% of hydrogen for possible use on rail was produced on Teesside, although the technology is in its infancy. She said the Northallerton-Teesport rail corridor was in urgent need of upgrading to handle much greater volumes of freight, large containers in particular. Railfuture believes this route should also be used for passenger services. Another speaker, Tim Rutter of Hitachi Rail Europe, said Hitachi's maintenance contract for the Azuma trains will last 27 years or more. He said Hitachi and Bombardier were preparing a joint bid to provide HS2 vehicles. At a more local level, Alan Williams, chairman of Esk Valley Railway Development Company, called for Whitby line trains to go on to Hartlepool, to increase Coast Line train frequency.

### More trains to Whitby from December

As if following up Alan Williams' talk at Darlington, Northern Rail and Network Rail have agreed to much-needed early and late trains. At present, nothing leaves Whitby for Middlesbrough before 08.45, or Middlesbrough for Whitby after 18.00. From December, the first train will leave Whitby at 06.27 for Middlesbrough, and the last train will go from Middlesbrough to Whitby at 20.40, returning to Teesside at 22.15.

### TransPennine extends to Redcar

Following its introduction of new rolling stock, First TransPennine is to extend virtually all its Manchester-Leeds-York-Middlesbrough services to Redcar Central in December. As well as encouraging commuter and leisure travel into and beyond Middlesbrough, these trains will enable visitors from much further afield to come to Redcar's racecourse, its promenade, and its vertical pier.

### Whatever next for CrossCountry?

Amid the continuing uncertainty arising from the Williams Review, many in the North East, especially Coastliners members, would like to know when, and whether, the widely supported demand for inter-city style expresses along the Durham Coast

will be met. CrossCountry's Alex Bray will be speaking to the Teesside branch of the Stephenson Locomotive Society on Tuesday 19 November at Coulby Newham Community Centre, starting at 19.00. His talk, *The Future Development of CrossCountry*, is open to all, so members of Coastliners will be taking the chance to ask for a proper express service linking Sunderland, Hartlepool and Stockton with the rest of the CrossCountry network.

### News from the Tyne Valley CRP

Congratulations to Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership on becoming the first partnership on the Northern network to attain Department for Transport accreditation status. The partnership has been working over the past few months to develop a clear activity action plan that will deliver on the DfT's community rail development strategy across the Newcastle-Carlisle line.

### Tourism in the Tyne valley

The TVCRP has been well known for its innovative approach to attracting visitors to tourist hotspots along the line. The team welcomed Matthew Barrett on a year-long tourism development internship, funded by CrossCountry, which helped to mastermind the partnership's Hadrian's Wall display at Glasgow Central and Carlisle stations. Matthew has returned to Northumbria University, Matthew will continue supporting TVCRP on an ad-hoc basis.

### The perils of transport surveys

The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, with the assistance of the Campaign for Better Transport, is organising a survey of communities left behind by public transport provision, buses in particular. The North East is among the areas chosen for closer investigation. However, the survey confines itself to communities over 5,000 and under 30,000 strong. There were community complaints about the timetable on the Bishop Auckland line, which ironically had been amended to help Hitachi's work force. At Eaglescliffe (served by Northern and Grand Central), rail use, nature and frequency score highly. But Yarm (served by TransPennine was not surveyed but has no train service to Eaglescliffe which is only two miles away. [www.railfuture.org.uk/North East Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/North_East_Branch)  
Twitter @RailfutureNEast

# Pink loco that is going green

By Lee Davies

[lee.davies@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:lee.davies@railfuture.org.uk)

This pink locomotive is a colourful reminder that more and more companies are waking up to the environmental advantages of sending their freight by rail.

The class 66 diesel was painted pink this year to celebrate a partnership between freightliner and Ocean Network Express, also known as ONE.

ONE was formed from three Japanese shipping companies which had reducing their carbon footprint as one of their core values.

"With ONE and Freightliner working together in partnership, everyone benefits from a significant reduction in carbon emissions and we can continue to provide the high level of service that our customers expect from us," said Derek Wakeling of ONE.

By switching from road to rail, the new three-year deal will see 118,320 road miles per day removed from UK roads, reducing greenhouse gasses by 67% in comparison to traditional road transport.

In addition, ONE will save 180 tonnes of carbon dioxide per day on inland transport.

"With carbon dioxide emissions reduced by 76% per freight tonne mile moved compared to road, transporting more freight by rail supports ONE in their commitment to the environment by helping reduce their carbon footprint," said Clive Slayford of Genesee & Wyoming Inc, Freightliner's parent company.

### IKEA trains

A new dedicated container train to move goods between Teesport and Doncaster has been launched by PD Ports in partnership with GB Railfreight. The 90-mile long twice-daily rail service for Containerships removes 120 lorry journeys from the heavily congested UK road network.

The train is carrying large amounts of IKEA goods which come to Britain by ship to Teesport.

"Delivery accuracy is of key importance. At the same time, we have a very ambitious decarbonising agenda and actively seek to reduce our environmental impact wherever possible," said Elisabeth Munk af Rosenschöld of IKEA.

"To shift from trucks to trains is one way of reducing the number



Picture: FREIGHTLINER

**AS ONE, WE CAN:** That is the name of the Freightliner loco which is now sporting the corporate livery of Ocean Network Express (ONE). The naming ceremony took place at Freightliner's Southampton Maritime terminal

of shipments and fuel used per shipment."

Geoff Lippitt of PD Ports, said: "Rail is at the forefront of our agenda at Teesport, providing vital UK connections for our customers and delivering significant environmental and cost-saving benefits."

John Smith, Managing Director of GB Railfreight said: "At a time when business is under increasing pressure to improve its sustainability credentials, rail has the advantage of being significantly more environmentally friendly than road transport."

### Intermodal decline

There is expected to be a decline in intermodal freight during this year because of uncertainty around Brexit.

That was the warning from Elizabeth de Jong, UK policy director at the Freight Transport Association.

There was notable growth in 2018 but the mood is now more subdued.

"Last year was a bumper year for domestic bulk and semi-bulk rail freight," said John Simkins of Santander Logistics. The FTA's

2019 Logistics Report warns of challenging times ahead for the rail freight sector. The Logistics Report polled more than 500 freight and logistics businesses.

### Thames-Forth link

A new weekend rail freight service is linking England's River Thames to Scotland's Firth of Forth.

Eddie Stobart and Direct Rail Services have joined forces to run the train between Tilbury on the Thames and Grangemouth, Scotland's largest port.

The new service – with 36 containers – started in June in response to customer demand. The material carried includes chemicals, retail goods, fresh food and drink, including exports.

Stuart Wallace of Forth Ports said: "Linking our ports in the South East and Scotland by rail has been a priority for us.

"The service comes on the back of an increase in business at our busy container terminals and underpins our commitment to provide sustainable and cost-effective logistics solutions for our customers, aiding growth and competitiveness in the

supply chain. This is the first time that a rail service truly links our ports in Tilbury and Grangemouth which opens up a number of import and export opportunities for our business and customers."

Chris Connelly of DRS said: "Through partnerships such as these many more road miles can be saved and huge environment benefits will continue to be delivered by rail."

### China-UK rail speed-up

A weekly rail import service for "less than container load" cargoes from China is consistently delivering quicker transits than those publicised, according to Davies Turner which operates the Express China Rail Service.

Cargo comes by train from Wuhan to Duisburg in Germany but is then transferred to lorries to Rotterdam and then by ship to Purfleet, near Dartford.

The fastest Wuhan to Dartford time so far is 18 days and is a competitive alternative to air freight and faster than by sea.

### Level playing field

Lorries on main roads in the Netherlands may be taxed per kilometre from 2023 onwards.

"This is good news for the rail freight industry," said RailGood, which represents Dutch rail freight carriers. "It is a step towards a fair and equal playing field for freight transportation in the Netherlands.

The level of charge will be fixed by the environmental properties and weight class of the truck. The plan is currently out for public consultation.

RailGood is calling for the tax revenue to be spent on encouraging more freight to switch from road to rail. It said road transport imposes massive costs on people, nature and society at large.

"There are various innovative concepts on the market that make it relatively easy to put trucks, trailers and standardised loading units on a train," it said.

### 'Double it' aim for rail

Britain's biggest container port at Felixstowe is aiming to double its rail cargo once the £60 million project to install rail loops on the Felixstowe-Ipswich line has been completed. Port officials said the environmental benefits of rail freight are widely recognised and have a key role to play in meeting government environmental targets.



Graphic: ASLEF

**1 freight train can take up to 80 HGVs off our roads**



◆◆◆◆ Increase Railfuture's lobbying power: Recruit a new member



Picture: RAILWATCH

**WORLD CLASS: Network Rail has agreed to spend £22 million on renewing the spectacular grade II listed Barmouth rail bridge which carries trains from Birmingham and Shrewsbury to Pwllheli over the River Mawddach on one of the world's most scenic rail routes. The number of Cambrian Coast trains (between Dyfi Junction and Pwllheli) is to be increased to nine a day from 2022. Gwynedd County Council pays Network Rail £30,000 a year to maintain the footbridge which runs alongside the Barmouth rail bridge**

rowland.pittard@railfuturewales.org.uk

### Integrated transport for North Wales

Railfuture Cymru Wales was represented at a seminar on integrated transport systems held at Llandudno in July. A Welsh Government speaker said the national transport strategy is being updated in the light of the climate change emergency, the shelving of improvements to the M4 and rail devolution. Active travel, reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality would guide future policy. He predicted that bus services would also be reformed.

Modal integration would be a key part of future transport plans, according to the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, which wants to stimulate growth, while Transport for Wales outlined its plans for future rail service and station improvements.

### TfW Rail must up its game for special events

Two of the highlights of summer in Wales are the Royal Welsh Show and National Eisteddfod. Both attract tens of thousands of visitors every day. The Royal Welsh Show takes place at a showground about two kilometres from Builth Road on the Heart of Wales line.

The previous franchise holder Arriva Trains Wales operated a special train to Builth Road from Cardiff, running via Bridgend and the Swansea District Line to access the Heart of Wales line at Pontarddulais. This gave passengers from South Wales a time saving of 30 minutes over the normal option of changing at Swansea. However, a week before the four-day event opened, there was no information to indicate that the special service would operate. Only three days before the show, details of the special train appeared on the website and at stations, by which time most potential passengers would have made alternative travel arrangements which are unlikely to have included rail. The train provided was also a letdown, with just two non-interconnected units, including a Pacer.

While the Royal Welsh venue is the same every year, the Eisteddfod location changes to take this annual highlight of Welsh language culture to various parts of Wales. This year it was held in August at Llanrwst on the Llandudno Junction-Blaenau Ffestiniog Conwy Valley line in Snowdonia. The line had been closed from March to mid July for major flood defence work. This

work aims to prevent a repeat of serious flooding incidents which have led to several closures in recent years. To its credit, the reopening of the branch was well publicised by Transport for Wales Rail. During Eisteddfod week there were additional services in the morning from Holyhead and Bangor, returning in the evening, with shuttle services between Llandudno and North Llanrwst during the day. Unfortunately the services from Holyhead and Bangor, avoiding a change at Llandudno Junction, were not well advertised. These services were again made known only a few days before the Eisteddfod opened, resulting in very poor patronage.

If train operators are to provide additional services to special events, which Railfuture Wales applauds as a way of attracting new users to travel by train, they need to ensure that appropriate advance publicity is given.

### Speed-up benefits lost in poor connections

Great Western Railway has announced major changes to its timetable between Paddington and Swansea with shorter journey times, two additional morning peak services from Cardiff returning in the peak from Paddington and an hourly service on Saturdays between Paddington and Cardiff replicating the present weekday services. Unfortunately the Portsmouth Harbour-Cardiff service will not connect with the Paddington-Swansea trains.

TfW services had to be modified to fit in with GWR and hopes of providing a well-spaced service between Newport and Swansea have been dashed again. Connections between GWR and TfW are variable and ironically the speed-up of GWR trains has in many cases not improved overall journey times. TfW has not yet published a list of significant timetable changes but has announced a major increase in Sunday services.

### Bow Street reopening delayed

A new £8 million rail and bus interchange near Aberystwyth has been delayed while planners work out a way to avoid the risk of flooding at the site, Bow Street. One aim of the station is to persuade car drivers from north of Aberystwyth to leave their vehicles at the Bow Street park-and-ride station, rather than clogging up both the narrow A487 road into Aberystwyth and the streets of the town.

[www.railfuturewales.org.uk](http://www.railfuturewales.org.uk)  
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### Bring back Sunday trains

Northern Railway has been persuaded to look into the problem of four stations in Greater Manchester – Smithy Bridge, Castleton, Mills Hill and Moston – which are often left with no Sunday trains and regular weekday cancellations. The problem is so bad that Richard Greenwood, chairman of the local rail user group *Support The Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester line* (STORM), believes Northern are probably in breach of their franchise conditions.

Richard believes that because overall control on the Calder Valley line rests with Northern at Leeds, punctuality on the east side of the Pennines takes precedence over providing a service in Greater Manchester. STORM has been told that Northern control rooms in Leeds and Manchester Victoria are now at least talking to each other about the issue.

The Blackburn-Southport via Todmorden service calls at Smithy Bridge, Castleton, Mills Hill and Moston on Sundays, but when that service is cancelled the four stations have no trains.

In that event, Manchester-Leeds Calder Valley trains are supposed to make extra stops but rarely do, even though replacement buses are not provided.

### PODS link for Liverpool Airport

North Cheshire Rail User Group has succeeded in getting passenger trains back on the Halton Curve, with a service linking Chester and Liverpool via Runcorn starting in May. Now NCRUG is campaigning for more services to connect the wider North Cheshire and North Wales area by rail to Liverpool John Lennon Airport through Liverpool South Parkway, the station for the airport.

NCRUG believes that the full benefit of the Halton Curve service will not be realised until the existing bus shuttle between the station and the airport is replaced with a dedicated transit system, similar to the personal rapid transit system at London Heathrow Terminal 5, known as the POD.

NCRUG has brought the airport, Merseytravel and the developers of the Heathrow POD system together but the cost is high.

Cedric Green, secretary of NCRUG, believes the cost could be offset by airport staff regularly using the new system.

### Southport pledge of Piccadilly service

The Ormskirk-Preston-Southport Travellers Association's campaign to get Monday-Saturday through services to Manchester Piccadilly reinstated is looking good. Northern and Network Rail have agreed on an hourly timetable from Southport serving Piccadilly and running through to Alderley Edge.

However, OPSTA is worried that the service would be reliant on bimode class 769 (former Thameslink class 319 electric multiple units fitted with a back-up diesel engine) which have not yet entered service. Reliability could be a problem.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthWestBranch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/NorthWestBranch)  
Twitter @RailfutureNWWest

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

janeann.liston@railfuturescotland.org.uk

### Levenmouth reopening brings summer joy

The highlight of the summer was the Scottish Government decision that the Levenmouth railway reopening should go ahead. Once the five miles from Thornton Junction is upgraded, residents of Leven, Buckhaven, Methil and Methilhill will be able to access Kirkcaldy and Edinburgh easily and quickly, which will be a great help in the regeneration of this part of Fife.

### Rail development grants

Another welcome development was the announcement of the second round of Transport Scotland's £817,000 local rail development fund grants. These included: access and accessibility in East Lothian, Dunblane and Kirkcubrecht, assessment of transport needs at Helensburgh, the Aberdeen area, the Perth-Montrose corridor, Leith and St Andrews. This last will enable the whole Scottish Transport Assessment Guidance (STAG) to be carried out for St Andrews. Results for the St Andrews *Case for Change* part are expected imminently.

### New stations at design stage

Meanwhile, in East Lothian, Network Rail is finalising the design of Reston and East Linton stations, once timetable analysis is complete. Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES) is continuing to keep in touch with the communities, attending local galas at Coldingham and St Abbs, as well as the new station locations. RAGES also responded to East Lothian Council's consultation on climate change, suggesting better integration of buses and trains at Dunbar and the need for an hourly rail service at Musselburgh. RAGES said rail should be first choice for sustainable travel.

### Strong support for Galloway reopening

The South West of Scotland Transport partnership (SWESTRANS) is very supportive of the campaign to reopen the Galloway line from Dumfries to Stranraer, which incidentally features in at least three detective and thriller novels from the Golden Age.

### £14m price on Beattock station reopening

The second part of the STAG for Beattock has been completed and concludes that a rail

### Fare initiatives

Helsinki has an app to give one hour travel on bus, tram and train.

Berlin is considering making its public transport free.

Luxembourg is to become the first country to have free public transport from March next year.

Tallinn (Estonia) has a €2 annual card for unlimited public transport use for its 420,000 inhabitants. Visitors have to pay.

Hasselt (Belgium) experienced a 1,300% increase in ridership when there was free public transport from 1997 to 2013.

In the Netherlands public transport is free for students.

### Rail to air

Railfuture has not taken a position on Heathrow expansion but advocates improved rail



Graph: ASLEF

service is feasible, although the timetable would be challenging. Because of the need for adequate electrical clearance and longer platforms to accommodate inter-city trains, even though only shorter local trains are expected to stop at Beattock, the cost of the station was calculated at £14 million. The STAG report will go to SWESTRANS for consideration.

### Greens urged to probe STAG rail process

The Scottish Green party has been urged to investigate the Scottish Transport Assessment Guidance (STAG) process because critics say it is a long-winded and costly way to assess rail projects.

### Waverley route 'could be Union link'

The right-wing Policy Exchange think tank recommended in early August that the British Government completes the reinstatement of the former Waverley rail route Borders Railway, from Galashiels to Carlisle, as a way of cementing links within the United Kingdom.

The Campaign for Borders Rail was celebrating in July that substantial funding has been agreed for a feasibility study into reopening the line to Carlisle. Five local authorities, Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council, Dumfries & Galloway Council, Northumberland County Council and Scottish Borders Council, have agreed that £10 million of the £394 million Borderlands Growth Deal funding is spent "to progress the evidence base, options appraisal and feasibility work on Carlisle-Tweedbank rail options". Transport Scotland has said it is

looking at several routes as part of a rolling programme of electrification. Campaigners believe that if the Edinburgh-Galashiels Borders Railway was electrified it would strengthen the case for an extension to Carlisle.

### Oban information links rail, ferry and bus

The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership has installed better information screens at Oban to improve integration between train, bus, ferry and air.

### Poll backs rail nationalisation in Scotland

More than 60% of people polled by YouGov for *The Times* in September want to see ScotRail nationalised. Only 11% want it to remain in private hands. 25% were undecided.

### Springburn works closes after 153 years

The famous St Rollox works in Springburn, Glasgow – where ScotRail trains were maintained – was closed in July after 153 years by its owners Gemini Rail despite pleas to the Scottish Government to take it over.

### Contacts:

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

Beattock Station Action Group:

[www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/](http://www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/)

St Andrews Rail Link campaign (StARLink):

[www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/](http://www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/)

[facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign](https://www.facebook.com/StARLinkCampaign)

Levenmouth Rail Campaign:

[www.lmrc-action.org.uk/](http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/)

[facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/](https://www.facebook.com/LevenmouthRail/)

Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG):

[www.capitalrail.org.uk/](http://www.capitalrail.org.uk/)

Newburgh Train Station campaign:

[http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/](http://http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/)

Forth Rail Link (*Dunfermline-Kinross-Alloa*):

[www.forthraillink.com](http://www.forthraillink.com)

[facebook.com/forthraillink/](https://www.facebook.com/forthraillink/)

Thornhill Station Action Group:

[chrisandmimi@supanet.com](mailto:chrisandmimi@supanet.com)

Bonnybridge Railway Campaign:

[http://bonnybridgerailway.scot](http://http://bonnybridgerailway.scot)

[www.facebook.com/bonnybridgerailway](https://www.facebook.com/bonnybridgerailway)

links to Heathrow and other airports, irrespective of whether the third runway is built.

### Pacer contest

Rail entrepreneur Pete Waterman is to chair a panel of judges to decide what can be done with Pacer trains when they retire at the end of this year. Rolling stock company Porterbrook is donating three Pacers for use by "communities".

### London Rail

Nearly 60% of Londoners want decision-making on the railways to be taken by the mayor of London and Transport for London, a poll has found. Research by Populus for the Rail Delivery Group, which represents train firms and Network Rail, found that 59 per cent of Londoners want decision-making to be devolved locally.

RDG supports the introduction of more London Overground-style concession models, in which TfL would appoint an operator to provide a specified service for a specified sum, alongside incentives for good performance. TfL would retain ticket revenue and would carry the bulk of the risk if revenue expectations were not realised.

### Maynard returns to DfT

Paul Maynard returned to the Department for Transport as a minister, as part of the July cabinet reshuffle. Grant Shapps replaced Chris Grayling as Transport Secretary. Chris Heaton-Harris and George Freeman are also transport ministers.

### Moscow airport rail link

Russian Railways are building a rail line to Sheremetyevo Airport's new northern terminal

complex to cope with chronic road congestion.

### Trunk road review

The Welsh Government has launched a review of the safety of the trunk road network. It follows media reports of Kieran Burling being "imprisoned" in his Ponterwyd home by the routinely heavy traffic on the A44 road and one vehicle crashing into his garden wall. There is no pavement for pedestrians and there are daily incidents when lorries travelling in opposite directions jam up the road. Large timber lorries have been stopped from travelling through the village of Llandewi Brefi after cracks started appearing in houses. National Resources Wales is in talks with 15 landowners in Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire to try to divert the lorries through forest roads.

## Wheelchair poser

*Railwatch* 160 was a good but sad read, comparing what railways used to be like, how easily they could be improved, and showing what European railways are like. *Railwatch* always gets me going! In the past, British Rail was a pleasure to use, although travelling with a wheelchair would not have been easy.

Now I can fly to Stansted, but what a challenge to get the 30 miles to Bedford! The train to Cambridge is fine, but then there is a long walk or a taxi to catch the X5 bus through the traffic jams to Bedford.

How much longer do we have to wait for East West Rail? It is so obviously necessary. Trying to get a wheelchair on to packed London-Bedford Thameslink trains is yet another challenge.

I also recall an attempted trip last year by rail to Wirksworth. The Bedford-Nottingham train was fine but we were then confronted with a one-coach train without wheelchair facilities.

We took one look and gave up. Yet as *Railwatch* reported, a lovely inter-city Lincoln-Nottingham-Derby-Crewe-Liverpool/Chester service could easily be operating, instead of this grisly railcar.

On the return Nottingham-Bedford train one of us had to stand and the other compete with baby buggies for available wheelchair space.

This would not be acceptable in Switzerland, Austria or Germany.

It seems travel is a pleasure in the UK only on preserved lines.

And how short-sighted of Britain to cut back on rail electrification!

If the Government was serious about its climate change emergency, it would immediately cancel the third runway at Heathrow and stop encouraging people to travel by Ryanair and easyJet.

Maybe by applying an upper age limit to politicians (possibly 35), we would get some sensible policies.

*P J Odell, Kimberley 8300, South Africa*

## Poor seats

I wonder how many other people find the seats on nearly all of the new trains hard, upright and uncomfortable – even in First Class. I travelled from London to Cardiff by GWR on the new Hitachi trains which are advertised as having “greater comfort” than the IC125s they replace.

That seems a misrepresentation.

As the same type of seat is being introduced on all new trains, can I assume it is as a result of a directive of the Department for Transport, or has every company independently decided to use the same seats?



**SEASIDE SAND:** A sculpture of Greater Anglia's new bimode train at Great Yarmouth station

## Sand train is signal to hare into action

Rail passengers and holidaymakers arriving at the East Anglian seaside resort station of Great Yarmouth in July were treated to a large sand sculpture of train operator Greater Anglia's new trains.

The sand sculpture took three days to build. Two artists, Richard Spence and Jamie Wardley, used two tonnes of sand to build the train in the middle of the station while holidaymakers looked on.

They compacted the sand mixed with water in wooden shuttering before carving, using shovels, building trowels and pallet knives.

The sculpture depicts one of Greater Anglia's new bimode trains alongside a leaping hare, the operator's new brand symbol.

The real trains will operate on local services between Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft, as well as Marks Tey-Sudbury. The operator is taking delivery of 24 four-carriage trains and 14 three-carriage trains which switch between electricity and diesel power, from Swiss manufacturer Stadler. The new



**REALITY:** The new train at Lowestoft

trains, which will have more capacity than the old diesel trains, were undergoing trials in August but an official launch was expected to take place in September. Greater Anglia is also introducing new electric Stadler trains on its inter-city services to London this autumn, followed by new Bombardier-built electric trains for its suburban train services.

I have written to various railway companies and been told that people have contacted them to say how comfortable they are!

When I consider how pleasant train seating once was and how they actually lined up with the windows, I am surprised to say the least.

*John-Francis Friendship, Eaglesfield Road, London SE18 3BT*

## Railfuture action

I can assure Mr Evered (*Railwatch* 160) that the Forest of Dean District does have a National Rail station, Lydney. It is served by Transport for Wales and CrossCountry Trains. The stops in some Cardiff-Nottingham services were introduced after campaigning by Railfuture and local authorities. Railfuture has also suggested improved train services and better integration with other modes at Lydney. Following that request in the 2015 Railfuture Severnside's response to Gloucestershire's Local Transport Plan consultation, the station car park has been enlarged, although buses from the station are almost non-existent. Gloucester has never had any

suburban stations within its boundaries but one has been proposed at Hunts Grove, where the city borders the Stroud District. Railfuture has supported this in consultation responses and is campaigning for Metro West to be extended to Gloucester to achieve this and other station reopenings.

*Nigel Bray, secretary, Railfuture Severnside, 23 James Way, Hucclecote, Gloucester GL3 3TE. nigel.bray2@railfuture.org.uk*

## Rail regrets

It is with regret that I have terminated my membership of Railfuture. Now retired and on a small pension, I can no longer afford it.

With rail reopenings never coming to anything but talking, railway managers seem to have lost the plot. Best wishes for the future and thank you.

*Tom Bowes, Caterham, Surrey.*

## Railwatch wrap

I believe all publications should use biodegradable packaging or paper envelopes. There will come a time to renew my subscription when I

must judge between the future life of this planet and up-to-date real information.

I would also like to see consideration for reintroducing trolleybuses for urban transport. Capital costs are lower than trams.

*James A Whitworth, Isle of Yell, Shetland*

■ The see-through wrapper in which *Railwatch* is delivered is 100% biodegradable.

## Reopening rationale

Now seems a good time to press the case for new rail projects, with the Government looking at investing in infrastructure.

Wales and Scotland seem to get priority but it would be good to see some speedy progress in England. East West Rail (the Oxbridge line) and the Peak Forest line are well overdue.

It takes years of clamour to achieve a rail reopening but new lines always create new houses, jobs, and businesses, so they are pretty worthwhile as an investment.

The feasibility of the Lampeter rail route from Aberystwyth to

Carmarthen is already being considered, but for a south-north link inside Wales, the Afon Wen-Caernarfon-Bangor route needs looking at too.

Dual gauge may be necessary where the Welsh Highland Railway now uses some of it. In Scotland, a landslide in Glen Ogle 54 years ago was used as an excuse to close the Dunblane-Callander-Lochearnhead-Crianlarich line. Much of the line survives as a cycle path through magnificent Highlands scenery. If reopened, there could be direct services from Edinburgh to both Oban and Fort William, with the train splitting at Crianlarich. The line could be used by sleeper trains, local services, steam trains for tourists, and for freight if the logging industry switched some of its traffic to rail. As a green corridor, new hamlets could be built along the route providing retired folk with a good country lifestyle while offering environmentally friendly travel to Scotland's Central Belt. There is not much work available in the area but a reopened line might also stimulate economic development, with perhaps a film-making company basing itself in the Highlands.

The Government could provide £500 million to each reopening scheme and seek follow-up money from other sources.

*Timothy J L Collier, Union Street, Kettering NN16 9DA timothycollider898@gmail.com*

## Electricity demand

Much of the debate about electrification has the tacit assumption that electric trains, and indeed electric cars, will have zero emissions. However, with the supply industry struggling to meet the ever-increasing demand for electricity, we shall be dependent for the foreseeable future on burning gas. All those solar panels will be insufficient for the evening rush hour in winter.

There are many good reasons for electrification, including removal of atmospheric pollution from city centres, better train performance, and eliminating the need to carry tons of diesel fuel around the country. Let us concentrate on those.

*Mike Keatinge, Highbank, Marston Road, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 4BL mike@keatinge.mail1.co.uk*

## Ticket to promotion

I agree that we, both as an organisation and as individuals, should do what we can to promote rail transport as a response to climate change, but it would help if the industry did so too.

Buy a ticket for rail travel in Italy at a booking office, turn it over and



**TEAM WORK:** Jane Ann Liston and Allison Cosgrove at St Andrews Model Rail Show in August

## Flying the flag for St Andrews reopening

Railfuture board member Allison Cosgrove joined St Andrews rail campaigner Jane Ann Liston at an event to raise awareness of the campaign to reopen the rail link to the famous Scottish town.

St Andrews rail link campaigners were inspired by the Scottish Government's decision to give the green light to reopening the Levenmouth rail link to ask: "Now why not St Andrews?"

StARLink convenor Jane Ann Liston told *Fife Today*: "We are delighted by the success of the Levenmouth campaign. We consider it can only help the St Andrews campaign. Each new rail reopening further draws attention to the fact that St Andrews is wholly dependent upon road access.

"The disadvantages of being in such a position have been clear for all to see over the past few weeks when the traffic controls have been in use on the A91 at Guardbridge, with cars and buses all delayed. Adding a rail connection would make the town more resilient.

"Levenmouth had a very strong case for the reinstatement of a railway. So has St Andrews, though it is a very different one, based upon the town being a destination for thousands of people every day and throughout the day."

The St Andrews Sustainable Transport evaluation is already under way, with the initial results of the Case



**WALK THE LINE:** Jane Ann Liston with Scottish transport minister Michael Matheson and Dita Stanis-Traken, right, pointing out the site of the old railway station in August last year

for Change section expected imminently. Transport Scotland boosted hopes of St Andrews reopening in August by awarding another £180,000 to the already pledged £40,000 to complete the funding for the STAG evaluation.

Jane Ann said: "The award is a very welcome 30th birthday present for the StARLink campaign. StARLink is confident that a rail option enabling direct travel to Edinburgh and Dundee will be a front-runner"

you will see a message promoting rail as the greenest form of travel together with a graphic comparing (favourably to rail) the carbon footprints of rail, car and air for a couple of medium distance journeys. I can recall seeing a few years ago a Virgin Trains TV advertisement which hinted in a rather restrained way that the train

was a greener form of transport than the plane, but cannot think of anything in the UK which drives home the message as consistently, effectively and universally as the back of an Italian ticket. Of course with so much of their network electrified, the Italians maybe have a more effective message to convey. Nevertheless that does

not explain or excuse the UK rail industry's general reticence on this issue.

*Andrew McCracken, Kylintra Crescent, Grantown-on-Spey PH26 3ES amccracken5154@gmail.com*

**More letters: Page 20**

## Toilet troubles

The problem of toilet provision is rightly highlighted in Anne Harrild's article in *Railwatch* 160.

There seems to be an ever-decreasing number of toilets per coach on modern trains and working ones at that.

I remember fondly the two toilets per coach in the British Railways designed Mark 1 and Mark 2 coaches. The IC125 trains also had two toilets per coach.

Now we are lucky if there is one toilet per coach in long-distance trains. Mark 4 coaches have only one toilet per coach for the long journeys between London and Scotland.

There is usually only one toilet per coach in outer-suburban trains, although the 12-car class 700 trains do actually have five toilets which is not too bad.

One of the problems Anne highlights is that there may be toilets on the train but they are often locked out of use. I regularly travel on the 08.37 Waterloo-Reading service which is a 10-car train with four toilets. The train is stabled overnight at Farnham depot, but frequently starts the day with two, three or all four toilets locked out of use. This is largely because the retention tanks are not emptied often enough. The water tanks are often not refilled with water. We have all read in the press

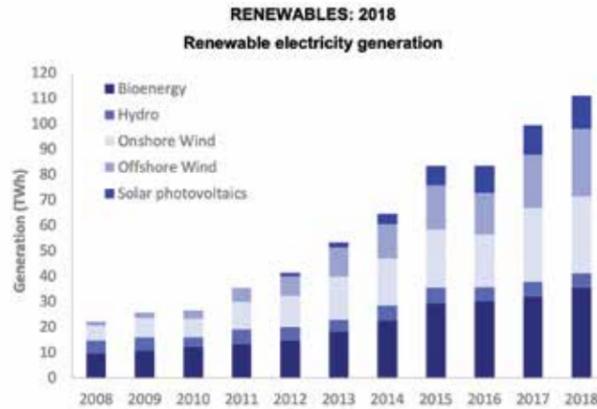
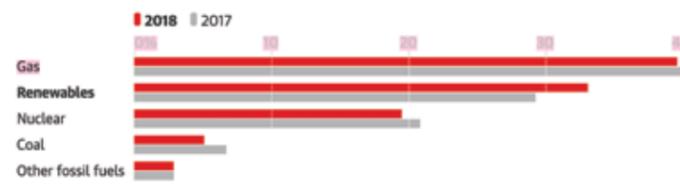
about the problems associated with disabled toilets out of use on trains, causing serious problems for passengers who need accessible facilities.

If there is only one toilet per coach at best, surely the operator must ensure they are all in working order at the beginning of every day.

In *Railwatch* 160 Your Views, Roger Smith comments about the lack of train services to the new garden villages/towns. I live close to Longcross Garden Village which is one of the designated future garden villages/towns. It is already growing rapidly and does have a rail station.

Despite my raising the issue with the train operator on three occasions, they refuse to stop trains at Longcross except during the rush-hour. Currently two trains per hour go straight through Longcross during the day and this will increase to four trains per hour when the Waterloo-Reading service is doubled. Having a station does not necessarily mean trains will stop there. Anyone living at Longcross who wants to go shopping in, say, Staines, Bracknell or Reading is likely to use a car. I was interested to read on page 14 about Oxford City Council and its "difficulty in talking to Network Rail". Before retiring, I worked in the electricity industry and my experience of meetings with Network Rail can at

## The proportion of electricity generated by renewables in the UK grew to 33% in 2018



**POWER CHANGES:** Graphic from *The Guardian*, top, and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, below

best be described as poor. It was not unusual for Network Rail to field completely different staff at consecutive meetings and, on one occasion, a colleague and I turned up for a pre-arranged meeting at a Network Rail office only to find that none of the people involved were in the office on that day.

*Martin James, Egham, Surrey  
thejamesfamily18rr@gmail.com*

## Trains and trams

The planned West Midlands Metro extension over a former (but largely surviving) 120km main line railway will provide trams from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill at a cost of £449 million.

It will use 6.7 km of a railway route which otherwise would have the potential to provide a 56km main line railway from Stourbridge to Burton on Trent, via Walsall and Lichfield.

It has been estimated that for £120 million, this entire rail route could be reopened and, using existing lines, could finish the 120km regional/national route from Worcester to Derby.

Currently, parts of the route are being used as a cycle and walkway, while some sections are overgrown with Japanese knotweed.

But the entire route could easily be reopened as a railway. Crucially, a bridge under the M6, one over the M6 toll road and other main road crossings already exist.

Rather than using one short section for a Metro extension, the former rail line could provide a Black

Country main line. Network Rail and the Department for Transport both call it a railway of "national strategic significance".

Unlike the Metro, it would also be available for freight, commuter and regional trains.

Network Rail appears to be giving up the line, despite knowing that Birmingham needs a main line railway to relieve existing overcrowded stations and to solve one of the worst railway congestion bottlenecks in the UK.

The reopened rail route could serve new residential areas in south Staffordshire. It runs through densely populated and traffic-choked Black Country boroughs with a population of over one million.

The UK tram promotion group has its HQ in the same building as Transport for West Midlands and the West Midlands Combined Authority. So, for nearly four decades, the money has gone into trams instead of reinstating fast trains to a mothballed main line railway.

For some reason, the slow "bus on rails" trams have the active support of many sections of the railway industry.

Which is more sensible? Two or three fast regional trains every hour and nine new stations on a 120km regional rail route, or six to ten "bus on rail" trams every hour with 17 tram stops in 11km?

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Halesowen B63 3DJ  
timweller1@gmail.com*

*Colin.major@railfuture.org.uk*

## Timetable changes make rail attractive

Railfuture West Midlands was delighted that West Midlands Trains have incorporated many of the service improvements we suggested at several meetings with them. Saturday services are now based on the off-peak Monday-Friday timetable, with earlier and later services on Sundays, recognising the increase in leisure opportunities at the weekends. As an example, on the Birmingham-Worcester line there are now an additional 10 Sunday trains. Overall the May timetable has been very successful, which is not the case with some operators. There are an estimated 150,000 extra passengers a week on WMT since the timetable change.

We welcome the provision of direct services from Rugeley Trent Valley through New Street to Euston via the Chase line, entailing coupling and uncoupling trains at New Street with those to Liverpool. LNWR worked hard to ensure that these operations were practised beforehand so that they are efficiently and quickly done. Unfortunately, joining two trains together requires both services to run to the timetable, and delays at Euston (with two fewer platforms) and Liverpool Lime Street, have led to delays at New Street, requiring Chase Line services to terminate short at Hednesford on occasions.

## Overcrowding continues as diesels divert

The on-train survey carried out by Railfuture volunteers on Hereford-Birmingham New Street services in 2016-17 showed that not only were rush-hour services overcrowded to the extent that some passengers could not board, but also that shoulder off-peak services were also badly overcrowded. Both West Midlands Trains and their predecessors London Midland promised that when the Chase Line was electrified the class 170 diesels would be used to increase capacity to Hereford. However, as part of the WMT franchise commitment, additional trains now run to Shrewsbury using the diesels released by the Chase line electrification. WMT are regularly advising passengers that the Hereford-Birmingham New Street trains are so overcrowded they are unable to board at Droitwich Spa even in the off-peak. We have had several meetings with both WMT and West Midlands Rail Executive, which oversees the franchise. We cannot accept that there will be no improvement in capacity until the introduction of the new class 196s in 2021.

## Three reopened stations for Camp Hill line

After a long campaign, funding has been released for the three new stations on the Camp Hill line, currently a freight-only route and diversionary passenger route to New Street. These are Moseley, Kings Heath and Hazelwell and we were instrumental, with others, in persuading West Midlands Mayor Andy Street to incorporate the stations in his 2017 election manifesto. They are claimed to be the first new stations to be built in a city outside London this decade.

## HS2 is essential for Midlands progress

In the light of the Government review of High Speed Two, Railfuture West Midlands supports the statement from Midlands Connect director Maria Machoneses. She said: "The massive benefits of HS2 to the Midlands are already being felt. Although a review must rightly scrutinise the project's deliverability, benefits and costs, we must not lose sight of the fact that HS2 will transform our transport network for the next century. Scrapping it or de-scoping the project will be a disaster for the Midlands

◆◆◆◆ Increase Railfuture's lobbying power: Recruit a new member



Picture: WEST MIDLANDS COMBINED AUTHORITY

## University station will be fit for 3.3 million people

Railfuture has long been campaigning, working with West Midlands Rail Executive, Transport for West Midlands and the City of Birmingham, for University station to be enlarged to meet the demands of the annual 3.3 million passengers using a building originally designed for an annual 400,000. It provides access to Birmingham University and to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, a national centre of medical excellence. Funding was announced by West Midlands Mayor Andy Street on 31 July. The existing building will be retained, with a new building on the Birmingham end of the two platforms connected by a footbridge which will also provide access across the canal to the university campus. The new station is expected to be completed and open by the end of 2021, in time for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, when the university hosts the hockey and squash competitions.

and the whole country. We re-emphasise in the strongest possible terms that cancellation would be a disaster for the Midlands and the whole country."

Railfuture West Midlands is pleased that Mr Street is on the review panel to promote the interests of the region. But it is vital that the East Midlands is not ignored in this process either. Therefore, Midlands Connect will be submitting compelling evidence to the review concerning the benefits of HS2 to the whole of the Midlands.

Far beyond the places with dedicated HS2 stations, many Midlands towns and cities will benefit from the rail capacity that HS2 will release. Midlands Connect has also submitted a strong business case to the Government and HS2 Ltd for direct conventional-compatible links to Nottingham and Leicester city centres, via the

HS2 East Midlands Hub at Toton. HS2 underpins the case for improvements that Railfuture is proposing to the classic rail network, including the flagship Midlands Rail Hub scheme to transform east-west links across the Midlands.

## Moor Street is key to Midlands rail hub

Railfuture West Midlands chairman Steve Wright attended the Midlands Connect official launch of the Midlands Hub Strategy – mentioned by Maria Machoneses. Midlands Hub aims to provide 24 new paths per hour in the Midlands region by providing new or improved infrastructure, especially in Birmingham to allow trains for Nottingham and Leicester (and Camp Hill locals) access to Moor Street station, freeing up paths at New Street. It will also facilitate local access to HS2 at Curzon Street and New Street as part of Railfuture's One Station concept for central Birmingham.



Picture: EXPRESS & STAR

Amanda Milling, MP for Cannock Chase, left, and the then Transport Minister Andrew Jones MP, right, at the launch of the Walsall-Rugeley line electrification project in May

**MORE THAN INCONVENIENT:** The toilet on the 08.06 train from Marylebone to Oxford on Bank Holiday Monday 26 August

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**Rail user group awards**

Railfuture's Awards for Rail User Groups will return for 2020, after a re-shaping of national events prevented their eighth consecutive annual run in late 2019.

The 2020 awards will instead be presented at the AGM, when the day's timetable will be planned to include brief contributions from each of the award-winners, as well as the customary photo-call with their framed certificate being presented by our honorary president Christian Wolmar.

The closing date is Sunday 1 March 2020. As before, the independent judging panel of experts will comprise some of our illustrious vice-presidents, who will as far as possible pay a visit to each of the rail user groups making a submission for an award before they convene to adjudicate shortly before the AGM.

Awards will be for the best in these six categories:

- website
- social media promotion
- newsletter
- new group
- campaign
- campaigner

There is also a Judges' Special Award at their discretion.

Clues as to what has taken the judges' fancy for award-winning entries in previous years can be seen in the dedicated website page <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/RUG+awards>, as can the competition rules.

**Railfuture infrastructure group**

Network Rail's chief executive Andrew Haines is rolling out a devolved structure of 14 routes, based on just five regions.

Railfuture now has an opportunity to engage with his commitment to put the passenger first. Cooperating with Railfuture branches, our infrastructure group will liaise with each NR route.

Our infrastructure group met recently in Sheffield and enjoyed presentations from Skipton and East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership and the Manchester & East Midlands Rail Action Partnership.

We were delighted to hear of the Levenmouth reopening go-ahead in Scotland, resurrected proposals for Marsh Barton station in Devon, south of Exeter St Thomas, and West Midlands funding for two new stations on the Wolverhampton-Walsall route at Darlaston and Willenhall, and three on the Camp Hill line at Hazelwell, Kings Heath and Moseley. More information is on the Railfuture website. Search for Railfuture: Missing Links and Railfuture: New stations.

Contact roger.f@railfuture.org.uk if you would like to help the infrastructure and networks group.

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

Send material to: The Editor, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU  
 Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk

Please use email if possible but include your postal address. Postal and email addresses may be published unless writers ask for them to be excluded.

roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

**Campaigners' fair tactic for bridge-the-gap leaflet**

Railfuture campaigners aiming to reinstate the rail link between Uckfield and Lewes launched their new leaflet at Uckfield Festival in July and at the Lewes Societies Fair in September.

[www.railfuture.org.uk/Uckfield+Lewes](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Uckfield+Lewes)

**Passing loops needed to boost train service**

The Abbey Line Users Group is calling for new low-cost passing loops as a way to increase train frequency on the Watford Junction-St Albans Abbey line.

**Overground stations' usage rise goes on and on!**

Railfuture-affiliated Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail Users completed their annual passenger count in May and reported record-breaking growth. The results of the count were described along with illustrative 2001-2019 graphs in the groups's *Up Line* newsletter, which can now be seen at the two stations thanks to noticeboards provided by London Overground. It is a far cry from the days when campaigners had to post their own timetables at the stations because the operator (now long gone) failed to provide them.

**'Fine' fund may lead to improved access**

Govia Thameslink Railway was "fined" £15 million last year for its part in the May 2018 timetable chaos which hit passengers using both its Thameslink and Great Northern services. The operator agreed with the Department for Transport to provide a fund for improvements as a pay-back to passengers. Railfuture contributed improvement ideas to GTR. Some of the cash is likely to go on feasibility studies to support bids to the *Access for All* programme. Reedham (Surrey) and stations on the Ashford-Hastings MarshLink may benefit.

**How to set up a new user group – in 10 days**

Railfuture has helped form a new rail user group to serve Plumstead, Woolwich Arsenal and Woolwich Dockyard. First step was the creation of a website and Plumstead and Woolwich Rail User Group was up and running. A speaker was invited and the inaugural September meeting focused on the passenger benefit fund set up by Govia Thameslink Railway.

**Community rail spreads its message**

Railfuture backed the recent launch of two new community rail line partnerships. Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity's third CRP covers stations between Bedford and St Albans City. In September a new partnership was started in Kent for stations between Swanley and Sevenoaks along the Darent Valley. In June, rail partnerships from across south-east England featured in a community rail *Showcase* in Southampton with the theme: What can community rail do for you?

**Gatwick airport station to get £150m upgrade**

The platforms at Gatwick Airport station are to be widened and the concourse doubled in size as part of a £150 million upgrade. The station is used by 20 million passengers a year.

**A host of problems beset Bedford-Bletchley line**

Delays or cancellations took place on 31 out of 45 running days in June and July on the Bedford-Bletchley line. Reasons were: train faults 19, crew shortages 10, signal problems 4, operational incidents 3, trespassers 3, level crossing faults 2, police incident 1 and congestion 1. The users group is calling for action from operator London Northwestern Railway. But the CRP organised a *History through Word and Song* train to celebrate the line's first Spring Bank Holiday service for 50 years!

**Monthly news updates from Railfuture London & SE**

Railfuture members throughout the country can receive the London and SE branch two-page online newsletter entitled *inter-railse*. The quarterly eight-page *railse* can be viewed and downloaded from the Railfuture website:

[www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East)

Twitter: @RailfutureLSE



Picture: JULIETTE MAXAM

**THIRD WAY: Trains from Stratford to London's newest station at Meridian Water travel on a newly reinstated £170 million third track along the Lea Valley. The station replaces Angel Road station which had a very limited service at peak hours only. A new half hourly service was launched in early September with, left to right, Enfield Council leader Nesil Caliskan, Network Rail's Kate Warner, Greater Anglia's Jonathan Denby and Steve Vidler of Network Rail. INSET: Haringey Mayor Sheila Peacock also attended the event, welcoming the service which will enable people to get to the superstores nearby but also be centrepiece of a £6 billion project to build a new community, including thousands of new homes, half of them described as "affordable". The new station opened in June.**



Picture: MARGARET KING



Picture: RAILWATCH

**ECONOMIC REGENERATION: Three years ago and four miles south of Meridian Water, Lea Bridge station reopened in a former industrial area. Now, just across the road from the station, three new tower blocks are taking shape. The station already has nearly 400,000 passengers going through it in a year**



**LEVENMOUTH HEROES:** Front row (left to right): Fife Councillor Ken Caldwell, Allen Armstrong (LMRC), MSP Jenny Gilruth, Ross Bennett (LMRC), MSP David Torrance, Eugene Clarke (LMRC), Transport Secretary Michael Matheson, MSP Alex Rowley, Mary Reilly (LMRC), Fife Council co-leader David Ross, and Fife Councillors Altany Craik and Colin Davidson. Other faces in the crowd include Transport Scotland's Bill Reeve, Fife Council's Ken Gourlay, Glenrothes MP Peter Grant, Keith Winter of Fife Council, Don Barclay (LMRC), Fife Councillor Bill Porteous, Elizabeth McGuire (LMRC), Andrew Hutchinson (LMRC), Fife Council co-leader David Alexander and Fife Councillors Graeme Ritchie and Ryan Smart

# Fife celebrates rail victory

After 50 years without a passenger railway service, the Fife town of Levenmouth was given the "incredible news" in August that it will soon be back on the rail map – with a reopened line to serve new stations at Cameron Bridge and Leven.

Campaigners and supporters in Fife were delighted with the decision, which gave campaigners throughout Britain renewed hope that the tide might be turning in official attitudes towards rail reopening.

Scottish Transport Secretary Michael Matheson travelled to Levenmouth and said work would begin immediately. He was given an ovation.

Local businessman Lee Murray believes the reopening will have a "monumental impact".

The £75 million project, which includes improved bus links, will enable people from Levenmouth to commute by train to Edinburgh in about an hour and a quarter, as well as opening up the whole rail network to them.

Kirkcaldy MSP David Torrance said: "Credit must be given to the incredible work of the Levenmouth rail campaign. They have continually kept

the rail link as a high-profile campaign at the forefront of the transport agenda." Mid Fife and Glenrothes MSP Jenny Gilruth said: "I could not be prouder. My constituency is going to be re-connected to the Fife Circle and to Scotland. This is a great day for Levenmouth."

Calls to reopen the Levenmouth rail link began almost the day after it closed to passenger trains.

Dr Allen Armstrong, secretary of Levenmouth Rail Campaign, said it was amazing that a community-driven effort had achieved so much.

"It's so overwhelming," he said. "There has been good support from the public but also elected representatives have stood together. We have been banging our heads against a brick wall for five-and-a-half years to bring it up the political agenda.

"The area is on its knees and is in need of a boost. This will bring opportunities."

David Spaven of the Rail Freight Group said: "Unlike the other Scottish rail reopenings of recent times – Airdrie to Bathgate, and the Borders Railway – this scheme also has a potentially strategic freight dimension,

unlocking a wide range of economic, environmental and social benefits. The largest grain distillery in Europe, at Cameron Bridge, has its own rail sidings connecting with the mothballed Levenmouth line – opening up prospects for movements of bulk spirit and barley to be shifted from truck to train.

"It is less than two miles by road from Cameron Bridge to the major bottling plant at Leven – creating the opportunity for up to two trainloads a day conveying finished product to Grangemouth, for onward rail and sea connections to domestic, deep sea and European markets."

Citing the climate emergency, Mr Spaven said it is vital that the Scottish Government works closely with whisky giant Diageo, logistics companies and the rail industry to ensure that the freight potential of the Levenmouth line is fully realised.

A Cameron Bridge railhead would be a key building block for the whisky industry to diversify its transport options within Scotland.

Fife Today journalist Jamie Callaghan said: "It was the campaigners' persistence that paid off."



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