

Railfuture Campaigners' Conference – Stoke-on-Trent – 1<sup>st</sup> July 2006



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# CAMPAIGNERS' CONFERENCE

STOKE-ON-TRENT  
1<sup>st</sup> JULY 2006

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# CONFERENCE REPORT

***(FULLY UPDATED IN 2010)***

Written by Philip Bisatt (2010 Revisions by Jerry Alderson)

Designed and Photos by Jerry Alderson

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Registered in England and Wales No 5011634 - Registered Office:- 12 Home Close, Bracebridge Heath, Lincoln LN4 2LP

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## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



Ian Yeowart  
Managing Director  
Grand Central



Councillor Jean Edwards  
Lord Mayor of  
City of Stoke-on-Trent



Andy Roden  
Co-Chairman  
Save Our Sleeper



Ruth Annison  
Chairman Wensleydale  
Railway



Carl Henderson BEng.(Hons.), MSc, MIRTE, MSOE  
Silvertip Design  
"BladeRunner"



Caspar Lucas MEng CEng MIMechE  
JM Parry & Associates  
"Parry People Mover"



Stuart Walker  
Railfuture Devon and  
Cornwall



Jerry Alderson  
Railfuture Vice Chairman  
and Conference Organiser



George Watson  
MyTestTrack.com

Also, Manuel Cortes, the assistant general secretary of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA); Graham Nalty of *Railfuture*, speaking on High-Speed Rail; and Michael Wilmot who chaired "Question Time".

**FOREWARD BY CONFERENCE ORGANISER**

I hope that you enjoy reading this report about *Railfuture's* highly successful Campaigners' Conference held in Stoke-on-Trent in 2006. A lot has happened in the four intervening years, with some very exciting developments, partly thanks to the hard work of campaigners including members of *Railfuture*. This updated conference report describes those successes and failures.

We originally chose to hold a conference in Stoke-on-Trent because of the feared threat to passenger rail services in the area. The "campaigns" theme replaced the normal Reopenings Conference that *Railfuture* normally holds in the summer because we feared that closures rather than reopenings were on the cards. I am delighted to say that we have been proven wrong, and our conferences have since celebrated the reopening of lines in Scotland, the new station at Corby in 2009 and plans for major enhancements such as the remodelling of Reading station.

At the Stoke conference we tried to make the effort of attending worthwhile. Between 11am and 8pm we squeezed in ten speakers, brief presentations by campaigning groups and finally a Question Time format. Thanks to our hosts, Staffordshire University, we were able to offer cheap accommodation with breakfast on the campus, a chance to meet in a local pub on the eve of the conference; a meal at a restaurant on the night; and a visit to the nearby Churnet Valley Railway on the Sunday. Our facilities even included computers for those attendees who could not live without reading their e-mail.

It was undoubtedly one of the most ambitious conferences that *Railfuture* has staged before or since, and feedback suggests one of the most successful too. We have a reputation for staging high-quality conferences for rail campaigners and users, without charging hundreds of pounds unlike commercially-organised conferences. I hope that you will endeavour to attend one of our forthcoming conferences, which will be held in Taunton and London in 2010.

Jerry Alderson, Stoke-on-Trent Conference Organiser, *Railfuture* vice chairman

**WELCOME SPEECH BY LORD MAYOR OF CITY OF STOKE ON TRENT**

Rail campaigners from all over Britain were warmly welcomed to the Staffordshire University Campus on Saturday 1st July by the Lord Mayor of the City of Stoke-on-Trent, Councillor Jean Edwards and her consort, Harry.

Councillor Edwards told delegates that railways had always had close links with Stoke-on-Trent. Railways had been crucial to the pottery, steel and coal industries which for many years had formed the economic backbone of the City. A dense network of lines developed, operated by the area's own railway company, the North Staffordshire Railway or 'Knotty'. Sadly, as coal and steel declined, many of these railways closed down, but today their routes make fine walks between the City's network of green spaces and parks.

However, Stoke-on-Trent still has a modern railway and it is very important to the City today. The West Coast Main Line gives fast connections from Stoke to London and Manchester, and there are also regular train services to Crewe and Derby. Stoke-on-Trent station has been very well modernised within its splendid Listed building, and Winton Square is one of the finest

gateways to any regional city. The City Council also sees railways as important in helping urban regeneration.

The City Council have a good relationship with the railway industry and support the North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership. Closure of Etruria station was a setback, although the Council worked with the community rail partnership to try and prevent this. Looking to the future, the Council wants to see the Crewe – Derby trains extended to Nottingham in the east and to Manchester Airport in the west. They were pressing for a restored service on three stations that had 'temporarily' closed to support the WCML upgrade. These were Barlaston and Wedgwood stations, which remain closed in 2010, and Stone station (photo on right courtesy of Wikipedia) which reopened in December 2008 (not in 2006 as had been hoped) to an hourly train service between Crewe and London Euston as part of a new revamped West Coast main line timetable. In the longer term, the Council want significant investment in track capacity to allow more local stations to open, and to expand services at the existing Longton and Longport stations.



#### **WELCOME SPEECH BY CONFERENCE ORGANISER – JERRY ALDERSON**

Conference organiser, Jerry Alderson welcomed delegates to the conference and thanked the event's sponsors Grand Central/Fraser Eagle and Staffordshire University, who provided excellent hospitality throughout. Grand Central's new managing director, Tom Clift, who succeeded Ian Yeowart, has since spoken about the company's success at our summer 2009 conference in Northallerton. However, their former parent company Fraser Eagle has went into administration during the recession, despite selling its investment in Grand Central.

Jerry referred to his efforts to find a low-cost ticket from Cambridge to Stoke-on-Trent. After half an hour's search on the internet, he managed to get the price down from £55 to £42, only to find engineering works obstructing the route. By driving to Milton Keynes he found a Stoke ticket for £9.50, but this attractive offer was made less so by having to pay for 4 days' parking at Milton Keynes, which would have cost £32!

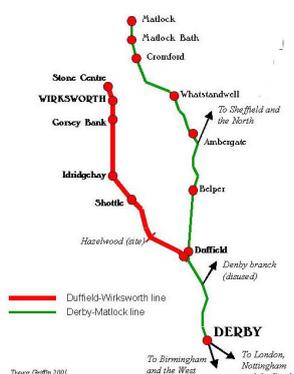
Thanks to traffic congestion, Jerry was unable to get to Milton Keynes Central in time for the train on which his £9.50 ticket was valid, and was told he would have to buy another at £32 – so instead, he reluctantly decided to drive to Stoke on the M1.

The lessons to be learnt, Jerry felt, was that APEX tickets should be valid on alternative trains for an appropriate fee and there needs to be a much easier way of finding out what the total cost of your journey will be. Is there scope for a website that takes a person's place of residence, rather than a station, as the journey starting point? Some people may, after all, have a choice of more than one station.

#### **GEORGE WATSON – VICE-CHAIRMAN, WYVERN RAIL PLC**

George explained that Wyvern Rail was founded in 1992 with the aim of taking over the Duffield – Wirksworth line (see thick line in map below). The railway obtained its Light Railway Order in

1996; the plc was formed and a share issue took place in 2002. At the time the railway was an 8½ mile 'linear forest' – tracks were barely visible!



The Ecclesbourne Valley Railway Association was formed to provide voluntary support to the railway. Challenges faced have included:

- Building an economically sustainable business
- Developing potential of the line for tourism, as a community railway, park and ride into Wirksworth and a facility for the local railway industry
- Developing reliable sources of revenue
- Establishing a Unique Selling Point (USP) for the line

The ultimate aim of the railway is to provide a 360-day service.

Wyvern have taken advantage of the line's proximity to Derby – arguably now the centre of the UK railway industry. In particular, there has been an historical association between the Wirksworth branch and testing – for example, even the 'Midland Pullman' was tested on the line.

The railway has one full-time member of staff, a training room, and sidings containing most types of track fitting found on the UK rail network (including complicated turnouts). It can offer room to test (with no conflicting traffic) and are easy to do business with, (have a website, 0870 phone number, and can respond at short notice to requests to test).

Results to date: the Wyvern Rail brand has been established, several key industrial customers have been gained, and several long-term testing contracts won. Significant partnerships have been built with the rail industry (photo on right shows a battery-electric locomotive for Tube Lines).



The [www.myresttrack.com](http://www.myresttrack.com) web-site promotes the testing facilities available for hire.

First result: Thermit Welding; Regular customer is Rail Accident Investigation Board (RAIB). Others:

- Have tested all 18 locomotives in the current MoD fleet
- RAIB tested braking of trolleys in the wake of the Tebay accident.
- The railway tests all aspects of 'yellow machines' (track machines) that need to be tested.
- Provide facilities for ultrasonic testing.
- Training of staff on welded track (the railway has 1½ miles of it).
- Buffer-stop testing (e.g. design from China).
- The railway has a 1 in 30 gradient which was used to see if equipment could cope with the equivalent gradient on the Merseyrail loop.
- Jubilee Line upgrade – Transmission Based Train Control – LH Group in Burton will use the Wirksworth line to test the system – LU tube trains and other equipment will be tested.
- Currently completing Severn Lamb's vehicle for Bristol Electric Railbus – there may be an application for ULR as a public service on the line.

Wyvern Rail has a complete Gatwick Express set with a push-pull class 31, which has been used for television filming (including a 2010 BBC-1 thriller "Five Days", which tracked five 24-hour periods in a police investigation), plus steam as well! However, carrying passengers is marginal to the business. The railway is in profit, but most of this will disappear into capital investment.

In 2008 the regular passenger service was extended to the almost half-way point at Ildridgehay, and in 2011, subject to shareholders and supporters providing up to £250,000, it will open all the way to Duffield, where passenger scan change to mainline trains.

In response to a question, George explained that the connection to the main line at Duffield has been removed; also signalling has since been renewed which will make it more expensive to restore. Reinstating the down slow line three miles from Derby may be a cheaper option!

**IAN YEOWART – FOUNDER AND 1<sup>st</sup> MANAGING DIRECTOR, GRAND CENTRAL RAILWAY**

Ian joined British Rail in 1973 initially working in Toton depot as a clerk. At Regional Railways (North East) he was an area retail manager and safety manager. At the time of the conference Ian Yeowart was managing director of Grand Central Railway, which had been formed to run open access rail passenger services, but had not yet commenced running. Surprisingly for an entrepreneur Ian suggested that privatisation should never have happened but based on his experience with BR, he feels that Grand Central can do better than the current set-up! Railways were in fact already on the 'up' at privatisation, he felt.



Government inconsistency makes it hard for new entrants to the rail industry – hence there had only been two Open Access operators so far (although subsequently Chiltern Railways' parent had set-up the highly-regarded Wrexham-Shrewsbury-Marylebone railway [WSMR]). Operators also need to understand the business. Grand Central initially approached Railtrack about Open Access paths in 1997 but there were difficulties with rolling stock availability and moderation of competition. They pre-qualified and bid for Midland Main Line. The 'Grand Central' name was chosen to reflect Sheffield (couldn't use Great Central or Great North Eastern Railway!)

Ironically, Sea Containers bought the GNER name from what is now Grand Central. GNER have strongly opposed Grand Central's proposal for services from London to the Durham coast.

The trans-pennine application by GCR was rejected in June 2004. The ORR had concerns about Grand Central's business model. ORR has a very narrow view of the acceptability of a new service. It mustn't abstract too much revenue or fail to generate enough. Operators can face a 'Catch 22' – you can't meet the growth targets if the necessary infrastructure doesn't exist.

Challenges which Grand Central has had to address include:

- Securing the rolling stock – class 222 Meridians were available at that time. But now GCR will have to start operations with HSTs – although new build trains are being discussed.
- Identifying track capacity – 20 paths/day identified by GCR on the ECML but Network Rail said they could only identify 3!
- Finding investment – £1½ million has been spent so far on getting to where things are today.

Grand Central made its formal bid for ECML paths to the Regulator on 24th February 2005. GNER must have known this at the time it signed the ECML franchise on 18 March 2005.

What is the real cost of open access on the ECML?

- Chris Garnett (GNER) quoted £165 million
- Figure revised to £114m by DfT
- Latest quoted figure by GNER £40m
- SRA's own report states £300,000...



Grand Central	
• Areas of high population with few or no direct services to the Capital.	
- Sunderland & South Tyneside	434,000
- Hartlepool	89,000
- Middlesbrough & Stockton	313,000
- Bradford	468,000
- Calderdale	192,000
- Kirklees	389,000
- The "5 Towns"	120,000
• Over 2 million of the population without direct links	

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*GNER claims it will lose over £10m per year, yet Grand Central expects revenue of only £7.8m.*

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The goalposts keep moving:

- 2005 – SRA strategy proposed no service improvements for the Durham Coast
- 2006 – SRA suggest there would be benefits in direct services to London from Durham Coast
- 2005 – SRA object to train splitting
- 2006 – DfT propose train splitting

Franchised and open access trains pay the same amount for access to the network, but don't necessarily get the same level of access to the network. For example, Grand Central trains are not being allowed to stop at Peterborough.

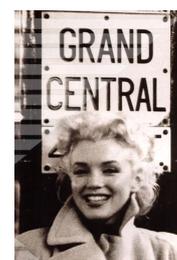
Grand Central wants to develop new markets. They believe head-to-head competition will bring consumer benefits. For example, they will pick up passengers from points within 3, 6 or 9 miles from a station for a fixed fee. Fares will be simple: single or return. If no seat, you get a refund!

Grand Central's legal advisor is Tom Winsor – who is not cheap, but knows the business!

At the end of the day, the ORR has made its decision to allow open access on the ECML on concrete evidence presented to them. Start of operations is, hopefully, 10 December 2006.

In response to questions, Ian stated that:

- Local Authorities in the North East were very helpful and supportive (as one might expect).
- GNER may have made an error in how much money it bid for the franchise.
- Parkway stations are OK to a degree but they are not the whole answer.
- The privatised structure has been too heavily prescribed by DfT.
- People who got involved at privatisation were basically interested in money, so long as it was their own money...
- Is franchising compatible with open access? Answer – yes.
- GNER have used Grand Central as a scapegoat for their own financial problems. Parent company Sea Containers is in serious difficulties. Everyone knows that open access is a possibility – it provides for niche markets and is not competition in the true sense (as with bus v bus on the same stretch of road).



Fraser Eagle had only been revealed as the owners of Grand Central a few months prior to the conference. In early 2007 it was sold for an undisclosed sum to a consortium of private investors led by Giles Fearnley, formerly of Prism Rail that had owned four TOCs that were sold to National Express in September 2000 for £165.8m. This cash-rich holding company was able to

keep Grand Central afloat during the protracted delays in getting rolling stock ready to operate (it commenced limited passenger services on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2007 until all HST sets were ready) and the reduction of services to a minimal service when the power cars proved highly unreliable. As a small operator it had limited spare stock to cover failures and had to cancel services. To date it has reported losses exceeding £12 million. Recently it leased redundant Class 180 Adelante trains (right), and has sold its HSTs to a ROSCO (to fund and fit new engines) and it will then lease them back. Proposals for new trains from China are on hold.



In 2009 the Grand Central logo was tweaked (see right).

In November 2007 former Valley Lines Managing Director Tom Clift was appointed managing director to allow Ian Yeowart to concentrate on identifying new open access services and bidding for the access rights under a sister company Grand Union. However, in May 2009 Ian was sacked from the company, and he has since bought back the name GNER, which had become free (after the GNER TOC withdraw from the East Coast franchise in 2007, unable to meet its financial liabilities) and intends to bid for open access routes (including on the WCML) from 2013 using a new railway company, Alliance Rail Holdings Ltd.

#### CASPAR LUCAS – TECHNICAL SERVICES DIRECTOR, JPM PARRY AND ASSOC. LTD

Caspar suggested that there is a need for more imagination and creativity in the rail industry.

Parry's are interested in revitalising and reopening rural railways. Their "lighter weight" vehicle is providing the first regular Sunday service on the 500-chain-long Stourbridge branch since 1915.

Sceptics said that the Parry People Mover (PPM) involved a great deal of work just to carry a few passengers – in a sense it has, but the initial effort is finally proving worthwhile. The Intermediate Mode has a lot of potential – light rail is attractive and successful. However, the costs cannot be justified everywhere. There is a need to adopt the attributes of light rail but reduce costs.

Two key differences between heavy and light rail are frequency of service, and frequency of stops. On rural railways, there is potential for additional stops.

The Parry system avoids problems of electrification (service disruption etc.) that arise with light rail, and simpler technologies for track-laying can be used.

JPM also provide lightweight technologies for platforms and buildings.

The Stourbridge achievement:

- Service began December 2005 – officially launched February 2006
- Is carrying 200-300 passengers every Sunday

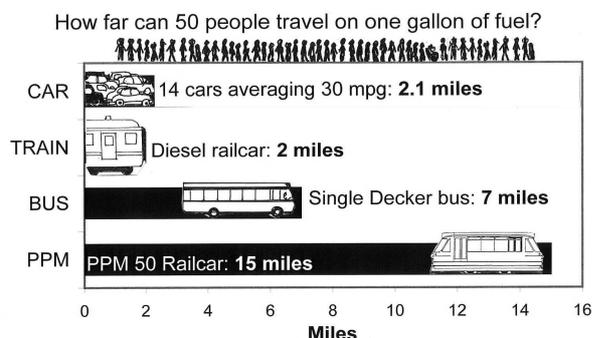
The slide is titled 'The Intermediate Mode' and features a list of benefits on the right side. On the left, there are two photographs: the top one shows a green and white vehicle at a station platform with passengers, and the bottom one shows the interior of the vehicle with passengers seated. The text on the right lists the following benefits:

- Good Ride Quality
- Inexpensive Vehicles
- Frequent Stops
- Short Braking Distances
- Low Internal Noise
- Quick Journey Times
- Good Acceleration
- Long Vehicle Life
- Generally Accessible Routes
- Reliable Schedules
- Low External Noise
- Low Energy Use

- Has achieved the 'feel' of a modern light rail system
- Is a partnership between Network Rail, RSSB, HMRI, Centro
- Are not fighting the system – the idea does work
- Service reliability is 100%, punctuality 99.5%

Comparison with conventional DMU: lightweight branch line shuttle:

- Two Parry railcars
- Local maintenance rather than having to run empty to a depot
- Increased frequency of service at peak hours
- Fuel usage is 75% less
- Empty stock working is down 90%
- Operating costs are down 35%



When the 12-month Stourbridge branch Sunday-service experiment ended, because there was no funding to continue it, PPM worked hard with the local authority to promote the vehicle as a replacement of the Class 153 Sprinter when the franchise came up for renewal. Despite the cost reduction and environmental benefits many were surprised that the DfT did not make the PPM mandatory in the franchise specification. However, bidders recognised the benefits and London Midland, the successful bidder, has agreed to lease two Class 139 PPM-50 vehicles for the duration. Despite having run a PPM on the line for a year, it took a considerable amount of effort to get the technical specification signed off before the 7-day 10-minute-interval service could commence. Late acceptance of the vehicles saw bus substitution for many months as the Class 153 had been reallocated elsewhere. The vehicles also suffered reliability problems on the very rough jointed track, but by mid 2009 were operating successfully. PPM's financial situation has been stretched to the limit, but it is now in a position to promote PPM vehicles elsewhere.

### CARL HENDERSON – SILVERTIP DESIGN – INVENTOR OF “BLADERUNNER”

Carl Henderson, who shared a 'technology for reopenings' session with Caspar Lucas, explained the BladeRunner concept, which Like the Parry People Mover, is a cheaper and more flexible alternative to traditional rail vehicles. However, in simple terms it is a redesign of the steering system for road vehicles (passenger or freight) to make them compatible with running both on roads and rail, without the complicated manoeuvring associated with current road-rail vehicles.



Carl gave a highly technical presentation where he explained that road vehicles were particularly unstable and required a lot of road space as they only had moveable bogie-like wheels at the front, not at the rear. He has designed a modified tractor units that can be used at both ends on larger road vehicles such as lorries and coaches.



So, how does this invention help rail campaigners? Put simply, existing road-rail vehicles, which are tend to be vegetation clearance and track maintenance, are quite short. The BladeRunner bogies can be coupled to any body configuration allowing lorries and coaches to run on railway lines as long as there is a flat surface on which vehicles and join and leave the track.

www.silverpdesign.com 1 July 2006 SR10

## Business case

capital cost	£500,000
annual distance	90,000 km
ownership period	7 years
fuel consumption	8.0 mpg

- Overheads (40t) £12,269
- Vehicle excise duty £1,850
- Insurance (x2) £6,844
- Depreciation (12yr.) £41,667
- Finance (5 yr.) £20,000
- Driver (+5k) £37,292
- **Standing Costs £120,000**

- Fuel & Oil (road) £23,455
- Tyres (x2) £1,812
- Maintenance (x2) £9,724
- **Running Costs £35,000**
- **Total: £155,000**

- **Revenue service example**
  - 10p/km x 25 km (average)
  - two round trips / day (x105)
  - £300,000 (285 days)**

Fleets of vehicles  
 a) £720,000 ÷ £120,000 = 6  
 b) £720,000 ÷ £2,850 = 250



Rail freight tends to be uneconomic because of the change between road and rail, which is very time consuming. However, lorries could drive along rail lines for part of the journey without losing any time. This would help to make rural lines much more viable, and reduce the time that lorries are on roads causing accidents (as cars and lorries do not mix).

Rural railways may be threatened by conversion to guided busways because they do not offer a door-to-door service like buses. BladeRunner would allow passengers the best of both worlds.

BladeRunner is still in development, and will initially focus on high flow freight applications and demonstration projects in the US and Europe.

During questions, Carl agreed that BladeRunner is not a substitute for rail freight on main lines. One comment from the floor was 'Leave the rubber tyres at home if you can'.

There are rivals to BladeRunner. From April 2007 an experimental dual-mode 17-seater passenger vehicle will operate at 11km route in the eastern part of Hokkaido, the northern big island of Japan. The vehicle will run on rail in one direction and on the roads on the way back. There will be 5 to 7 round trips of 40 minutes a day.

*The BladeRunner concept semi-trailer won the Trailer Innovation 2007 award, presented in Hannover in September 2006.*

Despite Car Henderson's work since the conference, including further development of his invention and demonstrations around the world, he has been unsuccessful in obtaining government funding. BladeRunner appears to have moved no further in the UK at the moment, and has certainly not yet been able to improve the economic viability of low-usage railway lines.

### MANUEL CORTES – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY, TSSA UNION

The TSSA union represents the office staff (e.g. booking clerks) in the railway and Manuel gave its view of what is needed in the rail industry. It is crucial to end fragmentation, not 'BR Mk II' but instead a new form of publicly-accountable organisation.

Most TSSA members do favour re-nationalisation, although not all. TSSA suggests Government should take franchises back into public hands upon expiration – thus avoiding cost to taxpayers. TSSA is taking its views forward through the TUC – it is also affiliated to the Labour Party.

The car is here to stay, but environmental arguments are key: rail is the most environmentally-sound way of doing many things. Britain is a small island – rail can do most of what we want, with lower environmental impact than either road or air. With current concern about energy supplies, we should look to a future rail network powered by electricity sourced from the wind or tides.

Upgrading capacity is now the most urgent need. We talk about high-speed lines, but little has yet been done. TSSA supports an extension of Eurostar to other UK and European destinations.

Main line rail access is needed to Thames Gateway, where massive development is proposed.

Despite general frustration, good things are happening now, such as line reopenings in Scotland. The TSSA want to see greater segregation of rail and road because of level crossing accidents – such as Aldermaston, for example.



## ANDY RODEN AND STUART WALKER – SAVE OUR SLEEPER (SoS)

The struggle to save the Paddington – Penzance sleeper service has been the highest-profile rail campaign in recent years.

The campaign had its own website, which generated some 3000+ online signatories (about the same number, we were told, as those who opposed Jeremy Clarkson getting an honorary Doctorate!) However, off-line ways of signing the petition were also used – not everyone has a computer.

Deliberately generated news stories and 'milestones' – for example, when reaching 500, 1000 signatures etc.

Much use of press releases (tip – keep them short).



The Government was challenged over the sleeper service costs and revenues. SoS suggested that the service was probably breaking even, or close to it. By contrast, the Government even argued that withdrawing the sleeper would be good for Cornwall!

Stuart and Andrew (left) argued that it is essential to get support from politicians, and celebrities etc. – whether we like it or not, these people carry more weight than 'ordinary' people. Politicians will always take notice of what it says in the newspapers...

In response to questions from the floor, it was said that:

- Sleeper patronage is higher than before the campaign – publicity has generated demand.
- Before the campaign, marketing of the sleeper service was poor – FGW are doing a bit more now.
- Lack of shower facilities in the coaches is an issue.
- The voluntary sector must fight for things that have a credible case: 'Reasoned argument expressed eloquently'.

It was also suggested that there is demand from people wanting to get to Cornwall and London from other places, but there are no sleepers. Another person asked, 'Can we have an East Coast sleeper back?', and related how 'temporary' diversion of East Coast sleepers to Euston became a permanent withdrawal.

Since the 'sleeper' was saved, it has gone from strength to strength. FGW completed a £2 million upgrade in 2009 and shared compartments have been abolished, with low fares being offered.

### MEDIA COVERAGE

- All regional newspapers
- BBC & Independent Local Radio
- Times / Telegraph / Guardian / Mail on Sunday
- Sky News
- Radio 4 / Radio 5
- BBC News 24

### THE SLEEPER IS IMPORTANT

- No High Speed Line to Plymouth / Cornwall  
– Much lower line speeds west of Exeter
- Between London and Penzance:  
– First daytime arrival Penzance 13:23  
– First Saturday arrival London 12:05
- Air service only serves Newquay  
– Airport affected by fog / closure threatened

## REVIVING RURAL RAILWAYS - CORNWALL - STUART WALKER

Stuart argued that it is important to 'brand' rural railways to give them an identity, and to encourage people to use them. He presented some interesting transport facts about Cornwall:

- The population has increased 20.5% since 1981
- It's the second most deprived county in the UK (has EU Objective 1 status)
- 90% of Cornish firms employ less than 10 people
- The average Cornish weekly wage is 19% below UK average
- 27% of households in Penwith do not have a car
- Cornish visitors in 2003: 87.5% by car (massive traffic impact despite new roads - 35% increase in trunk road traffic in last 10 years), 5.4% by coach, 4.2% by train, 2.9% by air/other

Stuart referred to SRA Community Rail Development Strategy and David Quarmby: 'too many empty seats'

On West Country branches, Wessex Trains' efforts have seen significantly more passengers since 2001:

- Looe +16%
- St Ives line +25%
- North Devon line +26%
- Newquay +40%



St Ives station handles 213,000 passengers per year, which makes an interesting comparison with a commuter station like Lichfield City (183,000 per year – and this with electric trains). Newquay station handles 76,000 and Gunnislake 39,000 (however, there are 157,000 in total on the whole Tamar Valley line).

In Cornwall there is an issue of low passenger numbers in winter – local residents tend not to use the railways. To help overcome this there are active Community Rail Partnerships in Devon and Cornwall, including:

- Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership
- Riviera Project
- Friends of Looe Valley Line
- Friends of St Ives Branch Line
- Friends of Tamar Valley Line

All of these are funded publicly. Capital funding for rail projects has been obtained by local authorities, but it is more difficult to find revenue funding.

On the Looe branch – inter-availability of some bus and rail tickets resulted in a doubling of effective service frequency. However, there more progress is needed elsewhere:

- Penzance – Exeter takes 2 hours by car, but 3 hours by train
- Dawlish sea wall – Railfuture Devon and Cornwall Branch solution is to reopen Okehampton – Bere Alston as a diversionary/alternative route
- Newquay Airport – subsidised by taxpayer to the tune of £1million per annum. Reducing the costs means expanding the terminal to attract more passengers, which will cost £21 million, of which £6 million has so far been found. RAF St Mawgan is closing, which will push more costs onto the taxpayer.

Wessex moved towards regular interval clockface timetables – which meant more trains to Newquay, Sunday services on branch lines, etc.

By contrast, the DfT-specified Greater Western franchise timetable will result in cuts to services on both main and branch lines. During the process, Railfuture Devon & Cornwall lobbied for:

- An hourly Paddington – Penzance service (as per the Waterloo – Weymouth service pattern)
- Hourly stopping trains Paignton – Plymouth – Par ( - Newquay)
- Hourly or better services on branch lines
- Regular interval clockface timetables

These ideas were not taken forward by DfT and First. Connections at junction stations are likely to be worse in the new franchise than at present, and there will be substantial cuts in calls at some main line stations.

Unfortunately, the message arising from the franchising process is: if you want to travel locally, use your car!

*(An award was presented by Mike Crowhurst on behalf of Railfuture to Stuart Walker for services to rail campaigning. – photo on right.)*



In 2008 the possibility of Devon rural railway lines being reopened took a surprising step forward when a proposal from Kilbride Community Rail to provide a passenger service from Plymouth to Tavistock via a reopened line from Bere Alston to Tavistock was promoted by housing developer *Kilbride Properties Ltd* it was allowed to build 750 new homes in Tavistock. Reopening of the line has long been an aspiration of Devon County Council.

### RUTH ANNISON – WENSLEYDALE RAILWAY

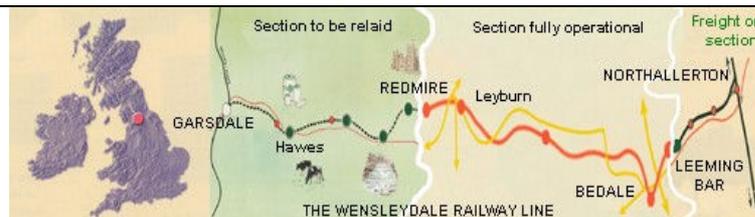
Ruth explained that the Wensleydale Railway does not set out to be 'another preserved railway' – the aim is to run 'ordinary' trains for use by local people. The successful initiatives on the Settle & Carlisle line are the model – providing road/rail links for walkers, cafes at stations, etc. The railway can also be a community facility and a provider of skilled jobs.

In Wensleydale, tourism is a big issue. The 2001 foot and mouth crisis had a serious impact on the rural economy – other sources of income are needed: more tourists, but not their cars!

'Best practice' in rural railways suggests that 50% of the income has to be derived from sources other than the farebox. As an example, the Wensleydale Railway has taken over the catering franchise at Northallerton station, which is opposite County Hall.



It has taken 16 years so far. The 22 miles of existing line was taken over from Network Rail in 2004. The Wensleydale Railway share offer has raised £2.3 million since 2000 – which doesn't go very far when you are running a railway!



Providing a door-to-door journey is very important. 'Traintaxi' in Netherlands is a good example. Tackling sensitive issues – when the railway had to fell trees it offered to plant replacements.

Ruth's 'can do' attitude was reflected in her view that, while it isn't right to be told – 'do it yourself, or do without your railway' – what is the alternative? She said that people ought never to underestimate the importance of what they can do – and as campaigners, we should note that weight of opinion does count.

Ruth has since spoken to at the *Railfuture* conference in Northallerton on 4th July 2009, which was the sixth anniversary of their first passenger train (the last regular British Rail service having run on Sunday 25th April 1954). In 2009 she stood down as chairman of the Wensleydale Railway PLC, and has been succeeded by Ian Sesnan, The Railway continues to survive, but only by being very careful about expenditure and working very hard to attract passengers of the railway and to spend money when they get there. The railway's future depends on getting the link reinstated into Northallerton so that it will carry locals as well as tourists.

## GRAHAM NALTY – RAILFUTURE – HIGH-SPEED RAIL

A clear believer in 'High Speed Rail', Graham said that we need to be clear what we mean:

- Speeds over 150 mph (most lines achieve 300km/h or 186 mph)
- Routes chosen to link 1 million+ population cities, plus those with 500,000+ to the capital city
- Train stops should be at intervals of over 100 miles
- There should be non-stop runs of over 400 miles
- HSR must serve city centre stations – experience from France (for example) suggests that out-of town parkway stations lose rail's city-city advantage over air

Wider benefits of High Speed Rail include:

- Generating large incremental increase in rail use (say 10-20% between London and Scotland)
- Increasing public awareness of rail travel, leading to more favourable press reporting
- Providing add-on benefits – for example, stimulating use of connecting service and lines

Answering "should we have a single High Speed Line or a network?", Graham thought that, by the time the first is complete, conditions will be favourable for a second!

As an illustration of why High Speed Rail is needed, the Third Runway at Heathrow will add 23% to the airport's capacity, but 19% of this would be catering for traffic that could be attracted to HSR – and the additional car traffic that the runway would generate would push emissions around the airport above EU limits.

Graham suggested that the role of Railfuture could include staging conferences, writing to the press, and encouraging local and regional authorities to include High Speed Rail in their plans/strategies.

We should note that DfT is to announce preferred options for High Speed line(s) in 2007...

### Benefits of High Speed Rail

- Shorter Journey Times – More Passengers
- Increased Rail Capacity – Reduces Congestion
- Improved Rolling Stock Utilisation
- Brings UK Regions closer and thus
- Improves the Economy of Poorer Regions
- Fast Access to Main UK Airports
- Cuts the Demand for Short Haul Air Services
- Alleviates the Damage of Airport Expansion
- Increases Travel Choice

Questions to Graham from the floor included:

- Is the Anglo-Scottish market big enough to support a High Speed line? Some doubt about this at present, but the market will expand over time.
- Is it better to spend money on incremental improvements to the existing network?
- Should *Railfuture* support Greengauge 21?
- Can we overcome the institutional resistance to building railways where large amounts of infrastructure are needed? (Answer – if we've done it with motorways, this should not be a fundamental problem.)

It is impossible to succinctly list the progress in the last four years for a UK high-speed rail network. Few would have believed that all three major political parties would be firmly behind a high-speed network, or that the government would have set-up a company, High speed 2 Ltd, to investigate a high-speed route from London to the north. On 11<sup>th</sup> March 2010 the Secretary of State for Transport, Lord Adonis, announced the scheme his government intended to launch, which would commence construction in 2017 and complete phase 1 (to Birmingham) in 2027.

## CAMPAIGNING ROUND-UP

Jerry Alderson spoke briefly about the CAST.IRON campaign to have the Cambridge – St Ives line reopened, and how the Government had agreed instead to put increasing sums of public money into converting the formation into a guided busway, despite widespread public opposition. Unfortunately, as Jerry observed, perhaps there is a need for this guided busway to be built in order for it to be shown to fail.

Despite being given funding on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006 the Cambridgeshire guided busway, which should have opened in April 2009, has not opened to the public four years later. Although the northern section has been built contractual issues arise and the full scheme (including the southern section) has ballooned from £116m to £161m and will probably go higher. Few people believe the optimistic passenger figures (20,000 per day) will be met.

Peter Wakefield observed that in respect of the Cambridge – St Ives busway, 'democracy is a sham'. Pressure needed to be kept up on Government Office for the Eastern Region in respect of the middle section of the East-West route (Bedford – Sandy – Cambridge).

Richard Pout cited the example of Roger Blake and Ray King, who conducted their own passenger counts at Cambridge Heath and London Fields stations to provide evidence of usage and make the case for more trains to stop. There are now 149 per day compared to 38 in 1996.

Graham Hyde of "A Station for Kenilworth" provided an update on the campaign to reopen that station. ASK have produced a walking map showing how many people live within 10 minutes of the proposed station site (which is now an LTP proposal and protected in the Local Plan). Warwickshire County Council produced an outline business case in 2006 – but TOCs have shown no interest. The lessons were that campaigns are needed to get people 'signed up' and ensure that the voice of the silent majority who want such proposals is heard.



Since the conference Warwickshire County Council has agreed to buy the land needed for this Leamington-Coventry line station. It will be working with John Laing to construct it and the government is providing £5m of the £6.5m cost. In early 2010 it was hoped that the station would be open by late 2012.

A representative from Rail Action Group East of Scotland outlines their ongoing campaign for: an improved service to North Berwick, a dedicated Edinburgh – Berwick local service, and new stations for East Linton, Reston and Haddington, where a lot of development is taking place.

## ATTRACTING PEOPLE ONTO THE RAILWAYS – JERRY ALDERSON (Speaking Personally)

Railfuture vice chairman Jerry Alderson, a business consultant, said he wants to see many more people use Britain's railways but intended to question whether we should blindly try to attract more passengers without considering the consequences.

Before we call for lower fares, let's consider why the current fares are so expensive (see slide on right) – because the cost of running the railways is so high.

Unfortunately, the primary cause of an expensive railway (not shown) is passengers: they all want to travel at the same time to the same places.

**Why are rail costs so high?**

Because...

- Own permanent way: Maintenance and renewals
- Greedy capitalist train operators and ROSCOs
- Bureaucracy (e.g. Apportioning blame)
- Regulations (incl. disability compliance)
- High-risk industry (Expensive safety requirements)
- Nonsensical safety requirements
- Gold-plated railway / "One size fits all" mentality
- Lack of new technology (e.g. manned signalboxes)
- Inefficiency (e.g. poor staff utilisation)
- Unions: restrictive practices, too high wages
- Trespass and Vandalism; Level crossing incidents
- Fuel, leasing costs, insurance, etc.

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Commuters cost the most money because of peak flows that leave assets underutilised for the rest of the day. Tackling the peak hour overcrowding problem this means getting more people to travel off-peak rather than peak – both through peak spreading and increased leisure travel.

The railway's success story could be a threat. We could see a 'Beeching Mark II' to fund investment needed for growth.

How do we manage passenger growth: do we price people off the railway: is RPI +1% such a bad thing given that salaries increase more than RPI?

The much-criticised restrictions introduced by First Capital Connect are an attempt to give seats to its most 'valuable' customers. But commuters spend most *per year*, not *per journey*; by causing under-utilisation are the least profitable!

**Threat facing the UK Railway**

**Beeching Mark I**

- Primarily caused by *decline* in use of railway
- Services/lines considered *uneconomic* to operate

**Beeching Mark II (if we let it happen)**

- Primarily caused by *growth* in use of railway
- Essential upgrades considered *unaffordable* without taking money from elsewhere in network

**Capacity increases must be avoided**

- If we can meet demand in other ways

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Tailor-made season tickets could encourage people to travel in only 4 peak periods per week (of their choice) instead of 5 - plus people need 'simple to use' and 'simple to find' fares.

Many have said we should have a National Railcard. There are two very good reasons for it: it would help the disadvantaged, and it would reward loyalty (and it might persuade some people to ditch their second car). Railfuture's research claimed that a National Railcard will "earn more than it loses", but how do we know for sure? Is it worth the risk?

Risks with a National Railcard could include:

- that customers spend less for the *same* service
- encourages unaffordable growth: more people on full trains rather than near-empty ones

A National Railcard must be linked with yield – it should offer benefits only to fill empty seats, and to encourage *different* travel behaviour. To deliver a more profitable railway, we need to know who the customer is. Customers could, for example, collect loyalty points that can be redeemed later, or receive rewards where margins are highest (e.g. one-off very cheap fares on rural lines) Rewarding the current journey rather than a future journey provides no financial incentive to business travellers on expenses Jerry suggest that we perhaps need something like the Tesco Clubcard – validates entitlement to privilege fares, used when boarding trains, card for life

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Railways are a public service, not a business like Tesco's, so what would a loyalty-style railcard offer the wider community?
- The big challenge is to get people to start work at different times – the morning peak is more pronounced than the evening peak. Timetables would need to be revised to permit this.

#### ANDREW RODEN – RAIL JOURNALIST

Andrew sounded a few notes of caution; in particular that campaigners need to press for what he called 'sensible schemes'. Alas, at the moment no-one is going to invest in major rail projects like re-opening the Woodhead route, because the costs are doing so are simply too high.

The main areas campaigners should target, he suggested, are things like fares, security at stations and better connections.

#### QUESTION TIME – CHAIRED BY MICHAEL WILMOT

*The panel consisted of Graham Nalty, Andrew Roden, Ruth Annison and Mike Crowhurst (with Michael Wilmot shown in the centre of photo).*

Questions were posed, and answers given by the Panel, on a wide range of issues such as:

- How can heritage railways become real railways?
- What are the relative benefits of investing in local, as compared to long distance trains?
- Is it a problem that rail campaigners tend to be 'male and hideously white'?
- How can rail campaigners raise money more effectively?
- How do we convince the DfT that rail passengers are stakeholders and should be listened to?
- How can we campaign better against vested interests like the road lobby?
- How can stations be made more accessible to families with children?



## SUNDAY VISIT – CHURNET VALLEY RAILWAY – POSSIBLE LINK TO ALTON TOWERS

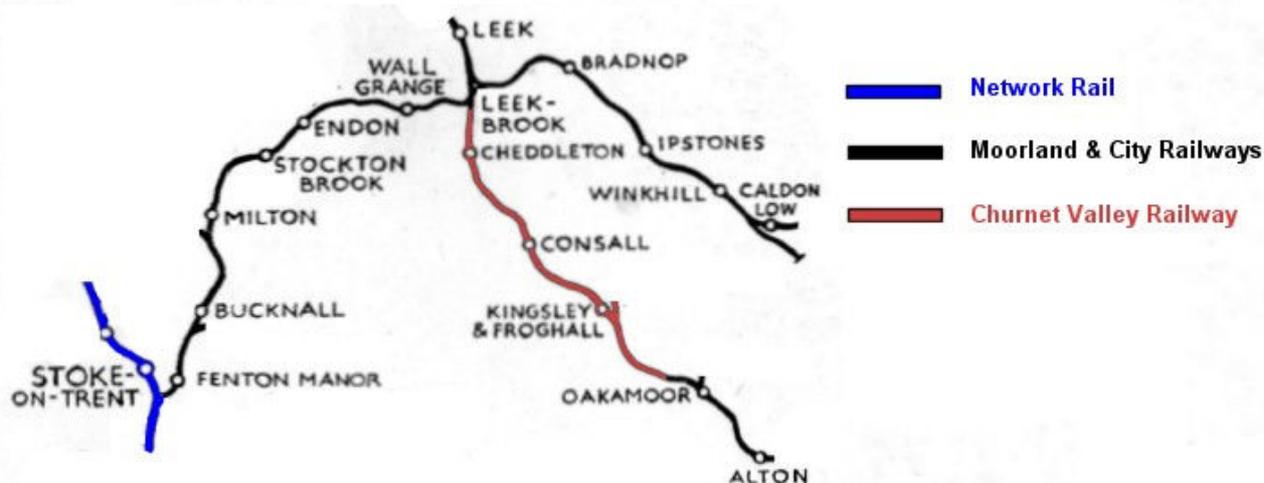
On Sunday morning about a dozen attendees visited the nearby Churnet Valley Railway. Yes, it's a steam heritage railway, but one with potential to take thousands of cars off the road each year if it is able to extend to Alton Towers. Our thanks to Brian Dunn, a very helpful and friendly CVR volunteer, for being our guide all weekend.



Despite not being discussed during conference presentations, the currently isolated 7-mile-long Churnet Valley Railway (CVR), which serves no useful purpose other than as a tourist attraction, will hopefully see the most exciting project or all come to fruition.

In 2009 it was announced that a new company, Moorlands and City Railways Ltd (MCR), two of whose directors are also directors of the CVR has bought about 20 miles of disused railway line between Stoke and Cauldon Low quarries, which it plans to reopen, partly for rail freight (serving Lafarge Cement UK). MCR then wants to extend the line, via the existing Churnet Valley line, to Alton Towers, with the intention of transporting hundreds of thousands of visitors to the theme park every year – and significantly reducing the weight of traffic passing through rural villages like Alton. To the latter aim it has reached agreement with the CVR to operate over their line whilst maintaining it for them. The MCR also wishes to build a station and car park at Leek, to reconnect passenger services with the national railway network.

The map below shows the existing Churnet valley railway (between Leek Brook junction and Oakamoor) in the centre, with the lifted track to Alton towers south of it. On the very left is the Network Rail mainline. Joining the two is the currently mothballed freight-only route just south of Stoke-on-Trent station to Caldron Low, which was last used in the 1990s.



Picture obtained from <http://www.churnet-valley-railway.co.uk/mcr/index.htm>

When *Railfuture* conference attendees visited the railway in 2006 the passenger service only went as far south as Kingsley and Froghall, which had opened in August 2001. The route to Oakamoor was mothballed. However, in September 2008 an occasional DMU service started operation. The track was not in good enough condition to allow steam engines to run.

## SOME COMMENTS FROM THE SPEAKERS

**Ian Yeowart**, "I would have loved to stay longer, but I must dash off to see England in the World Cup – by car, sadly, I just couldn't get home in time by train."

**Carl Henderson**, "I learned a lot at the conference and as it would appear have made many useful contacts."

**Caspar Lucas**, "From my perspective, I think the point that needs to be understood is that our organisation's developments obviously need support for them to be implemented - which is where the campaigning part comes in!

The ideal situation will be one where campaigns generate local support, informed by achievements elsewhere, and mobilise the relevant authorities to look around for detailed information, technical appraisal, etc."

**Graham Nalty**, It was very valuable for me as I received an invitation to lead a workshop at the forthcoming conference at Reading. I really enjoyed the expertise of all the speakers and their passion for their subject and learnt some very valuable knowledge about many new aspects of railways."

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Railfuture* would like to offer a sincere thank you to Ron Alcock, conference manager at Staffordshire University, and his team, who helped make the conference such a success. No problem was too much trouble for them. The venue was excellent, and Ron deserves special praise for driving around 20 attendees to the restaurant on Saturday night.

## RAILFUTURE PUBLICATIONS

*Railfuture* has long campaigned for new or reopened lines and stations. This is an area where there has been huge success.

**BRITAIN'S GROWING RAILWAY** consists of two volumes. The first, the **A-Z of Reopenings** (shown to the right) lists every station and line opened in the last 40 or so years. Published in February 2010. It can be ordered from the *Railfuture* web-site – [www.railfuture.org.uk/books](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/books) - for £9.95 including P&P.

Volume II, subtitled *Vision and Reality*, is in production and will explain how to campaign for new stations and lines.



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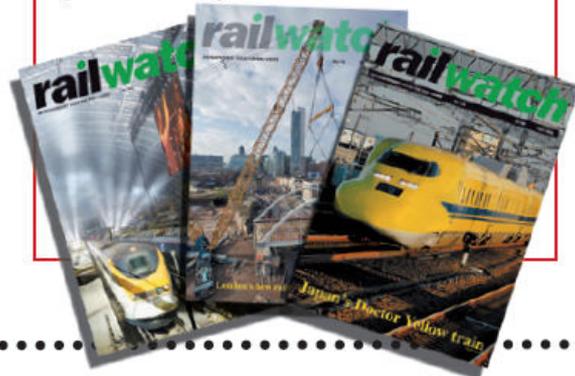
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