

# **rail**future

London and South East regional branch

Annual General Meeting 2019

Saturday 27 April 2019

Kwanglim Room, Wesley's Chapel & Leysian Mission,  
49 City Road, London EC1Y 1AU



South of Old Street roundabout and station, served by London Underground's Northern line City branch and Govia Thameslink Railway's Moorgate branch  
London Buses routes 21, 43, 76, 141, 214, 271 on City Road; 55, 243 on Old Street

[London and South East regional branch](#)

# Agenda

10.30 Doors open – refreshments available

11.00 *“Developments in surface access by rail for London’s six airports”*

**Heathrow Southern Railway**

Steve Costello - <https://heathrowrail.com/>

**Transport for London**

Shamal Ratnayaka, Aviation Strategy Lead, City Planning, TfL

13.00 lunch

14.00 formal Annual General Meeting for members

- 1 – Apologies for absence
- 2 – Minutes of AGM 28 April 2018
- 3 – Matters Arising
- 4 – Results of elections to branch committee 2019-20

Reports on 2018:

- 5 – Chairman/Vice-Chairman
- 6 – Treasurer
- 7 – Membership

8 – Divisions:

- a – Eastern
- b – Herts & Beds
- c – Kent
- d – London Metro
- e – Surrey
- f – Sussex & Coastway

- 9 – Branch campaigns
- 10 – Branch communications

11 – 2019-20?

## **2 – Minutes of Annual General Meeting 28 April 2018**

held in the Kwanglim Room, Wesley's Chapel, London EC1Y 1AU

Present: Keith Dyall (Chair), Mark Balaam\*, Roger Blake, Andrew Braddock\*, Ian Brown\*, Peter Collingborn, Nigel Denton, Mark Douglas, John Fowden, Chris Fribbins, Dr Colin Harris\*, Peter Hillier-Palmer, H Trevor Jones, Charles King, Prof. Lewis Lesley\*, Neil Middleton, Graham Morrison\*, Chris Page, Gordon Pratt\*, William Reynolds, Howard Thomas, Peter Wakefield, Michael Waller, and James Willis\*.

\* attended morning session only.

The morning session opened at 11.00 am and focused on developments in light rail.

**Gordon Pratt**, supported by **Prof. Lewis Lesley**, described proposals to build a tram system known as Kenex Thames Transit, which would directly link Dartford and Gravesend in Kent with Grays and Lakeside in Essex. This would remove traffic from the Dartford Crossing and local roads, contribute to improving air quality and open up new employment, education and housing opportunities for those living on both sides of the Thames. The presentation can be viewed [here](#) which is under 'What's on' in the L&SE branch page of the national Railfuture website, in 'Railfuture near you'.

**Dr Colin Harris** explained that Cambridge is witnessing phenomenal and unprecedented economic expansion and population growth, which is severely challenging existing transport modes, essentially buses, particularly in the historic city centre. A light rail system, Cambridge Connect, is therefore being proposed, which would link key points on the edge of the city and beyond with the centre. Several routes had been identified, which would be built on a phased basis. To protect the fabric of the city centre and to increase crossings of the Cam, some use would be made of tunnelling.

The final speaker was **Andrew Braddock**, Chairman of Promotions Group, UK Tram, who gave a talk entitled 'The benefits of modern trams in cities and towns'. By way of illustration, he focused on the rebirth of tramways across France, which has occurred over the past 30 years and now includes nine systems in Paris alone. His presentation, which was supported by numerous slides, can be viewed [here](#) which is under 'What's on' in the L&SE branch page of the national Railfuture website, in 'Railfuture near you'.

### **The formal 2018 Annual General Meeting for members commenced at 2.00 pm**

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Norman Bradbury

2. **Minutes of the AGM held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

The minutes were not available in hard copy but were projected on to a screen. They can be viewed [here](#) which is under 'What's on' in the L&SE branch page of the national Railfuture website, in 'Railfuture near you'. In the circumstances, they were agreed in principle subject to the committee checking them later.

3. **Matters arising**

There were none.

4. **Results of elections to branch committee 2018-19**

The following were elected unopposed:

Chairman	Keith Dyall
Vice-Chairman	Roger Blake
Secretary	No nomination
Treasurer	Howard Thomas

The other elected branch committee members are:

John Fowden, Charles King, Neil Middleton and Chris Page. There were insufficient nominations to fill the two other vacancies.

The divisional representatives are:

Howard Thomas (Eastern), Keith Dyall (Herts & Beds), Chris Fribbins (Kent), Charles King (Metro), Chris Page (Surrey) and Nigel Denton (Sussex & Coastway). The London-based editor of Railwatch and Rail Action, Ray King, is also a member of the committee.

### **Reports on 2017**

The reports, like the minutes, were projected on to a screen at the front of the room. They were subsequently placed [here](#) on the Railfuture website, under 'What's on' in the L&SE branch page of the national Railfuture website, in 'Railfuture near you'.

## **5. Chairman/Vice Chairman**

The chairman pointed out that the London & South East regional branch has some 25% of the entire national membership of Railfuture and London postcodes alone have about 25% of that branch total. Due to our numeric size and geographic spread we are unique among Railfuture branches in having a sub-structure of Divisions and it is at that level that much of the engagement with members, rail user groups and other organisations and campaigning activity takes place.

However, what is lacking is an active Division to represent members in the London area. Traditionally Eastern Division has covered services in East London but there is a need for Railfuture to focus on services across the Greater London area as a whole and then not just heavy rail. This requires improved links with TfL. The form such a new division should take will largely depend on willing volunteers coming forward to make it work.

The Chairman added that there was a potential issue about the day, time and frequency of branch committee meetings, currently held in central London every other month on a mid-week evening. He compared this to East Anglia Branch which meets four times a year at four different venues all day on a Saturday, with the committee meeting in the morning, followed by an open members' meeting in the afternoon, usually with a guest speaker.

## **6. Treasurer**

The treasurer reported that 2017 had been an unexceptional year as far the accounts were concerned. The main feature was a surplus of £792, down from £1129 in 2016. He explained that the branch's income comes almost exclusively from national funds. The surplus was largely accounted for by a small underspend in the amount allocated for campaigns and lobbying, a slight reduction in the anticipated cost of the 2017 AGM and a reduction in expenditure by the divisions - £735 against a budget of £975. The branch no longer budgets for contingencies – any need for extra funds would be negotiated with the national finance officers. Branch proposals for the 2018 budget have been approved by the Railfuture Board. The branch accounts are examined by co-opted committee member, Gordon Pratt, who has no financial role in the branch and then passed to the national accountant. The company's accounts are audited.

## **7. Membership**

The membership secretary reported that 26 new members joined during 2017. At the same time, the branch lost 40 members including the Abbey Flyer Users' Group (whose representative moved out of the branch area) and the Chingford Line Users' Association. At the end of 2017 we had 463 members. He added that we need to continue to raise our profile by being seen to be active and campaigning, maximising opportunities for publicity and telling others about Railfuture, so that we can recruit more members and continue to

grow. We must also make our meetings more welcoming to new members so that they stay and become active.

## **8. Divisions**

### **a Eastern**

Plans for new station at Beaulieu Park north-east of Chelmsford have gone quiet and even the local MP has been unable to find out what is happening – geological problems are suspected. Class 345s are now coming on stream between Liverpool Street and Shenfield. Dwell times in the peaks are shorter as there are more and wider doors. The Lea Valley project goes forward in increments and Network Rail is now talking about completion in May 2019 rather than December 2018. Angel Road station is due to close and be replaced a short distance away by a new station, Meridian Water. Meanwhile, Eastern Division members are keeping a watching brief on such matters as service reliability, fares and growing peak time overcrowding at Stratford station.

### **b Herts and Beds**

The main issues during 2017 have been the new Thameslink timetable, the poor quality seating on the Class 700s, services on the Hertford loop to be cut back at Watton-at-Stone awaiting a new platform being built at Stevenage and EMT trains to no longer stop at Luton and Bedford during peak periods. Thameslink timetables are being introduced in stages and this is causing difficulties for passengers at some stations. The Abbey Line users group are campaigning for the installation of a passing loop at Bricket Wood and have raised sufficient money to fund an independent study. There was widespread dismay that the Mayor of London is not prepared to accept future cost risk of the Metropolitan Line Extension thereby jeopardising the project.

### **c Kent**

The Kent area witnessed a lot of activity on the network during 2017, with the major works at London Bridge and new station buildings at Abbey Wood and Strood plus an upgrade at Snodland to support the additional stop on the Highspeed service between Maidstone West and St Pancras. Kent division members were involved in consultation meetings on most of these. 2018 will see new Thameslink services to Rainham in Kent and Crossrail opening, although the service between Cambridge and Maidstone East has been delayed a year. The division was involved in discussions with Network Rail around the new Kent Area Route Study, publication of which is still awaited. The division have met with all three bidders for the South East franchise, now due to start in April 2019, to discuss our ideas and build an ongoing relationship. Meetings have also been held with Kent County and Medway Councils as well as regular stakeholder meetings with Southeastern. Representations to the Medway Local Plan, suggesting the upgrade of the existing freight line from Hoo Junction to Grain for passenger use to support the large housing development proposals in the area appear to have been welcomed and discussions have taken place with Network Rail. The division does need more support from its members as due to the personal responsibilities of the Division's organiser only two meetings were held during 2017.

### **d London Metro**

The early part of 2017 was taken up by the launch of the GTR weekend timetable consultation. In particular, we supported the changes whereby the Caterham and Tattenham Corner trains remained part of the Southern Metro network rather than being transferred to Thameslink. We expressed the need for Thameslink to improve their contingency plans in the event of an incident north or south of the core causing a knock-on effect to trains running across the core. We supported the proposed vision of the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy and its central aims to reduce pollution, encourage walking, cycling and the use of affordable public transport. Railfuture continues to stress the need for a more frequent service on the West London Line.

### **e Surrey**

The Division contributed strongly to the Railfuture response to the South Western timetable consultation and achieved several wins including two trains per hour from Weymouth to London, confirming that engagement with TOCs does work. On the North Downs line there is a need for three trains an hour (a franchise requirement) but this would place some level crossings in a different risk category. It seems that GWR is planning to obtain tri-mode Class 319s for the North Downs route and Railfuture will be pressing for a through service hourly between Oxford and Gatwick Airport. The Division has been talking with Heathrow Southern Railway, which appears to be in pole position as far as providing a new line to the airport is concerned. The development of Guildford station has been welcomed.

### **f Sussex & Coastway**

The Division has continued to meet each month (other than in August) at locations across both East and West Sussex and it is good to report a steady increase in attendance. During the year two joint meetings were held with Surrey Division, the first addressed by Phil Hutchinson, GTR's Head of Strategy and Planning, and the second by Angie Doll, Passenger Services Director, Southern and Gatwick Express. Following on from this, several members of the Division were involved in joint meetings with Phil Hutchinson, which has led to the introduction of an improved service frequency between Eastbourne and Hastings plus an overlapping Marshlink (diesel) service between Eastbourne and Ashford. Connections with HS1 trains at Ashford have been improved and a later evening service from Ashford to Hastings introduced. Together with Kent Division we are supporting plans for track changes at Ashford, which in the short term will make platform transfers easier and in the longer term hopefully lead to a HS1 service on Marshlink. Unfortunately, our Wealden line extension campaign has, as it were, been moved into a passing loop (rather than hitting the buffers) as despite its previously high national profile any progress seems now wholly dependent upon a sufficient number of houses being built along the route. However, we took our stall along to the annual Uckfield Festival's Big Day in July and were encouraged by the continuing amount of local support for our campaign.

## **9. Branch campaigns**

Railfuture occupies the unique and valued position of being the only long-established, national, independent and voluntary pro-rail lobby group. Our campaigning for expansion and improvement to develop a bigger, better railway in Britain continually seeks to inform and to influence, to promote and persuade. We do so in the relatively benign environment of historically high levels of passenger patronage, with passenger journey volumes showing in 2017 only variable fluctuations to sustained long-term growth across our region's operations taken together, albeit with some significant signs of change in journey patterns. Strong and sustained capital investments in the railway assets of rolling stock and infrastructure appear likely to continue, with new train fleets in 2017 part of a continuing trend and with a substantial SoFA (Statement of Funds Available) from the DfT for 2019-24 in CP6, to be focused on operations, maintenance and especially renewals.

Details of the various campaigns undertaken within the branch area can be found on the Railfuture website – find the branch page in 'Railfuture near you'. These include continuing and revised efforts to restore the rail link between Uckfield and Lewes and to support the Gibb report recommendation for the Uckfield line to be electrified.

Active support continued to be given to the campaign to reduce journey times between Hastings and Bexhill and London, thereby boosting the local economy, by extending HS1 services from Ashford to Hastings and Bexhill via the Marshlink. Attention was increasingly concentrated on advocating the benefits of new and converted bi-mode trains on the route.

Our other principal campaigning activity has been responding to the steady flow of consultations throughout the year. These responses can be viewed at or downloaded from

'Consultations responses' under '[Our cause](#)'. Experience in our Branch and others is that evidence of active campaigning is one of the surest ways of attracting new members.

## **10. Branch newsletter *railse***

Four eight-page colour issues were published during 2017 as in previous years and were as usual distributed with each *Railwatch*. In addition, views/downloads are always available from the branch web page at [Branch news](#). While very little comment on the now-familiar format, or material suitable for publication, has been received such anecdotal feedback as there is remains positive and encouraging.

## **11. 2018-19?**

This is where you, our members, come in!

As a taster, your branch committee has, in common with the national approach for every one of Railfuture's 14 branches to have one headline campaign for a year, adopted the same principle for our six divisions and put forward these:

Eastern: Essex Rail Strategy

Herts and Beds: Midland Main Line new franchise and timetable

Kent: Hoo Peninsula passenger railway

London Metro: West London Orbital line development

Surrey: North Downs Line development

Sussex & Coastway: East Coastway/Marshlink development.

**The 2018 meeting closed at 4.16 p.m.**

## **3 – Matters Arising**

## **4 – Results of 2019 elections to branch committee 2019-20**

Chairman: no nomination

Vice-Chairman: Roger Blake

Secretary: no nomination

Treasurer: Howard Thomas

Others: Charles King, Neil Middleton, Chris Page

## **Reports on 2018:**

## **5 – Chairman/Vice-Chairman**

Our London and South East regional branch has roundly 25% of the entire national membership of Railfuture, and London alone has about 25% of that branch total. Owing to our numeric size as well as geographic spread we are unique among Railfuture branches in having our sub-structure of largely county-based Divisions, and that is the level at which much of our engagement with members, rail user groups and other organisations, and campaigning activity, takes place. The former is fully reflected in item 8 (reports from Divisions) below, and the latter is dealt with in more detail in item 9 (Branch campaigns) below.

Your branch committee has continued to oversee and co-ordinate those various activities, and officers have led on some of the several consultation responses submitted. Our approach mirrors that of the national organisation, which has its eye focused firmly on our vision for Railfuture as Britain's leading independent pro-rail campaign whose views are respected by the rail industry, to which decision-makers come for advice, and which rail users are proud to join, and to recommend.

Clarity of objectives matters, not just in the subject-matter of our campaigning but in the manner in which we conduct that campaigning. The stand-out example for 2018 was, ironically in view of the national headlines, the success of GTR's new Southern timetable for East Coastway/MarshLink services introduced on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May. That marked the culmination of months of close engagement with the operator and a variety of local stakeholders, especially the half-dozen rail user groups. Their reward, as the newly-forged Hastings & Rother Rail Users Alliance, was Railfuture's Gold Award for Best Campaign in the annual Rail User Group Awards.

The branch's regular column in the quarterly Railwatch, and the branch's own quarterly newsletter *raifse*, continued to document the content and conduct of our activities, be they responding or contributing to around two dozen consultations within or affecting our regional branch area, or participating often in other people's meetings in order to interpose our particular viewpoint and influence.

Sometimes uncomfortable, always constructive is one characterisation of our style – that of a 'challenging supporter'. We can demonstrate that our choice of *modus operandi*, to engage and negotiate, delivers real results for passengers' benefit.

There are many and diverse opportunities for members and supporters to add further value to our activities, much of it through helping to develop our relations with those whom we seek to influence in organisations of every scale and at every level.

We must thank our fellow branch committee members for all their efforts in continued commitment to our cause. Particular thanks are again due to John Fowden for filling part of the gap left by the vacant position for Secretary, by being our *de facto* Minutes Secretary!

## **6 – Treasurer**

The London & South East Branch received a subvention of £3,315 in support of its budget proposal for the year. Although a further £2,000 was made available to support campaign and lobbying work, this was not drawn upon. The main feature of the Branch's accounts for 2018 was the surplus of £1,122.57, up from £792.30 in 2017. The Accumulated Fund now stands at £5,385.41. As in 2018, this is largely accounted for by underspending against the 2017 budget in a number of cost centres, as follows:

- Campaigns and lobbying: the amount spent was only £25. However, there was capital expenditure of £543.41 (£369.99 on a second projector, and £173.42 on a Railfuture-branded table cloth) on items used as part of campaigning.



- The 2016 AGM came in at £168.00, considerably less than the £300.00 budgeted, largely because of the choice of venue.
  - Running the Divisions came to £768.70, against a budget of £1,125.00.
- Unbudgeted income and expenditure included:

- £10.00 for the sale of Railfuture pens.

There was a net increase in cash and cash equivalents of £669.56 in the bank balance from £4,426.81 at 01/01/2018 to £5,106.70 at 31/12/2018.

Railfuture's policy is to provide for 20% depreciation on cost in each of the first four accounting years of use, and to write down the value of non-current (fixed) assets to £1.00 in the fifth year. Thereafter, the non-current assets remain at £1.00 until they are disposed of. Following this policy, I have charged £140.23 for depreciation in 2018 (see: *Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 31 December 2018*). Following this, the net values of the gazebo, the first projector, and the two leaflet stands are now down to £1.00. During the year, a second projector was bought for £369.99, and the branch table cloth for £173.42.

In 2018, Divisions were asked to prepare their own figures for inclusion in the Branch budget for 2019. This went well, and the Branch proposals for 2018 have been approved by Railfuture's national Board of Directors. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking the Divisions for their work and cooperation on this. Inviting and encouraging the Divisions to submit budget proposals is now a regular activity.

## **7 – Membership**

We gained 18 new members during 2018 (including three new affiliated Rail User Groups – Abbey Flyer Users' Group, Hastings & Rother Rail Users Alliance, and Reigate Redhill & District Rail Users Association), down from 26 new members in 2017. We lost 29 members in 2018, including the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association, less than the 40 in 2017.

At the end of 2018 we had 450 members, a net loss of 13 on 2017, and now including 22 Rail User Groups which is up three from 2017, and 20 members who belong primarily to other branches.

Although the majority of new members joined online, so we do not know what prompted them, we do know that the remainder were either introduced by a member, picked up one of our leaflets at an event or their local station, or heard about us on the radio. We need to continue to raise our profile by being seen to be active and campaigning, maximising opportunities for publicity and telling our friends, relatives and colleagues about Railfuture, so that we can recruit more members and grow. We desperately need more active members so must make our meetings more welcoming to new members to encourage them to stay and become active.

We have to make use of electronic and social media. We need email addresses for all our members so that we can communicate by email - post is now too expensive to notify details of meetings or events, or request support for campaigns. Please let the national membership secretary [lloyd.butler@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:lloyd.butler@railfuture.org.uk) or the branch membership secretary [chris.page@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:chris.page@railfuture.org.uk) have your email address - it will not be passed outside Railfuture.

## **8 – Divisions:**

### **a – Eastern**

The main developments in 2018 have been work on the development of the Essex Rail Strategy, continuing work and problems associated with the Barking-Gospel Oak line electrification, and the capacity improvement on the Lea Valley line, including the building of Meridian Water station to replace Angel Road.

- **Essex Rail Strategy**

A key development in 2018 saw local authorities in Essex, and especially Essex County Council, start to work on the Essex Rail Strategy to link in with those of neighbouring authorities. Among items to be included in the Strategy are better rail/bus integration, improved ticketing and infrastructure improvements. The Eastern Division has established a link with this process, and East Anglia branch's Martin Cooper is now involved with Eastern Division as part of its oversight on this development.

Other developments and activities during the year have been:

- **Vicky Ford MP**

In May, Vicky Ford, MP for Chelmsford, organised a meeting with representatives from Greater Anglia, Network Rail, Essex County Council and Chelmsford City Council to discuss and move things forward on rail transport in the area. Topics included Beaulieu Park station and weekend engineering works.

- **Beaulieu Park Station**

We now know the design and track configuration proposed for the station. Taking into account the Network Rail GRIP process, Beaulieu Park station is now expected to be open in 2025.

- **Weekend engineering work**

2018 has seen a significant number of weekend closures of the GEML, mainly for infrastructure work in connection with the Elizabeth line. Most weekends have involved trains terminating at Ingatestone and passengers being bussed to Newbury Park on the TfL Central Line adding at least 1 hour to the normal journey time. Network Rail said that weekend engineering work would become the exception rather than the norm. By the end of the year, weekend disruption was still the norm.

- **Ongoing work to electrify the Barking – Gospel Oak Line**

Many of the problems faced in 2017 continued into and through 2018. There have been further blockades during which, as in 2017, alternative arrangements for passengers have not always been satisfactory. By the end of 2018, electrification work appeared to be complete, but there was still no firm date for the delivery of the long overdue Class 710 emus and for them to be in squadron service. The Barking – Gospel Oak line had just 6 dmus to cover 6 diagrams, meaning that there was no spare capacity to cover for maintenance and breakdown. Service performance and reliability has suffered. TfL have carried some testing of the electrification with a Class 378 emu reduced from 5 to 4 cars, with a view to possible use as a stop-gap pending the inauguration of the 710 fleet.

- **Lea Valley line capacity improvement**

Work on building a third track on the Lea Valley line north from Lea Bridge station has progressed during the year. Meridian Water station, which is to replace Angel Road station in May 2019, appears to be complete.

In the meantime, the Eastern Division has kept a watching brief on other matters such as passenger service reliability, fares and other local issues including the growing problem of overcrowding at Stratford station during peak times. The division has continued its work on evaluating station facilities in its catchment to focus on a range of issues including access for the disabled, toilet facilities, etc. It has started to establish links with Community Rail Partnerships in its area, in particular the Essex and South Suffolk Rail Partnership.

## **b – Herts & Beds**

The Division met in St. Albans – in March, June and October – but unfortunately the practicalities of life meant that we couldn't schedule our planned early-2019 meeting. Our next meeting is on Saturday 11 May in St Albans (our usual venue, the Garden Room at St. Paul's Church, Hatfield Road, AL1 4JP [walking distance from City station for most, otherwise buses available; fully accessible]) - 10.45 for 11.00-13.00. Attendance at the meetings was around 15, with a mix of Railfuture members, User Groups (some of them affiliated) and also representatives from Hertfordshire County Council and GTR.

Our focus for the year was the 'current railway'. The GTR timetable issues were a key topic, with the June meeting focusing on the then current meltdown being suffered by both Thameslink and Great Northern travellers following the May timetable change. GTR apologised for the then terrible service (this was before the reduced timetable came in, so travellers were plagued by short notice cancellations and long service gaps). GTR also explained the root causes – which are now well-documented in various reviews and so not repeated here. Members and RUGs both raised the matter of enhanced compensation, which was eventually agreed by the Government. By October, the focus moved to timetable design, with attention given to the impacts on Thameslink users of East Midlands Train's decision not to call at Bedford and Luton in peak hours.

We also discussed the 'want' for East Midlands Trains to disclose both passenger loading information and make an earlier than planned return to peak hour services at Bedford and Luton; something that unfortunately remains an unfulfilled desire. We reviewed options for the information we needed for informed decisions and our options for lobbying – both with EMT and via politicians. RUGs affiliated with Railfuture (APTU & BCA) are leading the work in this area.

We heard from ABFLY about the outcome of their successful campaign to crowdfund a study into options for a passing loop on the Abbey Line (St Albans Abbey to/from Watford Junction: currently operated on a one train in use basis: there is no signalling beyond Watford).

During the year we also heard about successful '[Treegate](#)' campaigns on the Great Northern route for Network Rail to take a more reasoned approach to vegetation management and tree felling, where contractors had strayed a long way beyond reasonable in tree felling as regards distance from the live railway (do note that this is not a disagreement about felling trees / clearing vegetation that is needed for a safe reliable railway).

Meetings also spent time reviewing possible changes in services on the Marston Vale line (Bedford / Bletchley) and London North Western Services between Euston and Hertfordshire.

For 2019/20, a key topic will be to review passenger 'wants' for the franchise or other arrangements that will replace the Govia Thameslink Railway management contract which is due to expire in September 2021 (subject, of course, to the Williams Review and other political developments).

If you live in Hertfordshire or Bedfordshire, use the trains in the area, or just have an interest, we hope to see you at our next meeting. Along with our 'business as usual' we shall spend some time thinking about how the Division should work in the future – eg should we start asking external speakers, are Saturday mornings or weekday evenings better etc.

## **c – Kent**

Following a busy year in 2017, there were major delays to key decisions in 2018. The Franchise Award had already been delayed to April 2019, and has been further delayed due to the workload and higher priority issues at the DfT. Announcement of the Franchise will now be in 2019. The Kent Route Study was also delayed, appearing in May 2018 – it has a higher priority on maintenance issues, and improvements as suggested by the division clearly need external funding.

The introduction of further Thameslink services was very disappointing and saw some services reduced from half-hourly to hourly, or even worse. Suggestions were made about stopping Highspeed trains to reduce the impact at the worst affected station – Higham, but a rail replacement bus was introduced from/to Strood and Gravesend instead.

The division's suggestion of re-opening the freight-only Hoo branch on the Isle of Grain has now been mentioned as an option in the Kent Route Study and is backed up by Medway Local Plan documents. A bid to the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund has been made for funds to progress this; decision on the grant is expected in the Spring.

More help is needed with the division's administration. There were only two meetings in the year, down from three in 2017. There is an intention to return to more meetings in 2019, but more assistance and input from local members is required to make meetings effective.

## **d – London Metro**

The year 2018 is clearly a year which we can put down to things not going to plan in the London Metro area.

**May 2018 GTR Thameslink/Great Northern timetable fiasco** which was supposed to be a new dawn in integrated rail travel across London. However, it resulted in hundreds of trains not running, leaving thousands of passengers stranded on station platforms. This required at least four temporary timetables almost on a daily basis within the six weeks to July 2018, when a more stable temporary timetable was introduced. This was further enhanced in December 2018 and will have some more enhancement in May 2019, but is unlikely to have the full proposed May 2018 until December 2019 or even as late as May 2020.

Railfuture had supported the proposed GTR May 2018, but expressed a number of concerns about reduction of services in the Metro area. We welcomed the exclusion of the Caterham and Tattenham Corner lines from Thameslink, and the May timetable fiasco showed that we were right to do so. We welcomed the ability that offered through journeys to Finsbury Park from East Croydon and stations to Redhill and Gatwick along with those from the Greenwich line and other parts of south-east London and Kent. We welcomed increased services on the Wimbledon loop especially in the peaks and on Sundays, along with the increase to four trains per hour on the Catford loop line.

On the Southern Metro we welcomed the new semi-fast services from London Bridge to Norwood Junction, West Croydon and Sutton to Epsom, the doubling of frequency and reintroduction of a Sunday service on the Epsom Downs service improving the service to Belmont for the Royal Marsden Hospital and the increase in frequency of calling at Carshalton, along with and the new all-day service from Dulwich, Tulse Hill and Streatham to East Croydon and Caterham.

On the down side we had and still have concerns over the reduction of the metro service at Norwood Junction which has been reduced from 6 trains per hour to 4 trains per hour and at certain times to 2 trains per hour. We raised concerns over the reduction to 1 train per hour on the metro service from East Croydon to Balham, and the loss of Thameslink services at New Cross Gate which has step free access. We were disappointed that there was no plan to increase the services on the West London line between East Croydon and Milton Keynes in the off-peak to 2 trains per hour at least between East Croydon and Watford. There is clear demand both actual and latent for this increase which would also resolve the East Croydon to Balham problem.

Railfuture met both TfL and GTR to discuss this and there is a desire by both to resolve this issue. However, the problem seems to be one of committed paths given to both freight and Channel tunnel freight trains, the latter enshrined in legislation which both DfT and Network Rail are reluctant to seek to change.

**Crossrail** was the next bad news as this was due for opening in December 2018. This was delayed due to problems commissioning trains, stations and signalling which at year-end were still not working as planned.

**Heathrow services** on the positive side TfL has taken over the Heathrow Connect service between Paddington and Heathrow T4. As this had run with a premium fare beyond Hayes and Harlington TfL has integrated it into the Oyster scheme with a special premium fare on single fares to the and from the airport, but has agreed to the same daily fares Oyster 1-6 cap for passengers who use additional TfL rail or bus services during the day. In addition, London Freedom Passes are now valid throughout. GWR has taken over running the Heathrow Express and will update recently-introduced Bombardier 387 stock for the purpose.

**Gospel Oak - Barking** has been another sorry tail. The long over-running electrification of the line finally happened and was completed in 2018, only to find that the new electric passenger rolling stock was delayed and not accepted into service. As there was commitment to cascade the eight existing class 172 diesel units to other parts of the country, this left TfL's London Overground with a looming problem as they progressively went off-lease and were cascaded to the West Midlands.

## **e – Surrey**

During the year Stephen Rolph took over as Division Convener from Chris Page.

Division members were invited to attend two joint meetings with Sussex & Coastway Division in Haywards Heath. Guest speakers on 7<sup>th</sup> June were Antony Merlyn from GTR and Victoria Garcia from Brighton & Hove Buses, on the theme of Accessibility. On 19<sup>th</sup> July the guest speakers were Catherine Folca from Transport Focus and David Statham and Andy Wakeford on behalf of the Rail Delivery Group, on the topic of fares and ticketing then out to a consultation.

Surrey Division reversed the arrangement on 27<sup>th</sup> November when guest speaker was Andrew Wood from Network Rail, updating us in Redhill on progress with the [Brighton Main Line Improvement Project](#), the planned [Croydon Area Remodelling Scheme](#), the additional platform proposed for Reigate station, and the planned North Downs line 3tph GWR service and some associated level crossings issues.

All presentations can be viewed on the respective Division's web pages.

## **f – Sussex & Coastway**

The Division maintained its pattern of regular monthly evening meetings, except in March (due to bad weather) and August, at various locations throughout East and West Sussex, providing reasonable access for a majority of members and affiliates.

An acceptable balance has been achieved between business and guest speaker meetings. In June the theme was Accessibility in Public Transport, with Antony Merlyn (GTR's Accessibility Manager) and Victoria Garcia (Brighton & Hove Buses'

Accessibility & Communities Manager). In July the subject was Fares and Ticketing addressed by Catherine Folca, Stakeholder Manager, Transport Focus (London Office) and David Statham and Andy Wakeford from the Rail Delivery Group. Both these meetings were held jointly with the Surrey Division. In September we were brought up to date on community rail partnership matters by Rowena Tyler, representing Arun Valley and the new West Coastway CRPs. In October our member Robert Baugham spoke about the London Bridge signalling project, in which he had been involved. In November our members supported the Surrey Division in its meeting at Redhill addressed by Andrew Wood of Network Rail. Attendance at ordinary meetings has remained steady, at around 15 to 20.

During the year our convenor, Nigel Denton, decided to stand down, after four years in the post and we are grateful for all his hard work during this time. We are pleased that John Black has taken over.

The Division is represented on various rail user and CRP groups. Members continue to have a continuing involvement with the Hastings & Rother Rail Users Alliance in seeking improvements to the East Coastway/MarshLink service. There has been much reference to the 2018 Timetable changes and we contributed a response to the consultations on this.

The Division was represented at the Uckfield Big Day with our gazebo, where interest is always shown in the possibility of reopening the line bridging the gap from Uckfield to Lewes (the Wealden Line Extension), but there is no practical progress to report and all depends on a business case based on increased housing development in the relevant area.

A full programme is planned for 2019, including a special emphasis on encouraging support in West Sussex and seeking ways of improving West Coastway services.

## **9 – Branch campaigns**

As noted last year, Railfuture continues to occupy the unique and valued position of being the only long-established, national, independent, and voluntary pro-rail lobby group. Our campaigning for expansion and improvement to develop a bigger better railway in Britain continually seeks to inform and influence, to promote and persuade. We do so in the relatively benign environment of high levels of passenger patronage, with passenger journey volumes in 2018 showing only variable fluctuations to sustained long-term growth across our region's operators taken together, albeit with some significant signs of change in journey patterns. Strong and sustained capital investments in the railway assets of rolling stock and infrastructure appear likely to continue, with some new train fleets in 2018 part of a continuing trend and with a substantial SoFA (Statement of Funds Available) from the DfT for 2019-24 in Control Period 6, to be focused on operations, maintenance and especially renewals.

That said, maintaining credibility and confidence against a background of high-profile Hatfield-like collective nervous breakdowns such as May's GTR timetable meltdown and TfL's late-notice and open-ended postponement of Crossrail's cross-London services presented unexpected and unwanted challenges to our chosen stance of 'critical friend'; where did, should, the balance between 'critical' and 'friend' lie?

Our own campaign to reconnect Brighton and coastal communities in the west of East Sussex with their Wealden neighbours and London had a seventh if perhaps less eventful year overall in 2018. In April we responded to an invitation from Lewes District Council to present our current thinking to its Scrutiny Committee; it can be viewed in our web page for our [Uckfield-Lewes campaign](#). Opening with 'imagine there never was a railway between the two places, why build one now?' and concluding with 'no new (housing) growth = no new railway' we sought to answer our own question with an invitation to collaborate around a new paradigm of a sub-regional scale of new housing situated in a growth corridor connecting the two towns. In July we had our annual campaign stall at the Uckfield Festival's 'Big Day'.

Elsewhere in East Sussex we continued our active engagement with the local campaign, with the objective of rejuvenating the coastal economies of Hastings and Bexhill, to reduce journey times by rail to/from London. Earlier responses to GTR's consultations on their May 2018 timetable finally bore fruit when the Railfuture-inspired new timetable structure was implemented. Some refinements to the morning peak service, in response to user feedback, were then added in December. As can be inferred from the report by the Chair/Vice-Chair above, the entire process can be seen as a model of effective campaigning.

Our other principal campaigning activity has been responding to the steady flow of consultations throughout the year. Experience in our branch and others is that evidence of active campaigning is one of the surest ways of attracting new members. During 2018 we responded directly to, or contributed to responses on these 26:

- TfL's proposed Canary Wharf-Rotherhithe river crossing
- Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 4
- the DfT's draft Community Rail Development Strategy
- the ORR's 'Improving Assisted Travel'
- Network Rail's East West Rail central section, round 3
- South Western Railway's optimisation of train services
- the DfT's next Great Western franchise
- Network Rail's East Coast Main Line Route Study
- Coast2Capital LEP's Strategic Economic Plan
- South Western Railway's possible Boxing Day services
- Rother Valley Railway's Transport & Works Act Order application for the Robertsbridge-Bodiam connection
- the House of Commons' Transport Committee inquiry into rail timetable changes
- the Medway Local Plan
- TfSE's Economic Connectivity Review
- the ORR inquiry into the May timetable, first and second phases
- the GLA's Transport Committee call for evidence on the future of rail in London
- the GLA's Budget & Performance Committee's investigation on who will pay for the TfL of the future
- DEFRA's draft Clean Air Strategy
- the Rail Delivery Group's 'Easier Fares'
- Network Rail's Transport & Works Act Order application for East West Rail's western section phase 2, and a Statement of Case for the public inquiry
- the Wealden Local Plan



- London TravelWatch's review of TfL's planned closure of 51 London Overground ticket offices
- the DfT's proposed closure of Angel Road station
- Network Rail's Croydon Area Remodelling Scheme.

## **10 – Branch communications**

Four eight-page colour issues of the quarterly *railse* were published during 2018, as in previous years, and were as usual distributed by post with each Railwatch. In addition, views/downloads of all editions, for the past nine years, are always available from the branch web page at [L&SE Branch news](#). While very little comment on the established format, or material suitable for publication, is received such feedback as there is remains positive and encouraging.

An innovation for 2018 has been, in response to a member's suggestion, the introduction of an additional two-page monthly e-newsletter *inter-railse* available by email upon publication to members notifying their wish to become a subscriber; over 100 members currently do so. It enables more up-to-date communication of events and consultations than is possible with the quarterly *railse* with its necessary pre-publication lead times. Again, all editions on *inter-railse* are available for viewing or download on the branch web page.

## **11 – 2019-20?**

This is where you, our members, come in!

As a taster, your branch committee has, in common with the national approach for every one of Railfuture's 14 branches to have one headline campaign for a year, applied the same principle to our six divisions and put forward these for discussion:

Eastern: Connecting new Essex garden communities  
 Herts & Beds: New East Midlands franchise and Main Line timetable  
 Kent: Hoo Peninsula passenger railway  
 London Metro: West London Line development  
 Surrey: North Downs Line development  
 Sussex & Coastway: West Coastway development

For the branch as a whole:

Transport for the South East's Transport Strategy 2050  
 Vote London 2020 – manifesto for Mayoral and London Assembly elections