

The **quarterly** branch newsletter of **railfuture** in London and the South East

Britain's leading *independent* campaign for a bigger better railway for passengers and freight

Return to rail – safely, confidently



As this newsletter is published so too are the Office of Rail & Road's latest [annual station usage estimates](#). For the year 2019/20, they reflect the pandemic near the end of the period to 31st March. Next December's figures, for the current year to March 2021, will be a horror-show and our challenge as a pro-rail campaign is to 'build back better' passenger usage – of a resilient transport system which is now into the final five-year countdown towards a truly notable bicentenary!

We have just two straightforward messages:
~ **to the general public:** of all possible ways in which you might become infected with the virus, using public transport is proven to be one of the most unlikely;
~ **to the rail industry:** as passengers see when they return to their local station after closure for a half-term of route improvement work, post-pandemic passengers returning must see improvements too with consistently higher standards maintained for cleanliness of stations and trains and for punctuality of services. We should also be able to look forward to easier and more flexible ticketing, more power and USB sockets and better wifi.



Our five national **railfuture** policy priorities:

Attracting passengers back to rail – improving the travelling environment

Climate change and modal shift – how the railway can reduce the carbon footprint of transport

Restoring Your Railway – reopening lines and stations

Fares and ticketing – making the system easier and fairer

Industry structure and Williams – taking the opportunity to move to devolution and concessions.

See "[Attracting passengers back](#)" + [@RailfuturePsng](#)

Decarbonisation = electrification!

The predominantly electrified rail network across most of our regional branch area still has a way to go before diesel-powered trains become a rarity. One task is electrifying Thames port and other similar connections for freight haulage, to discard the ubiquitous class 66!



Class 88 electro-diesel loco for Direct Rail Services

Dirty diesels destined for departure?

Our three unelectrified routes (two of which don't serve London) operate a fraction of the hourly diesel trains which stop and start in London's 'smelly seven' termini.



Class 810 bi-mode multiple unit for East Midlands Railway

Since *railse* nos. [128 June](#) and [129 September](#) 2015 there's been progress at Paddington, with Hull Trains at King's Cross, with more in prospect at St. Pancras and then Euston, and quite possibly at London Bridge.

Our vision for rail: A railway system that provides services which travellers and freight forwarders want to use, and which offers more journey opportunities to more people and more freight.

PM declares A New Deal for Britain, DfT sets up a new Acceleration Unit, Network Rail reveals 'Project Speed'

The story begins when the Prime Minister announced in June [A New Deal for Britain](#) and the establishment of a new Infrastructure Delivery Taskforce, to be led by the Chancellor and named 'Project Speed'.

The Transport Secretary then announced in August a new Acceleration Unit in the DfT. Two successive issues of a reputable monthly journal about modern railways made reference to first six and then another seven schemes in [Network Rail's 'Project Speed'](#).

Our regional branch area fared well with four of the 13:



To East Croydon right, Victoria lower left, London Bridge upper left

- ~ Croydon Area Remodelling Scheme (above)
- ~ Euston station regeneration
- ~ Access for All at Ash Vale station, Surrey
- ~ Uckfield line electrification (below).



The September 2017 [railse no.137](#) last examined our '**Electrify Uckfield**' campaign, [launched six years ago](#) when longer diesel trains, and platforms, were being considered. Then the 2017 [Gibb report](#) recommended electrification, part of a package to improve Southern performance. A new overnight train stabling point at Crowborough was also proposed, offering local jobs.

July's [Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy](#) from Network Rail has identified the Uckfield branch as a 'multiple option' route where "If electrification is not possible it is likely a battery solution would be required." As reported in [railse no.149](#), "RSSB has commissioned a study with ORR and Network Rail to explore the feasibility of infill third rail electrification on remaining diesel routes in the South East. Electrification would remove the last diesel trains from London Bridge and improve integration with other service groups."

"100 more by '24": any more for any more?



Railfuture's national campaign for the [Access for All](#) programme to be expanded was in November awaiting the Chancellor's announcement on his Comprehensive Spending Review and spending plan to fund another 15 stations to reach our target of 100 more by '24!



[Selhurst station is now step-free, street-to-platform](#)



[Crawley station is going step-free](#)



[Canterbury East station will soon be going step-free](#)





Denmark Hill station upgrade works get going



Peckham Rye – Britain's busiest lift-free interchange!



Eridge: change for Tunbridge Wells, via new footbridge a lift is planned to be installed in January.



New entrance + step-free access for [South Kensington](#)

Newhaven Marine station closed officially on Thursday 22 October. The DfT had confirmed on 24 September that the ORR had completed its ratification process.



Since our previous news item, in [railise no.149](#) for September, DB Cargo signed a [new 10-year contract](#) with Brett Aggregates including use of **Newhaven Port**.

Unsung heroes: gone, not forgotten

[Asquith Xavier](#), Euston's first black guard, challenging injustice on the railway. See our article "[Resistance to change](#)" from October 2016. Watch the 5-minute [BBC film](#) from then and for 3 minutes [another](#) four years on.



At Chatham, see 2-minute [ITV News](#) and [KMTV](#) films.



Asquith tribute [exhibition at London's Euston station](#)

TfSE rail – Medway Valley Line extension and N. Downs line east: Kent - Surrey SOO-MDB-PDW-TON-EBR-GDN-RDH

Kent County Council launched their [Rail Strategy 2021](#) for consultation in September and featured it in their virtual Rail Summit in October. [Railfuture's response](#) was submitted in November and advocates a new link between the Medway Valley and Chatham Main lines north of Cuxton, working title 'the Cuxton Chord'.



Through 'R25' services between Tonbridge (and on to Redhill and Gatwick Airport) and the populous urban economic agglomeration of the Medway Towns, via the county town, would create improved connectivity and avoid time-consuming, journey-detering interchange (or reversal, as happened in the 1990s) at Stood.

Transport for the South East will do its Inner Orbital Area Study in 2021, feeding its Strategic Investment Plan in 2022, and Railfuture has already signalled its approach to rail development in the corridor. In our response to TfSE's Economic Connectivity Review in June 2018 we highlighted the economic corridor between the two largest centres, the Medway Towns and Brighton, via Gatwick, Tonbridge, and Maidstone. In our response to TfSE's draft Transport Strategy in January 2020 we restated the case for rail as the spine for the development of orbital economic corridors.

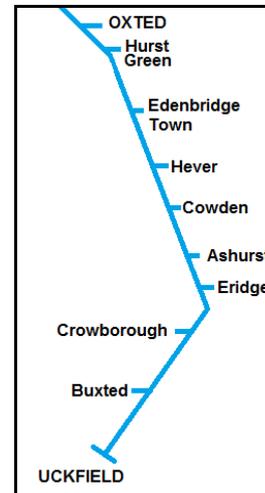
TfSE rail – N. Downs Line west: West Sussex - Surrey - Hampshire - Berkshire GTW-RDH-REI-DPD-GLD-WKM-RDG

Through 'R25' services between Gatwick Airport and Oxford could be possible with GWR's bi-mode trains.

Read [coverage in previous issues](#) of newsletter *raillse*

TfSE rail – west of East Sussex: BTN-FMR-LWS-UCK-COH-ERI-TBW

Kent Rail Strategy 2021 is relevant to the Uckfield line as four of its eight stations lie in the county: Ashurst in the Borough of Tunbridge Wells, and Cowden, Hever and Edenbridge Town in Sevenoaks District. With the return of branch line electrification as a possibility (p.2) our consultation response drew attention to the need to consider other localised infrastructure enhancements.



The line when part-singled in 1990 was operated by diesel-electric 'Thumpers' with different performance characteristics than the 'Turbostars' which superceded them by 2004, in turn likely to be replaced by electric trains with better acceleration. Already the part-single line imposes secondary delays, with a recurring hold-up just north of Ashurst awaiting late-running Uckfield-bound services often delayed behind late-running all-stations East Grinstead services as far as Hurst Green. We have therefore advocated re-doubling the line from Blackham Junction north of Ashurst for about 1.5 miles towards Blowers Hill just south of Cowden as part of any electrification of the line, to minimise such delays.



Original by Railfuture member Mike Turner FGRA

Is this the electrifying vision of Uckfield's rail future? East Midlands Railway is due to receive the line's diesel trains, maybe next autumn – before the RSSB report on 3rd-rail electrification detailed in the previous [raillse no.149](#). Railfuture will continue to advocate the benefits of carbon-neutrality and better performance.

See more about [Railfuture's Uckfield-Lewes campaign](#)

TfSE rail – east of East Sussex: EBN-BEX-SLQ-HGS-RYE-AFK-STP

Following the adoption of its Transport Strategy in July, Transport for the South East has embarked on the next stage of its work leading to a Strategic Investment Plan by spring 2022 and, it is hoped with acceptance of that by government, will also come its approval of statutory status for the shadow sub-national transport body. The first of five Area Studies has commenced, for the Outer Orbital area between the Isle of Thanet and the Isle of Wight, and Railfuture is represented in TfSE's Outer Orbital Area Study Forum for key stakeholders. It had its [first series of workshops](#) in October.



Hitachi's DfT-specified class 800 series 140mph-capable, HS1-compatible electric or electric / diesel bi-mode.
Note: EMR 'Aurora' class 810 carriages (p.1) 24m not 26m. (other products may become available!)

'Kent & East Sussex Coastal Connectivity Programme' being developed by Network Rail, is expected to reach a public stakeholder engagement stage on its Strategic Outline Business Case early next year. It has evolved from early thoughts about a new connection, west of Ashford's Beaver Road bridge, between MarshLink and HS1 via platform 2 of Ashford International station, to a less-complex link into an additional platform 2A which would benefit many east Kent as well as East Sussex coastal communities and their vulnerable economies.



Whither the Turbostar class 171s? GTR Southern were already developing plans to operate 4-car trains on summer weekends this year, instead operating all-day / every day for social distancing. Amidst wishful thinking and fanciful speculation by some, there is no definitive news on future rolling stock than the first announcement that some of GTR Southern's diesel fleet is due to cascade to East Midlands Railway. That could leave sufficient 4-car trains (and 2-car for Rye shuttles) to operate MarshLink services pending future decisions on HS1 services with or without electrification.

Read more about [Railfuture's MarshLink campaigning](#)

TfSE rail – West Coastway: West Sussex - Hampshire BTN-HOV-SSE-WRH-LIT-BOG-CCH

As noted in the adjacent column, TfSE's Outer Orbital Area Study embraces both Sussex 'Coastway' routes. Network Rail's [West Sussex Connectivity Modular Strategic Study](#) dated Spring 2020 concluded with 8 recommendations for immediate intervention including:

- ~ replace the Class 313 trains with modern Coastway-configured trains (a top priority for the post-GTR era)
- ~ introduce the Train Service Specification option 1, (Study pages 42-43) requiring no additional rolling stock or infrastructure (also a post-GTR priority)
- ~ enable reduced level crossing down times by lengthening platforms which are too short for the longest trains ([Goring-by-Sea and Lancing](#) now done)
- ~ enable faster east-west journeys, improve service resilience by progressing Worthing bi-directional working (TSS Option 2, Study pages 44-45)
- ~ progress an additional platform at Brighton through the DfT's RNEP process.

Noting that a recent stakeholder survey asked about aspirations for the GTR 'franchise' over the next three years – hinting at the contract running with its allowed extensions to September 2023 – the above will feature in Railfuture's evolving 'After-GTR – a Prospectus'.



West Coastway challenge: obsolete trains, level crossings

"How to improve West Coastway rail services" is the theme adopted by our [Sussex & Coastway](#) division. In response to plans for a longer runway at Southampton Airport, and with stakeholder support gathering for the occasional inter-regional service operated by GWR in and out of Brighton to become an all-day every-day hourly service, colleagues in Railfuture Wessex have advocated a [route between Brighton and Swindon](#), taking in the airport, via Salisbury and Westbury.



Might it be one of these bi-modes, whichever route it takes?

Read [coverage in previous issues](#) of newsletter *railese*

L & SE Community Rail Partnerships

Community Rail Awards – **online**, 9 December.
Shortlisted L & SE nominations in 9 of 13 categories:

- ~ **Involving children and young people:** Sheppey College Project “A chance to shine” – Kent CRP.
- ~ **Involving diverse groups:** Aldingbourne Trust “Good to talk, even better to share” – SCRP; Culture Shift “Get into trains” – SCRP; “Try the Community Rail Train” – Surrey Hills-South Downs + East Hants CRPs.
- ~ **Community Art Schemes**, renewable and smaller projects: “The Horsham station Pianimal” – SCRP.
- ~ **Most enhanced station:** Haslemere Community Station refurbishment and improvements; Rejuvenation of Gypsy Hill.
- ~ **Best Community Engagement project:** Artyface “Putting the community at the heart of our stations” – Arriva Rail London / London Overground.
- ~ **Tourism & Heritage:** “Christmas in St. Albans by Community Rail” – Abbey Line CRP.
- ~ **Photo competition:** “It seems they enjoyed their Visit” – Bedford-St. Albans CRP; “Ghouls Train” – Abbey Line CRP; “Snodland Garden – Growing Together” – Kent CRP.
- ~ **Outstanding Volunteer Contribution:** Tony Smale (also Railfuture Wessex Branch Secretary!)
- ~ **It’s Your Station:** Elmstead Woods Station Garden Club; Friends of Berkhamsted Station; Woburn Sands; Fenny Stratford Station Adoption Group; Friends of Angmering Station; Friends of Gypsy Hill.



L & SE Community Rail activities: near you

Surrey Hills & South Downs and Southeast CRPs win grants for [Integrated sustainable transport](#) projects.

Brighter [Uckfield station](#) thanks to animal displays.

New Hastings line CRP [Etchingam to go](#), now [on track](#).

[Pride in Crowborough](#) station, [bouncing back brighter in bloom](#).

Fascinating [history project at Redhill](#) station.

[Surrey station shortlisted](#) in Station of the Year awards.

New CRP in Herts, for [New River Line](#).

SCRP continue their [Back To School support](#) – [video!](#)
Let’s [transform the school run](#) say 8 transport charities.
CRPs [supporting schools going back](#)

[Bus Users](#) highlights role of community rail.

Women in Community Rail, [age 4](#), launches in [South](#) and helps to [show racism the red card](#).

“[Looking to the future](#) – an exploration of youth engagement in rail.” See 1-page [Summary](#) of report.

[SCRP becomes, well, SCRP!](#)

Click to subscribe to monthly “[Community Rail News](#)”

Paint the town – with another mural!



“Are you sitting comfortably?”



“[Sitting Pretty](#)” – 5 new benches for London’s stations

Campaigns calendar, London & SE

Current consultations of specific and general interest to our London and South East region are shown [here](#). In the absence this year of branch and national AGMs, [your opportunity](#) to influence our policy development is by mailing londonandsoutheast@railfuture.org.uk



South Kensington station is planned to be step-free between a new entrance on Thurloe Street and the subway tunnel, station ticket hall and two sub-surface Circle and District lines (not deep Piccadilly Tube line). Comment on planning application PP/20/03216 [here](#).



Wealden DC Local Plan *Direction of Travel* consultation closing Monday 18 January.
ESCC Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan is closing Friday 11 December.



Homes England consultation on a new Garden Town of 10k+ new homes [West of Ifield](#) closed 1 December.



KCC's [Kent Rail Strategy 2021](#) closed 17 November. Luton Borough Council (unitary authority) consultation on its [draft Local Transport Plan](#) closed 15 November.



MHCLG consultation on the "[Planning for the future](#)" White Paper closed 29 October. Surrey County Council survey for [County Rail Strategy](#) closed 14 October.



England's Economic Heartland consultation on their [draft Transport Strategy](#) closed 6 October.



HM Treasury consultation on Carbon Emissions Tax closed 29 September. Representations to HM Treasury on [Comprehensive Spending Review 2020](#) closed 22 September.

Responses to all previous consultations are [here](#).

Our vision for Railfuture: *An independent organisation whose views are respected by the rail industry, to which decision makers come for advice, and which rail users are proud to join and recommend.*

Forthcoming diary / calendar dates

Tuesday 1 December Station usage estimates for 2019/20 published by Office of Rail and Road.

Wednesday 2 December *"In dialogue with rail freight: solutions available now, and plans for the future."* Free afternoon [webinar](#).

Thursday 3 December Sussex & Coastway Division [online](#) evening meeting. Non-members welcome!

Monday 7 December *"How can lower-density development be made compatible with sustainable transport?"* Free evening [webinar](#).

Tuesday 8 December Railfuture East Midlands branch 'Christmas Conversation.' Probably [online](#) in the evening, when all welcome.

Wednesday 9 December *"Where would the railway have been without the timber industry?"* Free evening [webinar](#).

Wednesday 16 December Herts & Beds Division [online](#) evening meeting. Non-members welcome!

Wednesday 6 January *"Brighton Main Line Enhancement Proposals."* Evening [webinar](#).

Thursday 7 January Sussex & Coastway Division evening meeting, probably [online](#). Non-members too!

Wednesday 13 January *"Class 769 FLEX – re-purposing rolling stock to meet industry demands."* Free evening technical lecture, maybe [online](#).

Wednesday 13 January Eastern Division evening meeting, probably [online](#). Non-members welcome!

Monday 18 January *"New deep Tube trains for London."* Free evening technical lecture, maybe [online](#).

Thursday 21 January *"Re-engineering rail freight."* Free evening [webinar](#).

Thursday 28 January *"Rail freight during and since the Covid crisis."* Evening [webinar](#).

Saturday 30 January Herts & Beds Division morning meeting, probably [online](#). Non-members welcome!

Sunday 31 January Copy date for your campaign news, letters, articles, photos to appear in April's *railwatch* no.167. Send to editor@railwatch.org.uk

Monday 1 February Copy date for your campaign news / reports for London & SE branch Local Action column in April's *railwatch* no.167, and for March's *raise* no.151, to londonandsoutheast@railfuture.org.uk

Thursday 4 February Sussex & Coastway Division evening meeting, maybe [online](#). Non-members too!

Tuesday 9 February *"Class 390 refurbishment."* Free evening technical lecture, maybe [online](#).

Saturday 20 February Kent Division afternoon meeting, maybe [online](#). Non-members welcome!

Saturday 27 February Herts & Beds Division morning meeting, maybe [online](#). Non-members welcome!

Thursday 4 March Sussex & Coastway Division evening meeting, maybe [online](#). Non-members too!

Wednesday 10 March *"Barking Riverside Extension."* Free afternoon [webinar](#).

Wednesday 10 March Eastern Division evening meeting, maybe [online](#). Non-members welcome!

Saturday 20 / Sunday 21 March Railfuture London & South East regional branch stall at annual rail festival, Alexandra Palace, London N22 7AY.

Details of these and other important dates are in the Railfuture website's [Events](#) and [Rail dates](#) pages.

Branch divisions' meetings – open to all branch members, visitors welcome

Eastern [s. Essex and n. & e. London] – meets second Wednesday of odd-numbered months, **online** at 19.00 – next due on **13 January 2021** then 10 March. Division Convener is Howard Thomas (opposite). See [Eastern Division](#).

Herts & Beds – meets monthly for an hour **online**. Next mid-week evening meeting on **16 December**, next Saturday morning meeting on 30 January 2021 to be confirmed. Division Convener is Neil Middleton at neil.middleton@railfuture.org.uk See [Herts & Beds Division](#).

Kent – meets quarterly on third Saturdays, **online** at 14.00 – next due on **20 February**. Division Convener is Chris Fribbins at chris.fribbins@railfuture.org.uk or at 42 Quickrells Avenue, Cliffe, Rochester, Kent, ME3 7RB, or on tel: 01634 566256. See [Kent Division](#).

London Metro – a Division to cover all TfL rail modes: Underground, Overground, London Trams, DLR, and TfL Rail (becoming Elizabeth line). Contact Branch Vice-Chair Roger Blake (opposite). See [London Metro Division](#).

Surrey – next meeting, **online** and subject to confirmation, on **21 January 2021**, otherwise usually held jointly with Sussex & Coastway Division. Surrey Division Convener is Stephen Rolph at stephen.rolph@railfuture.org.uk. See [Surrey Division](#).

Sussex & Coastway – still meets monthly **online**, on first Thursdays at 18.00. Next due on **3 December**, then 7 January, 4 February, and 4 March 2021. Division Convener John Black: jcbblack@yahoo.co.uk. See [Sussex & Coastway Division](#).

inter-railse

Our 2-page monthly branch e-newsletter is available to all members on email (as a [pdf or link](#)) by requesting it via roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

This branch newsletter is free, published quarterly and usually distributed with each edition of the national *railwatch*. The copy deadline for *railse* issue no.151, due to be published in March 2021, will be Monday 1 February 2021. Items for this newsletter and our branch Local Action column in *railwatch* to londonandsoutheast@railfuture.org.uk

railfuture

Railfuture's mission: to be the number one advocate for Britain's railway and rail users

Websites: [Welcome to Railfuture](#) [London and South East regional branch](#)
[Railwatch](#) [Rail Action](#) [Rail User Express](#)

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In memoriam: Rev. Michael Davies our Sussex and Coastway Division's Minutes Secretary.



"Just a typical Minister's life" – Lindfield Life, November 2016

London and SE Branch officers

Branch Chairman: Vacant.

Vice-Chairman: Roger Blake, 70 Dynevor Road, Stoke Newington, London, N16 0DX.
Tel: 020 7254 1580; roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

Secretary: Vacant.

Treasurer: Howard Thomas, 24 South Primrose Hill, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2RG.
Tel: 01245 280503; howard.thomas@railfuture.org.uk

Branch committee meetings

Officers and other committee members continue to meet, **online**, every 3 weeks on Wednesday evenings.

railse online

Here's a [link to the online pdf](#). The blue links are clickable hyperlinks to something always interesting!