



24th October 2013

OXFORD TO HOST NATIONAL RAIL CONFERENCE

Transport experts from around the country will be gathering in Oxford on Saturday 2 November for a one-day conference at Oxford Town Hall. The event is being hosted by the campaign group Railfuture, and their President, the author and journalist Christian Wolmar, will chair the event.

"With Oxford set to become one of the major rail hubs in the 21st century, this is the perfect opportunity to bring together all this expertise. These are exciting times for the region's railways with a whole host of new projects happening" said Richard Stow, chair of railfuture's Thames Valley branch.

Network Rail is investing to enlarge stations and to create track space for more and longer trains. The Thames Valley counties have seen the £853 million rebuilding and expansion of Reading station, expansion of Southampton – Reading – Nuneaton container capacity and upgrades to the Chiltern Line. Crossrail from Maidenhead to Shenfield is being built, as is Chiltern Railways' Marylebone – High Wycombe – Oxford link. Paddington to Newbury, Oxford, Bristol and Swansea will be electrified, as will the "Electric Spine" from Southampton to the Midlands.

"Rail has seen a phenomenal growth in the last 20 years, and the challenge for the industry is how to meet that growth" said Richard "that's why we've invited speakers from network rail and the railway companies to discuss how we can improve the network for both passengers and freight"

Network Rail western region principal planner, Chris Aldridge, will discuss the challenge of increasing capacity at the same time as electrifying the main line. Great Western passenger capacity has been increased but has been "running to keep up" and there is still overcrowding. CrossCountry and other routes are also overcrowded at peak times.

Stephen Barker from Chiltern Railways and Patrick O'Sullivan from East West Rail will discuss how their projects will restore rail links from Oxford to High Wycombe, Marylebone, Milton Keynes and Bedford. Mr O'Sullivan will also discuss the hope of extending to Cambridge, Norwich and the East Coast.

Switching more freight to rail is vital to reduce road congestion, road casualties and carbon emissions. Railfreight Group Chairman Lord Berkeley will discuss this sometimes overlooked aspect of rail transport, and how it can continue to be developed.

Lord Faulkner of Worcester and Dr Ian East will discuss the success of local campaigns that saved and revived the Oxford – Worcester and Oxford – Bicester lines. The Lord Mayor of Oxford will open the conference and Cllr Ian Hudspeth, leader of Oxfordshire County Council, will discuss his council's role in the future of railways.
Conference booking contact

The conference is open to everyone. "Several of the speakers normally address conferences that cost hundreds of pounds per delegate, so to get to hear them all for £30 including a buffet lunch

and refreshments is outstanding value." added Richard

The conference will open at 10.45 a.m. and close at 5 p.m.

Bookings can be made online via the link below. Alternatively, the attached form can be downloaded, printed, completed and sent with payment to the address on the form. The conference organiser can be emailed at oxford2013@railfuture.org.uk or 'phoned on (01473) 326882.

http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/#2013_oxford

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