



**RAILFUTURE – LONDON AND SOUTH EAST BRANCH**  
<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East>

**Minutes of Annual General Meeting held in the Kwanglim Room,  
Wesley's Chapel, London EC1Y 1AU on Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

**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 under 'Events and Rail dates' in the L&SE branch page of the 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 under 'Events and Rail dates' in the L&SE branch page of the Railfuture website, in 'Railfuture near you'.

## **The formal 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 under 'Events and Rail dates' in the L&SE branch page of the Railfuture website '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 Dyll
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 Dyll (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 on the Railfuture website under 'Events and Rail dates' in the L&SE branch page 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 [https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Consultations+ responses under 'Our cause'](https://www.railfuture.org.uk/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 *raipse***

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 <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East+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 meeting closed at 4.16 p.m.**