

railfuture

AUTUMN 2011 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Held on 5th November 2011 at Mechanics Institute, Manchester

"RAIL USER GROUPS – WHAT ARE THEY GOOD FOR"

Ipswich
Lowestoft
**ESTA**
East Suffolk Travellers' Association



Lancashire
County
Council




CONFERENCE REPORT

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Visit the Railfuture website **www.railfuture.org.uk** for the latest campaigning news.

Railfuture returned to the Mechanics Institute in Manchester. *Railfuture* last held a national conference there in 2004. There were six presentations during the day.

Trevor Garrod
East Suffolk Travellers' Assoc
www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk



Barry Graham
Northern Rail
www.northernrail.org



Janet Briggs and Cedric Green
North Cheshire Rail User Group
www.ncrug.org.uk



Richard Watts
Lancashire County Council
www.lancashire.gov.uk



Lilian Greenwood
Labour Party Shadow Transport Minister
www.labour.org.uk



Peter Tomlinson
Friends of the West Highland Lines
www.westhighlandline.org.uk



Trevor Garrod, East Suffolk Travellers' Association *Lessons learned from decades of rail campaigning*

The conference began with a 30-minute presentation by Trevor Garrod, long-time Chairman of the East Suffolk Travellers' Association. The line which runs from Ipswich to Lowestoft (the most easterly town in Britain) was threatened with closure in 1966 and was saved by the efforts of a local organisation which became ESTA.



Trevor explained that despite survival the line soon became a "basic railway", which ESTA helped to promote. With the help of the Railway Development Society, it supported a modernisation programme in 1983-84 which would also reduce operating costs. This resulted in 17 miles of single-line working, fewer footbridges and the introduction of radio electronic token block (RETB) signalling which was also rolled out to remoter parts of Wales and Scotland. The single track has inevitably resulted in a less-frequent service, which has been every two hours since then. However, the southern half of the route (Ipswich-Saxmundham) has recently seen an hourly service introduced, in preparation for an hourly service along the whole line once the necessary infrastructure is put in place.

Trevor went on to list three recent challenges that ESTA had faced.

The first was the installation of a lift and new footbridge at Ipswich station which were delayed because of opposition from the local heritage group. It finally opened in 2011, and Ipswich is now one of few stations to have two footbridges, one at each end.

Photo: Chris Burton.



The second challenge was the creation of a much-needed passing loop at Beccles, which was finally approved by Network Rail in 2009, provided Suffolk County Council paid £1 million of the £4 million cost, which they did. It was a rare example of the cost falling, as a figure of £5m had been estimated the previous year.

The work will now be carried out in 2012 as part of re-signalling (from RETB back to conventional signalling) and allows an hourly service from December 2012, giving, a TOC has claimed, the best ever service on the line.

Ceremony at Beccles station to mark the start of work on the passing loop, attended by three MPs and the leader of Suffolk County Council as well as leading figures from Network Rail and new train operator Greater Anglia.



East Anglian Daily Times –Story from 30th March 2012

In contrast to helping support improvements to the line ESTA has also been forced into spending considerable time opposing the proposal to move Lowestoft station further inland by more than 400 metres, in order to redevelop the station site. It is currently fortunate to be very close to the sea front, unlike most seaside towns and has suitably long platforms to stable excursion trains. ESTA felt that many people would be inconvenienced by the station being relocated and facilities being reduced.

Just believing that the proposals would have a negative effect was insufficient – evidence was required. ESTA organised a survey of passengers (with some financial help from Railfuture's Fighting Fund) and received over 1,300 responses, most of which were against the move.

East Suffolk Travellers' Association

www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk

BACKGROUND

Formed in the 1960s as part of the successful campaign to save the Ipswich - Lowestoft rail line from closure, ESTA is an independent voluntary body for public transport users. Since the 1970s we have also campaigned for better bus services, for bus/rail integration and for the Lowestoft - Norwich rail service.

ESTA has promoted public transport through leaflets, displays, stalls and its website. We have regular dialogue with train and bus operators and with politicians and other stakeholders, while remaining strictly non-party. Public meetings are held at least three times a year, all members receive a quarterly bulletin and we also organise events from time to time.

As this image from their web-site shows, ESTA isn't just a rail user group. It has campaigned for better bus services as well.

It has individual, joint and corporate memberships, encouraging long-term support with offers of four years for the price of three.

Trevor concluded by stating four main lessons he had learnt from his experience.

First, prepare your groundwork, secondly, be persistent, thirdly, don't allow minor issues to get in the way of your main objectives and fourth, remain strictly non-party. These were important lessons that apply to all rail campaigning.

Barry Graham, Northern Rail Business Development Manager *TOC's view on what rail user groups are for*

The second speaker was Barry Graham, Northern Rail Business Development Director.

Considering the title of the conference, which asked the question as to what user groups were for, Mr. Graham replied that businesses needed to talk to their customers and get feedback. This was done particularly well via its user groups.

These were part of the community and made their views known by such means as newsletters and liaison with appropriate bodies. He then went on to state that many public bodies and local councils were not aware of Northern Rail so it was good to meet people who were – and understood the issues!

What use are Rail User Groups



RUG's as part of the Community

- Community important to Northern Rail
- RUGS a 'way into'
- Newsletters & round robins to members
- Contact with local opinion formers e.g. councillors
- Community notice cases
- Web sites

Liaison with RUG's

- Dialogue on specific issues
- Overall perspective on key issues of customer perception e.g. station facilities, train cleanliness etc.
- Source of knowledge – (regular travellers & railway knowledge – frustrated railwaymen)
- Proactive opportunity to run ideas past and to give advance warning of events (timetable changes, engineering work)

Northern-based Rail User Groups



- TVRUG (Tyne Valley)
- CRUG (Copeland)
- HVRUG (Hope Valley)
- NCRUG (North Cheshire)
- HADRUG (Halifax)
- LASRUG (Lancaster and Skipton)
- SENRUG (South East Northumberland)

Northern Rail dealt with seven rail user groups and the relationship was good with all of them. They had worked together on various matters including statistical analysis of performance and passenger loadings, monitoring rail replacement bus services, station adoption groups helping to improve stations and community events such as Santa specials.

Of course there were also times when the user groups would be dissatisfied.

He admitted that overcrowding was the biggest challenge the train operator faced, with 88 million customers now using Northern each year - a 38% growth in patronage.

New rolling stock was on the way, despite the franchise originally being let as a zero-investment one. The government's High Level Output specification (HLOS) for Control Period 4 had provided additional funding.

HLOS impact



- 62 additional carriages, 42 diesel and 20 electric
- 10% increase in Northern fleet size
- Capacity improvements in Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield
- Total 2.2m additional peak passenger seats p/a
- Upgrades capacity on 20% of Northern peak services - 90 upgraded, 6 extra peak services
- Allerton depot reopened
- Over 85 new jobs

Next Mr. Graham drew attention to the McNulty Report, which called for greater efficiency and a reduction of costs but train operating companies had little incentive to do so.

He believed that franchising policy was in need of reform, as was the fares structure which needed to move away from its link with the retail price index. At the moment the regional networks require the largest government subsidy.

McNulty – reasons for high costs



Main reasons for this are;

- fragmentation of structures and interfaces;
- the ways in which the roles of Government and Industry have evolved (i.e. the Industry sees that Government is responsible for costs and does not see driving them down as its responsibility);
- ineffective and misaligned incentives;
- a franchising system that does not encourage cost reduction sufficiently;
- Network Rail – heavily centralised and not customer-focused;
- management approaches that fall short of best-practice in a number of areas that are key cost-drivers and;
- a railway culture which is not conducive to the partnership and continuous improvement required for effective cost reduction

Among topics raised in the question and answer session were fragmentation of the rail industry and fares evasion, principally by a lack of on-train ticket checks – a common complaint by rail users and user groups across the country.

Cedric Green / Janet Briggs, North Cheshire Rail User Group *Monitoring local rail services and the travelling environment*

There then followed a brief presentation by Cedric Green and Janet Briggs from the North Cheshire Rail User Group who explained that the focus of their work was to monitoring the local rail services and travelling environment *from* Chester & Ellesmere Port *via* Helsby, Frodsham & Runcorn *to* Liverpool & Manchester.

They promote awareness of rail services and lobby for improvements. They have active campaigns to reinstate services to Liverpool via the Halton Curve and to increase services between Helsby and Ellesmere Port.

The NCRUG has been involved with improving the appearance of stations. This has included maintaining the gardens and planters at Helsby for over 10 years, restoring and tending the gardens at Frodsham since 2001 and regularly planting bedding plants at both stations, which it has adopted, with Runcorn East.



The group has also installed over 20 nest boxes at Runcorn East and keeps all stations tidy by regular litter picking.

The group communicates using notice boards at stations, press releases, stalls at local events and holds an AGM with an outside speaker. The importance of good communications was stressed.

Richard Watts, Lancashire County Council *Role of a Rail Projects Manager*

The last speaker of the morning session was Richard Watts, the rail projects manager at Lancashire County Council.

Mr. Watts mentioned the various bodies with which the council had to work, including the Community Rail Partnerships six of which were mentioned.

On the right are examples of leaflets produced by each of them.

Partnership leaflets



He gave examples of work done by the CRPs and 'Friends' groups, including recycled planters at Brierfield station, on the branch to Colne, and a welcome sign at St Annes.



He gave examples of new developments, such as refurbishment and modernisation of station buildings. At Ormskirk (below) a bright modern waiting room now exists.



The county council was particularly pleased that its work promoting the Buckfield Parkway station had seen its opening just five weeks earlier (3rd October 2011).



He raised the question of the involvement of local authorities in the running of franchises. He mentioned overcrowding between Preston and Manchester and hoped for a speedy replacement of remaining pacers.

The question and answer session included reference as the power of the local authority in the running of the railways.

Lilian Greenwood MP *Shadow Transport Minister*

Lilian Greenwood addressed the Conference, speaking for approximately 30 minutes.

She started by introducing herself as Member of Parliament for Nottingham South, who was elected to Parliament in May 2010. Following her position as an Opposition Whip, she was appointed to the post of Shadow Transport Minister on 8th October 2011.

CANDIDATES		ELECTION 2010	
Name	Party	Votes	%
Lilian Greenwood	Labour	15,209	37.3
Rowena Holland	Conservative	13,437	32.9
Tony Sutton	Liberal Democrat	9,406	23.1

Ms Greenwood mentioned that she had grown up in nearby Bolton (less than 20km from the conference venue) and then gave details of the Shadow Transport team, appointed by party leader Ed Miliband in 2010, and each of their responsibilities:



Maria Eagle



Jim Fitzpatrick



John Woodcock



Lilian Greenwood

- **Maria Eagle MP** - Shadow Secretary of State
- **Jim Fitzpatrick MP** - Shadow Minister dealing with International Transport (i.e. aviation etc) and London
- **John Woodcock MP** - Shadow Minister dealing with National Transport (road and rail)
- **Lilian Greenwood MP** - Shadow Minister dealing with Regional and Local transport (local rail, buses, cycling etc.).

Ms Greenwood then referred to Labour's Policy Review Programme and, in this regard thanked *Railfuture* and user groups for their submissions. The programme will be looking at transport as a vital part of economic growth and ensuring that fares are both affordable and fair for all passengers. Transport must be sustainable and part of the "green" solution with regard to climate change and also, local communities - via Integrated Transport Authorities - should be empowered to take decisions on local transport solutions.



Ms Greenwood then advised that each member of the frontbench team will have responsibility for different areas of the Policy Review Programme and details are as follows:

Maria Eagle will lead a review into the reform of the rail industry, looking at all options. Its starting point will be tackling the fragmented structure, which is considered vital to delivering better affordability for both taxpayers and passengers.

Jim Fitzpatrick will lead a review looking at how Labour can best deliver the aviation capacity needed for economic competitiveness, whilst reducing emissions and increasing sustainability.

John Woodcock will lead a review on how transport infrastructure and procurement could contribute to growth and jobs, through long-term planning. Also to be considered, how investment in different modes – such as road and rail – could be better integrated and jointly planned. In addition he will lead a review into how surface transport's contribution to climate change should be tackled.



Lilian Greenwood herself will lead a review into transport decision making and funding, including local roads and rail services.

The review will examine the powers and responsibilities of Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) and how these could be extended across other parts of England.

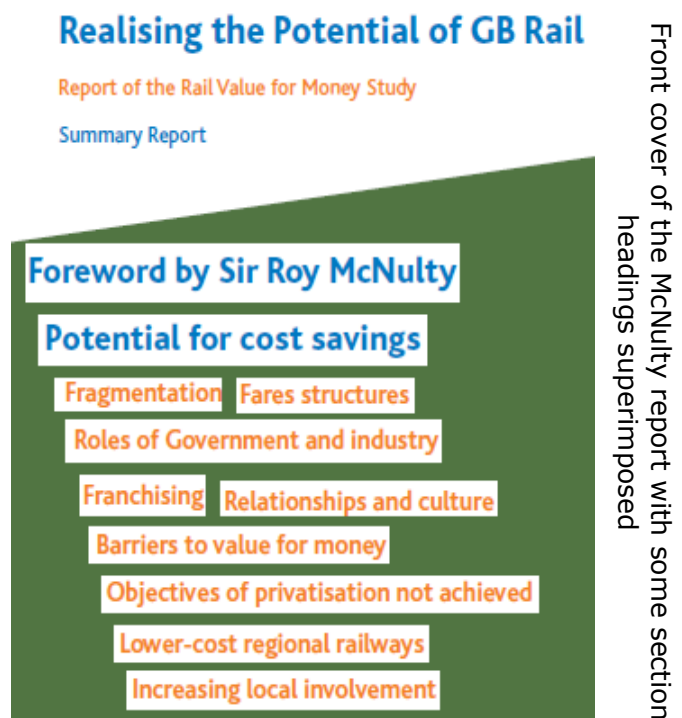
She will also seek to identify how best to deliver a reversal of bus deregulation (introduced in the 1980s) and ensure local communities can deliver bus services in a more effective way.

Also, Patricia Glass MP will continue the work in Labour's parallel Young People's Transport Policy and will lead a review into the affordability and accessibility of transport for young people.

Ms Greenwood then went on to the subject of the **McNulty Report** and the £4bn annual subsidy paid to franchise operators.

Referring to the section of the report which says that passengers must shoulder the bulk of costs, she said that a 30% rise in fares would be totally unreasonable and it would be wrong to price people off the railway, which would be a consequence of such a hike in fares.

She said that Labour was not in favour of vertical integration, whereby TOCs took ownership of infrastructure within their franchise areas, as they believed that Network Rail would be more accountable with respect to planning and long term investment.



The view of Labour was that the current fragmented network is not working efficiently and fundamental changes must be made, instead of merely tinkering around the edges as has been happening over the years.

With regard to stations, Ms Greenwood then said that all stations should be staffed, in order to provide both security and assistance for passengers.

She touched upon the East Coast Main Line presently run by the Government-controlled Directly Operated Railways and said that she believed it was a structure that was value for money. However firm action must be taken when agreeing new franchises to sort out the current peak/off-peak anomalies that are evident amongst different TOCs.

Finally, Ms Greenwood raised the subject of HS2 which was necessary to for economic growth but she believed that providing additional capacity on the network was important and that further electrification, such as Midland Main Line and beyond Cardiff was essential. She said that when the Bill for HS2 construction is presented to Parliament, it should include the whole of the “Y” route to Manchester and Leeds – not just to a location near Birmingham! With regard to the actual route of HS2, she said that a link to Heathrow is vital and consideration should be given to following the motorway corridor. However, Labour will not oppose the route that is presently intimated.

Finally, Ms Greenwood stated that no options whatever should be “off-the-table” with respect to the future development of the rail network!

A number of questions and comments from the floor were then taken.

Railfuture’s Vice Chairman, who was chairing the conference, picked up on her party’s suggestions that local authorities should have a greater role, citing the Cambridge – St. Ives busway. This scheme was looked at only from a local viewpoint, whereby a reopened railway would have provided links nationally.

Her answer was that regional bodies such as expanded Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) would take strategic views into account, as well as making local decisions.

1. It was pointed out that ITAs would surely only be able to make decisions within their own boundaries, whereby integrated rail services cross a number of boundaries.
2. She said that, as per the previous question, local people should be able to influence decisions and neighbouring ITAs would speak to each other to discuss regional rail strategies. It was suggested that the North West may never see HS2 and therefore there should be strategic thinking into the rail network as a whole.. Ms Greenwood replied that whole network must be taken into account during HS2 planning.
3. A questioner commented about Parkway stations on HS2, and the possibility of lines not going into city centres. Ms Greenwood replied that there is a need for direct links into cities and this is something she will discuss with her colleagues in the Shadow Transport team.
4. The question of Congestion Charging and Road Pricing was raised and whether alternate methods could be considered. She was not against the principal and agreed that pricing should pay for public transport improvements.
5. With regard to Concessionary Fares, she was adamant that there should be no "postcode lottery" in this respect and in the event of fuel/power problems due to climate change, contingency plans will be looked into.
6. She was asked about poor connectivities at new/growing cities such as Milton Keynes and Cambridge and whether new lines could be built. She could not make any commitment but would take the question back the the team. However she agreed that such locations do need good public transport links.
7. Finally, Ms Greenwood was asked how long, before another "political" reorganisation of the railways, do we have to wait for new major schemes. She could not answer but would take the comment away.



Peter Tomlinson

Friends of the West highland Lines

There then followed an excellent slide presentation by Peter Tomlinson from Friends of the West Highland Lines, a user group formed 25 years ago on the lines from Glasgow to Oban and Malaig.

His presentation, with some fantastic photos, focused on the railway lines' role as part of the tourist industry – and how vital it is to cater for the interests of those tourists if the lines are to thrive.



The area covered has a total of 170 route miles and in 2009, readers of the magazine *Wanderlust* voted the West Highland Line as the World's Most Scenic Railway.

However, 95% of the scenery is obscured by trees and Network Rail have only cleared lineside vegetation where there have been problems connected with safety, such as overhanging branches etc. Passengers using the line voiced disappointment and complained that the frequent views cannot be seen due to the density of trees.



This is not the view that tourists crossed continents to see. Something had to be done.



The Friends accept that it was totally unrealistic financially to remove all trees that hid the magnificent scenery so they applied for a grant from Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, to clear trees from selected lineside locations.

As a result trees have now been cleared at Tighness Gap, Loch Awe Station, Arrochar and Glen Falloch resulting in magnificent views of the scenery being opened up for the benefit of rail passengers. Another 7% of the route has been identified as priority for clearance. The following photo shows the before (top) and after (bottom) view.



Of course, tree removal requires preparation, which includes inspection of the line.



Some examples of the work done and cost are as follows:

	Cleared Length	Cost	Funded by
Arrochar	0.9km & 0.15km	£12,060	L. L. & T. National Park Authority
Glen Falloch	0.45km & 0.22km	£11,610	L. L. & T. National Park Authority
West of Loch Awe Station	300m	£2,291	Friends of WHL

All were proposed and supported by Network Rail with QTS Rail used as the contractor.

The Friends have arranged to meet with the Scotland Transport Minister and Network Rail to discuss further tree clearances.

Comments were then taken from the floor, which included congratulations on an excellent presentation. A suggestion was made about the opportunity of using the felled timber for biomass generation and another person asked whether the timber could be sold to help with User Group funds. Peter said that there was difficulty with some landowners who would not be prepared to release any timber that is felled on their land. Finally, it was agreed that the Class 156 trains currently in use on the line are not particularly comfortable for those passengers making the total 3½ hour journey from Glasgow to Malaig. New trains of InterCity standard must be considered soon.

A photo of the five speakers from the morning session



In 2010 *Railfuture* published a book detailing the new stations and lines added to the railway network in the last forty or so years. This superb and invaluable resource is still available.

BRITAIN'S GROWING RAILWAY consists of two volumes. The first, is the **A-Z of Reopenings** (shown to the right). It can be ordered from the *Railfuture* web-site – 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.





RAILFUTURE SUMMER CONFERENCE 2012

How Scotland took the rail way forward

Scotland has an enviable record on rail reopenings. Stirling-Alloa and Airdrie-Bathgate are a great success and work is now under way on the Borders Railway project and the Edinburgh-Glasgow improvement programme so Stirling is an ideal venue for Railfuture's summer conference



Conference venue:

The Golden Lion, 8 King Street, Stirling FK8 1BD

Ten minutes walk from Stirling station

Saturday 16 June 2012

10.30 to 16.30 (Registration from 09.45)

Once the capital of Scotland, historic Stirling is still an important gateway to the railways of the Scottish Highlands. It was created a city in 2002 and is dominated by its castle which was besieged by Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1746. The Golden Lion is in the centre of the city. Special room rates available to Railfuture members.

Speakers: Geoff Cook *Network Rail*, **Jackie McGuire** *Alloa*, **Dr Ann Glen**, *Airdrie-Bathgate*
David Spaven and Bill Jamieson *Borders Rail*

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Reports from recent Railfuture conferences are available for £2 each.

Summer 2006 – Stoke-on-Trent - Campaigners conference – Revised report

- * Ian Yeowart, Grand Central
- * George Watson, MyTestTrack.com (Wyvern Rail)
- * Ruth Annison, Wensleydale Railway
- * Caspar Lucas (Parry People Movers), Carl Henderson (BladeRunner)

Autumn 2008 – London – The Future of Railways

- * Caroline Lucas (Green), Norman Baker (Lib Dems), Kelvin Hopkins (Labour)
- * Chris Green (Railway Forum), Chris Austin (ATOC)
- * Simon Montague (Eurostar), Julie Mills (Greengauge 21)
- * Tony Berkeley (Rail Freight Group), Prof. Lewis Lesley (Tram Power)

Summer 2009 – Northallerton – Role of the Independent Railway

- * Tom Clift, Grand Central
- * Speakers from various heritage railways in the Northern England

Autumn 2009 – Corby – Reopenings conference

- * Tim Shoveller, East Midlands Trains, Mark Pengelly, Corby Borough Council
- * Brian Barnsley (ACoRP), Steve Abbott, (TravelWatch East Midlands)
- * Jim Bamford (Nottingham CC Rail Officer)

Summer 2010 – Taunton – Rail Development conference

- * John Bird, First Great Western on Major Projects
- * Charles Varey, Network Rail on Southampton Gauge Enhancement
- * Nick Gallop, Intermodality on Opportunities for rail freight in south west
- * George Boyle, Railfuture on Rail Freight campaigning
- * Keith Walton, Severnside Community Rail Partnership
- * Richard Burningham, Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership

Autumn 2010 – Shoreditch – Reopenings conference

- * Ian Brown (TfL), David Smith (Atoc)
- * Darren Hockaday (LOROL), Jonathan Roberts (East London Line Group)
- * Patrick O'Sullivan (East West Rail Link)
- * Jim Bamford (Nottingham CC), Trevor Mason (Herts CC)
- * Anthony Smith (Passenger Focus)

Send cheque payable to "Railfuture" to 6 Carral Close, Brant Road, Lincoln, LN5 9BD



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- ▶ Railfuture has a proud history of fighting for new and reopened lines and stations, high-speed rail and electrification

Members receive Railwatch, our glossy full colour 20-page magazine four times a year.



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