



railfuture

Annual Review 2017

Campaigning for a bigger better railway

Honorary President's address

The coming year on the railways is full of both uncertainty and opportunity. On the one hand, there is more money available for railway investment than ever before, after an amazing settlement of the investment plans which start in April 2019. On the other hand, in the short term, the overspending during the current five year period means that schemes have been reined back or

pushed into next year and beyond. Meanwhile, franchising is facing its most uncertain future since privatisation and there are doubts whether the current model can survive.

It may seem that given all the travails of the railway, groups fighting for local improvements or reopenings may face an uphill task. Not necessarily. The kind of ideas and schemes that we are putting forward may well fit in with Network Rail's wider plans. There is a new emphasis on devolution, on listening to 'stakeholders' and on finding quick wins.



Christian Wolmar

There may never be a better time to engage with the wider industry than during these rather troubled times. Go for it.

Chair's review

Campaigning for a bigger better railway sounds simple, but what do we mean?

A better railway is one which puts the passenger first. Successful businesses have excellent customer service woven into their culture, gaining the trust of customers and so ensuring that growth continues. If rail industry staff at all levels make decisions with the interest of passengers in mind, then rail users will see the benefits that are important to them: reliability, punctuality, quicker journeys, more seats, comfort, wifi, car parking, toilets, value for money and better customer service.

Critical to the rail industry's ability to deliver these benefits are clearly explained ticket and journey choices and competitive fares to attract passengers from other modes of travel.

A bigger railway is one which provides more journey opportunities and more capacity to accommodate the increasing number of passengers choosing rail, by modernising routes and adding new stations and lines

which will stimulate economic growth.

Our key national campaigns for 2018 are therefore: passengers first, fares and ticketing, route modernisation and a bigger railway.

Railfuture aims to put forward realistic proposals to improve rail services. Our influence comes from building relationships with stakeholders, not throwing rocks. We seek to reach out to a wider, more diverse audience and increase our numbers, which in turn will increase the weight our voice carries with government and the rail industry.

In 2017 Railfuture received recognition for our informative, impartial view on proposed changes to the roles of on-board staff, for our informed, sustainable and supportive responses to consultations, and for the open, constructive and sometimes frank conversations that we have had with stakeholders. Of the five stations that the Department for Transport included in the second round of the New Stations Fund, two (Peterlee and Warrington West) were included in the shortlist proposed to the Rail Minister by Railfuture.



Chris Page

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Front cover photo by Barrie Forrest

Fares and ticketing campaign

Chris Page, National Chair

Some people are deterred from travelling by train by the complexity of buying a ticket and the perception that fares are expensive, whilst some passengers are unclear whether they have the best deal so feel ripped off. What passengers need are:

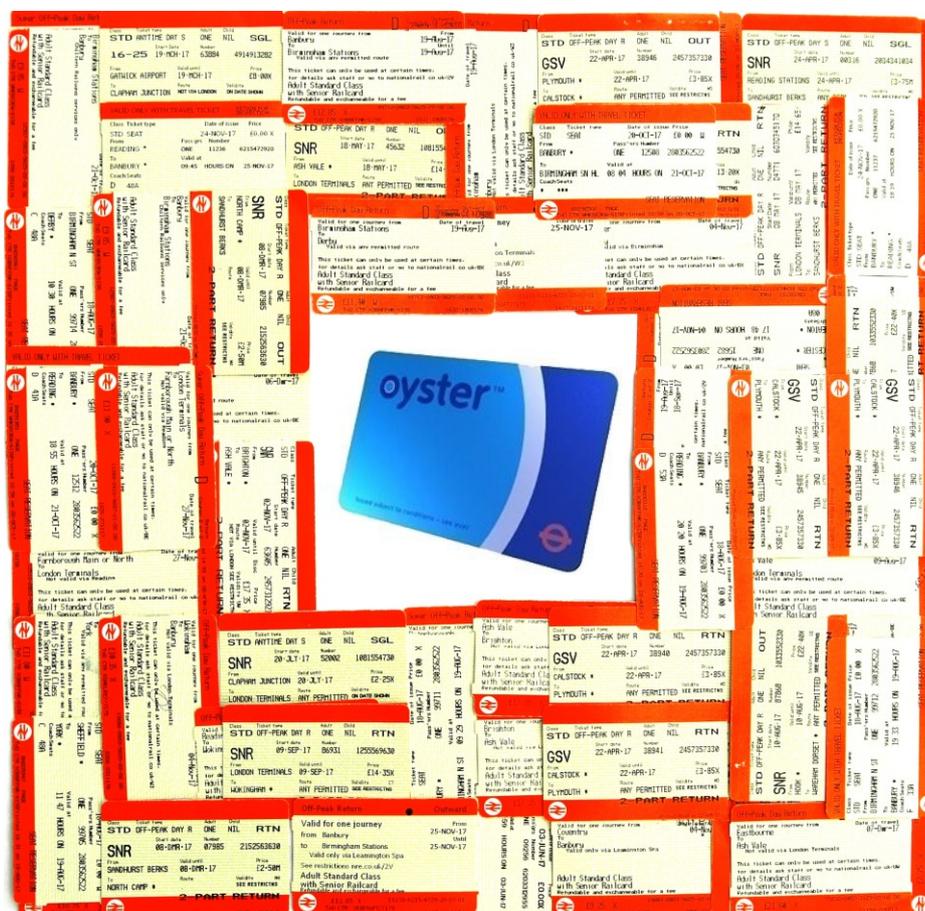
- Value for money fares
- Clearly explained ticket choices
- Smart ticketing which benefits the passenger

Fares. Fares rise each year at RPI so take an increasing proportion of passengers' income. Railfuture has long campaigned for the use of CPI, with the proviso that the rail industry must contain its costs so that it does not need more support from the taxpayer.

There are anomalies between fares which give rise to 'split ticketing', ie buying separate tickets for each part of the journey because it is cheaper than the through fare. Some routes have fare levels which are relatively high even though journey quality is poor, and vice-versa. These anomalies make passengers feel that fares are unfair, so the Department for Transport must instruct the rail industry to carry out a fares review to resolve them. The changes required should be made over a period of time to limit the impact on passengers and operator revenue.

Fares should reflect journey quality and demand, and be competitive with travelling by car. The fare for a through journey should not exceed the sum of the fares for individual legs.

Ticketing. The ticketing system offers passengers a choice: in flexibility of time of travel, in flexibility of route, in journey speed and in journey quality. That choice makes the system appear complex, but simplifying it would reduce choice and flexibility, which would not benefit the passenger. What passengers need is for that choice to be



Play the ticket maze game to reach the Oyster!

clearly explained at the point of purchase.

Printing a link to the National Rail website for the restriction code on the ticket is a step in the right direction, but it is unfair effectively to impose conditions after purchase. The validity in terms of both time and route for the specific journey, not just the generic restriction, should be displayed online and on ticket vending machines before purchase and printed on the ticket.

The times which qualify for off-peak travel vary between operators and routes. These should be consistent as far as possible – certainly the peak period for commuting to a major city such as London or Birmingham should be the same for all routes, defined in terms of arrival at (or departure from) the city centre station, and should not apply to the reverse peak direction.

The Routing Guide, which defines valid routes between any two stations, is impenetrable. It must be revised, not to remove route options, but to make it easy for anyone to use.

New ticket types are needed, for example 'part-time' seasons for people

travelling fewer than 5 days per week, and off-peak singles for people who can specify a train in one direction but need flexibility in the other, or are making triangular journeys.

Smart ticketing. Oyster is the only really smart ticket: it is pay-as-you-go and valid across operators, has a daily cap, can be loaded with your season ticket or railcard, and is cheaper than paying cash. Other smartcards and mobile phone ticket apps don't offer all those features – some are pretty dumb, being no more than an electronic ticket wallet for some but not all tickets. The only downsides of Oyster are that it has to be preloaded with money and it is not valid outside the London area.

Using a contactless credit/debit card avoids the need to preload and still gives most of the features of Oyster, but again only in the London area.

The rail industry must develop smart ticketing which is nationally valid and pay-as-you-go. However it cannot rely on every passenger having a smartcard or a smartphone, so must continue to offer a range of ticketing methods.

www.raifuture.org.uk/fares

Route modernisation campaign

Chris Austin OBE FCILT

Electrification was the hot topic of 2017, with the cancellation or deferral of much of the programme in the light of the disastrous budget overrun on the Great Western main line prompting Railfuture to review its priorities.

Railfuture still advocates a rolling programme of electrification, but at a sustainable level, where it can improve operational efficiency as just one element of a route modernisation strategy that needs to be planned coherently.

Much of the network was remodelled in the 1970s and 1980s, the steam age layouts were simplified and surplus capacity eliminated as sidings and depots were closed. Simplified track geometry yielded big maintenance savings and speed increases.

Now the need is for more capacity, more reliable operation, faster journeys and greater sustainability.

Total route modernisation may include digital signalling to reduce the interval between trains and so enable higher frequency, improved track layout and closure of level crossings to remove speed restrictions, enhanced stations to improve access and passenger flow, longer platforms for longer trains, gauge clearance for taller freight containers and future electrification, and renewal or stabilisation of structures such as bridges and tunnels for improved reliability. These should be completed before electrification.

Network Rail core funding only covers the cost of maintaining and renewing the existing railway, not an improved one, so that any improvement has to be justified and separate funding found. British Rail would routinely renew layouts with higher speed turnouts, for example, as part of a resignalling scheme, based on improved reliability and savings in fuel and brake wear. Now the underlying



Realignment at Market Harborough will remove a severe speed restriction on the Midland Main Line. Image by Network Rail.

problem is that much of the benefit is to the train operator while the cost falls on Network Rail.

There is little incentive for the train operator to fund the improvement unless it is required in order to deliver the franchise specification. Then the operator will recover the cost through the franchise agreement.

The same is true of electrification, where the costs fall to Network Rail and the benefits to the train operator in terms of lower train maintenance costs, better performance and higher availability.

Therefore the government, through the Department for Transport, must take the lead on route modernisation, sponsoring programmes either directly with Network Rail, through franchise agreements or via third parties. It must align incentives with the objectives of a more resilient, higher capacity, railway able to draw from a variety of fuel sources through electrification.

As with most railway investment, the best results will come from a coherent and consistent strategic approach to the issue, over many years. On electrification, Government has wavered wildly from opposition in 2005 to an ambitious programme in 2012, which ended in July 2017.

On the Midland Main Line, electrification may have been cancelled but route modernisation is continuing, including four-tracking between Kettering and Bedford, remodelling Market Harborough to remove the

speed restriction, remodelling Derby station, enhancements and platform lengthening at other stations, and W12 gauge clearance for taller freight containers.

Elsewhere the current hiatus does give a breathing space for better coordination and planning of railway route modernisation, including the phasing of future electrification, and to address the reasons for the excessive costs of Great Western Main Line electrification.

Trans Pennine is a good example, where the need for line speed improvements and additional loops or relief lines probably needs to come before the layout can be electrified – but electrification is still required to deliver the power required for faster services over the difficult gradients.

In others, like the South Devon banks between Newton Abbot and Plymouth, part electrification may yield big benefits, through the deployment of bi-mode trains much earlier than awaiting electrification of all 270 miles of line between Reading and Penzance. Similarly, bi-modes offer benefits to destinations off the electrified network such as Hull or Aberdeen, or for engineering diversions. However as an alternative to electrification, diesel bi-modes are not the answer.

Railfuture will campaign for total route modernisation and a rolling programme of electrification. This will no doubt be on the agenda when we meet the new ministerial team.

Campaigning for a bigger railway

Roger Blake, Infrastructure Director

Our agenda-shaping story of 2017 began with unveiling our 'Expanding the Railways' guide co-authored by member Chris Austin OBE FCILT, accelerated through its official launch by Rail Minister Paul Maynard and the publication of the sixth edition of 'Britain's Growing Railway', our A-Z guide to new and reopened lines and stations, and culminated with our annual Judges' Special Award to the New Stations Fund and the publication of 'Connecting people: a strategic vision for rail' from the Department for Transport.

Railfuture believes expanding the rail network with more stations and lines is the means to expanding access to opportunities to travel by rail for more people in hitherto poorly-connected or unconnected communities. Bringing communities closer together brings access to opportunities for individual and collective enrichment and advancement – economic, educational, cultural – embracing diversity and

inclusion and the challenges of change. Building transport infrastructure helps build a stronger society, enabling people to take more control of life's chances and choices moving forward in the mainstream, not being left behind or marginalized. A bigger rail network enables more economic and social exchange – of goods and services, ideas, even capital, as well as people – spreading economic and social prosperity.

Over the past five years 30 local communities have had both their horizons and their catchments expanded through the better connectivity provided by new/reopened stations. In 2017 stations serving Ilkeston in Derbyshire, Low Moor in West Yorkshire and Cambridge North were added to the rail network. During the year work was in progress on new stations for Kenilworth in Warwickshire, Maghull North in Sefton Merseyside, Rotherham Parkgate for the South Yorkshire tram-train, and Worcestershire Parkway. The second round of the New Stations Fund in July offered support for five more new stations, serving communities around Peterlee Horden in County Durham, Warrington West, Reading Green Park, Bow Street Aberystwyth and Portway

Parkway Bristol. The year closed with the opening of the Ordsall Chord, a short yet vital cross-city link in Manchester, adding capacity and connectivity to the wider region's rail network.

Over the next five years Britain will continue to build more homes to accommodate a growing population generally living longer and in a larger number of smaller households. Britain will need to build more railway to provide those growing communities with the transport capacity and connectivity they need to thrive. Aligned with the strategic objectives of Network Rail's Passenger Market Studies and the Department for Transport's recent Strategic Vision for Rail, and with the guidance on how to develop, design and deliver proposals in 'Expanding the Railways', Railfuture will continue to exert its independent influence to advocate the benefits of new and reopened stations and lines to unlock necessary housing and economic growth in ways that are environmentally sustainable.

As in 2017, so in future: a bigger railway network is needed to support new communities as they develop and long-established communities as they adapt and regenerate.



This is how much the people of Ilkeston appreciate their first train for fifty years. Image supplied by Ilkeston Advertiser.

Railfuture near you

Some of the campaign successes that Railfuture branches achieved in 2017.

Scotland. Railfuture Scotland has visited events and rail user groups throughout the land, spreading information about how we can assist local campaigning. Our efforts culminated in a Members Day in Perth, at which 7 different rail user groups from the Borders to the Far North Line shared campaigning strategies. Our efforts have helped bring about studies into rebuilding the Buchan line and re-opening stations in the south west (which directly led to funding agreement for the next part of the STAG evaluation), as well as ensuring that other campaigns receive regular press coverage.

North West. Our support for our affiliated Mid Cheshire Rail User Association helped to achieve a doubling of the train frequency between Chester and Manchester and to safeguard the alignment of the proposed Manchester Airport western link.

Wales. A contribution from Railfuture's Fighting Fund of up to £10K has helped a community group to secure a GRIP3 study to determine the best high level design for a proposed 'walkway' station at Magor near Severn Tunnel Junction, which will encourage passengers to arrive on foot or by cycle. Our funding partners are Monmouthshire County Council and the Welsh Government. In its half yearly report the National Assembly for Wales Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee recognised that Railfuture Wales had influenced its Rail Franchise and Metro Report recommendations.

West Midlands. Discussions with officers from Walsall Council on the reinstatement of Walsall - Wolverhampton passenger services has led to the new operator seeking to provide service in 2019/2020. We organised a successful Mayoral Transport Forum at Birmingham Council House prior to the election of the West Midlands Mayor and held a one day recruitment stall at Birmingham New Street in November where we were able to help rail users.

Severnside. Bridgwater station now has an Onward Travel poster with relevant information about bus stops and services. It is on the outside of the main building and therefore visible at all times of day. We also supported member David Wood who successfully campaigned to get the platforms at Parson Street cleared of vegetation.

Wessex. After an intervention by Railfuture, travellers using the West of England line to London via Salisbury have received an assurance that fares on their route will continue to offer good value. The Competition and Markets Authority upheld our complaint that awarding the South Western franchise to First Group, which already runs Great Western services via Reading, would result in a loss of competition, forcing the operator to concede that fares via Salisbury would remain better value than using the GW route.

Devon and Cornwall. Our second public meeting on 25th November 2017 brought together those campaigning for daily Okehampton to Exeter trains, which has led to the Secretary of State for Transport instructing Great Western to prepare plans for running all week, all year trains to Okehampton.



North East. Several years' lobbying has resulted in timetable improvements by Northern, increasing train frequency on the Bishop Auckland branch. Sunday trains now run all year between Middlesbrough and Whitby and between Metro Centre and Morpeth. Morpeth has also gained more East Coast and Cross Country services thanks to campaigning by our affiliate SENRUG (SE Northumberland Rail User Group). TransPennine Express have reinstated some direct Manchester Airport to Newcastle trains.

Yorkshire. Low Moor station near Bradford finally opened on 2nd April 2017. Railfuture and the Bradford Rail Users Group had been campaigning for this for many years, so this was a very welcome event. Railfuture was one of the organisations whose strong arguments resulted in the post 2016 Northern and TransPennine Express franchises being more ambitious than the initial proposals in the DfT consultation.

East Midlands branch hosted Railfuture's Autumn Conference in Leicester on 4th November. Titled 'Dynamic Triangle' – a reference to Nottingham, Derby and Leicester – it brought together a range of speakers from the rail industry and local authorities to draw attention to the importance of railways to the East Midlands.

Lincolnshire. No matter that Sunday shopping has been with us for years and the City of Lincoln now has a large University, anyone wishing to travel by rail to Lincoln on a Sunday found that depending on the route they wished to use the service was either sparse or non-existent. After many years of campaigning and lobbying by the branch, Sunday rail services on two routes have been transformed in 2017 with all day services introduced from Nottingham and Sheffield.

East Anglia. Railfuture helped shape the outcome of a number of positive developments, including the new station at Cambridge North which opened in May. The Government's Autumn statement confirmed a commitment to East – West Rail, and a study into future rail infrastructure needs around Cambridgeshire. Following our 2016 station audit at Whittlesford Parkway station, a recent planning application for a major research park near the station has included funding for station improvements mentioned in our report.

Thames Valley. This year the final link of the Oxford - Marylebone service was completed, exceeding all estimates of usage; Oxford Parkway is now achieving over 1m passengers annually. Railfuture supported Chiltern every step of the way through the government's Transport and Works Act Order process and Public Inquiry and thereafter. At the end of the year we welcomed the final go-ahead for East West Rail to Cambridge and for Reading Green Park station.

London and South East. Railfuture's decisive influence secured an innovative solution to the demise of Ashford-Brighton through services. Instead of splitting at Hastings or Eastbourne, Railfuture advocated two new overlapping services, maintaining connectivity while adding capacity and increasing frequency. Locally six RUGs were convinced and two MPs persuaded. Negotiations saw the idea adopted for GTR's May 2018 timetable!

Campaigns in your area

Scotland. We participate in the Scottish Parliament's cross-party rail group and respond to Government consultations, thus taking part in the strategic movement working for better rail connectivity to offset the large amounts being spent on roads. We support several user groups, including the campaigns to extend the Borders line to Hawick and Carlisle, Glasgow Crossrail and reconnecting St Andrews.

North West. We will focus on making the case with stakeholders for full electrification of the Trans-Pennine route, as part of a route modernisation programme also including improved track layout, to reduce journey times and increase frequency and reliability. We also advocate the use of battery trains on the Windermere branch, which would be a better option than the (temporary) bi-modes and then reversion to diesel trains.

Wales. We will work with the new Wales & Borders train operator, which will take over in October 2018, and Great Western to seek a greater choice of destinations by through services, higher frequency and faster journey times on the South Wales main line between West Wales, Swansea and Cardiff. Following cancellation of electrification west of Cardiff, the introduction of the paired 5-car class 800 bi-mode trains on the route by Great Western Railway will provide opportunities, which have yet to be fully explored, for new direct services.



Welsh Assembly Member David Rowlands looks on as Ted Hand, a founder member of Magor Action Group on Rail, points to the proposed station location. Photo: Paul Turner

West Midlands. We will continue our successful links with the train operating companies, Network Rail and officers from the West Midlands Combined Authority. We will challenge and support West Midlands Trains in their promises to deliver service improvement and campaign to improve HS2 connectivity to the existing network and other parts of the West Midlands.

Sevenside Completion of MetroWest is our priority, to expand and improve rail services in the Bristol commuting area. We will emphasise the growth in usage of existing stations to campaign for a bigger, better rail network in the West of England. We will work with the Combined

Authority to get the Portishead line reopened as soon as possible.



The existing Portbury freight line at Pill station will remain and a second track will be laid on the left for passenger trains to/from Portishead. Photo by Nigel Bray

Wessex. Our focus will be to ensure that a new railway station is included in plans for Welborne, a 6,000-home development north of Fareham. We advocate a basic structure on the single-line section between Fareham and Botley, with allowance to add a second platform and accessible footbridge should the route be double-tracked in the future. Any more complex solution, for example a two-platform station from the outset, would prove unaffordable and so would leave the new community with no direct access to the railway line on their doorstep.

Devon and Cornwall. We will continue working with Wessex branch and rail user groups to campaign for improved train services on the Exeter to Salisbury line, and to press for Tavistock to Bere Alston reopening and new stations for Cullompton and Marsh Barton in the Exeter area.



The crowd waiting for the Royal Oke special train at Paddington demonstrates the enthusiasm of Okehampton residents for a regular rail service. Photo by John Wills

North East. The key campaign is to re-introduce passenger services on the Ashington Blyth and Tyne line, bringing economic regeneration to an area with a population of around 100,000, high unemployment and poor transport links. Other objectives include new stations at Ferryhill, Gateshead Team Valley and Gilsland, and provision of new passenger rolling stock.



More trains on the way at Morpeth. Photo: Trevor Watson

Yorkshire. Our priority is to influence the decision makers and providers by holding or attending regular meetings with Northern, TransPennine Express, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Rail North to advocate how services could be improved and what the future strategic vision should be. We also engage with influential speakers at our quarterly branch meetings. There is also more campaigning to do to ensure that Low Moor gets a direct service to Manchester – currently it is only served by one Huddersfield-Leeds train an hour and the four daily Grand Central London trains.

East Midlands. A potentially vital route across the Midlands is the line between Derby and Crewe. Despite connecting two major cities and numerous towns, it suffers from an historically poor service. With important



A single-car Class 153 calls at Blythe Bridge on a Crewe-Derby service. Photo by Steve Jones

rail interchanges at each end, the line could form part of a major inter-regional route between the Midlands and the North-West. There is huge potential for this line so we will be seeking significant improvements via the next East Midlands franchise.

Lincolnshire. Facilities for passengers at some of our mainly rural stations have not kept pace with the growth in usage so our key campaign for 2018 is to improve their facilities. We want to see sufficient wind and rain proof waiting shelters on platforms, adequate car parking without standing water whenever it rains and a walking route to the platforms that has a firm, mud free path.

East Anglia. Whilst train operators and Network Rail frequently announce plans to improve major stations the smaller stations often get neglected and simple schemes that would benefit passengers are put aside. The branch intends to carry out audits at a number of stations, looking at the facilities provided for passengers including shelter, facilities for the disabled, train and local information. A report suggesting simple improvements will then be sent to the train operator and local authority for action. We continue to campaign for reinstatement of passenger services from Wisbech to provide access to employment in Cambridge, a new station south of Cambridge to serve Addenbrookes Hospital and are speaking with developers regarding a possible new station at Waterbeach to serve a major new settlement.

Thames Valley. By engaging with stakeholders we have an understanding of what the public and opinion formers want from the rail network, such as sustainable housing. Therefore we campaign on high economic return schemes that generate housing connectivity and economic growth, engaging with councils at Leader/Cabinet level and lobbying for extension of East West Rail services to Cowley, a new station at Wantage Science Vale Parkway (with necessary track quadrupling), Heathrow - Milton Keynes services via High Wycombe and reinstatement of Witney - Oxford.

London and South East. Midland Main Line passengers deserve better services from the new franchise. Passengers' champion Railfuture campaigns for fast, limited-stop services for East Midlands and London passengers, with new trains and upgraded infrastructure. The five towns between London and Corby deserve intercity-style journey times. East Midlands and Yorkshire cities deserve quicker journey times, supporting their economies. Two Leicester services hourly must serve Bedford for connections northwards, with Thameslink, and with new East-West Rail Oxford services.

Rail industry review

Ian Brown CBE FCILT

2017 was a very turbulent year for the rail industry and its customers. Much effort went into major developments with benefits largely coming on stream from 2018. Here is a snapshot of some of the most significant changes.

High Speed 2 achieved a tipping point in 2017 when the project went ahead with 'paper on the ground' in the form of detailed plans and contracts. The debate largely moved on to ensuring that the benefits of providing more rail capacity are realised in the regions by proper integration into regional rail and light rail networks. Railfuture has been extremely active in this area in conjunction with stakeholders. The government has stuck with HS2, unlike electrification.

Electrification. The case for electrification of our intensively used railway remains a strong one. The problem in 2017 was delivery - too much electrification, too fast, hence massive cost overruns. London to Bristol electrification was truncated at Thingley Junction (Chippenham), the Swansea scheme at Cardiff and the Midland Main Line scheme at Kettering/Corby. The worst example is the continued uncertainty over Trans-Pennine electrification, leaving a gap on the otherwise electrified Liverpool to Edinburgh main line between Manchester and York. 2017 saw the rise of bi-mode trains as the industry response. The weight, maintenance, fuel and hence cost penalty is around 5%, a serious long term setback for the industry. Nevertheless, bi-modes have improved the potential for service development on routes such as to Devon and Cornwall, Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester plus destinations off the already electrified East Coast Main Line.

Completed electrification projects. Scotland fared better on electrification in 2017 by completing Edinburgh – Glasgow despite change of specification issues resulting in cost and time overruns. The new trains are to

follow in 2018. The remaining programme is still in progress and we also saw the go-ahead of the Edinburgh to Glasgow via Shotts project. The second electrification project completed right at the end of 2017 was the introduction of the Paddington to Didcot electric service, a massive improvement in capacity and comfort.

Ongoing electrification. Railfuture will continue to campaign to complete the main line electrification programme, allowing the cascade of bi-mode trains onto other long distance cross country routes. Work continues on Manchester to Preston and Blackpool, extension of the Cross City Line to Bromsgrove and the Chase Line from Walsall to Rugeley.

Major Projects also progressed in 2017 particularly in London. Thameslink took delivery of a huge fleet of new trains and is now almost ready to go with the reopening of a completely rebuilt London Bridge. The tunnelling works on Crossrail were also completed and the new trains started to run on the Eastern surface section from Liverpool Street to Shenfield.

Franchise changes. There were new franchise announcements in 2017 for the former London Midland routes to West Midlands Trains (Abellio) and for the former South West Trains to South Western Railway (First Group). Both these involve commitment to provide increased capacity and new trains. Railfuture was pleased to see the provision of cost effective, innovative Vivarail trains to the Bedford – Bletchley line in the contract.

Progress on earlier franchise awards. Both the Northern (Arriva) and the Trans-Pennine (First Group) franchises awarded in 2016 started to make changes in the form of small but useful service improvements, such as the introduction of better Sunday services, prior to more fundamental improvements which await the delivery of new rolling stock. Northern introduced additional Sunday services on several routes, including: Sheffield – Lincoln, the Airedale Lines with their two new stations, Manchester/ Liverpool – Wigan, plus improved weekday frequencies from Manchester to Blackburn and Bishop Auckland to Saltburn. All these are success stories

for Railfuture branches using their established contacts with train operating companies. Trans-Pennine introduced a limited number of late night weekday services from Hull and between Manchester and Scotland, squeezing existing resources. The Greater Anglia franchise, also let in 2016, saw work start on the complete replacement of every single train in the fleet with new electric and bi-mode trains.

Income. 2017 was the first year that income declined, following continuous growth since privatisation, particularly on suburban services. This is generally assigned to Brexit job uncertainty plus the regular RMT rail strikes on the Driver Controlled Operation issue.

This is a special worry at the current time of peak investment in the rail industry, particularly for franchises which have not achieved projected large increases in revenue. The East Coast franchise is a case in point and controversially is to terminate early.

The Planning process. Given planning lead times with railway investment, now is not the time to scale back investment as Network Rail undergoes the ORR Periodic Review in 2018 in preparation for the next Control Period, CP6, which runs from 2019 – 2024. Railfuture will be responding to consultations designed to ensure that the rail infrastructure can keep up with projected increases in service and a resumption of economic growth.

Manufacturing – Famine to feast. The legendary 1000 days after privatisation in 1996 without a single UK rolling stock order and no UK based rail suppliers other than Bombardier in Derby has changed. Going out of 2017 we have just under 7000 new rail passenger vehicles on order, mainly electric and bi-mode units.

Bombardier has a high volume production facility in Derby now flat out with new train production including new Crossrail and London Overground trains. 2017 also saw train manufacturing re-established in Britain by inward foreign investment. Hitachi (Japan) are in full production at Newton Aycliffe (Co Durham) building bi-modes and also electric units for

Scotrail. Alstom have re-established themselves in the UK at Widnes with a new plant currently refurbishing Pendolino trains and CAF (Spain) are building a plant at Newport (South Wales). The current peak of orders is a major factor here but all eyes are on the star prize of new trains for HS2.

Reopenings. Railfuture's remit includes campaigning for reopening stations and whole lines which meet viability criteria to ensure that what we campaign for is sustainable - a good example being Cambridge North. The commercial success and continued growth on the Borders Line since opening in September 2015 has validated the sustained effort put into campaigning. The next big re-opening is Oxford - Cambridge and this got the go-ahead in 2017.

2017 also saw major station rebuilds to accommodate growth including Liverpool Lime Street and London Bridge.

International services – Eurostar.

Eurostar awoke from years of slumber with a new determined effort to grow the business. The new Eurostar e320 Velaro trains came into mainstream service on the core Paris route, then later the Brussels routes, coinciding with significant increase in business and leisure journeys despite terrorism incidents. A new, up to five days a week service was introduced to Lyon and Marseille and despite the need to detrain for immigration at Lille on the inward journey, this is very popular. The big breakthrough however was deferred from 2017 until Easter 2018 in the form of the long awaited London to Amsterdam service. This is the busiest air route in Europe (London to Paris would be but for Eurostar). Arrangements are being made so that passengers will not have to detrain en route for immigration, nor will there be an extended station stop en route. Despite this, to improve viability this service will take London to Brussels passengers as well as passengers from Brussels to Amsterdam.

Freight. (2016-2017 data). Railfreight tonnage lifted fell by 8% in 2017, tonne miles less so, declining by 3%. Within these figures is massive change both in commodity carried and routing.



An awkward attempt at sharing between trams and main line trains at Navigation Road, Manchester. Better integration is planned in Birmingham. Photo: Ian Brown

Traditionally rail freight was all about coal generally flowing short distances from mines to power stations. By 2016/7 coal has almost disappeared, down to 8% from ports to power stations (longer journeys being replaced by biomass). The success story is the growth of intermodal, both domestic (Daventry – Scotland) and from British ports to the Midlands, North West, North East and Scotland. 39% of rail freight is now intermodal. Much of this new traffic is focused on passenger main lines. The determinants on whether this growth will continue are economic growth (somewhat downgraded in forecast terms at this pre-Brexit stage) and rail infrastructure capacity. 2017 saw improvements to the Felixstowe branch to access the network, but much needs to be done in terms of the cross country route to the Midlands and the North/Scotland. The upgrade of the 'Joint Line' through Lincoln with modern signalling was also an important improvement, but the cancellation of the 'Freight Spine' concept (an electric freight route from Oxford to the West Coast and Midland Main lines) during 2017 was a bitter disappointment.

Light Rail. 2017 was also an eventful year both good and tragic. Opening the Second City Crossing in Manchester was a landmark for light rail in that

Manchester is now the first city in Britain to have a comprehensive light rail system. The Trafford Park extension also got the go-ahead, serving the largest employment and retail centre other than the city centre itself. Edinburgh Trams was a great success commercially in 2017, two years ahead of ridership projections.

Blackpool saw the go-ahead for an extension to Blackpool North Station (soon to reopen on the electrified network) and Midland Metro in Birmingham is extending via Centenary Square to Edgbaston. Railfuture, through its branch contacts, has supported the development of city light rail systems properly integrated into plans to develop regional rail networks and HS2.

The tragic tram accident in Croydon which occurred late in 2016 illustrated that there is no room for complacency despite the very high levels of safety otherwise being achieved in both the light and main line rail sectors.

Fares. The government set up a working party to simplify the fares system with little to show for it so far. More evident was the 3.4% fares increase imposed at the start of 2018, the highest for some time and probably counter-productive when set against experience with 2017.

Help improve our railway

Railfuture campaigns strongly on behalf of all rail users for a bigger and better railway that will make life easier for current and future passengers:

- value for money fares
- better customer service
- more seats and better on-board facilities
- more frequent, reliable services
- quicker, easier journeys
- more accessible trains and stations
- new services, stations and lines
- shifting freight from road to rail.

Join us to help make your rail journey better. As a member, you'll enjoy the support of a campaigning, voluntary organisation which is passionate about improving the services that our railways deliver.

You can meet other members at your local branch meetings or our national conferences, contribute to our newsletters, magazine and website, and choose to play an active role in our campaigns.

The more members we have, the more influence we can exert on rail investment and operational decisions.

www.railfuture.org.uk/join

Railwatch

Our quarterly colour magazine Railwatch is sent free to members and selected opinion formers to provide positive news of rail campaigning which may not get proper coverage in either the mainstream media or the railway press.

We present authoritative news and views about railways which are taken seriously in the corridors of power while encouraging rail campaigners to be more confident and effective. We cover the work of rail user groups to enable them to learn from each other.

Railwatch relies primarily on Railfuture members to send letters, articles, reports and pictures, especially of people. We are interested to hear from other rail campaign groups and also the rail industry. Please tell us about your achievements and problems - if they are reported in Railwatch, they can be followed up by other media outlets. Railwatch aims to provide a platform for discussion about Railfuture itself and its policies.

Rail User Express

Anyone can subscribe to our monthly email which rounds up the latest news from our affiliated rail user groups.

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