

REPORTS BY CHAIRMAN, MEMBERSHIP ADMINISTRATOR, COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES

CHAIRMAN

Mike Crowhurst

2010 was always going to be an eventful year. The General Election in May was one of those unpredictable ones that seem to crop up every 20 years or so, and the result, after several days on tenterhooks, was something not seen in most of our lifetimes - a coalition government. An immediate and regrettable consequence was the departure of Andrew Adonis from the Department of Transport after an all too brief tenure.

His replacement, Philip (not Stephen) Hammond, reflecting the changed political arithmetic of coalition, got off to a rather shaky start with some ill-advised comments. However by the time of his appearance at the National Rail Conference in July he was showing a more balanced approach. Indeed come the autumn he succeeded in getting the rail capital investment programme through the Comprehensive Spending Review almost intact, demonstrating that he not only knows how to deal with the Treasury, but unlike Alastair Darling he was prepared to put this experience to good use.

Although rail investment came out of the spending review better than anyone had expected, it was not all good news. Some smaller projects fell foul of various bureaucratic deadlines as a result of the demise of certain funding bodies. And there was a price to pay in the form of fare increases, peaking at RPI+3% (average) for the next three years. Pay now, new trains later perhaps, it seems. As I write, the InterCity element of Great Western electrification remains unconfirmed pending decisions about rolling stock, so we are not quite back to where we were last year just yet.

The year-end brought the now almost routine havoc on all forms of transport due to snow. This time rail came out of it rather better than aviation. But regardless of who was to blame for what, it is clear that neither the airlines nor railways have yet understood that customers must be kept properly informed, and looked after, not just left to fend for themselves, when disaster strikes. It still takes far too long to rescue passengers stranded even in quite minor incidents.

In January 2011 we met with Maria Eagle MP, the new Labour Shadow Secretary of State for Transport, but efforts to establish or renew contacts with politicians of any party have been frustratingly fruitless since the election. Changes have not been confined to the political leadership, however. Both the DfT and Network Rail have new leadership. Meanwhile the deluge of RUSs and other consultations continues apace, to all of which we respond, and changes are afoot in the franchising setup too.

On the domestic front, we again held two very successful conferences - in Taunton in July and London in November, the latter to mark the reopening of the extended East London Railway, and followed by a Branch officers' meeting the following day. Thanks are due to all concerned with organising these events, notwithstanding what proved to be a rather unwise choice of date in November. Some welcome new directors are making a valuable contribution to the Board, bringing useful new thinking. And we now have the benefit of active involvement at committee level of Chris Austin, bringing with him wide experience of both the railway industry and of various other lobbying organisations, to our benefit. And finally, as will be evident from the formal part of the Annual Report, our finances are now on a far sounder foundation, for which thanks are due to the Financial Director and the Treasurer.

At the end of the year, the Board approved the creation of a new Information, Publishing and Communications Group (IPC).

INTERNATIONAL & EU COMMITTEE

international-eu@railfuture.org.uk

Andrew MacFarlane

The International & EU Committee met three times in 2010, in Derby, London and Peterborough. We received much useful feedback from airports around the UK to our report on public transport links to airports. Some of these are being followed up with a view to meeting decision makers to press the case for improvements.

The committee's next project was a report on ferry services between the UK and both Ireland and the Continent. This was ably compiled by Committee member Peter Walker (incorporating comments from relevant branches) and we are now receiving feedback from port and ferry operators. A particularly useful and encouraging response has been received from the European Commission. We objected to the closure of the Rosslare to Waterford line and were in liaison with our Irish counterparts.

We have continued to play an active role in the European Passengers' Federation (EPF), with three members of the Committee involved in producing a new report "Journeys without Borders" and updating the cross-border list on the EPF website. Two members of the Committee, Andrew MacFarlane and Ronald Schwarz, held a useful meeting with Brian Simpson MEP, Chairman of the Transport & Tourism Committee of the European Parliament and a *Railfuture* Vice-President, during the year. We also intend to contact the appropriate Conservative and Liberal Democrat MEPs to express our concerns on European issues. We were disappointed that air passengers who were unable to travel due to the Icelandic ash problem were not directed to use rail. Ian McDonald proposed an emergency motion at the *Railfuture* AGM (seconded by Ronald Schwarz). The motion urged all transport operators to work together at times of emergency and for national and EU authorities to draw up appropriate plans. The visit of a DB ICE train to London St Pancras in October was a ground-breaking occasion and we look forward to the start of regular services between London and Germany in 2012 or 2013.

Eurostar again encountered problems with cold weather before Christmas 2010 and its performance was disappointing in the light of the amount of work that went into researching last year's failings. We wrote to Eurostar in November asking them if they were confident that they had now overcome all their "train winterisation", staff training, and passenger information problems. No reply has yet been received, but from these events clearly they have not. We plan to do another "Mystery Shopper" exercise on the issue of through ticketing between UK train operating companies and the Continent via Eurostar during 2011. Trevor Garrod represented the Committee at a meeting with branch representatives in London on 14th November. This meeting was felt to be worthwhile and is to be repeated.

As is normal, the PLC committee met three times in 2010 alternating between London and Birmingham. There are now 12 full members of the committee and 11 corresponding members. The Chairman is Mike Crowhurst and the secretary is Norman Bradbury.

The principal activities focus on lobbying and campaigning. Meetings are sought each year with Transport Ministers and their respective Shadow Ministers. It is significant that on only one occasion have we met the same Minister twice. This was Tom Harris.

However, our attempts to meet Philip Hammond and Theresa Villiers this year have been turned down due to "pressure of work". We will try again to get a meeting in due course.

Members of the committee also met David Mapp of ATOC and Peter Williams, Customer Services Director for East Coast, at ATOC's offices in July. Concerns about fares issues were high on the agenda and the loss of most of East Coast trains' dining facilities was also discussed. Two PLC committee members also attended a meeting with Passenger Focus organised by Passenger Committee. Once again, fares issues were the main topic.

PLC committee were also responsible for producing two campaigning documents during the year. The "Rail Manifesto for the 21st Century" was widely distributed to politicians and prospective candidates prior to the general election, as well as to **Railfuture** branches, and a press release was circulated to a number of industry related publications. The "Britain's Railways - Much More for Much Less" campaign document was intended to influence the spending review and was again widely circulated including a copy sent to the Secretary of State Philip Hammond, and other key Cabinet ministers.

In a letter to Mike Crowhurst, Alistair Cormack, Mr Hammond's Private Secretary, said that Mr Hammond had read the Much More for Much Less paper and passed it on to key members of his staff at the DfT. Theresa Villiers had also written to Mike saying that she had read this paper with interest and that the Government supports further electrification. On the subject of the Luton-Dunstable guided busway, Ms Villiers said that since Luton Borough Council had already signed the contract to proceed, it was too late to review the project.

PLC committee members attended a number of conferences during 2010, three of which were organised by Transport Times. One of these concentrated on future funding problems for transport projects while the other two focussed on high-speed rail. Chris Austin was a panellist at the Public Service Events Conference in London in May. Chris and Mike also attended the National Rail Conference in Liverpool in July. Reports on these events were circulated to committee members.

PLC committee is also represented at **Transport Activists Round Table (TAR)** meetings and the **Transport Taxation Group**. There have been three TAR meetings and two meetings of the Transport Taxation Group during 2010. Reports on these meetings are also circulated to those interested.

The committee is also on the mailing list for the Parliamentary Transport Select Committee and some of our members attend relevant evidence sessions as and when they occur. We have also submitted evidence to a number of their enquiries, the most recent being Priorities for Rail Investment.

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Network Development Committee met four times in 2010, in Peterborough, Birmingham and twice in London. The July meeting in Birmingham was an additional meeting held jointly with relevant interested members of the Policy Lobbying and Campaigns Committee, to co-ordinate members' views on the HS2 project. Our new Secretary with effect from January has been Chris Austin, formerly of ATOC, whom many of us from **Railfuture** previously met on the "opposite side of the table", but with whom there was always a good rapport. We are very pleased to have Chris on board. He is also the new Heritage & Community Railways Officer, and liaises regularly with the relevant groups to promote **Railfuture**, and encourage closer links.

"Britain's Growing Railway, an A-Z of Rail Reopenings" (BGR Volume I) was published in February, edited by Jerry Alderson and myself, with final preparation by Ray King for printing. The book has been well received, and the good quality of the final production noted. We hope more members will purchase it. It has considerably more information contained than in the 1998 edition it has replaced. Meanwhile we are working on BGR Volume II which will contain suggested reopening schemes, some actively pursued or advocated by branches in the areas concerned, as well as advice on how to campaign for reopenings in the 21st century. It will also contain details of the largest towns in the UK, which have no railway serving them. Production should be completed by the end of February 2011 with publication in May 2011. BGR Volume I can be ordered online from www.railfuture.org.uk/books

The planned update of our Electrification paper published in late 2008 was postponed following the publication of the Labour Government's proposals for the network, towards the end of 2009. We now have some insight into the new Government's plans, somewhat watered down, and the new paper will respond accordingly once final announcements are made, expected in Spring 2011.

Following a joint NDC/PLC meeting in July to discuss HS2, we decided to continue internal discussion and research on the project and consideration of alternative routes and stations, but not to publish any substantive policy document before the new Government went out to consultation on their preferred route in early 2011. I also attended two conferences, on behalf of **Railfuture**, organised by Transport Times on High Speed Rail. The first, led by Lord Adonis was in March, and the second, led by Mr Hammond, was held in October, following the change in Government. Notes of these can be obtained from me at ian.mcdonald@railfuture.org.uk.

We have of course followed other railway projects and proposals, around the UK. The Rail Reopenings Conference in November at Shoreditch was attended by over 100 members, and focussed on the reopening and upgrading of the East London Line and imminent completion at last, of a complete circuit of inner London, as conceived by the Ringrail project, supported by **Railfuture** for many years if not decades.

The Passenger Committee met three times in 2010 alternating between Birmingham, London, and Oxford. Its work was strengthened with the arrival of new members in the middle of the year. During the year there were also meetings with ATOC and Passenger Focus, where a wide range of rail issues was discussed. Once again, it was encouraging to note from these meetings that the work of *Railfuture* is both valued and respected in official and railway circles.

In March, the committee responded to ATOC's questionnaire on Future Fares Policy and suggested a number of basic principles, the most important of which was that all fares should be proportional to distance and set on a consistent basis across the whole network. We accept that it would be impractical to make this change overnight, but incremental change over the course of a franchise is perfectly possible once the principle has been accepted.

The committee is now turning its attention to the quality of service received by customers. This includes facilities for passengers both at stations and on trains such as catering, toilets, and on-board passenger information systems. Restaurant car facilities have now been withdrawn from all but a handful of long distance trains. It seems that standard class passengers are now banned from restaurant cars, with first class passengers only being served meals at their seats. Being able to dine on a long distance train should not be a matter of class.

On trains and in stations it is important that toilets should work, and that they are properly serviced and maintained. Many trains are making longer journeys and this often means that toilets run out of water before journey's end. On many trains, the provision of toilets is inadequate, whilst the squalor and absence of toilets on some quite important stations is seen as unacceptable. Similarly, it is vital that passenger information systems do not give out incorrect data, and that air-conditioning units work correctly in all weather conditions.

Earlier in the year, the committee was pleased to note that following consultation, the Department for Transport had accepted many of the recommendations in Chris Green and Peter Hall's report Better Rail Stations. The passenger environment is a vital, but often neglected, part of any rail journey and the introduction of a basic set of standards that can be applied to all stations on the network is long overdue.

FREIGHT SERVICES DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**freight@railfuture.org.uk****Gary Tinsey**

The Freight Committee met on three occasions in London, Oxford and Sheffield. At the Oxford meeting we welcomed Maggie Simpson, Policy Manager for The Rail Freight Group, who gave a comprehensive presentation on the contemporary domestic and EU rail freight picture.

We were also heavily involved in the planning and execution of the society's Taunton Conference, which had a strong freight theme with a number of key industry guest speakers communicating information to delegates on The Strategic Freight Network and new projects to deliver supermarket goods by rail. This was supported by the experiences of lobbying within the voluntary sector by George Boyle, a Vice President of our organisation and long term Freight Committee member, thus providing a useful insight into both the success and setbacks recorded over many years.

We continue to campaign against heavier and longer lorries, with particular thanks going to George Boyle's sterling efforts on this matter. Other members have been busy corresponding with a number of third parties, including our Chairman to help facilitate an outline scheme to reconnect the Cantley sugar factory in Norfolk, allowing the possibility of moving raw cane sugar in bulk from the port at Great Yarmouth.

New 'ideas' to promote so called Short-Lines to help retain a nationwide single wagonload service, particularly for bulky loads and variable container flows also featured on the agenda. One item of concern subsequently noted was the number of modern rail-connected terminals currently in abeyance or moribund.

Support for the inclusion of railway connectivity initiatives in major planning applications is maintained, with the Rookery scheme near Bedford one of many examples illustrated. On some occasions applicants' details have been passed to The Freight-on-Rail consortium that is often best placed to submit appropriate documentation.

The 'More for Less' campaign was aided by a contribution to highlight the needs of rail freight as part of the wider rail industry structure. Internal flows of information from the branch network, other specialised committees and individual members are recorded in the minutes held on file.

Our Vice Chairman went to an Institute of Logistics & Transport meeting in Bristol, at which there was an interesting presentation by the Department for Transport on freight modal choice. Clearly, despite the change of government, the DfT still see rail as having a significant role to play in reducing the level of carbon emissions in the freight sector. There appears to be scope for a switch to rail in a range of commodities and in regions where rail does not feature strongly at present, e.g. South West England. DfT are looking for industry to come forward with schemes to develop rail freight as a more attractive choice for consignors.

In summary, despite another difficult year following the prolonged downturn, heavy industrial customers, logistics companies, shipping lines and increasingly prominent retailers moved goods back onto rail or began new-to-rail operations.

RAILWATCH**editor@railwatch.org.uk****Ray King**

Railwatch in 2010 was produced in colour for each issue. Overall production costs have been held steady during 2010. Print-Out of Histon, Cambridge, printed all copies of *Railwatch* during the year.

The editorial board included Jerry Alderson, John Barfield, David Berman, Roger Blake, Lloyd Butler, Alan Cocker, John Davison, Laurence Fryer, Ray King, Graham Morrison, John Stanford and Robert Stevens. We are grateful to *Railfuture* members who provide interesting reports and pictures. Distribution was carried out efficiently by the professional firm, Mailhandlers of London E2. They have provided excellent service throughout 2010, although we had temporary problems in changing the way we provided data when Royal Mail appeared to change their rules on Presstream mailings.

Several hundred copies of *Railwatch* continue to be sent free as part of our campaign to keep opinion formers properly informed on rail issues. Lloyd Butler maintains the list of those who receive *Railwatch* free.

The editorial board meets four times a year in London.

PUBLICITY TEAM**trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk****Trevor Garrod**

Four members of the Team organised the printing, sales and distribution of our new book, Britain's Growing Railway Vol. I. It was the first time for ten years that *Railfuture* had done any publication on that scale.

We produced a new recruitment leaflet, which was sent to all members with the July *Railwatch*, for them to use, since personal contact remains a significant means of gaining new members. I also sent out packs of the "A moment of your time" leaflet (published in 2008 by *Railfuture*) to tourist attractions and heritage railways. Two boxes of this leaflet remain.

The Publicity Team again offered financial help to Branches for their own publicity projects, notably for the purchase of display boards, and helped one Branch pay for an advert in an electronic railway magazine.

In the summer, helped partly by a generous donation from a member in the London area, we placed three display adverts in the magazine *Modern Railways* and investigated advertising rates in a number of other publications.

On September 4th the Board voted "to suspend the Publicity Team pending a review" and that review was still going on at the end of the year.

The Team has been criticised because the adverts placed have not covered their costs. This raises the issue of to what extent *Railfuture's* activities should be self-financing. It also ignores the fact that each advert and each mention in the media, indeed each contact with a potential member via a publication or website, raises awareness of our organisation. People are then more likely to join us. It is called "brand awareness" and the benefits are not always immediate or tangible.

OFFICER FOR DISABLED TRAVELLERS**clara.zilahi@railfuture.org.uk****Clara Zilahi**

The long saga of accessibility for Ipswich Station seems to be coming to an end at last. We had postulated that a passenger lift must be in place by the end of 2010 when the through service from Peterborough to Liverpool Street via Ipswich was being withdrawn (as a condition for improvements to other services). The withdrawal has taken place, and indeed many trains were already terminating at Ipswich before the timetable change in December 2010. Work is proceeding and the new bridge and passenger lift are expected to be ready in the spring. I might mention that a passenger lift at Ipswich was mentioned as an urgent need for disabled passengers at a meeting I had with the disability team of Railtrack (as it was) in 2000! For travellers who have not booked assistance but expect a seamless journey, the need to change platforms at Ipswich could come as a shock. There has been a promise of additional staff being available at the station but I have no knowledge of whether this is actually taking place.

I have not for some time received individual complaints about lack of help. A snippet from *You and Yours* (Radio 4) is worth mentioning. A wheelchair user wrote in to express appreciation at the help she had received on a journey from Milton Keynes to Edinburgh and had e-mailed Virgin Trains to express her thanks. The standard reply she received referred to her "complaint"!

An important point about venue accessibility is worth repeating. If upstairs venues are used for *Railfuture* (or RUG) meetings, not only must accessibility be checked out but the organisers are obliged to check what arrangements are in place for evacuating disabled people in case of fire or other emergency, when lifts may not be working. This may involve selecting strong volunteers who would be able to carry someone to the exit. If this cannot be solved satisfactorily the venue should not be described as accessible and must be avoided, at least for AGMs as every member has a right to attend these.

MEMBERSHIP**renewals@railfuture.org.uk****Lloyd Butler**

Membership at the end of 2010 was 2238 with 104 family members counted as two (31.12.2009 = 2330). This means that the net loss of members is slowing, but is still a worrying trend. Once again, financial reasons were cited by many members who failed to renew, but donations from renewing members remained strong - a surprising trend. On the recruitment front, the website and personal recommendations were equally successful.

To help us target recruitment drives, it would be beneficial to understand our existing membership age profile, particularly as our pensioner member numbers are closing on the number of full members. To help us create this profile, please write to the Membership Administrator at the registered office with your year of birth or, preferably, email it to **renewals@railfuture.org.uk**.

HOW MEMBERS CAN HELP RAILFUTURE

Nearly all *Railfuture* campaigning is funded by our members. As well as making a donation with your subscription there are other ways of helping *Railfuture*.

Can you recruit a new member? Membership leaflets can be downloaded from the **www.railfuture.org.uk** web site ("Join Us") or by contacting the Membership Secretary, 6 Carral Close, Brant Road, Lincoln LN5 9BD. **membership@railfuture.org.uk** Please consider some of the ideas suggested in the "Time for Action" section in *Railwatch*.

Why not volunteer to take an active role in National and local branch activities?

Try to attend one of *Railfuture's* national events. The **AGM** will be held at Brighthelm Church and Community Centre, North Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 1YD on Saturday 7th May 2011, starting at 11.00. We are also hosting a '**High Speed Rail**' **Conference** at Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes MK3 6EB on Saturday 9th July, and are planning a **Rail Users Conference** in the north, during November.

Join the *Railfuture* Lottery. 50% of the net receipts are paid out as prizes each month, with the remainder allocated to our Campaigns Fund. Details can be obtained from the *Railfuture* Lottery Organiser, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND or visit **www.railfuture.org.uk/lottery**.

Consider making the Society a beneficiary of your will. Please consult your solicitor for advice on how to do this.

RAILFUTURE'S MISSION STATEMENT

To be the number one advocate for the railway and rail users
