

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2011

CHAIRMAN

Mike Crowhurst

This report will be necessarily brief, but may I start by thanking all those who sent their best wishes during my recent illness, which has forced me to resign as chairman as well as a director and from all official positions from the date of the AGM, as for now I am unable to travel. These things always strike at the worst possible moment, but in a sense it did me the favour of reminding me that I have now served eight years as chairman, and it really is time that I stood down. After all, even American Presidents are not allowed to serve longer!

As a result of this *inter alia*, we should have several new faces on the Board this year. We already have some new directors making useful and original contributions, so this is all to be welcomed. My enforced resignation does however serve to emphasise the importance of a robust Business Continuity policy, which is something the Vice Chairman has been anxious to pursue for some time, so I hope everyone will give him support in achieving it. We are also losing two other directors: Colin Elliff, one of the most recent, has had to resign due to conflict with his professional interests, and Clara Zilahi, who at a ripe old age that it would be ungallant to specify, has sensibly decided that the demands of directorship are now too onerous, but she will I am sure continue to do good work from home especially with the Disability Issues Sub-Committee.

In the real world outside, railways have had a remarkably good year. It has of course been dominated by the question of high speed. I will not revisit all the issues it raised - see my in-depth article in the December *Railwatch* for that. Suffice it to say that I do not believe that HS2 is now all but done and dusted (remember HS1), but if it caused us internal strife I suspect it may yet cause the Conservative party more of the same!

We must not however, allow it to detract financially from the more urgent needs of the existing network (especially more rolling stock to relieve overcrowding) nor from our campaigning effort on other fronts such as electrification and reopenings. It was particularly gratifying therefore to see more electrification authorised (albeit still with some silly omissions) and more likely to follow. On reopenings, our publication of Volume 1 of Britain's Growing Railway has been welcomed, and work continues on Volume 2, which will put forward our proposals for further line restorations.

Finally, and on the minus side, it is depressing to see Transport yet again playing the role of political career path, with a good Secretary of State moved on too soon for no better reason than that someone in another Department leant on the "Play" button and when the music stopped we had yet another new face in the Transport seat. Hammond was clearly a political heavyweight with a determination to grasp his brief; it is not yet clear that Ms Greening is of the same fibre. Early policies on higher road speed limits and longer and heavier lorries suggest that she has a long way to go on the environment. Hopefully this may change when she has had more time to master her brief, and her partial review of HS2 does suggest that she may take a fresh look at accepted policies.

INTERNATIONAL & EU COMMITTEE

international-eu@railfuture.org.uk

Andrew MacFarlane

There were three meetings of the International & EU Committee in 2011, in Derby, London and Peterborough. We again conducted research into passengers' views of Eurostar services through a survey and we also repeated our "mystery shopper" exercise to discover how well British Train Operating Companies were able to deal with enquiries about through journeys to the Continent using their services and Eurostar. We were pleased by the good level of response to the Eurostar survey, which identified a number of positive points including that Eurostar is increasingly becoming a key link in longer journeys. The report also highlighted a number of areas for improvement. These included more through ticketing between UK and Continental stations and add-ons for local destinations. There was also a view that Eurostar fares needed to be less expensive and simpler. There were requests for better connections at Brussels Midi and for more Eurostar services to call at Ashford International. Finally there were calls for more through services, both from North of London and beyond Paris and Brussels to Amsterdam, Germany, Switzerland and the South of France. The mystery shopper survey highlighted that the Train Operating Companies do little or nothing to promote Eurostar services and that many booking websites are a challenge even for the very experienced traveller. The findings of both surveys were published in a report in November, which was sent to all of the major players including of course Eurostar themselves. Over 100 copies were distributed in total. Chris Brown, Simon Hope and Trevor Garrod compiled this report, and to whom I offer my thanks. Trevor Garrod and Simon Hope met a Eurostar manager before Christmas 2011 to discuss the report and Trevor Garrod had two further meetings arranged with other recipients of the report in early 2012.

The Committee also finally received in May 2011 a considered response from Eurostar to the four letters we had submitted since February 2010 (regarding how Eurostar copes with service disruptions) without any response having been previously received! We will continue to maintain our contact with them over issues of interest or where we consider improvements in service are needed.

Railfuture continues to be a member of the European Passengers' Federation (EPF), which is chaired by Trevor Garrod, and four members of the Committee attended the EPF AGM in Barcelona in March. *Railfuture's* membership of AEDTF (L'Association Européenne pour le Développement du Transport Ferroviaire) has now lapsed, as we felt continued membership represented poor value for money.

The Committee encouraged *Railfuture* branches to contact their MEPs and a few did so. We will continue to work with branches to establish effective liaison with their MEPs.

We provided examples of good and bad air/rail co-ordination to the European Commission at its request.

We were disappointed by the ending of the winter ferry service between Holyhead and Dun Laoghaire (Dublin) with its good onward connections by rail and a meeting took place between Peter Walker from the Committee, Rowland Pittard from *Railfuture* Wales, Dr Mark Gleeson of Railusers Ireland and a representative from ferry operators STENA at Holyhead on 7th November. From the discussion it became clear that there was scope for better liaison between the ferry companies and the train and bus companies serving the ports. It was most welcome to learn that the ferry operators do co-operate with each other when things go wrong. We also pressed for schedules that allow for more attractive day trips between, for example, stations in Wales and in Ireland.

A further disappointment was the ending of ferry services from Stranraer to Belfast with the transfer by STENA of sailings to non-rail served Cairnryan. Rail passengers now have to endure a bus journey from Ayr all the way to Cairnryan although at least Ayr has a more frequent train service than Stranraer.

The proposal from Wandsworth Council for an "Airtrack Lite" scheme to Heathrow from Waterloo avoiding most of the level crossings in the previous scheme was welcomed.

The Committee has been in direct contact with DB (German Railways) over their plans to run ICE trains to and from London St Pancras and there was disappointment over the two-year delay to the start of these services until December 2015. At least international freight services have now at long last started to use the UK high-speed line (HS1) between the Channel Tunnel and London.

POLICY, LOBBYING AND CAMPAIGNS COMMITTEE

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Norman Bradbury

As normal, the committee met three times during the year, on 12th February and 8th October in Birmingham and on 28th May in London.

The Chairman's attempts to arrange a meeting with Theresa Villiers were declined on the basis that she was "too busy". However, a successful meeting with Maria Eagle, Shadow Transport Secretary, took place on 19th January and this led to an invitation to her Rail Round Table meeting in Portcullis House on 11th July. The purpose of this meeting was to help her formulate Labour Party rail policy in light of the Sir Roy McNulty Value for Money report. The Committee Secretary (Norman Bradbury) represented Policy Committee at this meeting.

The Committee was also represented at the joint Network Rail/Passenger Focus meeting in London to discuss the forthcoming 2nd Generation London & South East RUS. A number of other meetings were attended by the Committee Secretary and these included the ACORP conference in Lewes on 11th February, the 'Gov Today' Sustainable Transport Conference on 16th February, Network Development Committee meetings on 29th January, 2nd July & 1st October, the Branch & Committee reps meeting in Derby on 15th October, the Public Service Events conference in London on 17th November at which the principal speakers were Sir Roy McNulty and Anna Walker, various Right Lines Charter meetings including the reception in the House of Commons on 18th October which was attended by 15 MPs and the CBT Fares Fair seminar in Portcullis House on 21st November.

Policy committee submitted the *Railfuture* response to the Transport Select Committee High Speed Rail inquiry.

The Chancellor's decision to limit rail fare increases to 1% above inflation may have been influenced by the CBT campaign and representations made by *Railfuture* Passenger Committee etc.

Norman Bradbury also represents Policy Committee on TAR (Transport Round Table) meetings and the Transport Taxation Group meetings. Unfortunately, due to funding constraints, only one TAR meeting was held this year and this was to discuss the Planning Bill but Norman Bradbury was unable to attend this meeting. However, he did attend the Taxation Group meeting on 7th October and followed this up with a paper on the external costs of road transport. This could lead to a study by the Metropolitan Transport Research Unit being commissioned on aspects of road costs.

It was noted, however, that the Chancellor's Autumn Statement contained the announcement that private executive jet aircraft will now be taxed and this is considered to be the result of successful campaigning by the Transport Taxation Group which has raised this issue over a number of years.

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

network-development@railfuture.org.uk

Ian McDonald

The Network Development Committee met four times in 2011, three times in Birmingham and once in London (also most recently in January 2012). We were pleased to welcome Dr. David Berman, Norman Bradbury, Philip Shelton, and David Shaw on to the Committee during the year. Our secretary, Chris Austin OBE, continues to carry out good work liaising with heritage railways, and encouraging their members to join *Railfuture*. David Berman has been especially helpful with his transport consultancy background, and his IT expertise has also provided valuable help to us.

"Britain's Growing Railways, an A-Z of Rail Reopenings", published in 2010, continued to make good sales, although the take-up by members at the reduced price of £7.50, could be even better, and we urge branches to encourage members to buy copies and keep up to date with developments and line and station reopenings, not always fully covered in the railway press. We continue to work on the production of its companion volume "Britain's Growing Railway, Vision and Reality", focusing on lines and some of the stations *Railfuture* branches are seeking for opening/reopening, and providing advice on campaign strategies. This should be published in summer 2012, rather later than previously intended, due to the amount of work involved.

Not surprisingly, the Government's plans for high-speed rail line HS2 took up much of our time, in consultation with branches, and examination of the proposals. We helped organise the *Railfuture* High Speed Conference in July in Bletchley, attended by over 100 people, both members and non-members, for which *Railfuture* was well praised. A full report of this Conference will be published separately in due course. At this Conference we published our formal submission to the DfT's public consultation on HS2, which can be downloaded on our website, plus the press releases issued since. While naturally very supportive of a high-speed route to the north and its consequent relief of classic lines for more regional, commuter and freight services to be provided, we nevertheless criticised the lack of an overall UK transport strategy. We urged the need for a 4-track route, and criticised the lack of rail connectivity, the parkway stations proposed, and the highly controversial route through the Chilterns, which regrettably, together with the scheme's high cost, may ultimately scupper the scheme. We recommended a route following existing rail and motorway transport corridors, a lower maximum speed, and a far better link between HS2 and HS1.

We are also currently updating our Railway Electrification paper to take account of recent Government plans for expansion, and do not overlook other rail developments.

We continue to receive requests for financial support for reopening campaigns from branches and affiliated groups, which are granted if the proponents can present a well-planned and coherent case for a worthwhile scheme, show value for money, backed up with a full report and details of actual costs. We encourage this use of our funds.

PASSENGER COMMITTEE**passenger@railfuture.org.uk****Howard Thomas**

The Passenger Committee met four times in 2011 alternating between Birmingham and London venues. The work of the committee was strengthened with the arrival of further new members during the year. However, the committee had to let go an effective acting secretary whose work will be missed.

During the year, the committee was unable to meet with ATOC, but did have its now regular meeting with Passenger Focus attended by four committee members in July. As usual, a wide range of rail issues was discussed at this meeting. In particular, the meeting covered progress on the recommendations made by Chris Green and Peter Hall in their report *Better Rail Stations*. Once again, it was encouraging to note from this meeting that the work of *Railfuture* is both valued and respected in official and railway circles.

The committee continues to examine 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. Standard class passengers are now banned from restaurant cars on a regular basis, 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.

The committee maintains a watching brief on fares. It was encouraged by the early action of the new Secretary of State for Transport, Justine Greening, in curtailing the proposed fares increases for 2012 from RPI+3% to RPI+1%. However, the committee is concerned that this was a 'one-off' action, and that the RPI+3% formula is expected to apply for the next two years. Just how much users of a public service railway should be expected to contribute by way of investment is a vexed question, which the committee will continue to examine.

Earlier in the year, the committee was pleased to note that at long last, programmes for railway electrification are to be implemented. It is to be hoped that a more holistic and system-wide than hitherto approach to electrification will be adopted.

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

The committee met on four occasions; Birmingham twice, and once in Peterborough and Oxford. Our agenda business formed a number of varied topics, ranging from local issues, regional news and items of national significance.

We maintained a core of campaign activities, such as lobbying for or against on promoters' planning applications, supporting interchange developments, alongside infrastructure upgrades. Additional, reviewing innovative ideas, area traffic gains or losses, heritage railways, and facilitating the use of the Channel Tunnel for rail freight also featured.

Despite continued pressure to resist longer, heavier goods vehicles, the Government authorised the trial of a limited amount of longer road trailers over a ten year period, potentially undermining the switch of lighter volume loads from road to rail.

Stabilisation of bulk staple traffic continued, further improved with the carriage of new flows like imported biomass, and road de-icing salt. This was eclipsed however by the continued growth of containerised movements, both from ports and between domestic points, helped from positive developments to enlarge the railway loading gauge on key corridors, besides the introduction of a new low platform wagon design aimed at routes where physical restrictions still apply.

Communications with established third parties, such as the Rail Freight Group, Freight-on-Rail, and local authorities, were strengthened from an invitation to become an advisory member of a single wagon study team headed by Newcastle University.

Delegates attended seminars on planning for urban freight hosted jointly by Department for Transport and The Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport, and The Future of Planning for Infrastructure by the Westminster Energy, Environment and Transport Forum.

In summary, the efforts of a small voluntary panel, correspondents and wider society participants is important to retain, promote, and expand modern rail freight usage going forward. Further, inclusion of additional people with rail, logistics and transport industry background to the committee is welcomed, as is those with a general interest in non-passenger activities.

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

Railwatch continues to rely on *Railfuture* members who provide letters, articles, reports and pictures. *Railwatch* aims to disseminate news of *Railfuture*'s campaigning activities to a wider audience and we are worried that some of your good work does not get reported.

Please tell us about your achievements as well as problems. If it is published in *Railwatch*, it is often picked up by other media outlets. Please include *Railwatch* if groups you are involved with issue press releases. *Railwatch* also aims to provide a platform for discussion about *Railfuture* itself while not undermining the agreed policy of the organisation.

The editorial board would like to record its thanks to Peter Rayner who, with his 16 years of regular articles in the magazine, gave *Railfuture* members the benefit of his lifetime's experience of working for the railway. He contributed his final, regular Rayner's Review in the December issue but we are hoping he will still write occasional articles in future.

Our overall production costs have been held steady during 2011 and Print-Out of Histon, Cambridge, continued to print all copies of *Railwatch* during the year.

Distribution was carried out efficiently by the professional firm, Mailhandlers of London E2. They have provided good service throughout 2011. Some members did not however receive the December 2010 issue until January 2011, because of disruption to the postal system, which Royal Mail blamed on two spells of snow in December.

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 which meets in London four times per year comprises Jerry Alderson, Dr. David Berman, Roger Blake, Lloyd Butler, Alan Cocker, John Barfield, John Davison, Laurence Fryer, Ray King, Graham Morrison (secretary), John Stanford and Robert Stevens.

INFORMATION, PUBLISHING & COMMUNICATIONS GROUP ipc@railfuture.org.uk **Dr. David Berman**

At the end of 2010, the Board established the Information, Publishing & Communications Group or IPC for short! The aim was to ensure that **Railfuture** was able to produce effective and professional publications and information.

Throughout the year the IPC has produced papers and presentations, aided in the compilation of press releases and given advice and support where necessary. In 2012 the IPC has been directed by the Board to take a much more pro-active role in the production of advertising material. We will also be pursuing the update of the **Railfuture** family of websites and the issues of digital publishing will be addressed along with other online services.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE REVIEW GROUP governance@railfuture.org.uk **Dr. David Berman**

At the end of 2011, the Board set up a review group to examine the way **Railfuture** is funded, organised and operated. This is a major task and all members will, I hope, get fully involved in this exciting endeavour.

DISABILITY ISSUES SUB-COMMITTEE disability@railfuture.org.uk **Clara Zilahi**

During the year the Board decided it would be better to have a team rather than an individual dealing with disability matters, and this was duly set up. The team currently consists of David Harby (Lincolnshire), Mike Harrison (Scotland), Stephen Aselford (London & South East), Paul Byrne (North West) and Clara Zilahi (East Anglia), who will act as coordinator for the time being. Matters sent in by members can be sent to a team member in their area if there is one.

I have read in a press report that several TOCs will accept booking for disabled help only if received through the official help line. Even where stations were ready to help with booking such help they are no longer allowed to do so.

CYCLING SUB-COMMITTEE cycling@railfuture.org.uk **Chris Hyomes**

Members of the cycling committee have kept a watching brief throughout the year, including maintaining contact with cycling and green groups, but have been too busy on other **Railfuture** projects to take a more pro-active stance on bikes and trains. We would welcome members who are willing to take a more active role. Please get in touch if you are interested.

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

Membership at the end of 2011 was 2135 with 107 family members counted as two (31.12.2010 = 2238), showing another net loss of over 100 members. Together with current data showing an ageing membership, the rate of loss is not exceptional but it is still a great cause for concern. The Age Analysis shows that over half of our membership is over 65 and this proportion could be greater, given that there are over 1,000 members for whom we have no age recorded. This makes it even more crucial that members email their year of birth to renewals@railfuture.org.uk, or write to me at the company's registered address, so that we can have a more complete picture of our membership.

On the recruitment front we are simply not recruiting enough to replace those we lose and not enough of those we do recruit are like the enthusiastic 30 – 50 years olds who joined in the 1980s and who still substantially form the core of our active membership today. The website and one-to-one recruitment continue to provide a majority of new members. We will soon be adding the facility to join and pay online – something often requested by prospective members – but if **Railfuture** is to continue to prosper, and have enough active volunteers, an exceptional effort is required of existing members to recruit new, and younger, members.

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 Worcester Guildhall, High St., Worcester WR1 2EY on Saturday 12th May 2012, starting at 11.00. We are also hosting a '**Rail Reopenings Conference**' at the Golden Lion Hotel, King Street, Stirling FK8 1BD on Saturday 16th June, and are planning a **Rail Users Conference** in Birmingham, 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, Tattingstone, 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

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