

rail*future*

London and South East regional branch

Annual General Meeting 2018

Saturday 28 April 2018

Kwanglim Room, Wesley's Chapel & Leysian Mission,
49 City Road, London EC1Y 1AU



South of Old Street roundabout and station, served by London Underground Northern line's City branch and Govia Thameslink Railway's Moorgate branch
Also served by London Buses routes 21, 43, 76, 141, 214, 271

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East>

Agenda

10.30 Doors open – refreshments available

11.00 Developments in Light Rail

KenEx Thames Transit <https://kenextransit.co.uk/>

Gordon Pratt

Cambridge Connect <http://www.cambridge-connect.uk/>

Dr Colin Harris

UK Tram <http://www.urbantransportgroup.org/resources/tram/uk-tram>

Andrew Braddock, Promotions Group Chair

14.00 formal Annual General Meeting for members

- 1 – Apologies for absence
- 2 – Minutes of AGM 29 April 2017
- 3 – Matters Arising
- 4 – Results of elections to branch committee 2018-19

Reports on 2017:

- 5 – Chairman/Vice-Chairman
- 6 – Treasurer
- 7 – Membership
- 8 – Divisions:
 - a – Eastern
 - b – Herts & Beds
 - c – Kent
 - d – London Metro
 - e – Surrey
 - f – Sussex & Coastway
- 9 – Branch campaigns
- 10 – Branch newsletter *raipse*

11 – 2018-19?

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017

held at the University of Westminster, 115 New Cavendish Street, London, W1W 6UW
on Saturday 29 April 2017

PRESENT: Chris Barker, George Bathurst, David Charlton, Peter Collingborn, Steve Costello, Nick Dibben, Keith Dyall, John Eddleston, John Fowden, Martin Freeman, Chris Fribbins, Peter Hillier-Palmer, H Trevor Jones, Charles King, Neil Middleton, Ian McDonald, Graham Morrison, Richard Porter, Howard Thomas, Dick Tyler, Peter Wakefield, Michael Waller

The meeting opened at 11.00.

**ACTION
BY**

Welcome: Keith Dyall, L&SE Chair (KD) welcomed all to the AGM.

Heathrow Expansion – improving surface access by rail

The Chairman welcomed:

Steve Costello of **Heathrow Southern Railway** (view the presentation at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display1540>) and

George Bathurst of **Windsor Link Railway** (view the presentation <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display1556>),

who explained their projects and how they related to other actual and potential railway projects in and around Heathrow, and answered questions.

It had been hoped to have an additional presentation from Network Rail on Western Rail Access to Heathrow. (<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/our-railway-upgrade-plan/key-projects/heathrow-rail-link/>) but that did not prove possible

It was noted in a wide-ranging discussion that while these projects were very specific in terms of delivering additional tracks, and the business cases were strongly related to Heathrow Airport, through running using the proposed infrastructure could enable significant improvements to rail services in the surrounding area.

RAILFUTURE LONDON AND SOUTH EAST BRANCH FORMAL AGM 2pm

- 1 Introducing the meeting, the Chairman explained that the full pack of reports had been distributed to members on arrival; it had previously been distributed by email to those members for whom email addresses were held.
- 2 **Apologies for absence**
Norman Bradbury, Jean Crighton, Nigel Denton, Chris Fribbins, Chris Page, Gordon Pratt
- 3 **Elections to branch committee**
There had been insufficient names to trigger a postal ballot for the Branch Committee. The following had therefore been elected unopposed:
Chair – Keith Dyall
Vice Chair – Roger Blake
Treasurer – Howard Thomas
Other Branch Committee members – Norman Bradbury, John Fowden, Charles King, Neil Middleton, and Chris Page
In addition, the Division Representatives are:
Howard Thomas (Eastern), Keith Dyall (Herts & Beds), Chris Fribbins (Kent), Charles King (London Metro), Chris Page (Surrey), Nigel Denton (Sussex & Coastway)
No nomination had been received for the position of Branch Secretary. The Committee would address this at its next meeting.

- 4 **Minutes of previous AGM, held on 23 April 2016, International Hall, London**
were AGREED.
- 5 **Matters Arising (not covered later in the Agenda) – none.**
- 6 **Chairman's Report for 2016**
The Report circulated with the Agenda was accepted as a valuable record of 2016 activities.
- 7 **Treasurer's Report for 2016**
The report circulated with the agenda was accepted.
Formally the accounts (having been approved by the scrutineer and the Branch Committee) had been submitted to the RF Board and had been incorporated in the national accounts. For its part, the meeting endorsed the accounts.
The Treasurer pointed out that funding availability was not a restriction to Branch activities.
- 8 **Membership Report**
The report circulated with the agenda was received. Membership remained broadly level. A major issue was the need to increase the number of members who were active in Branch activities and campaigning. There was also a need to attract a broader range of members. All members were encouraged to seek to introduce new members.
- 9 **Division Reports (2016)**
- a. **Eastern Division**
The year had seen the reopening of Lea Bridge station. But for campaigning by the Railfuture-affiliated Chingford Line Users Association, supported by the Division and a grant from Railfuture's Fighting Fund, this work would never have started.
For the future there was a lot happening or planned for the Lea Valley line and the Great Eastern main line from Liverpool Street through Stratford.
 - b. **Kent Division**
The Division had been active and continued to work with other organisations in the area.
 - c. **Sussex & Coastway Division**
This Division continued to campaign actively for rail improvements and was actively engaged with other bodies. In answer to a question, it was reported that the current industrial relations issues on Southern did not appear to have had any impact on our membership numbers.
 - d. **Herts & Beds Division**
The Division continued its pattern of meetings with active participation of Rail User Groups. Involvement in timetable consultations had been a significant issue, and while some positive outcomes had been achieved, there remained some concerns.
 - e. **Surrey Division**
Some meetings had been held jointly with Sussex and Coastway Division.
 - f. **London Metro Division**
This Division has not yet started regular meetings, but some members developed a rail manifesto for May's elections for Mayor of London and the Greater London Assembly.
- 10 **Branch Campaigning Report**
The report of campaigning activities, including those which Railfuture was leading, those it was supporting, and other more general activities. In discussion, reference was made to the continuing need to monitor the effects of developing national policies on rail service development within the Branch area – for example 3rd rail electrification.
- 11 **Branch newsletter *railse* Report**
The meeting noted the formal report and expressed appreciation of the content of *railse*.
- 12 **Resolutions – None.**
- 13 **Other Business – None.** The meeting then closed at 16.05.

4 – Results of elections to branch committee 2018-19

Chairman: Keith Dyll

Vice-Chairman: Roger Blake

Secretary: no nomination

Treasurer: Howard Thomas

Others: John Fowden, Charles King, Neil Middleton, Chris Page

Reports on 2017:

5 – Chairman/Vice-Chairman

London and South East regional branch has roundly 25% of the entire national membership of Railfuture, and London alone has about 25% of that branch total. Owing to our numeric size as well as geographic spread we are unique among Railfuture branches in having our sub-structure of Divisions, and that is the level at which much of our engagement with members, rail user groups and other organisations, and campaigning activity, takes place. The former is fully reflected in item 8 (reports from Divisions) below, and the latter is dealt with in more detail in item 9 (Branch campaigns) below.

Your branch committee has overseen and co-ordinated those various activities, and officers have led on some of the several consultation responses submitted. Our approach mirrors that of the national organisation, which has its eye focused firmly on our vision for Railfuture as an independent organisation whose views are respected by the rail industry, to which decision-makers come for advice, and which rail users are proud to join, and to recommend. Those familiar with the story of the Tuskegee Airmen, the first all-African-American Air Force squadron during WW2, will know the closing line in the 1995 film: “We weren’t assigned; we were requested.” Is that not Railfuture’s aspiration for its position of influence too?

Clarity of objectives matters, not just in the subject-matter of our campaigning but in the manner in which we conduct that campaigning. We can point to two particular examples of recent success in that approach, both to do with changing operators’ timetable plans. In the cases of GTR and SWR the fruits of our labours in 2017 will be seen in May and December 2018 respectively. Sometimes awkward, always constructive is one characterisation of our style. While some prefer confrontation we can demonstrate that negotiation delivers real results for passengers’ benefit.

There are many and diverse opportunities for members and supporters to add further value to our activities, much of it through helping to develop our relations with those whom we seek to influence in organisations of every scale and at every level.

I must again thank my fellow branch committee members for all their efforts in continued commitment to our cause. Particular thanks to John for filling part of the gap left by the vacant position for Secretary by being our de facto Minutes Secretary!

6 – Treasurer

The London & South East Branch received a subvention of £2,965 in support of its budget proposal for the year to 31 December 2017. A further £2,000 was made available to support campaign and lobbying work. The main feature of the Branch's accounts for 2017 was the surplus of £792.30, down from £1,129.05 in 2016. As in 2016, this is largely accounted for by underspending against the 2017 budget in a number of cost centres, as follows:

- Campaigns and lobbying: the amount spent was £1,047.04, some £952.96 less than the amount made available by Railfuture;
- The 2016 AGM came in at £349.00, £49.00 more than was provided for in the 2017 budget;
- Running the Divisions came to £735.15, against a budget of £975.00.

Unbudgeted income and expenditure included:

- £37.50 for the purchase of books;
- £140.00 for the sale of books and pens; and
- Proceeds of £15.70 from the sale of coffee/tea at the AGM.

There was a net increase in cash and cash equivalents of £669.56 in the bank balance from £3,757.25 at 01/01/2017 to £4,426.81 at 31/12/2017.

Railfuture's policy is to provide for 20% depreciation on cost in each of the first four accounting years of use, and to write down the value of non-current (fixed) assets to £1.00 in the fifth year. Thereafter, the non-current assets remain at £1.00 until they are disposed of. Following this policy, I have charged £134.50 for depreciation in 2017 (see: *Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 31 December 2017*). Following this, the net values of both the Gazebo and the Projector are now down to £1.00. During the year, a trestle table was bought for £32.99.

In 2017, Divisions were asked to prepare their own figures for inclusion in the Branch budget for 2018. This went well, and the Branch proposals for 2018 have been approved by the Railfuture Board. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking the Divisions for their work and cooperation on this. Inviting and encouraging the Divisions to submit budget proposals is now a regular activity.

7 – Membership

We gained 26 new members during 2017 (including 2 new affiliated Rail User Groups – Sutton Rail Users Forum and Cooksbridge Station Partnership), up from 19 new members in 2016, but still less than the 31 new members in 2015. We lost 40 members including Abbey Flyer Users' Group, whose representative has moved out of the branch area, and Chingford Line Users' Association. At the end of 2017 we had 463 members, a net loss of 20, comprising:

- 185 Full, 205 Reduced rate (pensioner/student/unwaged)
- 18 Family, 25 Life
- 19 Rail User Group, 3 Supporter
- 3 each Honorary, VP
- 1 Company, 1 Affiliated group (Union)

This includes 22 members who primarily belong to other branches.

Although the majority of new members joined online, so we do not know what prompted them, we do know that the remainder were either introduced by a member, picked up one of our leaflets at an event or their local station, or heard about us on the radio. We need to continue to raise our profile by being seen to be active and campaigning, maximising opportunities for publicity and telling our friends, relatives and colleagues about Railfuture, so that we can recruit more members and continue to grow. We must also make our meetings more welcoming to new members, so that they stay and become active.

Disproportionately few of our new members live in London - we must do more to activate our London Metro division.

We have to make use of electronic and social media. In particular we need email addresses for all our members so that we can communicate by email - post is now too expensive to notify details of meetings or events, or request support for campaigns. Please let the national membership secretary lloyd.butler@railfuture.org.uk or the branch membership secretary chris.page@railfuture.org.uk have your email address - it will not be passed outside Railfuture.

8 – Divisions:

a – Eastern

Perhaps 2017 has been a bit of an anti-climax following the May 2016 reopening of Lea Bridge station and re-establishment of its direct rail links with Stratford and Tottenham Hale for the Lea Valley Line. The year has seen rapidly growing use of the service between Stratford and Tottenham Hale, along with increasing use of Stratford as both railhead and interchange. It was reported that the year saw Stratford exceed London Bridge as a railhead and interchange station if Tube and DLR volumes were included.

The division has started work on evaluating station facilities in its catchment to focus on a range of issues including access for the disabled, toilet facilities, etc.

Other developments and activities during the year have been:

- Ongoing work to electrify the Barking – Gospel Oak Line
This has continued to involve blockades during the year, during which alternative arrangements for passengers have not always been satisfactory. Additional blockades were required following the discovery of technical faults in the design and implementation of the work. Following the government's moratorium on electrification, the scope of the scheme has now been reduced, omitting freight links to the Midland Main Line and into London Gateway.

- Rebuilding work at Chelmsford station
The rebuilding work at Chelmsford was finally completed in February, although the new concourse had been completed and formally opened the previous October.

- Beaulieu Park Station
For the second consecutive year, it has to be reported that not a lot appeared to be happening with the proposal for a new station north-east of Chelmsford in connection with a new housing development.

- Infrastructure work on the Great Eastern Main Line in connection with the TfL Rail/Elizabeth Line

Work to reconfigure the track around Shenfield to accommodate a new platform 6 and sidings for Elizabeth Line trains involved the termination of Metro trains at Brentwood until the end of the Winter timetable in May. This has now been completed with most Southend line trains serving platform 4 and making better use of the dive-under facility to the east of the station. Delays to London-bound trains from the Great Eastern Main Line approaching Shenfield because of down Southend line trains crossing have been significantly reduced.

- New class 345 trains for the TfL Rail/Elizabeth Line

New class 345 trains have been coming on stream since May, although the majority of services are still in the hands of class 315s. The initial 345s have seven carriages with three sets of doors on each side, giving 21 sets per train as opposed to the 16 sets in the eight-car class 315 trains. This should ease boarding and alighting during the peaks, but this has yet to be evaluated.

- Lea Valley line capacity improvement

Preparatory work has been taking place to enable a third track to be installed as far as Angel Road in connection with an enhanced service level between Stratford and Tottenham Hale. However, Network Rail is now talking about completion of this project in 2019 rather than by May 2018.

In the meantime, the Eastern Division has kept a watching brief on other matters such as passenger service reliability, fares and other local issues including the growing problem of overcrowding at Stratford station during peak times.

b – Herts & Beds

The Division met in St. Albans on three occasions, with around 20 attendees on average plus representatives from Thameslink and Herts County Council. The main topic throughout the year was the revised timetable that was being prepared for the completed Thameslink scheme. Whilst the general principles were acceptable there were a number of items of complaint from member organisations. Whilst there were to remain 4 trains per hour to Gatwick the different stopping patterns meant that with a 13-minute difference journey time between alternate trains they arrived at Gatwick within two minutes of each another. For the inner suburban services there was disappointment that two thirds of their services went around the Sutton Loop as it was felt this could bring unreliability into the service. One of the great disappointments which raised a great furore was the failure of Network Rail to build an extra platform at Stevenage in time which meant that trains on the Hertford Loop would have to terminate at Watton-at-Stone and that journeys beyond to Stevenage would have to be by dedicated coach. All of the division's members have let the DfT and the railway authorities know that this is highly unsatisfactory.

We as well as Railfuture nationally spent considerable effort crafting a reply to the Midland Main Line franchise consultation and after reviewing the many initial reactions generated we put in a proposition to suit the many aspirations. At the turn of the year however the DfT announced plans to not stop East Midlands trains in the peak south of Kettering except at the Airport Parkway which pleases no-one except the airport.

We were pleased to see that the government was pressing on with preparations for East-West Rail and we met with the line's user group and with East Anglia and Thames Valley branches to discuss progress.

There was universal dismay about the Metropolitan Line Extension which the new Mayor of London is not willing to support, however with the new franchisee the Abbey line received better news in that it was to get a later evening service and 'new' trains which will make operation easier and also there would be better revenue protection.

We finish up with good news in that the Hadley Wood user group encouraged by us have succeeded in getting a disabled users' ramp to the down slow line platform, with facilities to cross over to the up trains at Potters Bar. They have also fought to get their train service quarterly instead of half-hourly. They had a plaque unveiled by their former MP Michael Portillo at a very well-attended event to celebrate their station as the one used by one-time resident Sir Nigel Gresley.

c – Kent

The Kent area saw a lot of activity on the network during 2017, with the major works at London Bridge dominating the news, but other major works including new stations at Abbey Wood (to service Crossrail/Elizabeth Line) and in the Medway Towns, a new station building at Strood following on from the new station at Rochester. Snodland was upgraded to support the additional stop on the Highspeed service between Maidstone West and St Pancras. Kent division members were involved in consultation meetings on most of these. As a result 2018 will see new Thameslink services to Rainham (Kent) and Crossrail opening, although the service between Cambridge and Maidstone East has been delayed for a year to allow the increase in Blackfriars to St Pancras services to bed down.

The division has been involved in discussions with Network Rail around the new Kent Area Route Study. This was delayed by the snap General Election and we are still waiting to see the final detailed proposals. There were also discussions with the DfT and potential bidders for the new South East franchise, which was due to start in 2018, but the programme slipped and the new franchise will now start in April 2019. The division responded to the consultation and have met with all three bidders (Govia - current operator, Abellio and Stagecoach) to discuss our ideas and build an ongoing relationship. There have also been meetings with Kent County Council and Medway Council as well as regular stakeholder meetings with Southeastern.

Representations to the Medway Local Plan suggesting the upgrade of the existing Hoo Junction to Grain freight line for passenger traffic to support the large housing development proposals in the area appear to have been welcomed and discussions have taken place with Network Rail, further details are likely to be available in 2018. A suitable cost-effective solution is being sought with the potential for further growth in the future if required (Crossrail tracks are already being considered for extension to Hoo Junction, for stabling, in the future).

The Division does need more support from its members as due to the personal responsibilities of the Division Organiser only two meetings were held during 2017 - more help and ideas from members will be appreciated.

d – London Metro

The early part of 2017 was taken up by the launch of the GTR weekday timetable consultation for May 2018 in which Thameslink through trains would start running between Bedford, Cambridge and Peterborough and Brighton, Gatwick Airport, Sevenoaks and Ashford, using automatic train control through the core. We supported the changes whereby the Caterham and Tattenham Corner trains remained part of the Southern Metro network rather than transfer to Thameslink. We supported the transfer of Orpington trains on the Catford Loop as this increases in service frequency to 4 trains per hour. We also supported the diversion of Thameslink services to Rainham and to Maidstone/Ashford as these will increase journey opportunities across London.

We expressed the need for Thameslink to improve their contingency plans at times of disruption when an incident north or south of the core had a knock-on effect to trains running across the core. This is especially important for the lines which are totally dependent on Thameslink trains such as Luton/Bedford, Catford and Wimbledon loops.

We commented on the Mayor of London's draft Transport Strategy <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display1606> in which Railfuture supported the proposed vision and its central aims to reduce pollution, encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport. We suggested that this should be subject to interim targets at 4-year intervals to which the Mayor can be held accountable by the GLA's Transport and other Committees. We also supported the Mayor's aim to keep public transport affordable. Railfuture also agreed with plans that would improve accessibility of the transport system.

On control and use of the rail network Railfuture supported Proposal 59 and added that a key part of achieving it will be working with the ORR and Network Rail to release unused freight paths for use by passenger services and in particular to challenge, if necessary with legislation to amend existing statute, the allocation of paths on the West London Line. Railfuture wholeheartedly endorsed Proposals 60 and 61. We have long since and shall continue to advocate the advantages to passengers and to local communities and their economies of devolving from the DfT to TfL though the Mayor powers over rail services in London.

In December, we responded to the GTR May 2018 timetable proposals for Late Night and Weekend services. We expressed concern about proposals to reduce services after midnight from Sunday to Thursday from London Bridge and Victoria. We expressed concern over the reduction of overnight airport services on Saturday night/Sunday mornings. We welcomed the number of additional night services from Victoria on Friday and Saturday nights. We also expressed concern over the service frequency at a number of stations where the weekend frequency was very uneven particularly in the outer zones.

e – Surrey

The Division contributed strongly to the Railfuture response to the South Western Railway December 2018 timetable consultation, and held a meeting in Woking on 16th November where Phil Dominey, South Western Railway's Stakeholder Manager, and their timetable planner were present to explain the reasons for the proposed changes and also to cover topics such as:

- Staff engagement (and Driver Controlled Operation)
- Community engagement
- Rolling stock changes
- Improving the journey experience
- Engaging passengers

We also contributed to the Railfuture response to the Govia Thameslink Railway timetable consultation.

Surrey Division members were invited to attend a joint meeting with Sussex & Coastway Division in Haywards Heath on 20th July, where the guest speaker was Angie Doll, Passenger Services Director for Southern and Gatwick Express.

f – Sussex & Coastway

The Sussex and Coastway Division has continued to meet each month (other than in August) at locations across both East and West Sussex.

In 2017 we had two joint meetings with the Surrey Division in Haywards Heath where in June we welcomed Phil Hutchinson of GTR who discussed a number of issues in connection with the GTR 2018 Timetable Consultation and in July Angie Doll of Southern and Gatwick Express came to share her thoughts. One of the highlights of the latter meeting was a film taken from a drone above Windmill Bridge junction (North of East Croydon) over a two-hour afternoon period (sped up!) showing around forty conflicting train movements. This demonstrates something of the scale of the problems with which the much-criticised GTR has to contend. This film deserves the same status as the 'London to Brighton in Four Minutes' film familiar to most of our members. Both of these meetings did provide a forum for groups from across our area to discuss and share mutual problems – something that Railfuture by its nature is well able to do. Collectively, we supported GTR's Jane Cobb of the 2018 Timetable Consultation team in reporting on the appearance of publicity posters at stations across Sussex and south London for the second and third phases. In a similar vein at the February meeting held in St. Leonard's just prior to the Hastings Rail Summit we invited representatives of the local user groups for mutual sharing of hopes and aspirations.

Following on from this, members of our group were involved in joint meetings with GTR's Phil Hutchinson which led to improved train scheduling on the Eastbourne to Hastings section of East Coastway and by extension through to Ashford.

As usual most of the activities in between meetings has focussed on our two major campaigns namely improvements to the Marshlink Line (between Hastings and Ashford) and re-instatement of the Wealden Line (between Uckfield and Lewes).

The Marshlink campaign has borne fruit as there are now plans to build the link with HS1 at Ashford (albeit actually in Kent) in Network Rail's Control Period 6. Unfortunately, our Wealden line extension campaign has, as it were, been moved into a passing loop (rather than hitting the buffers) as despite its previously high national profile any progress seems now wholly dependent upon a sufficient number of houses being built along the route. However, we took our stall along to the annual Uckfield Festival's Big Day in July and were encouraged by the continuing amount of local support for our campaign.

One of the most encouraging aspects of the past year has been the fact that the regular attendance is now of the order of fifteen at each meeting. This means that between us we cover an enormous range of organisations such as local authorities, LEPs, RUGs and CRPs either through members' direct involvement or our own direct representation at meetings and thus we are able to contribute to Railfuture's responses to consultations (of which there are an increasing number).

A visitor to our November meeting in Brighton was Clive Robey of Network Rail who manages the level crossings in the Barnham area. While the number of level crossings along the East and West Coastway and Marshlink lines are a constant irritation few of us had previously thought about either their complexity or the underlying safety issues. Some of our members actively took up the safety challenge and distributed the relevant NR leaflets in their area. So maybe we are getting something right!

9 – Branch campaigns

Railfuture occupies the unique and valued position of being the only long-established, national, independent, and voluntary pro-rail lobby group. Our campaigning for expansion and improvement to develop a bigger better railway in Britain continually seeks to inform and to influence, to promote and persuade. We do so in the relatively benign environment of historically high levels of passenger patronage, with passenger journey volumes showing in 2017 only variable fluctuations to sustained long-term growth across our region's operators taken together, albeit with some significant signs of change in journey patterns. Strong and sustained capital investments in the railway assets of rolling stock and infrastructure appear likely to continue, with new train fleets in 2017 part of a continuing trend and with a substantial SoFA (Statement of Funds Available) from the DfT for 2019-24 in CP6, to be focused on operations, maintenance and especially renewals.

Our own campaign to reconnect Brighton and coastal communities in the west of East Sussex with their Wealden neighbours and London had a sixth, eventful year in 2017. The year began with the introduction to the Transport Secretary of the private sector London and Southern Counties Railways Consortium, whose interest we welcome and support. Announced in both Budgets in 2015 and completed in April 2016, the London and South Coast Rail Corridor Study was eventually published by the DfT in March 2017, and we responded with a website article <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1737-New-approach-to-Uckfield> which embraced the 'New approach to Lewes-Uckfield' recommended in the report, and we published a fourth edition of our 'Bridge the gap' leaflet.

In June the DfT published the Gibb report on improving the performance of GTR in their management contract and again we responded with a website article <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1744-Southern-could-be-buzzin> and an updated 'Electrify Uckfield!' leaflet. Then in July the guide "*Expanding the Railways – how to develop and deliver a proposal*" was published jointly by Railfuture with the Campaign for better Transport and the DfT and reported in our website article <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1745-Expanding-the-Railways>. The year closed with the DfT's "*Connecting people – a strategic vision for rail*" and again Railfuture responded with an article <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1763-Fixing-our-creaking-railways>. It is noteworthy that of the 21 national website articles published in 2017, '*New approach to Uckfield*' and '*Expanding the Railways*' were respectively the second and third most read, and '*Southern could be buzzin*' the fifth.

We continued and developed our active support for the campaign to rejuvenate the coastal economies of Hastings and Bexhill by reducing journey times for London extending HS1 services from Ashford across MarshLink via Rye, a third Transport Minister attending the local MP's third transport Summit in March. Revived by the twin threats of no electrification of MarshLink and a split Ashford-Brighton service, attention increasingly concentrated on advocating the benefits of new and converted bi-mode trains to deliver the benefits both of through HS1 services and of retaining the through local service. Our other principal campaigning activity has been responding to the steady flow of consultations throughout the year. Experience in our branch and others is that evidence of active campaigning is one of the surest ways of attracting new members. Our responses can be viewed at or downloaded from <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Consultation+responses>. Perhaps the 'consultation of the year', with the most widespread implications for the branch region, was GTR's proposals for the post-Thameslink Programme timetable in 2018. This coincided with ongoing disputes affecting Southern services; our national website article <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1694-Train-staff-duties> in June 2016 was the most-read of that year, and by far and away since, or before, with now getting on for 10,000 reads.

Other significant interventions during 2017 included our responses to DfT consultations on two new franchises, for South Eastern and East Midlands. We also responded to consultations on Kent County Council's Freight Action Plan, South Downs National Park Authority's Local Plan, and Network Rail's Kent Area Route Study. Govia Thameslink Railway and the new South Western Railway received submissions from us on their timetable changes for May and December 2018 respectively, and in both cases it is gratifying to report changes as a result of our influence. Transport for London and the Mayor of London attracted comment from us during consultations on the draft Transport Strategy, Holborn station upgrade, two new Overground stations for Old Oak, and a new Canary Wharf-Rotherhithe river crossing.

10 – Branch newsletter *raipse*

Four eight-page colour issues were published during 2017 as in previous years, and were as usual distributed with each Railwatch. In addition, views/downloads are always available from the branch web page at

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/London+and+South+East+branch+news>

While very little comment on the now-familiar format, or material suitable for publication, has been received such anecdotal feedback as there is remains positive and encouraging. One improvement to the branch website page suggested by a member, reported in the December issue no.138, has been the addition of 'Current consultations' as well as reporting those to which Railfuture submitted a response.

11 – 2018-19?

This is where you, our members, come in!

As a taster, your branch committee has, in common with the national approach for every one of Railfuture's 14 branches to have one headline campaign for a year, adopted the same principle for our six divisions and put forward these:

Eastern: Essex Rail Strategy

Herts & Beds: Midland Main Line new franchise and timetable

Kent: Hoo Peninsula passenger railway

London Metro: West London Orbital line development

Surrey: North Downs Line development

Sussex & Coastway: East Coastway/MarshLink development