



THAMES VALLEY

campaigning for
all Britain's rail users

THAMES VALLEY BRANCH Newsletter 99 August 2021

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Branch Annual General Meeting - Saturday 4th September 10.30 – 12.30 West Oxford Community Centre, Botley Road, Oxford, OX2 0BT

Our branch AGM this year will be held at the West Oxford Community Centre, Botley Road, Oxford, OX2 0BT at 10.30. After the formal business, our guest speaker will be John Ellis who is Chairman of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group. His talk will be about Stratford-Honeybourne-Oxford/Worcester and its progress since last November winning its bid to round 2 of the DfT's Ideas Fund as part of the Department's 'Restoring Your Railway' programme. Winning the bid has provided DfT funds to assist with production of a Strategic Outline Business Case, which has been returned to the DfT (and if we're all lucky the lead promoter, Stratford Rail Transport Group SRTG, with which CLPG collaborates along with Shakespeare Line Promotion Group and Solihull & Leamington Spa RUA, may have heard back from DfT on it by the time we meet in Oxford). John will likely also talk about the state of play with the work of the North Cotswold Line Taskforce under the Chairmanship of CLPG President Lord Faulkner of Worcester.

The Community Centre is on the north side of Botley Road just a few minutes walk from the station. There is a café on site. For more about the centre please see: [West Oxford Community Association | Home \(woca.org.uk\)](http://WestOxfordCommunityAssociation.org.uk)

This will be our first live meeting since pre-pandemic so we look forward to seeing many of you there. In the event that it has to switch to a virtual meeting at least one week's notice will be given.

Chairman's Comment

Putting the passenger first is key to a Bigger and Better Railway that Railfuture endlessly and successfully campaigns for. I fear the industry, during the boom times prior, seems to have forgotten this and took passengers (customers) for granted, despite Railfuture at branch and national level continually pointing out the obvious.

This came home to me whilst travelling to Paignton for a short break last week, on a busy holiday train, when a passenger (customer) approached the Train Manager, who was next to me at the time, asking "Is there a buffet on the train?" The answer was "No", "Can I get a sandwich?", to which the reply was "there is a trolley but there are no sandwiches today", and "unfortunately there is not hot water for coffee".

How did the industry manage to spend several billion pounds of taxpayers' money on "ironing board" seats, and long distance trains without buffets or proper catering? It is 4 hours to Penzance from the Thames Valley.

It is clear that the Branch needs to campaign for the needs of passengers first, as without passengers in the post-Covid world there will not be a Bigger and Better Railway.

Berkshire News

Reading Council have granted planning permission for street level improvements at Reading West station with provision of a ticket office and café/kiosk. The branch supported the application by GWR which should result in better amenities and less anti-social behaviour in the area. Once Reading Green Park station is open it is likely more passengers will change here for Kennet line services. Progress on Green Park station (and the adjacent development) appears to be slow, with as of mid-July only the platforms and steel framework for the station buildings in place.

Press Release from the Hampshire Community Rail Partnership:-

"The Hampshire Community Rail Partnership and Great Western Railway (GWR) are delighted to announce the launch of a new Community Rail Partnership, encompassing GWR rail services and stations between Reading and Basingstoke. Rail services between Reading and Basingstoke are key interchanges with other routes across the country and the new Community Rail Partnership will work with GWR to promote stations, services and destinations accordingly.

This is the third rail partnership within the Hampshire CRP remit, joining East Hampshire and Three Rivers CRPs. Aspirations for the new group include promoting the line, improving stations, developing integrated transport solutions at each station, enhancing local tourism, building communities around each station hub and attracting volunteers to take part in our activities. Alongside GWR, the new CRP looks forward to working with our wider rail colleagues including the Community Rail Network; Cross Country Trains and South Western Railway; Network Rail; local business Groups; councils at all levels; and local voluntary groups to bring the community and the rail industry together.

HCRP Chair and Director Nick Farthing said: "We are delighted with this new project and grateful to GWR for working with us and providing the initial funding. We look forward to working with other partners whom we are now approaching, to share our joint plans to promote the line to bring back and further increase passenger numbers along the line. Fellow Director Mark Miller and I look forward to hearing from other potential partners, stakeholders and volunteers who wish to help us raise the profile of this important railway link."

GWR Community Manager Emma Morris said: "Community rail plays a vital role ensuring people get the most from their railways. Working alongside local, regional, and national partners; Community Rail Partnerships; station adoption groups; and individual volunteers, community rail encourages social inclusion, community wellbeing and empowers economic development."

A full name for the CRP reflecting the route it serves has not yet been chosen, but ideas from stakeholders will be sought."

In response to this request for a name for the CRP, we have suggested "The Loddon Line" as the route runs roughly parallel to the river and rivers seem to be popular names for railways.

Consultations and other news

The branch committee have been busy in recent months responding to various consultations including our contribution to the Railfuture response to the EWR consultation which can be seen here:

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2717>

For Oxfordshire LTCP see: [display2641 \(railfuture.org.uk\)](https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2641)

For NR's TWA Order for Oxford station works see: [display2736 \(railfuture.org.uk\)](https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2736)

For the full library of responses see: [Railfuture | Consultation responses](#)

We were also represented at the recent Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan Examination Hearings making the case for provision of good connectivity between Salt Cross and Hanborough station and its associated expansion along with double tracking from there to Wolvercote Junction.

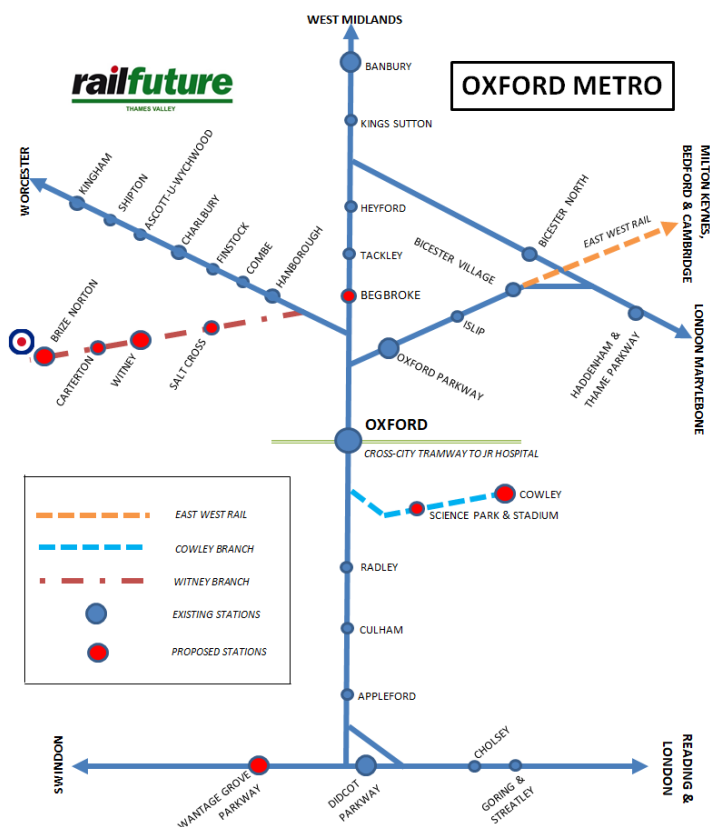
The branch also continues to work closely with Witney Oxford Transport ([Witney Oxford Transport Group – Sustainable Transport in West Oxfordshire](#)) in support of their campaign for a rail route to Witney and Carterton which, following the river theme mentioned above will, with luck, become "The Windrush Line".

The branch continues to be concerned about the future of the Aylesbury spur of EWR which is in limbo at present. It is probably not at serious risk due to the large numbers of housing planned for the north

of Aylesbury and the importance of Aylesbury having proper connectivity to Milton Keynes and the north but we keep up the pressure to ensure it is committed.

Oxford Metro

The publication of an article on the Railfuture website by committee member Nigel Rose (see [Railfuture | Oxford Metro](#)) with this map received a good level of local media coverage thanks to the efforts of our Media Officer, Dave Richardson, including on the front page of *The Oxford Mail*. Subsequently, the publication of Networks Rail's Oxford Rail Corridor Study contained broadly the same ideas.



On Sunday 2nd May 2021, Richard Stow (Branch Chairman) and Roger Blake (Board Member assisting with this project) together with Charlie Maynard (Chair of Witney Oxford Transport), made a fact finding trip along the former Witney Branch. The photo here was taken looking south to the former Yarnton Junction. (Charlie Maynard)



Railfuture's Dave Richardson on BBC South TV News on 1st March 2021 talking about the fares increase.

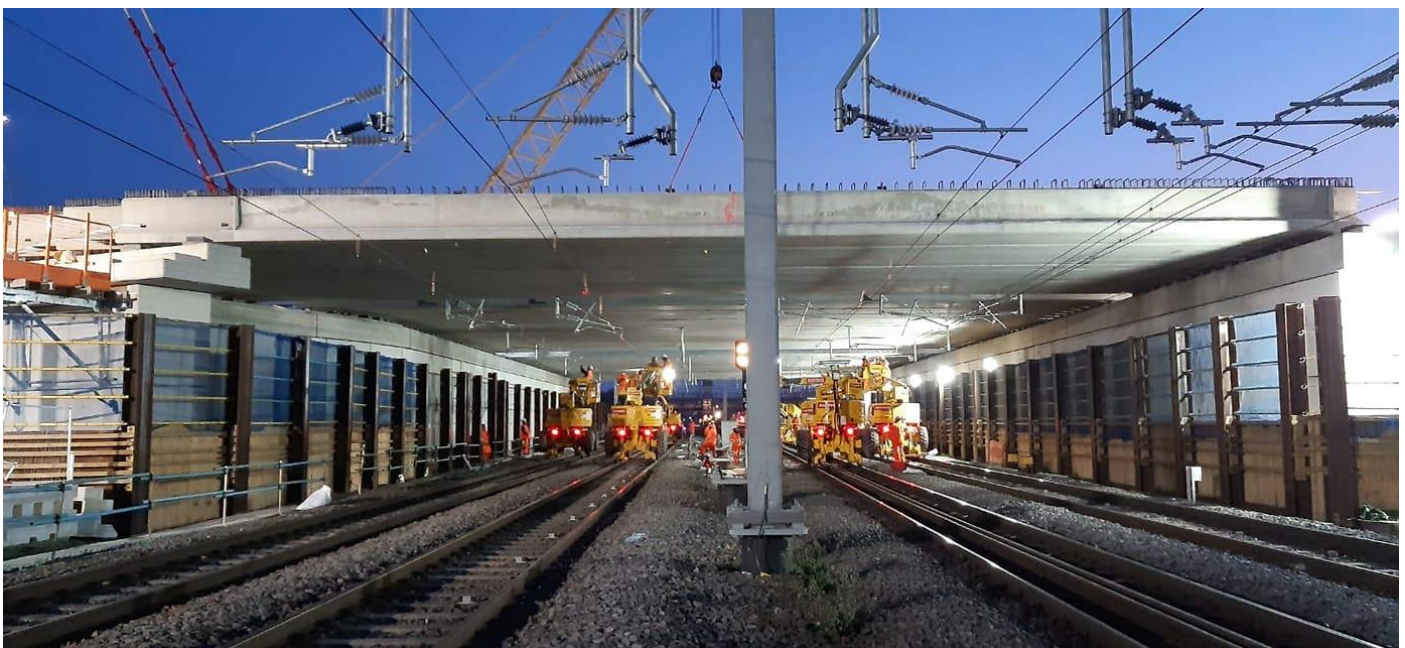


New bike sheds, or cycle hubs as we are supposed to call them, have opened at Newbury and Didcot Parkway Stations, seen here on 5th May 2021. New cycle racks have also been installed at Banbury but not in such an impressive structure. *(Both: Andrew McCallum)*



The new repeater signal at the end of platform 1 at High Wycombe has been installed. Unlike the signal at left it can be seen the length of the platform and will allow trains to use the full length thus reducing the long walk (twice as long for those connecting from the up platform). *(Nigel Phillips)*

GWR have named many of their 800/802 trains. Here is 800 025 *Captain Sir Tom Moore* at Reading on 5th May 2021. *(Andrew McCallum)*



A concrete 'tunnel' has been built over the WCML which was completed over the May Bank holiday weekend during a three-day possession when the line was shut south of Milton Keynes. This photo was taken from Bletchley station platforms looking south. *(John Elvin)*

The following photos are paired aerial and ground level views of selected locations on the EWR route between Bletchley and Bicester, all taken in May 2021. (Aerial photos by Richard Stow, ground level by John Elvin)



East of Winslow New bridge installed over Little Horwood Road with adjacent works site.



Winslow new station site adjacent to A413 Aylesbury to Buckingham Road. The new station building will be constructed on the right of the second picture.



Claydon Junction Early stage of new bridge construction for Queen Catherine Road to replace existing level crossing in centre of picture. New bridge foundations are on the centre left of aerial picture. Former Claydon station site is to the right of level crossing. Ground level, looking east towards the above site from remains of the disused Claydon loop.



Marsh Gibbon/Poundon Large work site to the left of the former station site (middle right) with new temporary access roads for the east and west approaches. Yet another road underbridge that is being completely replaced. Marsh Gibbon/Poundon bridge abutments awaiting delivery of new bridge deck.



Launton The EWR route runs diagonally from left (west) to right while, in the centre, work continues on building a new overbridge for a realigned Station Road. The existing road is closed until mid 2022. New road overbridge under construction from ground level.



Launton Road Bicester Centre of aerial photo shows the site of a new overbridge for Charbridge Lane with temporary road diversion in place while bridge is constructed. Westwards view towards site of new road overbridge being constructed for Charbridge Lane eastern ring road.

Edited by Andrew McCallum with contributions from Richard Stow & John Elvin.

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