



## West Midlands branch - campaigning for a bigger, better railway E-News September 2021

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### SECRETARY's MESSAGE - Colin Major

At last the industry is doing what your Branch has advocated, even before Covid, that it should not just put posters up at stations but advertise to the non-rail user. Great therefore that now they need to seek customers to see television advertisements encouraging the use of trains.

The Rail media is full of comments on the Williams- Shapps Plan for Rail but in the absence of exact details of how the ideas in the plan will be implemented it is just speculation. We will examine the full details once they are announced and await the Integrated Rail Plan due to be published this autumn. Whatever the plans are they will need legislation in Parliament for any structural changes which experience tells us will probably take 24 months.

We are delighted that twelve West Midlands submissions in tranche three of to the Restoring Your Railways have been approved for funding.

Your Committee has been busy since the last newsletter and to ensure that all our members are involved in Branch matters, we held the first hybrid (face to face and online) meeting by any Railfuture Branch on 7<sup>th</sup> September - a report is below.

We are very keen to see more goods being transported by rail rather than road so to this end we have formed a Task Group who are examining potential routes which will reduce the current circuitous routing around Birmingham for freight. Plus ideas on infrastructure enhancements to enable better use of Rail to Road distribution centres.

Other meetings have been with Senior Managers of Midlands Connect, Cross Country Trains, West Midlands Trains and GWR.

The coming months will be exciting as a clearer pattern of post covid rail usage emerges and we will be discussing changes in timetables to reflect these.

### **Railfuture West Midlands Branch Pioneers Hybrid Meetings.**

On Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September we met for the first-time face to face since February 2020. Despite it being a very hot evening eighteen of us met at the Carrs Lane Church in Birmingham to hear Ian Brown CBE FCILT give his ideas on the "Prospects for Rail in the West Midlands". We were joined by seven members online and were able to show that despite using a place without any specialised IT or equipment, just our Webcam and laptops, and the venue's projector, and screen it is a viable method of showing a meeting to the widest audience. The only clever(-ish) trick was to use a separate laptop for the speaker to progress his slides, with the same slide set screen-shared on the Laptop for the Zoom connection and an operator to advance those at the same time. Your Officers are in contact with Chiltern Railways, who have for many years allowed to use their training room for Committee Meeting, to see if we can log into their WI-FI system to provide online viewing of our Committee Meetings.

### **Railfuture West Midlands Campaigns 2021-22**

#### **Restoring Your Railway (RYR).**

Delighted to report that the following local campaigns, many of them aspirations of the Branch, have been granted funding in tranche 3 of the RYR.

Castle Bromwich & Fort Parkway stations  
Newcastle-under-Lyme  
Oswestry - Gobowen Line

Etruria Station  
Tettenhall area station (Wolverhampton)  
Coventry area stations study  
The Stourbridge Dasher – Stourbridge to Brierley Hill  
Lichfield - Burton on Trent / Derby  
Galley Common/Stockingford Station (Nuneaton to Birmingham line)  
Sutton Park Line for passengers  
Reinstatement of Stoke-Leek  
Reinstatement of rail track at the former Ironbridge Power Station

### **Midlands Connect**

We had a very constructive meeting with Midlands Connect's new Head of Rail, their Senior Rail Manager, and their Strategic Partnerships Lead. As Midlands Connect's prime objective is to improve connectivity across the Midlands we invited two members of Railfuture East Midlands our nearest adjoining Branch to join us.

Midlands Connect's big push is a modal shift from Road to Rail helped by their major rail project the "Midlands Rail Hub", which includes as the major component the extension of capacity at Moor Street via chords at Bordesley into the Camp Hill line, both northwards and south. This will offer the opportunity to provide additional services to the Northeast and Southwest. The DfT. have made funding available to Network Rail to examine and prepare the Strategic Outline Business Case.

In June the possible service increases to the Southwest were published by Network Rail in their "Bristol – Birmingham Corridor Study" whose proposals I include separately below.

In line with our thoughts they have proposals for a modal shift of freight from Road to Rail and were very interested in our Freight Task Group's initial ideas.

We raised the poor connectivity with the Midlands from the Marches Line especially from Hereford and Shrewsbury. They had themselves identified challenges for those in rural mid-Wales to connect with the Midlands.

We were delighted with the openness of the discussions and Midlands Connect have agreed that we should meet them on a regular basis.

### **Midlands Rail Hub**

The £2bn Midlands Rail Hub at the extended Birmingham Moor Street would offer 10 more trains/hour and 12 million more seats/year overall. Two new paths into the city centre would improve connections to Bromsgrove, Hereford, Worcester, and Cheltenham, as well as to Leicester, Derby and Nottingham

### **Network Rail Bristol -Birmingham Corridor Study.**

This 81-page study outlines service levels to the South- West once the Midlands Rail Hub is in place. Their proposals are: -

For fast services

From Midlands Rail Hub (MRH): - MRH -Bristol with a calling pattern Worcestershire Parkway, Cheltenham Spa-Bristol Parkway.

New Street - Existing XC Exeter – Manchester-service with a calling pattern Bristol Temple Meads, Bristol Parkway, Cheltenham Spa, Worcestershire Parkway, Birmingham New Street.

For Semi fast services: -

From Midlands Rail Hub (MRH):-1train per hour (tph) to Worcestershire Parkway, Ashchurch (for Tewkesbury), Bristol; 1 tph to Worcestershire Parkway, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Cardiff; and 1tph to Bromsgrove, Worcester, Hereford.

From New Street: 1tph Worcestershire Parkway, Gloucester, Cardiff; and 1 tph Worcester Shrub Hill, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Cardiff

Their proposal for urban services is to extend Cross City Line South to Worcester Foregate which implies electrifying the line from Bromsgrove. Plus extending two of the current Bristol to Gloucester services to Worcester which would deliver 2tph Gloucester to Worcester City and fills a substantial connectivity gap in the current timetable between stations in the south of the corridor and Worcester.

### **Broadway to Honeybourne**

The Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Steam Railway have been offered the ownership of trackbed north of Broadway their present terminus to Honeybourne by the present owner of the route, Railway Paths Limited (RPL). When doubling the Cotswold Line in 2011 Network Rail made 'passive provision' for the heritage railway to eventually reach Honeybourne and use one side of the island platform on the Upside of the main line. However GWSR has not

accepted this offer to take over the trackbed as it includes the maintenance of the five bridges on the line which are in a poor state. GWSR said “RPL has spent the minimum necessary to ensure the safety of the bridges over the line, which are mainly steel spans on brick abutments. They have deteriorated significantly over the years. Some of them are supported by brick piers or steel props in the former trackbed and the bridges will need considerable sums spending to restore them”.

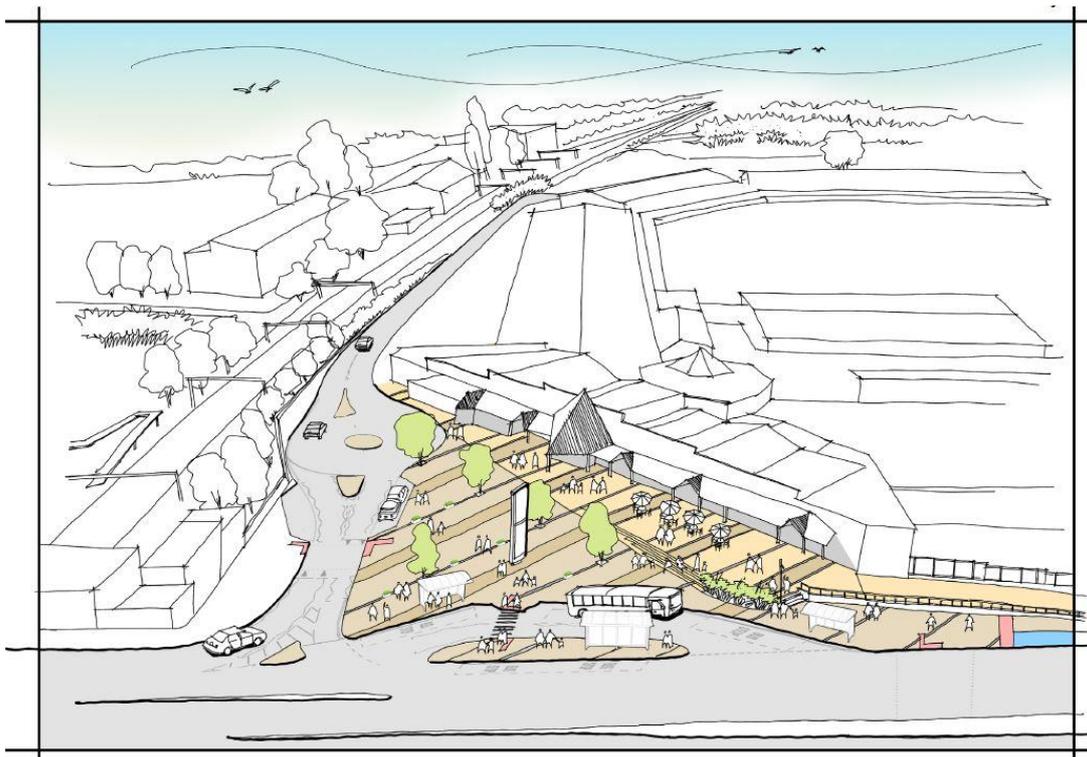
### Station Construction

#### Commonwealth Games Stations

**University station** – The new building concrete structure is rising rapidly as shown in the photograph below taken using a drone by our friend Professor Roberts of Birmingham University.



**Perry Barr station:** - After clearing the old building away it is great to see the steel framework for the new station building has been winched in place. The scheme is part of the overall £30.9m transport interchange development which has taken another step forward with the approval of plans for a new bus interchange across the road from the new station.



## Solihull Station

Following approval at the Solihull Councils Environment and Infrastructure on 8<sup>th</sup> July an eight-week public consultation period commenced on Monday 19 July.



The Council stated “The wholesale redevelopment of Solihull train station is required to ensure it is able to keep up with forecast growth in passenger numbers. Prior to the pandemic, around 2m passengers were passing through the station every year and this was forecast to increase to 3m by 2036. Although the pandemic has temporarily impacted passenger numbers over the last 18 months, this is expected to recover with overall station use still set to increase drastically”

### HELP WANTED-

Michael Tombs retirement has left a void in your Branch as, not only was he an active Committee Member, but he also kept our webpages on Railfuture.org.uk upto date. If you can help with this or our twitter account, please get in contact with us.

### YOUR VIEWS MATTER

We would like to hear from **you** about any matters you believe your Officers and Committee should be working on. So please don't hesitate to get in touch with us on [westmidlands@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:westmidlands@railfuture.org.uk).

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