

Railfuture in London and the South East

quarterly branch newsletter

Campaigning by the Railway Development Society in London and the Home Counties - Kent, Surrey, Sussex, south Hertfordshire, south Essex, Bedfordshire, and Greater London

The *independent* campaign for a better passenger and freight rail network

Campaigns calendar

Our quarterly review of key campaign activities since the March newsletter. More in London and South East branch area of www.railfuture.org.uk/Local+action

Sussex & Coastway Division met on 4 April in Lewes to plan next steps in our 'Bridge the gap: connect East Sussex' and other local campaigning. Details in www.railfuture.org.uk/Sussex+and+Coastway

On 11-12 April the Branch Vice-Chairman went with the Chairman of East Anglia Branch and other passenger group representatives to Germany to inspect and feedback rail users' comments on a full-size mock-up of the new Thameslink rolling stock.



Image: Siemens

On 2 May in Bexhill **Sussex & Coastway Division** hosted a meeting of a range of local Rail User Groups and like-minded organisations, aiming for a consensus response to East Sussex County Council's request for comments on Network Rail's draft London & South East Passenger Market Study. See www.networkrail.co.uk/improvements/planning-policies-and-plans/long-term-planning-process/market-studies for further details.

Kent Division met on 18 May in Sevenoaks with local RUGs and discussed Southeastern's Stakeholder Forum, Kent CC's annual Rail Summit, NR's L&SE Passenger Market Study, and station usage data.

Surrey Division met on 1 June in Staines with local Rail User Groups to develop a consensus response to the consultation on the draft Surrey Rail Strategy. See www.surreycc.gov.uk/your-council/consultations

Forthcoming dates for your diaries/calendars – details: this newsletter or www.railfuture.org.uk/events

Wednesday 19 June National Rail Passenger Survey for Spring 2013 at www.passengerfocus.org.uk

Friday 28 June draft Surrey Rail Strategy consultation closes. See www.surreycc.gov.uk/get-involved

Wednesday 10 July Eastern Division in Stratford.

Saturday 13 July join us: Uckfield Festival's 'Big Day'; joint meeting in Chelmsford with East Anglia branch.

Thursday 18 July Sussex & Coastway Division.

Thursday 25 July Network Rail consultation on draft London & South East Passenger Market Study closes: www.networkrail.co.uk/Long-Term-Planning-Process

Wednesday 31 July Copy date for *railse* 121, and for London & SE branch Local Action in Railwatch 137.

Friday 2 August TfL consultation on Crossrail 2 ends: https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/crossrail/2/consult_view

Saturday 10 August Spa Valley Railway 'Fish & chip evening special' – book by 25 July via Roger Blake.

Saturday 17 August Kent Division in Maidstone.

Saturday 31 August Final date for members-only discount for our Saturday 2 November national conference, and the 2013 RUG Awards, in Oxford. Book now at www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences

Monday 2 September Copy date for Railwatch 137.

Thursday 5 September Sussex & Coastway Division in Hampden Park, Eastbourne.

Wednesday 11 September Eastern Division.

Monday 30 September Final date for entries to 2013 Rail User Group Awards. See full details in www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Groups

Saturday 2 November Railfuture conference, and presentation of RUG Awards for 2013, in Oxford.

Further details are always available in the London and South East pages of www.railfuture.org.uk/branches

Rail infrastructure investment: SBP – determination, delivery

The three-year **Periodic Review** process PR13 for Control Period 5, 2014-19, is nearing conclusion. On 12 June the ORR published its 'draft determination' on Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan published in January www.networkrail.co.uk/publications/strategic-business-plan-for-cp5 with a period for comments [including a workshop on 19 June] until 4 September. ORR will then publish their 'final determination' on 31 October, giving Network Rail five months to finalise their CP5 Delivery Plan. See www.rail-reg.gov.uk/pr13

In just three years' time PR18 starts, leading to CP6 from 2019-24, with foundations already being laid.

Network Rail's Long-Term Planning Process – LTPP

The primary foundation is the new LTPP, successor to the various Route Utilisation Strategies. See www.networkrail.co.uk/Long-Term-Planning-Process for vital background. Consultations started in March: www.networkrail.co.uk/improvements/planning-policies-and-plans/long-term-planning-process/market-studies and for us the draft London and South East Passenger Market Study is the main target for a response by late-July.

Ten route studies, akin to RUSs, and cross-boundary analysis are later elements in the LTPP – see more at www.networkrail.co.uk/long-term-planning-process/faq

The approach and language of the LTPP may take getting used to, but will reward us if we do. It takes a 30-year forward view, and will inform DfT's High Level Output Specification [HLOS] for Control Period 6.

Among key statements, indicative of a new approach:

+ "It is important to emphasise that each passenger Market Study will consider a particular market, rather than a particular set of train services."

+ "The requirement to look to the long term has changed the emphasis of industry planning, from consideration of 'what can be achieved given existing constraints' to 'what should be achieved to deliver the desired outcome'."

+ "Most stakeholder organisations have a strategy for future rail services intended to deliver their desired outcome for the areas they represent. The themes of supporting economic growth, a greener environment, connecting communities, and financial efficiency are common to most."

The new language is of strategic goals and 'conditional outputs' to deliver them ie aspirations conditional on both affordability and a value-for-money business case being made for any schemes that the Route Studies may consider as a way to deliver them.

Our chance to influence CP6 starts from here, now!

Refranchising – abbreviations, acronyms, and anagrams

The previous newsletter's eagerly-awaited "further announcement in 'the Spring' ie May according to informed sources" was made by the latest Transport Secretary the day before a 50th anniversary. His oral and written statements to the Commons and the DfT press release were littered with mention of passengers.

More new language, restoring the 'f' in franchising programme – franchise extensions and direct contract awards. The latest programme holding most interest for our branch, following publication on 25 April of a Franchise Procurement Process Map, is:

Essex Thameside – extension of current franchise from May '13, then direct contract award to National Express until start of new franchise in September '14. Revised Invitation To Tender [ITT] issued July '13 to four existing short-listed bidders - Abellio, First, MTR, National Express - and new franchise award May '14.

Combined **Thameslink** [with Southern and Great Northern] – extension of current franchise from September '13, then direct contract award to First Group until start of new franchise in September '14. ITT issued July '13 to five existing short-listed bidders - Abellio, First, Govia, MTR, Stagecoach - and new franchise award May '14. Southern merges-in July '15.

Great Western – extension of current franchise from October '13, then direct contract award to First Group until start of new franchise in July '16.

South Eastern – extension of current franchise from April '14, then direct contract award to GoVia until start of new franchise in June '18!

Greater Anglia – extension of current franchise from July '14, then direct contract award to Abellio until start of new franchise in October '16.

London Midland – extension of current franchise from September '15, then direct contract award to GoVia until start of new franchise in June '17.

South Western – extension of current franchise from February '17, then direct contract award to Stagecoach until start of new franchise in April '19.

For the rest of 2013 the sequence is therefore:
May - Essex Thameside extension started;
July - Essex Thameside and Thameslink ITTs issued;
September - Thameslink extension starts;
October - Great Western extension starts, East Coast OJEU issued.

A Franchising Competition Process Guide on 25 June will be followed by a Rail Franchise Overview in July: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/rail-franchising

Competition time – a year's free membership for the best anagram of 'refranchising' submitted by 31 July.

Bridge the gap: connect East Sussex

It is 15 months since we committed to a campaign with a 10-year target. Although it began on the defensive – seeking to prevent severance of the rail route by an inner relief road proposed for Uckfield town centre – it changed stance within weeks to support for that same relief road on a bridge over the route and advocating the case for reinstatement of the railway line.

The three months since the previous newsletter have witnessed significant developments in the campaign, the evolving strategy for which can be viewed at www.railfuture.org.uk/Uckfield+Lewes with a campaign diary at www.railfuture.org.uk/Sussex+Coastway

In early-March Railfuture's Board of Directors voted a small grant from the national Fighting Fund to enable us to appoint independent adviser JR Consulting [author of 'Lea Valley Rail: better access to jobs and homes']. He is assisting us with developing an outline proposition, based around the line's reinstatement, which is attractive to strategic stakeholders such as local authorities and others needed to form a new partnership to 'own' and promote it. The next newsletter will be able to report on our emerging prospectus for rail development in a county context.

In mid-March Uckfield Civic Centre hosted a County Council exhibition presenting the proposals most favoured in responses to their consultation a year earlier. We have supported the proposed 130-space station car park on part of the site of the former station, and improvements to the bus station and to the High Street. We also welcomed the absence of reference to an inner relief road across the track-bed, instead it being part of a longer-term plan for a bridge over the railway. Our voice has been heard!

In April we heard that a senior County Councillor was understood to want a rail strategy and action plan, preceded by a rail summit after the elections in May. Those elections then saw the County change from a majority party to no party having overall control.

In late-April, as reported on page 2, Network Rail went public with the first step in their new Long-term Planning Process. As voters went to the polls we hosted a meeting with several local rail user and other like-minded campaign groups to establish common ground for our responses to the County Council and to Network Rail on the latter's consultation on the draft London and South East Passenger Market Study.

In mid-May the County Council issued a press release confirming the transfer of the former Uckfield station site from British Rail Board [Residuary] Ltd to Network Rail for the new car park. This marked a successful outcome to multi-agency, cross-sector partnership working involving officers and councillors from Town, District and County Councils, the local MP, incumbent operator Southern, Network Rail, Sussex Community Rail Partnership, and Railfuture. From such an acorn an oak can surely grow; partnerships make projects.

Lea Valley Rail – new station for better access to jobs & homes

The previous newsletter made mention of the DfT's £20million New Stations fund, and it was ventured that "Waltham Forest's Lea Bridge station might be just such a candidate." And how; it's now a winner! See www.gov.uk/government/news/new-65-million-railway-station-to-be-built-in-waltham-forest From fund launch in January to confirmation in May, which in turn is inside a year since the Railfuture Fighting Fund-supported report and presentations by JR Consulting established the case for re-opening the station. See more in the Railfuture-affiliated Chingford Line Users Association website which can be found here: www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Groups The CLUA site hosts the report and related slide presentations.

Hackney Interchange

In 2014 it might look something like this!



Image: TTPP

A computer-generated image looking south-west from the existing footbridge, with lifts added just in time for last year's Olympic and Paralympic Games, at Hackney Central station. This illustrates the change of level for passengers interchanging between London Overground's Stratford-Clapham Junction/ Richmond services and Greater Anglia's Liverpool Street-Enfield Town/Cheshunt/Chingford services, via platform 1 at Hackney Downs station on the viaduct behind the high-level walkway. Plans are being prepared for a funding bid to install lifts at Hackney Downs station, in the original ticket hall to be suitably-refurbished.

GOBLIN – e for electrification

Campaigners are hopeful that with sustained support we shall soon see a long-overdue commitment to fund electrification of north London's outer-orbital mixed-traffic route, the Gospel Oak-Barking line, despite the disappointment of recent missed opportunities dashing earlier hopes. The prospect of DP World's London Gateway container port www.londongateway.com opening before the end of this year feeding more freight trains through Barking, and the reduction in capacity for freight trains between Forest Gate and Stratford with the opening of Crossrail services in a few years' time, combine to narrow the decision window. If not the 26 June Comprehensive Spending Review, then the Chancellor's Autumn Statement?

Branch AGM 2013 – report-back

Chairman's report on 2012

The past, Olympic, year has been one of our most active, thanks both to an established regional branch committee at ease with itself, comfortable in each other's company and working well together as a team, and to a settled working relationship with our local divisions. If the task we set ourselves is not just to describe what we observe but to help redefine and reshape it in our own image then we ended the year with some confident answers to our key AGM review question – what difference are we making?

As we seek to influence rather than merely observe the course of events, to campaign for rather than satisfy ourselves with just commenting on, we have for example responded directly or contributed to a wide range of consultations. These have varied between County and District consultations – Uckfield traffic improvements, Lewes Regeneration, Wealden Community Infrastructure Levy – to Network Rail's plans for CP5, to the DfT's franchise consultations.

Our longer-established local Divisions – Eastern, Kent, Sussex and Coastway – have been joined by new ones for Surrey, Herts & Beds, and London Metro, affording further opportunities for local activism. Their 24 meetings in the year have provided focal points for our members and local rail user groups across our region, some have also provided the opportunity to develop our working relations with Community Rail Partnerships and preserved/heritage lines.

During the year our two most active campaigns made successful applications for national funding support. In May the Fighting Fund supported a three-pronged campaign by our newly-affiliated Chingford Line Users' Association, backed by our Eastern division and the branch committee, with a grant for a report from Jonathan Roberts Consulting [JRC]. The case for re-opening Lea Bridge station in CP4, additional capacity on the Lea Valley line in CP5, and for extra capacity on the Chingford line with services to Stratford were all cogently argued and clearly advocated. Then in November the national Board agreed that significant financial support for activities in our East Sussex campaign, centred on re-opening the Uckfield-Lewes link, should also come from the Fighting Fund.

We maintain our liaison with most of the train operators in our region through their various forums, whether for stakeholders, passengers or rail users groups, to develop a shared understanding of challenges ahead and opportunities to address them. We have also met some of the franchise bid teams, and rolling stock leasing companies, to share our perspectives and learn something of their approach.

Most of the branch committee are heavily involved in other aspects of Railfuture activity. Our principal branch activities are reported in the quarterly branch magazine *raillse*; the national website pages for our branch and its divisions, and the Events and other frequently-visited pages, are generally kept well up-to-

date. Railfuture as a voluntary organisation only does what its members volunteer to do. Contributions range from commitments to a committee or specialist group to specific time-limited tasks, so that the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

The year drew to a close on a high campaigning note with the culmination of the long-running campaign for an outer orbital mainline route in the completion of the second route into Clapham Junction, and on a social note when some members of the branch committee, with wives, had a pre-New Year Saturday lunch in the middle of a return trip via the Spa Valley Railway.

I have been personally pleased that over recent years the committee members have welded together as a team for a common cause, and bring in a wide range of professional expertise. We have enlisted the help of the membership at large far more than we have in the past, and we have been working with rail user groups to deliver a common message thus making the delivery of that message more effective. We are making efforts to prioritise our campaigns to those that stand a modicum of success. Supporting lost causes is not a good use of our limited time and puts at risk those schemes which we can influence.

I must thank my fellow officers and other members of the committee, and the branch membership, for their support and encouragement and commitment to the cause. There have been a number of successes for which campaigning by the Society has contributed in no small measure; we are being consulted by industry, authorities and agencies indicating that we have a reasoned message that is worth listening to. **KD**

Hon. Treasurer's report on 2012

We had c.£600 at year-end compared with c.£1500 a year before. The "Bridge the gap: connect East Sussex" campaign accounted for most of the difference. Other 2012 campaigning items came out of our large reserves. The large surplus in 2011 balanced a large deficit in 2010. Savings on room hire in 2012 have been spent on the extra campaigning.

As new Treasurer of another organisation, I was pleased when Howard Thomas offered to be our new Treasurer, allowing me to withdraw. I wish him well, and am available for co-option to the committee. **HTJ**

Membership Secretary's report on 2012

We are not recruiting enough members but 2012 shows we are making progress. At year-end we had 480 members. Nearly all our new members join online, and are drawn by our campaigns and news coverage. We need to raise our profile by being seen to be active and campaigning, and maximising opportunities for publicity, so we recruit more members than we lose. We must use electronic and social media. We need email addresses for all our members so we can communicate by email, as post is now too expensive to notify details of meetings or events, or request support, for example by writing to MPs. Please let me have your email address - it will not be passed outside Railfuture. Email Chris.Page@railfuture.org.uk **CP**

Division reports for 2012

Eastern – Convener Howard Thomas

The Division met six times to discuss a range of issues. It kept a watching brief on reliability problems on Greater Anglia (GA) lines, especially the Great Eastern Main Line; GA's fare restrictions, and other local issues, including the Chingford Line, the Lea Valley Line, Hall Farm Curve and the possible reinstatement of Lea Bridge Station. We also kept a watching brief on proposals for franchising both Greater Anglia and c2c line services. These have been delayed into at least 2013 following the West Coast franchising debacle in October 2012.

The Division was pleased to note how well all rail operators performed during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The volume of passengers generated also seems to have been well handled. However, we continue to be concerned with potential crowd control problems both in and on the approaches to Stratford station. Arrangements that have been put in place to manage peak crowds have been working quite satisfactorily. Whilst the Division has been reassured about Stratford station, it remains concerned about overcrowding and crowd control outside railway territory, and therefore our Division's sphere of influence, on the approaches to Stratford station, especially from Westfield shopping centre direction.

Good progress continues to be made on the replacement of overhead line equipment (OHLE) between Liverpool Street and Chelmsford. Where the work has been done, disruption due to OHLE problems has been virtually eliminated. We noted that the December 2012 timetable allowed for work on this project to be carried out on Monday to Thursday nights as well as the occasional weekend possessions.

Continued campaigning during the year on the possible reopening of Lea Bridge Station and the Hall Farm Curve seems to be bearing fruit. During the year, funds were allocated by a Stratford developer to assist in the rebuilding of Lea Bridge station. Design work has already started, and we will continue to support these developments during 2013. Related to this, we welcomed provision in the DfT's High Level Output Specification for an extra track from south of Coppermill Junction northwards through Tottenham Hale and Angel Road. This is another development that we will be following closely during 2013.

We noted that Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils were putting forward ideas for a Rail Prospectus for East Anglia. We shall be working with East Anglia Branch to pursue this project further when more details become available in 2013. Plans were instigated to hold an initial meeting with East Anglia Branch in the early part of 2013 to look at ways of working together in reviewing the Prospectus, and Greater Anglia developments generally.

One of the Division's MPs, Simon Burns (Chelmsford, Con), was appointed Minister of State for Transport in September 2012.

Kent – Convener Peter Collingborn

Quarterly meetings took place at Paddock Wood, Faversham, Robertsbridge, and East Farleigh. Average attendance was 10, boosted by the members' meeting at Robertsbridge, jointly with Sussex and Coastway Division. Representatives of Rother Valley Railway (RVR/K&ESR), Spa Valley Railway (SVR) and Lavender Line (LL) made presentations. Rother Valley had made much progress, thanks to some very generous benefactors. Robertsbridge station is to be rebuilt, with improved track layout. SVR was consolidating, following last year's extension to Eridge. LL was a worthy heritage line, holding steady. These and other heritage lines had aspirations to play a useful transport role.

The organiser attended the branch and national Railfuture AGMs. Abellio's Greater Anglia presented on the preparations for the Olympic Games at the branch AGM. Southeastern impressed during the Games. The organiser also attended the Wealden Line Campaign (WLC) AGM (see below) and annual walk of the route.

Prominent concerns for the year were the impending works at London Bridge for Thameslink, Thameslink route and service options, timetabling generally (extra stops), and fares of course, especially the latest punitive increases. The breaking of the convenient official connection between HS1 and Medway Valley Line at Strood was deplored. There had been calls for restoration of direct Medway-Maidstone-Gatwick services, with improved stock (not class 508s).

On Uckfield-Lewes reopening, the threat to the route from ESCC's proposed Uckfield inner relief road seemed to have receded. Prospects for establishing an enlarged car park on part of the old station site had improved. Network Rail was pursuing that keenly. The Branch had launched a campaign to restore the link in basic, low-cost fashion. The 'Bridge the gap: link up Sussex' leaflet outlined a ten-year plan. This endeavour complemented WLC's ambitious BML2 vision, expounded in a comprehensive brochure. BML2 might eventually evolve into 'TL2', joining Gatwick and Stansted airports. WLC had become convinced, by decades of frustrated efforts and hopes that only a radical approach would succeed. Support for BML2 was gathering momentum with the railway and politicians. The Wealden Line was increasingly popular as an alternative to BML1. The need for expanded services to Gatwick reinforced the case for BML2, which could provide the necessary relief. The selection of Jonathan Roberts Consulting to develop an alliance to pursue the L&SE Branch proposal was noted in the current Modern Railways.

Chris Fribbins had been very active once more, and had taken on a national role as head of the Railfuture Passenger Group, as well as being Branch Secretary and involved in community rail partnerships. More generally, there had been some discussion of opportunities for future campaigning by Kent Division, such as on fares and connectivity. Meeting dates for the coming year would be 16 January in Faversham, 18 May at Sevenoaks, 17 August and 16 November.

Sussex and Coastway – Convener Dick Tyler

We have concentrated our efforts for much of 2012 on the reinstatement of the Lewes-Uckfield line. This was prompted in March 2012 by one of the options put forward by East Sussex County Council to solve Uckfield's traffic problems, which cut the line at grade on the site of the former station. Notable results of these activities is agreement from ESCC not to build the Uckfield inner relief road across the trackbed but on a bridge over the line, and representation by Rt. Hon. Charles Hendry MP to Minister for Transport Simon Burns about transfer of land at the old Uckfield station to Network Rail, (instead of London & Continental Railways), who want to build a car park.

Our monthly meetings have taken place at Lewes, Uckfield, Brighton, and Newhaven, to evaluate local opinion and harness support. In November we took paid advertising in Modern Railways for consultants to submit 'Expressions of Interest' in undertaking a new piece of work to develop a positive business case for a scheme based on restoring the rail link between Uckfield and Lewes. We planned a consultants' briefing session for January in the House of Lords, hosted by Railfuture Vice-President Lord Berkeley. There is very clear professional interest and belief that a viable proposition could be developed.

Southern Stakeholder Forums have been attended by Sussex & Coastway, one on 5th September last. There were some very good and informative presentations indicating how seriously Southern are taking their franchise commitments particularly with regard to station improvements, stock maintenance and train lengthening. They are gradually rolling out 'The Key' smart card ticketing system across the Southern network.

As Network Rail promised work has started on a new Platform 7 at Gatwick Airport to facilitate Gatwick Express trains terminating on Platforms 5 & 6 and free up the slow lines. This work will be completed in January 2014. The resignalling of East Coastway is also under way and will be completed in November 2013.

Both these projects are measures to alleviate Brighton Main Line congestion and speed up services together with work already done on Marshlink. However when such alleviation will become possible is uncertain and must also depend on the franchising process which at the end of 2012 was still in the balance.

It is also understood that Network Rail are taking the opportunity to buy land as it becomes available to facilitate the construction of a flyover at Keymer Junction to separate conflicting movements between Coastway and BML trains.

Other measures to alleviate overcrowding on the BML are taking place at East Croydon and Brighton stations. At East Croydon a new bridge is already in place across all platforms and will soon provide new entrances/exits. There is also provision for an extra platform on the west side of the station. At Brighton the concourse is being reconfigured and taxi rank moved to ease circulation of traffic and pedestrians.

Both these, of course, only address problems at the stations, although welcome and necessary, but do not solve the underlying problem of overcrowded trains.

This problem is serious already with severe overcrowding. The franchising process will give opportunity for the BML timetable to be recast (as Southern have indicated they would if chosen), but more drastic action will be needed in the not too distant future, part of the reason for our pursuit of Lewes-Uckfield reinstatement.

In our quest to influence events and establish ourselves on the local scene we responded to East Sussex County Council's consultation on Uckfield traffic improvements and Lewes District Council's Regeneration Strategy, took part in ESCC's workshop on implementing their Economic Development Strategy, and we responded to Wealden District Council's consultation on their Community Infrastructure Levy. We contributed to the Railfuture response to the DfT consultation on the new combined Thameslink/Southern franchise.

Carrying our message to various parts of the local community, we attended the Annual Town Meeting of Uckfield Council, the Town Conference of Crowborough Council, the Annual Assembly of Buxted Parish Council, and the regular meetings of the East Sussex and Wealden Local Strategic Partnerships. In July we launched our campaign leaflet 'Bridge the gap; link up Sussex' at Uckfield Festival's Big Day.

We have taken an active part in the new Uckfield Transport Hub Working Group [under the auspices of the Uckfield Town Centre Steering Group] which we suggested and which then adopted our suggested Terms of Reference! It concentrates on short-term delivery of a new 130+-space car park for the railway station on part of the former station site, improvements to the quality of the bus station, and public realm improvements to the town's High Street.

We have developed a close working relationship with Sussex Community Rail Partnership with an open invitation to be represented on all their individual line partnerships, and have participated in the alternate monthly meetings of the Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee and its offshoot the Uckfield Line Rail Extensions Group.

The year concluded with a visit by three of us to Tavistock to learn about their re-opening campaign, led by Devon CC and which had seen services included as a priced option in the ITT for the then-proposed long franchise for Great Western, and how they had developed it.

2013 postscript – another RUG in our midst

One of the groups invited to Germany in mid-April [front-page] was Hassocks Amenity Association's Rail Group – www.hassocksamenity.btck.co.uk Not hitherto in our Directory of Rail User Groups, they soon will be! In mid-June their new station building was due to open, behind which is an inspirational story of community activity around a Southern station which ORR usage data says has risen 50% in eight years.

Herts and Beds – Convener Keith Dyll

The new Division met twice in St Albans, attendances including members from East Anglia Branch and affiliated local rail user groups. The main topic was responses to the DfT consultation on the combined Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise.

Another topic was the East West Rail link, since given the go-ahead from Oxford to Bedford with connections to Milton Keynes and Aylesbury, and options for routes between Bedford and Cambridge. The Chairman was to contact London Midland to learn when Marston Vale services would extend to Milton Keynes.

Other topics discussed were the effect of the possible new freight depot at Radlett on Thameslink services, additional mainline trains stopping at Watford Junction, and Abbey line conversion to light rail.

Another meeting, when the DfT issued the invitation to tender for the new combined franchise was deferred to 2013 in view of the franchising debacle.

Surrey – Convener Chris Page

The Great Western, Thameslink, South Western, Southern and (just) Cross Country TOCs serve the Surrey division which was formally inaugurated in 2012 with a meeting on 9 June in Guildford. The meeting, entitled 'Developing Rail Services in and around Surrey' covered the North Downs line, Airtrack, scheduling on the Brighton Main Line and the Sutton and Mole Valley lines, refranchising Thameslink-Southern, Great Western, and RUG objectives and progress. It was attended by 21 members and RUG representatives.

Having found that the round-table discussion and Saturday morning format was successful, a follow-up meeting was held on 1 December when Assistant Director Iain Reeve from Surrey County Council explained the consultation process by which they are developing a rail strategy. This led to a discussion on the key rail developments needed for Surrey, followed by discussions on franchising, how we can make use of media coverage of the anniversary of the Beeching report, and the Uckfield - Lewes campaign.

We will contribute to the consultation on Surrey CC's draft rail strategy, and plan to hold the next meeting soon after they publish the consultation draft.

London Metro

There continue to be new members in the London area and it is planned to organise members' meetings as an opportunity to come together, with affiliated rail user groups, to explore issues of common interest. The Mayor of London and TfL's desire to take over more TOC services in the area is clear. TfL are due to consult on Crossrail 2 in summer 2013 [front page]. There are also issues around current and future Overground, Underground, tram and Dockland services that Railfuture needs to consider and seek to influence. If you are interested please get in touch with the branch Chair, Vice-Chair or Secretary.

Overground – e for expansion

Transport for London confirmed in May an order for 57 centre-cars to extend its fleet of class 378 Capitalstar trains to five carriages each. Their known need for two additional five-car trains for East London Railway services on the Crystal Palace route was left in apparent abeyance. That may not be totally unrelated to the growing pressure [GOBLIN, page 3] for funding to electrify the only diesel-operated London Overground route, on the back of which an order for at least a further eight trains, if only initially three-car, would follow. That would meet the literally crushing need for more capacity, and will we be surprised if that in turn is not followed by the hallowed 'sparks effect'?

Inside now step-free Crystal Palace station's ticket hall



Image: Scottbrownrigg

Tucked away in TfL's invitation for expressions of interest from potential operators of its new Crossrail services, starting by taking over Greater Anglia's Metro services from May 2015, was a reference to the possibility of also operating services between Liverpool Street and Enfield Town, Cheshunt, and Chingford. It appears that, like the extension of Oyster Pay-As-You-Go only to Broxbourne rather than Hertford East, the Lea Valley line's Stratford services, via re-opened Lea Bridge station, may wait longer for 'the Overground effect' – unless campaigners articulate needs and advocate benefits to political stakeholders?

Will rampion emulate thistle?

"Demonstrating emphatically what rail re-opening could achieve, the Bathgate line's 1994 traffic growth target was achieved by 1987." From 'Waverley Route – the life, death and rebirth of the Borders Railway', by David Spaven, 2012. Re-opened in 1986, the Bathgate line met its 10-year traffic target in two. Buy the hardback book [it includes four Appendices] and our own 'Britain's Growing Railway' at a discount from www.railfuture.org.uk/books - post & packing included.

Bathgate station usage estimates from the ORR are:
2009/10 – 607,250 [last year of branch line terminus]
2010/11 – 704,346 [first 3 months of through services]
2011/12 – 871,012 [first full year of services between Edinburgh and Glasgow via Bathgate and Airdrie]

Over the eight years since Turbostars replaced Thumpers, Uckfield station usage grew over threefold to 445,146 and the branch line by 67%. Through services to the south coast will build on this success.

Branch divisions' meetings – open to all members of our regional branch

Eastern [s. Essex and n. & e. London] – usually meet bi-monthly on the second Wednesday of odd-numbered months, at 18.30 in **Stratford** – next on 10 July and 11 September. Contact Division Convener Howard Thomas at howard.thomas@railfuture.org.uk or 24 South Primrose Hill, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2RG, or phone 01245 280503 before 21.00 hours.

Herts & Beds – the first meeting of 2013, probably in St. Albans, will be notified direct to local members, on the website or/and in the next newsletter. Contact Branch Chairman Keith Dyall [opposite] for details.

Kent – usually meet quarterly on the third Saturday afternoon, in a different venue around Kent – next on 17 August in **Maidstone**. Contact Division Conveners Chris Fribbins at chris.fribbins@railfuture.org.uk or 5 Englefield Crescent, Cliffe Woods, Rochester, Kent, ME3 8HB, or tel: 01634 566256; and Ian Killbery at ian.killbery@railfuture.org.uk or 11 Western Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6RX, or tel: 01304 362569.

A better deal for rail users
Key demands of Rail Action Plan for Kent

- Regular peak period mainline services to Charing Cross or Victoria and City stations on each principal rail route
- Shorter off-peak waiting times for connections to High Speed trains from east Kent
- Hourly all-day service from Maidstone East to Blackfriars to connect to the City
- High Speed services from Maidstone West to run all day, including stops at Maidstone Barracks and Snodland
- Four High Speed trains every hour between Ashford, Ebbsfleet, Stratford and St Pancras after 2014
- 'Smartcard' ticketing for bus and rail services
- Shorter journey times between North Kent line stations and Victoria and Cannon Street

Source: Rail Action Plan for Kent, KCC 2010



Surrey – next meeting emailed to local members, on website or/and in next newsletter. Contact Division Convener Chris Page at chris.page@railfuture.org.uk or 'Clara Vale', Thibet Road, Sandhurst, Berkshire, GU47 9AR, or phone 01344 778643.

Sussex & Coastway – usually meet monthly on the first Thursday [except summer and New Year] at 18.00. Next on 18 July, then 5 September. Contact Convener Dick Tyler at richard.tyler@railfuture.org.uk or 27 Windsor Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN39 3PB, or phone 01424 211500.

This branch newsletter is free, published quarterly and usually distributed with each edition of the national *railwatch*. The copy deadline for *raillse* issue 121, due to be published in September 2013, will be Wednesday 31 July 2013. All items for this newsletter and the branch Local Action column in *railwatch* to be sent to branch Chair Keith Dyall

the railfuture mission: to be the number one advocate for the railway and rail users

Websites: www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
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Our neighbouring branches

These and all other branches' websites can be seen in www.railfuture.org.uk/branches. Note that for East Anglia branch this also leads to their own website.

East Anglia – contact Secretary Paul Hollinghurst – paul.hollinghurst@railfuture.org.uk. Board liaison is via Director Jerry Alderson.

East Midlands – contact is Secretary Roger Bacon – roger.bacon@railfuture.org.uk. Board liaison is via national Finance Officer David Harby.

Thames Valley – contact is Branch Secretary Andrew McCallum – andrew.mccallum@railfuture.org.uk. Board liaison is via Director Roger Blake [below].

Wessex – contact is Branch Secretary Charles Burns – charles.burns@railfuture.org.uk. Board liaison is via Director Chris Page [below].

and finally, RUG Awards 2013

The inaugural Awards for Rail User Groups in 2012 were deemed successful enough to encourage a 2013 sequel. Details have been published in recent editions of Rail User Express, which you can download at www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Groups. Each issue can be emailed to you on publication just by asking Tony Smale via ruglink@railfuture.org.uk. This July's issue of Railwatch also features this year's Awards.

London and SE Branch officers

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