



Promoting Britain's Railway for Passengers and Freight

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Railfuture Summer Conference **Salisbury - 5th July 2008.**

Railfuture Vice-President and Railwatch contributor Peter Rayner gave a presentation at the conference He did not use PowerPoint but read from his notes. This document (also known as "Rayner's Routes") contains those notes.

AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY **by Peter.G.Rayner**

1. INTRODUCTION

Routes to be electrified, reinstated, reinstated double track & doubled (existing track)

As a reader of Railwatch as well as a columnist perhaps I should start by saying I realise how much is going on and to assure you I recognise many of the schemes I list are being campaigned for vigorously. I hope any mention by us this afternoon can only be of help. I have kept away as much as possible from covering lines and schemes which I know are being actively pursued

By just going round the Country and thinking out loud may be an indulgence but it may help as each of us will have a favourite topic and each of us through cooperation and Railfuture perhaps can make a difference to the complacent road orientated society we live in.

That I have written 12 pages to deliver this 20 minute “Snappy Session Mid Afternoon” to quote our Chairman John Freidberger may also seem an indulgence but I felt it is needed for I have no doubt there are many, many lines that need re-examination and many, many existing lines that should be reconnected. I intend to give an opinion on as many lines as I can in an attempt to wake the system up to the failings of the government and the total dominance of short term Treasury attitudes.

Before going into a section by section comment it seems to me the two most important issues are Electrification and the High Speed Lines. I am pleased to see that on Monday of last week (23.06.08) Network Rail Chief Executive whom I am learning to like despite myself, announced a strategic review into looking at New Lines.

As I understand the programme it will examine scope for providing new capacity and decide whether it should be in the form of a new high speed line or lines. Everyone agrees this is a step forward but even if sensible propositions come forward and then the resultant Nimby-like public outcry all takes its course it will be something like 15 to 20 years before it is built. Meanwhile there is much that could be done to improve capacity and increase electrification in the short term.

No doubt Electrification is the greatest need and the failure to recognise this even now is the greatest sin of omission the Department for Transport is guilty of.

In my Critique of the White Paper which was requested by the Select Committee I commented with regard to Electrification that it has been demonstrated by recent events (Rugby 2007) that the industry has lost the expertise on overhead electrification maintenance and erection and what was needed was a more strategic approach. I suggested the creation of a team of experts with resources to commence with small schemes over the next 5 years. Say Preston to Blackpool over the Fylde is easy. Manchester to Preston again would be a simple link up scheme and maybe the linking of Peterborough to Ely. Once the skills are again available will be the time to look at Midland Main Line and the GW Mainline and the North Wales Coast line.

It borders on hypocrisy with the present global warming situation to say in the Executive summary *Investments that starts before 2014 will deliver their full benefit in later years* and then to put electrification on hold.

The easiest way of taking advantage of electrification is to actually run electric trains on an electrified railway. The freight business has just about given up on electric traction and it appears that some of the passenger operators are heading the same way. On the East Coast Main Line (ECML) around one-third of the long distance high speed departures from Kings Cross are operated with diesel traction with the majority of their journey on an electrified railway. Not one of the current proposals to the Rail Regulator for additional services on the route is based on the use of electric traction. Why not use the serviceable Class 90 locomotives and Mark 3 vehicles that are available? Unless common sense prevails, we face the prospect of having over forty percent of the long distance passenger services on the electrified ECML operated with diesel traction.

The same farce obtains on the West Coast Main Line (WCML). I stood on Preston Platform a few weeks ago and saw a Trans Pennine Diesel set off to Glasgow under the electric wires at 10.33 and at 10.40 another diesel, this time a Virgin Voyager set off under the wires to Glasgow. Some Department for Transport!! We carefully avoided diesels under the wires wherever we could! That was when it was run by BR an organisation which the present Rail Minister Tom Harris says when he was growing up was a joke. Well perhaps he has some more growing up to do.

There has always been an element of diesel operation to serve off-route destinations. However the present DfT thinking indicates a growing tendency to increase the number of services to off route destinations.

Clearly there needs to be fresh thought about the case for an immediate programme of railway electrification and the imaginative management of rolling stock cascade arrangements. The challenge for the industry is to electrify

up to 200 route miles of railway in less than three years and bring widespread benefits to non-electrified lines as well. However, no changes to ECML infrastructure are required to allow electric trains to displace some of the HSTs that currently operate trains that complete their entire journey under the wires. The displaced HSTs could transfer to cross-country routes and replace Class 220 units as the start of a rolling stock cascade. The 221 units could provide additional capacity on Birmingham, Leicester, and Stansted Airport services and/or on the Nottingham to Cardiff route. Class 170 units displaced by the 221s could provide additional capacity in the Manchester or Leeds areas to reduce the number of new build DMUs.

Again for the WCML with no additional electrification, it is possible to build new electric trains to operate Birmingham to Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh services and displace 220 units. A simple cascade would allow those units to operate between Liverpool and Norwich with the displaced Class 158 units available to increase capacity on East Midlands, Northern and FGW services.

Whilst major schemes would be welcome, a series of minor in-fill electrification schemes together with a detailed rolling stock cascade programme would have significant impact. Indeed with the DfT acknowledging the need for extra vehicles to increase capacity on the network, new electric trains and the cascade of diesel units would prevent the need for the majority of the proposed new DMUs.

There would be an even better case if in-fill electrification should start by providing diversionary routes. Here are a few selections.

2. ELECTRIFICATION

2.1 Peterborough – Ely. The ECML is the busiest Inter-City route in the country generating 11 per cent more business than the WCML. There are over 30,000 passenger journeys each weekday between Peterborough and London and yet the contingency plan when anything goes wrong south of Peterborough appears to be cancellations and/or buses.

For the ECML the priority is to electrify and upgrade the railway between Peterborough and Ely, a distance of 35 miles to provide electrified diversionary routes between Peterborough and London via Ely, Cambridge, and Bishops Stortford/Hitchin.

A truly visionary Department for Transport would have forged a new line across the Fen and around Huntingdon to St Ives (the old Kettering-Cambridge springs to mind) and given an electrified route via St Ives to Cambridge but they are going to run a Guided Bus instead!
(See 3.19)

2.2 Preston – Blackpool. Blackpool has suffered unduly because of the enforced changing of trains by passengers bound thither and returning home. The distance from Preston is not great and the rationalised layout is simple. If the line from Blackpool North station to Preston is electrified, London could be served by Pandolinos (possible alternating with the Euston – Lancaster trains). A range of electric trains could be operated via any other routes also electrified serving Blackburn, Skipton, Bolton, Manchester, Wigan, Warrington & Crewe (these last three already wired), St Helens, Liverpool. By reversal at Preston, easy with electric trains, service from Blackpool North station to Lancaster, Carnforth, Morecambe, Heysham, Oxenholme, Penrith, Carlisle, Glasgow & Edinburgh would be practicable.

2.3 Manchester – Euxton Junction. This route via Salford (Crescent or original), Clifton Jcn, Bolton and Chorley, continuing on WCML to Preston is the shortest one from Manchester to Blackpool. It carries long distance diesel trains to Glasgow and a range of other diesel-multiple-unit passenger services that continue for many miles north of Preston under the wires.

2.4 Leeds – Manchester via Huddersfield and Stalybridge. There is a strong case for electrifying and upgrading the 43 route miles between Leeds and Manchester via Huddersfield and Stalybridge to allow operation of electric trains between Newcastle, York and Manchester Airport. The potential impact on services is set out in the following table; I have included some trains that currently operate via Doncaster and Sheffield to maintain a through service from Hull to Manchester. The western end of this route used to have a ‘cut off’ from Stalybridge to Stockport. Now passengers from the south of Stockport must travel via Manchester. Consideration should be given to using this route for main line passenger trains once more.

PRESENT (All Diesel)	PROPOSED (Electric in Bold, Diesels in Italics)
1tph Newcastle to Manchester Airport	1tph Newcastle to Manchester Airport
1tph Middlesborough to Manchester Airport	1tph York to Manchester Airport
1tph Scarborough to Liverpool	<i>1tph Scarborough/Middlesborough to Liverpool (Combined at York)</i>
1tph Hull to Manchester Piccadilly	1tph Leeds to Manchester Piccadilly
1tph Hull to Sheffield	<i>1tph Hull to Leeds</i>
1tph Cleethorpes to Manchester Airport	<i>1tph Cleethorpes/Hull to Manchester Airport (Combined at Doncaster)</i>

With electric trains operating the majority of trains between Leeds and Manchester, it would again be possible to cascade rolling stock with the Class 185 units providing additional capacity between Doncaster and Manchester via Sheffield and operating Carlisle to Newcastle and Middlesborough services. The Class 156 units displaced from the Carlisle to Newcastle route could replace Class 14x units on other Northern services which could be withdrawn. The 14x units are not crashworthy and I believe it irresponsible that the D for T allow TOCs to use cheaper non crashworthy units and leave crashworthy more modern (but more expensive) units in mothballs.

2.5 Leeds Horseshoe Scheme. The Leeds Horseshoe scheme needs to be urgently progressed with electrification and upgrading of 20 route miles to provide a diversionary route between Leeds and Doncaster via Hambleton. Combined with the electrification and upgrading of a further 12 route miles to York, electric trains could operate between Leeds, York, Newcastle and Edinburgh. A diversionary route would also be available for electric trains between York and Doncaster via Leeds. A well-sited Park and Ride station could also be sited on the Leeds – Hambleton line.

2.6 Leeds – Sheffield via Wakefield. The electrification of another 22 route miles would allow electric trains to operate between Leeds and Sheffield via Wakefield Westgate. Including a further 8 miles would also allow electric trains to operate between Doncaster and Sheffield or indeed from Leeds to Sheffield via Doncaster. The Class 156 and 158 units that currently operate services between Leeds and Sheffield could be redeployed within the Northern franchise whilst the Class 14x units that currently operate the majority of local services between Doncaster and Sheffield could be withdrawn.

Without access to rolling stock diagrams it is not possible to assess the number of new build trains that would be necessary to deliver the increase in electric trains possible with the suggested electrification of just 185 route miles. However, from the existing timetable, it would appear that 323 trains each day could be operated by electric rather than diesel trains

This comment on electrification is essentially about infill schemes to improve the railway and put back the overhead line engineering expertise. The main cases for Midland Mainline and Great Western Main Line and High Speed Lines are not discussed.

My proposals are not exhaustive and the suggested rolling stock cascades are arbitrary but come from the experience of several senior operators of railways. (Two of us former Regional Operating Managers to say nothing of the other experienced people from different disciplines.) There is no doubt in my mind therefore that the *Strategic White Paper – 30 year Strategy* was a short term Treasury led document and we need to highlight its inadequacy and point out its flagrant bias against rail. Please note when Ms Ruth Kelly gave evidence to the Select Committee it was revealed, and I quote, “The Strategic Objectives of the Department are set by the Treasury”.

3. HIGH SPEED LINES

The next vexed question is one of High Speed Lines. High Speed lines are capacity creators and are not just about maximum speed. To make economic and environmental decisions on 350kph rather than 300kph, which is the Eurostar speed, gives an unnecessarily high carbon footprint which the White Paper uses to make the case against these lines. No lesser person than Richard Brown President of the Chartered Institute of Logistic and Transport (CILT) pointed this out in a letter to the Times on 6 June 2008. What more does this government want than key players like Brown and Chief Executive Network Rail all telling them the same story.

Even with the existing High Speed Line (HS1) there was a deliberate attempt to move away from Rail itself for it does not support rail feeder services at all. The situation is now damning for the rail traveller to connect with the service other than at St Pancras. Ebbsfleet was built on HS1 with platforms for international and high speed commuter services with a vast car park and its very presence duplicates both Stratford and Ashford. This was a strategic error driven by the desire, in my view, to placate the Blue Circle Cement Co who owned the contaminated land in the area. The effect of Ebbsfleet is to encourage more cars on the M25 and take away passengers from the local rail feeder services which cannot get near Ebbsfleet. It is already clear Eurostar will have difficulty in maintaining 4 International Stations in 60 miles. Ashford seems likely to be less and less relevant to the HS1 and the resultant loss of rail feeders from Southern England is obvious.

In France the first High Speed line between Paris and Lyon was built because of capacity problems. It freed up the classic rail routes via Dijon for freight usage. The same economic value could apply to the West Coast Main Line after High Speed line number two is built. The White Paper ignores High Speed lines other than knocking them down along with electrification. What the DfT should be doing is identifying and protecting land on High Speed Route 2 and on the other routes that logically follow. For the White Paper to ignore the options that might solve the capacity problems and rely on their interpretation of the Eddington Report, propped up by the many false assumptions, is in my view irresponsible.

The Eddington Report opposed quite rightly in my view, the use of unproven technology but he told the Select Committee he supported High Speed Lines using conventional wheel on Rail Technology. Indeed if I remember correctly he said planning should begin now!

The only definite High Speed Line decision to come from the DfT is another sin of omission. They have allowed Birmingham Civic and Business leadership to develop the Curzon Street site which means the nearest point any high speed line will get to Birmingham is Tamworth.

Finally the routes that should be re-examined. I foolishly said I would list all I could think of regardless of the likelihood of success. Well here goes.

4. TOUR OF THE COUNTRY

4.1 Bodmin Parkway to Padstow. It would be perfectly feasible to extend the line to Wadebridge and on to Padstow. A case was worked up and in the end only Cornish insularity in my view stopped it.

4.2 Tavistock - Plymouth. This line is currently covered by a scheme for re-instatement of single track between Bere Alston and a new Tavistock station, said to be nearer the town centre but on the Plymouth side of the original Tavistock (SR) station.

4.3 The former SR main line from Exeter to Plymouth. If it is to be re-opened, avoiding the sea-washed section of the GW mainline at Dawlish, it should be double-track. The present Cowley Bridge Junction, Exeter – Plymouth route is mainly single track to Okehampton and Meldon quarry where it ceases. It was a double track route, so redoubling should not present too many problems, apart from where developments have been permitted foul of the formation. A route would need to be found through Tavistock, where some encroachment by development on the SR formation has been permitted. The proposed single line Tavistock - Plymouth would need to be re-doubled.

There is a major steel viaduct structure: Meldon Viaduct. Parts of this route have been adopted as a linear walkway by Sustrans. Sustrans are our friends we hope and their remit is to give up any closed railway routes that are needed for future railway traffic movements.

If through GW ML trains are to be diverted from via Dawlish to via Okehampton, they would have to be reversed at Exeter and Plymouth in both directions. Not so difficult with today's railway and occurs in many places.

This subject is linked to 3.25 below because there may be a case for using modernised redoubled line from Salisbury through Exeter and to Plymouth via Okehampton. Dare I say it but the L & SW Main line is better aligned than the Berks and Hants.

Gerry Feinnes a revered Railway Officer of the generation that preceded mine said the GW route was selected as the principal route in the early 1960's because of the high costs of retaining the steam tank engines and crews needed to bank the expresses between Exeter St Davids and Central! Today the ruling gradient there would be on a high speed line! The Okehampton route is worthy of examination as global worry/climate change could make via Dawlish inoperable.

In any event the Department for Transport should be looking at those issues not writing Treasury driven "put downs" and developing busways.

4.4 Minehead Branch off at Taunton. It is operated by a private company, The West Somerset Railway, during times of holiday demand only and the railway connection to the main line is not made which limits its usefulness for Passengers and probably prevents more regular train services on the branch. There is in my view a case to press for connection to the Main Line and as always for through services but vision is required that rises above local political differences.

4.5 Somerset and Dorset Bath to Bournemouth. This route is dear to the hearts of many because it represented the Midland Railway and South Western Railway joint venture seeking holiday traffic in the South/South West. After the railway grouping in 1923, holiday trains from several northern towns used the S & D to reach Bournemouth until the line was closed.

The S & D had a sub-standard structure gauge, which means any attempt at re-opening would be particularly expensive. Since closure, the line has been depreciated and broken by new road works but I list it.

4.6 Wales – Rail Plan and Assembly alterations. I have not seen this document nor the alternatives proposed but I am sure Railfuture are involved or if not will be involved.

4.7 Llanelli – Carmarthen. Redoubling should not be especially difficult. It may be possible to relay in a superior form to that which was removed. – easing freight movements.

4.8 Central England. There is potential to open up the centre of England and relieve much congestion. It could link Stourbridge with Stockport on a half hour interval service and freight as well which has enormous potential. Now that the WM Tramway has been put on the back burner we need to fight this one all over again. I gave evidence to the Transport & Works Inquiry and my constant references to this route speak for themselves. Its value to the West Midlands is considerable.

Although in my critique to the Select Committee space prevented a detailed exposition of other routes I did go over this particular example again, which is key to many of the problems of capacity and it is relevant now. It is the most Important Railway Issue that I have left to fight for and I set it out again below. (Extracted from my Select Committee report.)

There is a route from Oxford to Stockport which is strategically placed to carry goods and passengers, an alternative way through the West and East Midlands. This once in a lifetime opportunity is to be blighted by the extension of the West Midlands Tramway.

I gave evidence to the Transport and Works Inquiry in November 2002 having produced an Expert Witness report into the extension of the Centro Tramway from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill and at the time I was examining that Tramway extension I was asked separately and by a different client to consider the case of the extension from Matlock through to Millers Dale.

The release of the above line to Heavy Rail use would provide direct services from Worcester and beyond to Stourbridge, Walsall, Burton on Trent, Derby, Matlock to Manchester, opening up lines which should not have been closed and for which the formation and routes are available and would take Passenger and Freight from out of central Birmingham.

In the research associated with that report it became clear that enhancements of the existing Oxford – Worcester line to facilitate freight trains moving via the Stourbridge to Walsall line and avoiding the need to run them through central Birmingham area was one of the strategic ways to ease the congestion. It would also release Freight Paths between Leamington and Birmingham by both the Solihull and Coventry routes again easing the congestion.

To run the tramway over the Heavy Rail formation is clearly a waste of that infrastructure’s robustness and it’s fit for purpose qualities as a railway line. In addition, for simplicity and lack of effort in solution-solving, it simply takes the tramway away from the centres of population along the way. The strength of the Tramway is that it can use the streets safely and take people from homes in the locality to the centres of business and trade.

Although the T &W Inquiry found for the Tram route to go over and destroy the Heavy Rail route the Inspector recognised that it will cause a Heavy Rail route right through the heart of the West Midlands to be lost and he did say:

“As for his argument that the SRA should be doing what he did, it is just possible that on a long term view beyond current planning and policy horizons, Mr Rayner is correct about the desirability of providing for a

heavy rail passenger link between Stourbridge and Walsall. But rightly or wrongly Mr Rayner is not the SRA”.

May I tactfully point out the SRA are no longer in existence but I am (only just one might say, but still here!). It is my view that the implementation of the tramway should be halted or if going ahead it should be built to heavy rail requirements so that the error can be rectified and the Tramway routed through an area where it is needed.

A copy of my Report and Appendices with maps has been made available to the Clerk to the Committee.

The route from Matlock to the connection with the national network at Peak Forest Junction is pretty well clear of obstructions. I am told that a route is still possible but again I have neither the time nor information to hand to fight for it.

The route is heavily engineered with tunnels and stone and steel viaducts. These have been very soundly built and despite 40 years of limited maintenance are not likely to prove excessively expensive to restore to a double line railway. At Matlock a development is proceeding that will obstruct this route.

4.9. West Midlands. So many gatherings of Transport experts of Road Rail and Air have taken place and still the planning for the area is a shambles insofar as Trams and Trains are concerned. I have along with the late Mrs Dunwoody tried several times to get some realisation of the operating problems of New St and my reports to her and notes of meetings with her, and her letters to me could form a dossier if anyone is interested.

Suffice to say, Birmingham and West Midlands rail network is of strategic importance to the National Network but continues to be planned round regional concerns and interests only. I believe the present Rail Minister Tom Harris fails us daily by his lack of understanding of his brief and by his obeisance to the Treasury.

4.10 MSW. The Woodhead route needs several champions to fight its corner. The D for T has failed us again with the Minister Rosie Winterton saying “we expect campaigners to produce robust evidence that increasing passenger numbers and freight will justify opening the line. It is not a new line and if the D for T did its job properly they would be funding a full investigation both from a capacity and environmental view point. This line could in addition provide a diversionary route.

4.11. Great Central. This railway was built to last with the clear intention of extending it to France via the Metropolitan and South Eastern Railways. A start (only) was made on excavating a Channel Tunnel. That is why remaining structures, some now used by Network Rail, have survived with little or no maintenance.

The GC formation is a marvellous inheritance. The gradients are not severe. The structure gauge is larger than any other UK railway. The curves on the main line are not severe and, given good permanent way should easily permit 125 mph. for much of its length. This is why some have suggested it could form the basis of a new UK high speed line. However care needs to be taken to examine curvature and gradient considerations for it was built for steam engines and at speeds way lower than to day. I strongly believe parts of it should be considered for a high speed line and certainly efforts to reopen the Great Central should not be left too long and acceptance of the utility of the route should be our immediate aim.

4.12 North Yorks and East Lancs area generally. There were many rail routes that have been closed, ranging from simple branch lines, like that to Richmond, to meandering routes from Pilmoor to Drifffield and useful cut-offs like Harrogate to Northallerton via Ripon. None of these routes is in a PTE area and bulk freight potential seems unlikely. There are preserved railways operating from Leeming Bar to Redmire and from Pickering to Grosmont. The general level of economic activity in the area may make it less likely to have a strong case but these routes should be examined and debated for environmental reasons, and because some of them could form

part of diversionary routes or useful extensions to existing passenger train services.

East Lancs is a hilly district where railways needed tunnelling and viaducts to get through. The key route closed is Colne to Skipton and is already the subject of a re-opening attempt. This route should be made a double track. It should be made a PTE passenger service to/from, ideally, Manchester or Preston despite being outside the PTE boundary. A rail service would encourage new housing as indeed it does anywhere.

There are several other routes that might serve either for future freight movements or for extension of existing commuter routes to serve newer housing areas. The PTE supported Clitheroe service could well be extended to Hellifield rather than the few trains now re-instated.

4.13 North Yorks line itself is a very successful private railway of useful length. It has its own workshop near Grosmont. The NYMR recently obtained agreement with Network Rail and Northern Rail to permit it to emerge onto the national network just beyond Grosmont and run to and from Whitby (the terminus of the Esk Valley line). It also runs to Glaisdale (the second station towards Middlesborough)

4.14 Trains and Trams South West Yorkshire The Sheffield trams (South Yorkshire Supertram) are impressive and the current operator, Stagecoach, seems to have bested the early problems. There are no expansion plans on the scale of the Manchester proposals. Some of the routes pass on street for much of their length via narrow Victorian roads in the south-west of Sheffield and suffer much delay because of congestion. There is a need for a concerted attempt to increase the network.

The former GC route to Barnsley Junction now has no passenger service. This could provide a fast route to Penistone and Huddersfield and to Manchester if life is breathed again into the MSW.

4.15 Kings Lynn Wisbech March. If no one has obstructed the formation, this should be a very easy line to renew – however I seem to have heard of a bridge being removed at Wisbech.

4.16 Luton – Dunstable. Here again, like other examples we have a government that is hell bent on a bus solution. The railway should run Luton to Dunstable and on to Linslade. Railfuture members have detailed plans, fought for years – does anybody listen, even in the overcrowded commuter belt. It should be a heavy rail addition to the network but if not be part of a number of Tramway opportunities in the area. This is a heavily populated corridor with no rail service and is one of the cases where we should try and raise the issue on environmental grounds and point out there is a real possibility of a Hatfield – Leighton Buzzard line linking the ECML and MML and WCML.

4.17 Tramways. Because the item above reminded me I thought it worth saying that I realise there are too many examples to list so apart from acts of supreme vandalism like the St Ives Busway, I have kept off Tramway opportunities. Remember however the economic fact that people will not get out of their cars for a bus but will often for Tram or reopened railway. It is almost a social thing. Likewise it is proven that a new railway or Tramway increases House prices whereas a new Bus route does nothing. I repeat again the only good thing Mrs Thatcher did for railways was to say that if you catch a bus after you are forty, you are a failure!

4.18 Oxford – Cambridge. This route comprises the Oxford – Bedford where the original formation remains intact with the rails in situ and in use Oxford to Bicester. Re-instatement of double track would be a straightforward matter. From Bedford to Cambridge the route has been obstructed in various locations. The River Great Ouse and its water meadows (now a water park) in Bedford rule out a small deviation of the railway to clear the obstructions. It has therefore been proposed to strike across country towards Sandy joining the ECML and running south to Hitchin, where a new chord would lead left to join the new route of the Cambridge branch, itself being altered to create a flying junction.

4.19 St. Ives – Cambridge Busway. Guided busways laid across flat land, as here, will need careful management

of intersections if they are not to suffer from road user indiscipline and 'level crossing' problems now faced and controlled by the railways. The Busway scheme is something we should monitor and continue to oppose even if it is a fait accompli. I have a vast amount of information and detail on safety and other strategic views. Only by constant opposition to such schemes can we hope to reverse the Bus emphasis.

4.20 Peterborough – Doncaster down the Joint. Network Rail is already planning to divert freight flows from the ECML to the Joint Line in order to find enough paths for the Dec. 2010 timetable. The line needs championing.

4.21 Marks Tey Eastwards. There were 11 branches east of Marks Tey . Most have been closed and those remaining in use have been rationalised. The Harwich Branch is currently being partly restored to double track in order to pass more container trains to/from Felixstowe. Commuters drive themselves fair distances to/from stations on the GE Main Line. There is an environmental case therefore for many of these branches to be examined for reopening
E.g. Haughley Jcn – Laxfield or Mellis – Eye.

4.22 Ore Ashford re doubling. Most of this route is single line. Redoubling is currently being threatened by the land at Rye which BR Residuary has sold for redevelopment. Local people are objecting to the grant of planning permission for a development on the site which would prevent redoubling through Rye station. As far as I know there is no other obstruction to making the line double track throughout.

Though the area is pretty empty, it is gaining population – witness the proposed development at Rye. The tourist interest in the area is developing.

To provide an improved train service, which should be at least half-hourly, more double track will be needed. This should include, as I think it now does, the section from Ashford to Appledore used by nuclear flasks traffic

4.23 East Grinstead to the Coast. There are two routes from East Grinstead to Brighton. Both are closed. The shorter route via Ardingly and Copyhold Jcn used to be electrified from Horstead Keynes. That route was a branch line – the main route was via Lewes and London Road Jcn.
The Bluebell Railway Company have taken over this latter route between Sheffield Park and Kingscote and working their way to East Grinstead where they will have a new station near to the Network Rail station. Part of this work is spending £2million to dig out a cutting that had been filled with refuse.

I do not know if agreement could be reached by all concerned to pass main line traffic over the Bluebell Railway. There are some very substantial obstructions in the way of re-opening between Sheffield Park and Lewes but I list it nevertheless if it could be made available as a through route, it would be very useful as a diversionary London – Brighton route when the main line is blocked by accident or engineering work

4.24 Swanage Weymouth. The route has been partly reinstated throughout. There is single track from Worgret Junction to Furzebrook Oil Sidings owned by Network Rail and used for freight and occasional rail access to the Swanage Railway, which preserves and operates the rest of the line from Corfe Castle to Swanage. There is a need to link Swanage with the main line at Wareham.

4.25 Salisbury – Exeter re-instatement of Double line. (see 3.3 above) This route is now single track with a few passing loops. It cannot cope with all the train movements required, particularly when diversions of GW traffic are required. In such situations, cancellations of part of the route of the line's proper trains have to be implemented, with passengers forced to change trains, sometimes into heavily loaded GW trains. The present passing loops are insufficient to give the capacity needed. Additional loops are required and two, at least, of the existing loops need to be made longer.

A great deal of work is being planned to develop this scheme so I will not go into much detail except to say the economic case for re-instatement of double track is possibly less strong east of Yeovil Jcn. But unless this is completed, there will be no improvement regarding the train delays cumulating because of a train having to wait at a passing point for a late-running train in the opposite direction. With throughout double track, as originally provided, the timings of trains can be tightened up and overall performance improved.

4.26 Oxford Worcester Cotswold. Put back Double line. This route has received some management attention recently, because of poor running. It remains a single line with few passing loops, yet it carries traffic comparable with when it was double throughout. If doubled and the Stourbridge to Stockport concept accepted then this would be an important feeder

If double-track can be re-laid there is no doubt that the prospects for the line would be revolutionised. There is already freight potential, which coupled with 3.8 above could become significant. The passenger timetable could be refined and speeded up to give regular, hourly trains from Paddington to Oxford, a key railhead or two on line, Worcester, Great Malvern and Hereford. The possibility would also exist to run local to line stopping trains and more stations might well be appropriate.

4.27 Northampton Market Harborough. A private preservation Company, Northampton and Lamport, is in occupation around Lamport. A carriage shed has been constructed on the formation at Northampton, but this could be avoided if the junction were to be re-sited further from Northampton, for which there is space.

At the Market Harborough end part of the railway embankment has been removed and several buildings, including houses have been constructed. I do not know if there has been any other obstruction along the line or if bridges have been removed.

Whilst

restoration of this route would undoubtedly be useful providing a direct through route from London to the East Midlands, West Yorkshire and York, it must be recognised that the existing and planned high levels of line occupation on WCML and MML will mean few paths could be available for through trains via this route. Possible options include running on WCML only between Northampton and Denbigh Hall, then via Aylesbury to Marylebone or Paddington or Kensington Olympia and destinations to the south of London. The latter option would need the relaying of the Park Royal to West London Railway link.

4.28 Original route to Nottingham. (via Manton) It follows from 3.27 above that consideration should be given to reopening the original Midland Route via Manton and Old Dalby. This would free up capacity through Market Harborough on the twin track section between Glendon and Leicester. It might also i) permit Desborough to reopen ii) release capacity north of Leicester through to Trent for other services. E.g. Swindon – Oxford- Milton Keynes- Northampton-Leicester- Nottingham/Sheffield via Erewash. Or iii) attract passengers away from Peterborough to an appropriately sited Parkway station and so ease the ECML

4.29 Rugby Leicester. This route has been broken by the M6 motorway and would need to be raised several feet to bridge it. I do not know of any other obstruction, but it would be surprising if nothing had been developed through Wigston and southern Leicester. Other sections of infrastructure could have been destroyed or obstructed.

This line joins WCML immediately north of Rugby station, but for years has terminated in the Up sidings.

Because WCML is so fully committed to its own proper traffic there will be no capacity of consequence for trains to/from the Rugby-Leicester line.

The passenger traffic potential for this relatively short line (20 miles) through largely open countryside is very low. It could provide a useful, more direct route for some passengers from WCML south of Rugby who want to reach Leicester, the East Midlands and Yorkshire, whose only option today is change at Birmingham New Street

or Crewe. Even if this were to mean changing trains into an MU from a bay platform at Rugby and again Leicester, many passengers would prefer that to New Street.

It occurs to me that new housing may eventually figure on some of those green acres. This could provide more potential for a passenger service.

4.30 GSW. This secondary main line was downgraded as part of the 1974 electrification of Crewe-Glasgow, leaving a single line railway. The extent of rationalisation then is now a cause for regret, given the demands for regular bulk coal imports from Hunterston, container trains and a desire for improved passenger services.

The northern end of this route is electrified and connects with other electrified lines. It would make sense to remove diesel powered trains and locomotives from the south-west Glasgow rail system.

5. FINALLY

I finish this lengthy opinion by saying I apologise for its inadequacies and for the fact that I will have missed some key points and maybe got others wrong.

So many of these examples need national publicity – Luton-Dunstable, the MSW and East West links Oxford-Cambridge to name but three. How do we achieve it against the present political position?

My message is still let us raise all the issues over and over again. Let us seek publicity. Let us protect against what the Treasury is doing. Let us not tolerate the patronising discussion.

Fight for the railway and for a better environment to grow old in and in which our children and grandchildren can grow up in.

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Presentation produced for Railfuture, July 2008.

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