

raillfuture

Campaigning for all Britain's rail users

Annual Review 2016 – Towards a better railway in 2017 and beyond



Waterloo (above) is Britain's busiest railway station, used by 99 million people per year. Like much of our rail network it is creaking at the seams and needs to be *bigger* as well as *better* – the two key aims of Railfuture's campaigning over many decades. In 2017 the old Eurostar platforms will be brought back into use so that other platforms can be extended. At Railfuture our campaigns – and therefore our successes – are not limited to the mainline railway. We promote and lobby for all forms of rail-based travel, including the Underground and trams as well as trains. All are expanding. In May 2016 the Midland Metro trams finally

reached Birmingham New Street (photo left) and further extensions started in early 2017. The Blackpool, Manchester and Sheffield systems will be expanding too.



In this review of Railfuture's campaigning during 2016 you'll find:

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HONORARY PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS



CHRISTIAN WOLMAR

As a transport journalist and author, I do not speak on behalf of Railfuture. However, I am delighted to offer advice and support its campaigns for a bigger and better railway. The railways need a champion and Railfuture is certainly that.

Who would have thought that a new line between London and Oxford would open, and that the beautiful border country in Scotland would have a busy reopened rail line. That is why rail campaigners must keep on battling away. Lines that were once earmarked to become weed-encrusted footpaths or paved over by supermarket car parks are thriving and being blessed with new trains and extra services.

However, we must pick the right fights. The winnable ones. We must pick the low-hanging fruit and go for the obvious extensions of existing routes, for reopening freight lines, for re-establishing stations in growing towns and improving services where demand is obviously there because of new housing or workplaces. There is no shortage of such places where the campaign can be won. And sometimes won easily.

That is not to say we should give up on the more ambitious schemes. But in times of austerity, when local authorities are cash strapped and Network Rail is now more constrained, it is important to pick the right battles in order to keep on winning the war. There is nothing more pleasing than standing on a newly-reopened platform or sitting on a train travelling on a route whose resurrection would make Beeching spin in his grave. Go for it in 2017.

CHAIR'S REVIEW



CHRIS PAGE

Railfuture is changing – our views are sought out by decision makers, the rail industry and the media.

After the EU referendum we felt it was important for the government to reaffirm its commitment to rail investment, so I wrote to the Transport Secretary, Chris Grayling, giving our top 10 recommendations for rail investment to promote economic growth. This letter led to us being invited to a meeting with the Rail Minister, Paul Maynard, in November 2016.

At the meeting we focused on the three key areas which must be addressed for that rail investment to be effective and efficient: creating a customer service culture, the shortfall in Network Rail's delivery capability, and realistic forecasting of passenger usage for new lines and stations.

The minister recognised that these issues were valid and that our proposals are both reasonable and realistic, see www.railfuture.org.uk/article1727-Putting-passengers-first. The minister asked us to identify potential small projects meeting a rail need which would bring visible benefits to passengers; we submitted many ideas from our branches.

At our annual Away Day many of our active members discussed 14 of the key issues facing the railway and proposed the Railfuture policy to meet each issue.

Each director now has a specific role. We advertised for a Membership Director and found an ideal person, who has accepted and is now hard at work.

Our strategy - which is to take realistic positions on key rail issues, focus on campaigns with a realistic chance of success, and promote our position and campaigns professionally with stakeholders and the public – is beginning to bear fruit.

RAIL INDUSTRY REVIEW – KEY AREAS OF CONCERN IN 2016

Three much-discussed issues with Britain's railway dominated all others in 2016. Firstly, Network Rail (NR) continued to demonstrate on occasions its inability to accurately estimate, plan and manage infrastructure enhancement projects – something that is critical when so many enhancements are needed. Secondly, the service on Southern Railway (SR) fell way below expectations through staff shortages (something that there is no excuse for), major re-construction works at London Bridge for Thameslink, unreliable NR infrastructure and a prolonged industrial dispute over working practice changes intended to improve customer service (which could spread to other operators). Lastly, the rail industry and government have finally woken up to rail passenger rights and the fact that the cumbersome, irrational fare structure must be made clearer, if not necessarily simpler. Railfuture has campaigned for solutions to all of these issues.

Network Rail's 'day job' of running the network well is coming under the worsening pressure of an ever-increasing number of passengers that results in busier stations, longer trains and more trains on the network. This challenge is not helped by parts of the network, especially signalling, being nearly life-expired. During 2016 NR reset the roll-out of the much-needed Digital Railway, cancelling schemes to prioritise new technology on where it can deliver most value i.e. capacity. NR spoke at Railfuture meetings to explain it.

Fortunately for passengers a serious overrun of engineering works was not repeated. NR's Chief Executive got off lightly from the media in 2016. However, all electrification schemes are running late and over budget. Even the electrification of the short Gospel Oak – Barking line saw some of the works done incorrectly, despite a five-month complete closure, necessitating a further closure later in 2017. The late running and eye-watering cost escalation on Great Western electrification will see bi-mode trains running on diesel for longer distances (probably at lower speed) than they should. Network Rail needs fixing – we all know it. See our article: www.railfuture.org.uk/article1730-Fixing-Network-Rail.

Thanks to the credibility brought by the experience of Ian Brown (former MD of TfL London Rail), Stewart Palmer (retired MD of SWT), Chris Austin (previously with the SRA and ATOC) and Vice-Presidents such as Adrian Shooter (ex-MD of Chiltern and now chairman of Vivarail), Railfuture was invited by NR's Hansford Review to give its thoughts on changes needed to allow Britain's railway industry to improve its performance. Railfuture took part in telephone interviews and completed a confidential feedback form. One of the ideas, supported by NR and the government, is 'contestability' - a greater level of competition in the current system would deliver greater value for money and innovation. East West Rail between Oxford and Cambridge has been a key Railfuture campaign since the 1980s, and it will be a pilot scheme.

In 2016 much national media coverage – all negative – was given to the troubles on **Southern Railway**. Railfuture's national media spokesman, Bruce Williamson, gave numerous radio interviews about it, helping to explain the real issues behind the disruption. Passengers have been the innocent victims. A Railfuture website article (www.railfuture.org.uk/article1694-Train-staff-duties) explained the changes that SR was making – under its contract with the government - and how these will be in the interests of passengers (better customer service, fewer cancellations, improved performance) if they are implemented correctly.

The media also has a field day when **rail fares** rise on 2 January each year. Railfuture continues to lobby for increases based on the lower consumer prices index, which the government uses for most things, rather than the outmoded RPI. Railfuture's website offers passengers hints on finding better value fares. However, there are many anomalies in fares and passengers either feel they are being ripped off or it is not worth the effort to hunt for sensible fares or split tickets. In late 2016 Ian Brown represented Railfuture at a fares and **ticketing** review launched by the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) to look at these anomalies. Earlier in the year we met the Department for Transport, Office of Rail and Road and RDG to raise our concerns. The good news for passengers is that there will be a trial of revamped fares. In addition Delay Repay is being extended to make payments from a 15-minute delay (the minimum was previously 30 minutes) and in October 2016 the Consumer Rights Act came into force allowing rail passengers to claim money back for a range of problems that result from a service not being delivered with 'reasonable care and skill' or for consequential losses because of delayed or cancelled trains e.g. missed flights or taxi fares. Our campaign on fares is at www.railfuture.org.uk/Fares.

The railway has yet to see any impact from the momentous decision by referendum voters to leave the EU. Railfuture posted three articles on the website looking at what might change in terms of passengers, freight, operations and economics, and urged continuing network investment to support the UK economy.



RAILFUTURE LOBBYING

Railfuture's vision is for: 'A railway system that provides services which travellers and freight forwarders want to use, and which offers more journey opportunities to more people and more freight.'

Our campaigning supports this vision. We identify and communicate with the organisations that make decisions and those that implement them. Much of Railfuture's time is spent talking to the 'movers and shakers' across Britain: the Westminster and devolved governments in Scotland and Wales, plus their agencies such as TfL and Transport Scotland along with the rail industry itself: train and freight operators, Office of Rail and Road, Rail Delivery Group and so on. Every Railfuture branch lobbies their local authorities, LEPs, MPs and local train operators. In short, if they are worth talking to, Railfuture does!

Railfuture wrote to Transport Secretary Chris Grayling to stress the need for continued rail investment (www.railfuture.org.uk/article1698-Letter-to-Chris-Grayling), giving 10 recommendations. These included:

- A growing railway meeting social, economic and regeneration objectives and passenger aspirations
- Complete major electrification schemes but increase focus on value for money regional incremental schemes with a view to reducing unit costs and increasing capacity
- Provide new journey opportunities; reduce dependence on London's existing overcrowded rail/Tube
- Invest in rail freight: improved capacity from ports for efficient and competitive freight train operation
- Devolve City Transport networks for cost-efficient integrated heavy and light rail transport
- Provide upgraded rail capacity to serve the additional London and Regional Airport Development
- Improve cost and efficiency of Britain's railways to secure continued capital investment for growth.

When a Railfuture delegation met Rail Minister Paul Maynard MP he asked us to identify ideas for projects, maybe costing around only £2m each, which could then be delivered quickly, perhaps by the TOCs, so that they do not get stuck in NR's delivery queue. Our ideas included:

- Conversion of redundant station buildings for retail/café use
- Improved waiting facilities
- Improving passenger flow where space is currently constricted
- Better bus/rail integration
- Improved customer information displays
- Increased service capacity

Control of the Wales and Borders franchise has passed to the Welsh Government. Therefore, prior to the 2016 Welsh Assembly election Railfuture Wales prepared a summary of its Development Plan: a vision for the Welsh rail network and services. The summary was sent to all candidates seeking election. We also gave evidence to the Assembly's committee dealing with transport on priorities for Welsh rail infrastructure.

Not all lobbying is done directly by Railfuture. For example, our North West branch has strongly supported affiliated local rail user groups (RUGs) in their meetings with local authorities. Issues raised often have a strategic impact, such as the loss of direct services when timetables are rewritten, and the RUGs, often with Railfuture support, supplied passenger survey data that both the operator and local government have taken seriously. Where branch boundaries do not match those of authorities then neighbouring Railfuture branches work together: Devon & Cornwall joins with Wessex to promote service and infrastructure improvements in conjunction with local authorities and rail users.

East Anglia branch influenced the Greater Anglia franchise, resulting in a 100% new train fleet, and helped obtain better infrastructure for the region. Its committee has a member in each large town, so the branch is able to attend to local issues and council planning quickly. It also attends many railway industry stakeholder meetings and has private meetings with local authority officials and Members of Parliament. It backed this up with original evidence such as detailed station audits. The audit done at Whittlesford Parkway resulted in Railfuture setting up a RUG for it and the next station a few months later. Thames Valley branch has been integral in re-forming the Bicester - Oxford User group and it is hoped this will stretch to Bletchley in due course. Railfuture Wessex branch also setup a RUG, SERUG, on the Salisbury-Exeter Line, and then engaged with decision makers in a concerted campaign for infrastructure and service improvements. In doing so, the SERUG activists won a coveted Railfuture Commendation for Best New User Group in 2016.

The West Midlands branch conducted two surveys of off-peak train loadings and quality of customer care on the Hereford-Worcester-Birmingham services. London Midland promised to act upon our findings.

Railfuture TOC liaisons regularly meet with management. We asked CrossCountry to stop trains at the new Cambridge North station, alleviate overcrowding and add later services (the last train to March and Peterborough leaves Cambridge at 9pm) and earlier ones on Sunday mornings. North East branch had two stakeholder meetings with Virgin Trains East Coast, which have resulted in additional stopping trains in Northumberland, with Morpeth gaining 26 additional calls each week, from December 2016. Railfuture Scotland attends the Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Rail to raise passenger concerns.

Direct lobbying gets things done. However, much of the time those organisations' hands are tied. They have projects to undertake and Railfuture tries to maximise the benefits to rail users from them. The questions are asked and Railfuture gives its answers, after careful consideration using knowledge built up over many years of how the railway works and what passengers and freight customers want.

As an informed, realistic and respected stakeholder Railfuture is often directly contacted to take part in consultations. Over a year Railfuture nationally or via its 14 branches submits a written response around once every week. This is a tremendous achievement for an organisation run entirely by volunteers.

Following our response to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee consultation on Improving the Rail Passenger Experience, in June 2016 Chris Fribbins (below) of our Passenger Group, along with Campaign for Better Transport, was called to give evidence in person to the Select Committee, and was questioned for almost an hour.



A continuing role of our Passenger Group is to coordinate responses to DfT consultations during the process of franchise renewal through direct awards or competitive bids, based on input from each branch in that franchise area via the liaison officer Railfuture appoints for each train operator.

West Midlands branch co-ordinated responses to the West Midlands Trains franchise consultation and Network Rail's West Midlands and Chilterns Route Study, to which we made major input and will, we hope, lead to significant improvements for passengers. We urged improved timetable and rolling stock utilisation of CrossCountry Trains for December 2017 to reduce often severe overcrowding.

In 2016 Railfuture Wales focused efforts to influence the award of the new Wales and Borders franchise from 2018. We submitted evidence to the Welsh Affairs committee in Westminster about the process for awarding the franchise, and we met consultants working for the four shortlisted companies. The meetings provided the opportunity for Railfuture to explain its priorities for the new franchise in terms of passenger services, routes and stations. Our key success was the announcement that the franchise would be let based on the existing passenger network with a number of services continuing to run a significant distance in England. We opposed a proposal that trains terminate at places such as Shrewsbury and Chester.

In addition to responding to the consultation on the South Western Rail franchise, David Brace from Wessex branch accompanied Railfuture Chair, Chris Page, at meetings with each bidder (First and Stagecoach) to put forward our concerns and aspirations.

East Anglia submitted responses on varying topics such as Sizewell C, Soham station, East Cambridgeshire District Council's transport plan, the National Infrastructure Commission about East West Rail, and several from Network Rail (e.g. Felixstowe line doubling and the national freight network).

Sevenside branch responded to the West of England Spatial Plan asking for new housing development to be sited within easy reach of railway stations and for new public transport links to be introduced at the start of a development, not years afterwards. We called for rail schemes to be fast tracked so that road building does not take priority. The branch also attended GWR Station Travel Plan meetings at Bristol and Taunton, meeting Station Managers and raising issues such as access and bus / rail interchange.

Railfuture West and East Midlands cooperated to lobby Midlands Connect leaders for rail improvements.

Railfuture has consistently campaigned over half a century for the opening of **new stations** to allow more people to access the railway. More than 370 stations have opened (or reopened) during this time. Apperley Bridge and Kirkstall Forge on Yorkshire's Airedale Line opened in 2016. Railfuture was one of the organisations making the case for these. Lea Bridge station re-opened in May 2016 – Railfuture had spent £5,000 on a consultant to make a case for it.

Ilkeston is scheduled to open in April 2017, and Low Moor in south Bradford in May 2017. We will continue to campaign for other priority stations, for example Peterlee and Maghull North, to be included in the next round of the government's New Stations Fund. Railfuture's book **Britain's Growing Railway**, which lists every new station, will be revised and re-published during 2017. A list of new stations planned, and ones recently opened, is at www.railfuture.org.uk/New+stations.

Railfuture East Anglia has campaigned continuously for a station to serve the north of Cambridge for almost 30 years – initially as part of its failed campaign to reopen the Cambridge to St Ives line. Railfuture has responded positively to every consultation supplying a detailed list of passenger requirements for an ideal station. Cambridge North will finally open on Sunday 21 May 2017 – the day after Railfuture's AGM.



Photo: Network Rail

At £50 million, this ought to be a perfect station. During the public consultation Railfuture provided a detailed list of facilities that it believes are necessary for a **good passenger experience**. This is used as a template for other new stations. We succeeded in getting lots of cycle storage (1,000 spaces right next to the station building) with solar-panels on the roof to produce green energy. We got a substantial car park (450 spaces) but the foundation work has made it expensive to add a deck. We asked for, and got, protection from rain and wind between station entrance and platform, including for those using the footbridge lifts, with proper waiting rooms on all platforms, but the canopies only cover two of the 12 carriages of trains calling there. We asked for toilets on both sides of the gateline (meeters and greeters need them) as well as on the platforms. There will be minimal facilities in the station building beyond the gateline. Seating in the building is being provided, along with ticket machines and retail facilities. We asked for customer information screens throughout the station, especially along the footbridge and on the platforms. During our guided tour facilities were still being worked on.

Passengers want **stations that are fit for purpose**. Our West Midlands branch reviewed the new Birmingham New Street station and presented observations to Network Rail. As a consequence we were invited to tour the site with the Station Manager and several NR officers. Some of our observations have encouraged NR to proceed with a number of changes such as more use of colour to identify the 'lounges', more information screens and more seats. However, more is needed and Railfuture will keep pushing for improvements.

Ely station (right – full of students on their way home) is an example of a station with substantial canopies on all platforms ensuring passengers stay dry from the moment they enter the station, which has all the facilities that passengers require.



Railfuture wants the rail industry to **put passengers first**, rather than their own operational convenience, and it welcomes innovation and modernisation focused on passenger benefits. We have supported the introduction of station 'hosts' who are free to help all passengers rather than being stuck behind glass. However, it is vital that they can provide all of the facilities of a ticket office. Where this is not the case we have taken it up with the train operator in charge of the station. We also recognise the benefits of on-board staff being dedicated to serving passengers where the driver can be put in full control of the train.

Millions of passengers will soon experience a major improvement: **upgrading and replacement of trains** across Britain. The government has funded thousands of new carriages in order to meet its self-imposed deadline of 31 December 2019 to make every train service **'accessible'** to 'persons of reduced mobility'. A benefit of this will be air-conditioning, enhanced passenger information, Wi-Fi, power-points, and toilets that do not flush onto the track (that can therefore be used in stations). Railfuture East Anglia supported politicians who demanded new trains. The East Anglia franchise will have a 100% new fleet even though many trains are not life-expired. The Yorkshire, North East and North West branches successfully campaigned for a step change in the train service from the new Northern and TransPennine Express franchises, which commenced on 1st April 2016. Some 400 new carriages will enter service from 2018, the unloved 'Pacer' trains will go by end 2019 and all remaining rolling stock will be rebuilt to an 'as new' standard. New trains can also enable services to be extended: Liverpool-Newcastle trains will be extended to Edinburgh in 2019. A combination of new trains and rebuilt platforms would give wheelchair users their independence rather than having to arrange for ramps to be used, but will it happen? Railfuture wants it to.



Railfuture has been urging operators to provide **earlier and later train services**. As the network becomes more automated the excuse of having to staff a large number of signal-boxes no longer applies. Lincolnshire branch is particularly unhappy that the complete re-signalling of the 'joint line' from Peterborough to Doncaster via Lincoln, which allowed it to run 24 x 7 for freight by removing the limitation of single-shift signal box staffing, has not also seen the very restricted hours of operation for passenger services extended. In much of the county long day return trips by rail are not possible.

Fare dodging: To minimise fare increases it is vital that passengers pay for their journeys, but those who make innocent mistakes or are confused by an over-complex fare system should not be humiliated or put off travelling again. The West Midlands branch spent a day with revenue protection officers to see how many people had not paid and how they were treated by the staff.

Helping passengers: Some of Railfuture's work is mundane but still of value to passengers. Severnside branch persuaded GWR to relocate the Onward Travel poster at Kemble to make it more visible. It's the small things that make the journey trouble-free and encourage passengers to travel again.

MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE CAMPAIGNS

Railfuture has always been an organisation with a long-term vision, promoting schemes that may take decades to realise. Although 'big bang' projects such as London's Crossrail are being delivered now, often the best way to achieve these schemes is incrementally.

Railfuture's campaign for a bigger railway – which means more train services and journey opportunities - relies upon increased capacity and that is rarely cheap. Our criteria for deciding whether to campaign for an upgraded or new route are:

- it is reasonable and feasible
- it has political and public support
- it has a good chance of success
- there is a demonstrable demand
- it supports economic development

Two photos of mothballed Wisbech branch (right)



Re-instating passenger services on freight-only and mothballed lines

Railfuture is keen for viable passenger services to be re-introduced on selected freight-only lines, which are often an underutilised asset. The cost will vary depending on the number of stations required and the amount of work needed to bring it up to passenger standard, such as increasing the line speeds. The viability will depend on the population on the route, the need to travel and the competitiveness of rail.

The news that oil trains to **Fawley** refinery were to cease sparked renewed interest in new passenger services on the Waterside Line serving Marchwood and Hythe. Wessex Branch produced a brief paper on the subject summarising the situation to date and calling for a fresh appraisal.

Railfuture North East and campaign group SENRUG gave Toby Hughes, director of Metro Futures a tour of the **Ashington, Blyth and Tyne** freight-only route on which we want passenger services. The scheme has progressed to Network Rail's GRIP3 stage and is sponsored by Northumberland County Council.

West Midlands branch continued to lobby for the re-introduction of regular, frequent passenger services on the **Walsall to Wolverhampton** line. We had several meetings and site visits with Transport Officers of the two boroughs, which culminated in a meeting with officers, the Deputy Leader and Transport Portfolio Holder of Walsall and a senior representative of Network Rail. We will continue to pursue this in 2017.

It is also important that existing rail services are put on a sustainable footing. On the **Isle of Wight**, the Garnett Report into the future of the Island Line, which considered converting it to light rail, continues to provoke discussion, with Wessex Branch members putting forward practical solutions in the face of some rather fanciful suggestions.

The **March to Wisbech** branch has been out of use since 2001. Railfuture East Anglia has played a crucial role in getting political support – including that of former Prime Minister David Cameron – for reopening and a frequent through service to Cambridge. Railfuture continues to work closely with all interested parties and is very much 'inside the tent.' The vital project, which will rejuvenate Wisbech, has never looked more certain.

Rebuilding rail routes

Railfuture's highest-profile rail route campaign is the **East West Rail** for Oxford to Cambridge and beyond in both directions. In December phase 1 was completed: a new Chiltern Railways service from Marylebone to Oxford. The photo below shows passengers alighting from one of the very first trains as it arrived in the new terminus platforms at Oxford station. The line reopened having been fully rebuilt in 30 months.



The Greater Cambridge City Deal has taken a huge amount of Railfuture's time but we are having real success in getting the role of rail taken seriously. From this work has arisen the *Cambridge Connect* concept of a **light-rail network for the Cambridge area**, developed largely by our member Dr Colin Harris with support throughout Railfuture. The concept is gaining serious traction both locally and nationally. The creation of a Mayor's Office for Cambridgeshire from May 2017, with a large transport budget, much of it for rail, has not escaped our attention! Linked to this is our determination that Wisbech, Soham and Haverhill

shall all soon be linked back into the national railway network. All campaigns have received much attention and all are making very positive progress.

In Fife the restoration of services to **St Andrews** and to **Leven** are only inching forward despite two well-organised local campaigns supported by Railfuture.

Yorkshire branch is supporting re-openings, notably Skipton to Colne, which would link two towns turning a branch line into a through route and, if lines are upgraded, a potential route to reduce freight train journey times. In Lancashire, a new line from Kirkby to Skelmersdale would regenerate the largest town in the North West without a station at present.

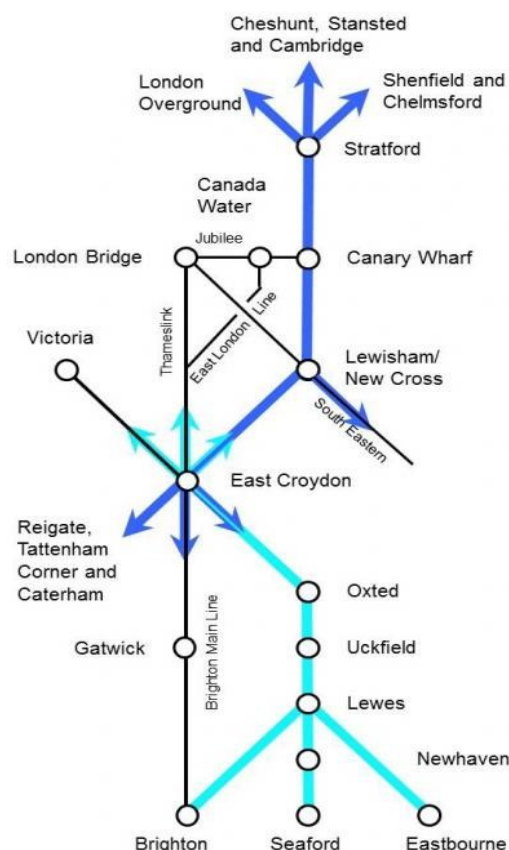
Railfuture's vision for the south east is **Thameslink 2** (www.railfuture.org.uk/Thameslink+2) which, coupled with an incremental upgrade of the Uckfield line, will provide vital capacity enhancements and resilience for the Brighton Main Line. We have paid a consultant to identify the economic growth opportunities and make a case that will persuade politicians to support it. This has both raised Railfuture's profile and credibility amongst stakeholders.

Mistakes not to be repeated

Railfuture has campaigned for decades for the Borders Railway to be reopened (it featured on the front cover of our 2015 review). Because of pessimistic passenger forecasting – particularly the passenger kilometres travelled (and therefore revenue earned) rather than the actual passenger numbers – the line was built down to a budget rather than being fit for purpose. Passengers have paid the price, just as Railfuture predicted, for a route that is largely single track with little provision for future doubling.

Upgrades to keep the railway competitive

Although much investment in the railway is to provide capacity to cater for increasing passenger numbers it is also needed to keep the railway viable where it is not competitive with the car or – worse still – the bus. On the Far North Line, passenger numbers continue to decline - the only rural route in Scotland where they are - because the journey time is still too long. Investment is needed to dramatically raise line speeds.



RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF RAILFUTURE

www.railfuture.org.uk/Railfuture+in+the+news
www.railfuture.org.uk/Press+releases

Fare increases are government policy rather than TOCs maximising profits. They do pay for improvements as government uses the extra rail fares to plough back into the network but the promise of 'jam tomorrow' doesn't make things easier for the commuter today who just wants to find a seat on their journey to work.

The media have three opportunities to spread bad news: August, when the July RPI rate is announced, December when fares are published and 2nd January when the fares actually rise. Railfuture makes sure that its voice is heard on television, radio and in newspapers. We have consistently called for the government to base increases on the lower CPI inflation index, rather than RPI.

Railfuture's national **media spokesman**, Bruce Williamson (right), issues all of our national press releases and is regularly on the radio. We've become the go-to rail people for new national digital station talkRADIO. We were interviewed 7 times in 2016 by Julia Hartley-Brewer, George Galloway and Alexis Conran. Many are uploaded to the Railfuture website. The interview with George Galloway has been downloaded more than 2000 times and two other radio interviews have been listened to by more than 2,500.



Media coverage averages one appearance every other day (186 in 2016). Railfuture has been mentioned in all the national newspapers, as well as BBC Radio Five Live, Sky News and the BBC News channel. Many requests to Bruce for an interview were related to fare rises, fare complexity, Southern's strikes and difficulties, and delays to investment.

Yorkshire branch Vice Chairman Chris Hyomes is a regular interviewee on regional TV and local radio, and he has worked closely with the regional press. Railfuture East Anglia has a very high-profile and few weeks pass without media coverage or endless media calls....newspaper radio, television...frustratingly the latter often means hours of messing about in the wind and rain for a second or two on the news! The profile is achieved by engaging with the media, sending copies of the newsletter, press releases, and using Twitter effectively. The Cambridge News has been very interested in our views on how useful Cambridge North will be and what improvements we want to see. East Anglia branch continues to develop the '**Easy Stations**' concept, gaining the support of Greater Anglia. The first award will be given to a station where access for all improvements have been made, and a plaque will be erected. The local media will be invited.

Major public events: The West Midlands branch has been preparing for elections for a regional Mayor who will be in effect the chairman of the West Midlands Combined Authority with a budget of £8 billion. It has organised a Transport Forum entitled 'Keeping the West Midlands Moving' where at least four of the mayoral candidates will debate in Birmingham Council House. Railfuture's Vice-President Lorna Slade, who edits Rail Professional magazine, will chair this high-profile event on 6 April 2017.

We are not an enthusiast organisation but often find that people who like trains from an early age grow up to become regular rail users, many relying upon the railway and expecting constant improvements. On the basis of 'capture them when they are young' and explaining the value of the railway to their parents, Railfuture Scotland attends many Model Rail shows to promote its campaigns. In 2016 we attended shows at Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Perth. In 2017 we'll travel to the Kyle Show in Ayrshire. It has paid off with many new members joining in the last two years.



During 2016 Railfuture Scotland attended meetings of the Far North Line, Campaign for Borders Rail, Newburgh Rail Group and Levenmouth Rail Campaign, to show support for our fellow campaigners and tell them how Railfuture could help them. In 2017 we will spend more time meeting our members and will be attending as many User Groups as we can, including the West Highland Line (which means a journey to Mallaig) and to Kyle of Lochalsh.

Railfuture produces many **branch publications**. For example, twice a year Railfuture Wales publishes its magazine Rail Wales, which provides comprehensive news and thought-provoking comment on the Welsh rail scene. East Anglia produces the quarterly 20-page colour Rail East newsletter that is sent to every one of the region's MPs, many council leaders and officers, rail operators and the media. Yorkshire and Lincolnshire do the same with the Yorkshire Rail Campaigner magazine and Rail Lincs newsletter.

Sevenside branch had **letters published** in regional and local papers. These raised the need for better CrossCountry services at Gloucester and regular daily services from Minehead to Taunton. Campaigning isn't just about calling for improvements but making sure that the community uses them when they have been delivered. The branch gave talks on recent rail improvements at public meetings in Wells and Pewsey.

Our North East branch gave an illustrated talk to the Aln Valley Railway Group about Railfuture's north-east aspirations, campaigns and the future rail service provision in our area. Scotland did similar presentations.

Railfuture's literature often has a long shelf-life. Greengauge 21 has published its response to the Peninsula Rail Task Force's proposals for rail in the South West, which aims to ensure the railway continues to run when there is bad weather on the coast and flooding in vulnerable areas. It was almost identical to proposals by our Devon and Cornwall branch produced seventeen years ago.

We invited members of Young Rail Professionals, which promotes the railway to young people as a career, to attend our events including an Away Day to decide on our rail policies. In 2017 we intend to work with them more closely.

MEMBER ACTIVITIES

Railfuture has thousands of members across Britain – and that doesn't include the tens of thousands who belong to Rail User Groups affiliated to Railfuture.

As an organisation entirely independent from the rail industry, train operators, unions, national and local governments, Railfuture is funded solely by its members who pay an annual subscription, make donations or who leave a legacy. Some members are happy to be armchair supporters, receiving their quarterly issues of Railwatch magazine and branch newsletters. Many attend our free branch meetings and modestly-priced national conferences to find out what Railfuture is doing and to ask challenging questions of guest speakers. Train operators often learn much about what is right and wrong with their service at these events.

Railfuture is a professional, competent and internally-disciplined organisation with effective processes and procedures that are transparent, fair and legally compliant. Its directors, elected by the whole membership, abide by the 'Nolan Principles' of good conduct. We are run entirely by unpaid volunteers, all of whom are both members and rail users – some current and former rail employees. However, our ability to campaign is dependent on our active volunteers, and we need more of them.

Each branch operates according to its size and geographic shape. West Midlands branch invites all its members to its monthly committee meetings. East Anglia branch prefers to have a public meeting each quarter located across the region, attended on by an average of 40 people and holds its committee meetings beforehand so that members are fully briefed and consulted. Jamie Burles, MD of Greater Anglia, spoke to a packed room of almost 60 people in Cambridge. Yorkshire branch also rotates its four meetings. David Home, MD of Virgin Trains East Coast; Alex Hynes, then Managing Director of Northern Rail and Chris Nutton, Major Projects Director of TransPennine Express spoke at Yorkshire branch meetings.

Conferences: In June Railfuture held a conference in Newtongrange in Scotland to allow members so experience the 35-mile-long Borders Railway, which reopened in September 2015. Many attendees travelled along the line to Galashiels (pictured right) and the terminus (for now!) at Tweedbank.

In November we organised a very successful conference in Birmingham with 120 delegates and six speakers covering a wide variety of topics relevant to railways and the economy in the West Midlands. Particularly noteworthy were Lord Tony Berkeley of the UK Rail Freight Group, Stephen Joseph of Campaign for Better Transport, and Professor Clive Roberts, a world expert on the Digital Railway from the University of Birmingham.

We made efforts to attract students to the conference – they will be the rail campaigners of the future.



Site visits: Occasionally it is possible for Railfuture members to see behind the scenes. North East branch members toured the Hitachi train assembly plant at Newton Aycliffe where the new intercity-trains for Virgin Trains East Coast and Great Western Railway are being completed. Yorkshire branch visited the Institute of Railway Research at Huddersfield University in September, and will work closely with them in the future.

Rail User Group Awards: Railfuture has been running these unique awards for five years. Members can nominate RUGs for awards to recognise outstanding achievements, particularly where campaigns have been successful. Winners are presented with a certificate at our autumn conference and receive a year's Railfuture membership. See www.railfuture.org.uk/RUG+Awards. Our affiliated RUGs are listed at www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Groups.

Our monthly Rail User Express bulletin contains announcements of particular interest to RUGs. This is sent by e-mail and can be downloaded from the website. Send news items to ruglink@railfuture.org.uk.

HELP IMPROVE BRITAIN'S RAILWAY - SUPPORT RAILFUTURE - JOIN US!

Railfuture has attracted some of the railway's best talent to support its army of volunteers from thousands of members. We take realistic positions on the key issues of the moment for the rail industry and passengers, focus on key campaigns that have a realistic chance of success, and promote our position and our campaigns professionally with stakeholders and the public. We promote international best practice.

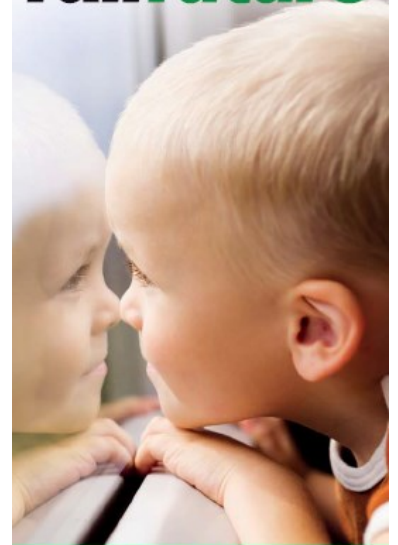
We are funded entirely by our members, confident that we are campaigning on behalf of all rail users for a bigger better railway. We campaign for:

- **value for money fares**
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- **quicker easier journeys**
- **more accessible trains and stations**
- **new services and lines**
- **shifting freight from road to rail**

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More info: membership@railfuture.org.uk - 1 Queens Road, Barnetby le Wold, North Lincs DN38 6JH

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Several hundred copies of Railwatch are sent out free as part of our campaign to keep opinion formers, for example selected MPs and peers, properly informed on rail issues. Requests to be added, and suggestions for people to be added, should be sent to renewals@railfuture.org.uk

Our 2015 Annual Review can be read at www.railfuture.org.uk/display1219.

Railfuture's mission is to be the number one advocate for Britain's railway and rail users



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There are 22 other Railfuture Twitter accounts – for a full list see www.railfuture.org.uk/branches/?twitter

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