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LISTED BUILDINGS

Reading 'Pan Up' in the May issue and the comments about Manchester Oxford Road station, I fear that Ian Walmsley may not be fully aware of the purposes and workings of UK Listed Building legislation.

Historic England and its fellow listing bodies in the rest of the UK are fully aware that buildings need to change with time, as their purpose and use changes. The object of listing a building is to manage the change process, not to prevent it, and there are plenty of examples of such changes happening in the industry whilst retaining Listed status. For example:

- the rebuilding of the Grade 1 listed King's Cross and St Pancras stations showed how major interventions can be made with the highest levels of protection;
- the changes at London Bridge included the total removal of the Grade 2 listed 'Driver' roof on the Brighton side; and
- if you go back far enough, the Euston Arch was Grade 1 listed.

In each case it was possible to show that the benefits of the major interventions to society by a better railway outweighed the heritage losses (although I still greatly regret the politicians preventing the relocation of the Arch rather than allowing complete demolition).

If changes are necessary at Oxford Road, then it is not the right thing to de-list the station, but for Northern and Network Rail to develop a proposal with the station's listed status in mind, and, working in conjunction with Historic England, the local Mancunian conservation team and even, dare I say it, the Railway Heritage Trust, come up with a solution that will deliver the required operational and passenger needs and also gain Listed Building Consent.

ANDY SAVAGE

Executive Director
Railway Heritage Trust

EASTBOURNE OVERLAP

The most recent official estimates of station usage have provided a window into the impact of the first near-full year of the innovative 'overlapping split' for Southern's

Ashford – Hastings – Eastbourne – Brighton services begun two years ago. The concept was first described in the August 2017 issue, and referred to again by GTR Head of Strategic Planning Phil Hutchinson in the February 2020 issue. Essentially, it involves splitting the former Ashford to Brighton through diesel services into two overlapping service groups: Hastings to Brighton electrics and Ashford to Eastbourne diesels.

Figures from the Office of Rail and Road show that the 17 stations from Eastbourne to Ham Street witnessed an overall 10% increase in total station entries and exits in just the first year of the new timetable, which amongst many other changes saw standard-hour services for Bexhill increase from three to four each way and all-day / every day hourly Marshlink Turbostar services for Ore. The seven Marshlink-only stations witnessed a 17.6% annual increase for the same period.

Eight of those 17 stations saw their best-ever estimated footfall in 2018-19, and a ninth with its second-best since its record in the previous year. St Leonards Warrior Square, for example, saw 820,252 passengers over the year, 10.7% up on the year before, while Three Oaks saw a whopping 42.5% jump in passenger numbers to a record 11,534 in the year. 'Run it and they will come' as the old adage goes.

The Hastings & Rother Rail Users Alliance of six rail groups, of which Railfuture is proud to be one, newly-formed to champion the original novel service pattern, has continued regular fine-grained liaison with Phil Hutchinson and his team to make detailed adjustments with each subsequent timetable change. These have included further improvements to connection times at Ashford International, St Leonards Warrior Square and Hampden Park, and additional station calls for example at Collington to fit shift patterns at the nearby Hastings Direct insurance offices and also some extras for Winchelsea and Three Oaks.

A victim of its own success, the May 2018 timetable's new service pattern has been highlighting the worsening inadequacy of the two-car Turbostar trains on Marshlink services.

The change of rolling stock scheduled for next year should address this, in order to cater for the growing demands to savour the area's visitor attractions as well as for everyday journeys to learn. Meanwhile the four-car Turbostars planned to relieve the pressure of this summer's weekend crowding have instead been relieving the pressure for social distancing!

The proposition from HRRUA (pronounced by some as 'hurrah!') was always based on the economic needs of the area for improved connectivity, as well as the increased capacity of a four-car Electrostar replacing the two-car Turbostar between Hastings and Brighton.

Adapting to an uncertain future for peripheral coastal communities with vulnerable economies already in need of some levelling-up will at least be supported by a strong local alliance of rail groups, committed to creative engagement with their local operators and responsive to the needs of rail users and local economic stakeholders alike.

ROGER BLAKE

Vice-Chair, London & South East regional branch of Railfuture

EAST WEST RAIL

I share Lord Bradshaw's concerns over the design of East West Rail ('Forum', April issue). Several years ago, prior to the creation of the separate 'EWR Co', I worked as a consultant to Network Rail, advising on capacity and timetabling for the section between Bicester and Bedford, including the Aylesbury branch. The train service specification included paths for inter-regional cross-country services and freight trains, with the assumption that the line would be electrified. The infrastructure would have been planned and designed accordingly.

Much of this has been lost in the severe de-scoping. Have we not learned the lessons of the Borders Railway? Far from heralding a 'bright new dawn', the creation of a separate company to progress the project has led to a 'silo' mentality, where the focus is solely on delivering the minimum possible on the core EWR route, with scant consideration of the wider needs and aspirations.

To take a specific example, the Aylesbury branch was to have enjoyed a through service between Marylebone and Milton Keynes via High Wycombe. As Lord Bradshaw observes, this has now been cut back to Aylesbury – Bletchley only. Thus three separate terminating services – from



Castle class: a Great Western short HST set arrives at Saltash led by power car No 43186 while operating the 17.55 Plymouth to Penzance service on 14 May 2019. Tim Squires

Amersham, from High Wycombe and from Bletchley – will all have to be accommodated at Aylesbury, together with the Calvert waste trains running through. Without additional infrastructure in the Aylesbury area (and none is planned), I believe it will be impossible to path all these services.

TIM STEVENS

Peterborough

TOO MANY TRAINS?

Roger Ford's alarming statistic that while ridership and revenue have doubled in 30 years, so has the subsidy per passenger mile ('Informed Sources', April issue), is explained by a combination of many factors. I cite two.

First is the cost of infrastructure projects to which Mr Ford alludes, of which the biscuit is surely taken by the new platform 'O' currently under construction at Leeds. This terminal platform, built on the level, is to cost £161 million.

Another factor is that on many parts of the system too many trains are run. Taking Leeds again, whereas in my youth there were two daily trains to Edinburgh, the 'Waverley' via Carlisle (until 1969) and the 'North Briton' via Newcastle, now there are two, sometimes three, per hour. For example, there are direct trains at 18.39, 18.51 and 19.07 (all only five-car) plus 19.14 (change York) and interspersed with