

railfuture

London and South East regional branch

Annual Meeting 2022

Saturday 30 April 2022

Agenda

11.00: “From street to seat – the platform-train interface”

Guest speaker: Professor Bridget Eickhoff CEng FIMechE, Principal Infrastructure Engineer, Rail Safety and Standards Board



Then (to 12:30): Directors Panel

Ian Brown CBE, Railfuture Policy Director

and Neil Middleton, Railfuture Communications Director

Introductory presentations followed by moderated Q&A

If joining virtually then please use ‘Chat’ function to alert event moderator to your question.

14.00: formal Annual General Meeting for members

Agenda

- 1 – Apologies for absence
- 2 – Minutes of AGM 17 April 2021 pages 2-3
- 3 – Matters Arising page 3
- 4 – Results of elections to branch committee 2022-23 page 3

Reports on 2021:

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- 6 – Treasurer page 4
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2 – Minutes of Annual General Meeting 17 April 2021

Held virtually in view of the cancellation of 2020's AGM and continuing pandemic restrictions.

The morning-only session opened at 11.00 am and focused on **'Re-growing our railway.'**

Guest speakers: Steve White, Chief Operating Officer, Govia Thameslink Railway; George Paterson, Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Southeastern; Alex Hellier, Head of Strategic Planning Kent & Sussex Routes, Network Rail; Mike Smith, Restoring Your Railway & Better Value Rail, Network Rail; Linda McCord, Senior Passenger Manager, Transport Focus.

The formal 2021 Annual General Meeting for members commenced at 12.00 pm

1. Apologies for absence

2. Minutes of the AGM held on 27th April 2019

The minutes were not available in hard copy. They can be viewed [here](#) which are also in the papers for our previous AGM in 2019 [here](#), all under 'What's on' in the L&SE branch page of Railfuture's national website, in 'Railfuture near you'.

3. Matters Arising from Minutes of 2019 AGM

There were none.

4. Results of elections to branch committee 2020-21

The following were elected unopposed:

Chairman	no nominations
Vice-Chairman	Roger Blake
Secretary	no nominations

Treasurer Howard Thomas

The other elected branch committee members are:
Charles King, Neil Middleton and Chris Page. There were insufficient nominations to fill the other three vacancies.

The divisional representatives on branch committee are:
Howard Thomas (Eastern), Neil Middleton (Herts & Beds), Chris Fribbins (Kent), Charles King (Metro), Stephen Rolph (Surrey) and John Black (Sussex & Coastway).

Railfuture's Company Secretary / Accountant and Sussex & Coastway Division's Secretary Trevor Davies, and branch Independent Examiner Gordon Pratt, also attend.

Reports presented to the meeting are available as Appendix B.

3. Matters Arising from Minutes of 2021 AGM

If any not being covered in the agenda for the 2022 AGM.

4. Results of elections to branch committee 2022-23

The following were duly nominated and elected unopposed:

Chairman no nominations
Vice-Chairman Roger Blake
Secretary no nominations
Treasurer Howard Thomas

The other branch committee members duly nominated and also elected unopposed are:
Charles King, Neil Middleton and Chris Page. There were insufficient nominations to fill the other three vacancies. Only half of the 10 committee places have received nominations.

The divisional representatives on branch committee are:
Howard Thomas (Eastern), Neil Middleton (Herts & Beds), Chris Fribbins (Kent), Charles King (Metro), Stephen Rolph (Surrey) and John Black (Sussex & Coastway).

Railfuture's Company Secretary / Accountant and Sussex & Coastway Division's Secretary Trevor Davies, and the branch's Independent Examiner Gordon Pratt, also attend.

Reports on 2021

5. Vice Chairman

The Vice Chairman notes as before that the London & South East regional branch still has c.25% of the entire - albeit diminishing - national membership of Railfuture, and London postcodes alone have c.25% of that regional branch total (although, ironically perhaps, our Metro Division is among our least active). Owing to our numeric size and geographic spread we remain unique among Railfuture branches in having an informal sub-structure of essentially county-based Divisions, and it is at that level that much of the engagement with members, rail user groups and other organisations and our campaigning activities takes place. It is gratifying therefore to report that after the inevitable period of adjustment at the start of the pandemic two years ago, and since, the branch quickly regained and has retained much of its rhythm with regular committee and Division meetings held online. One of the few side-effects of the pandemic, not being able to travel for meetings in venues, which has been beneficial has been increased levels of participation in our online meetings; Herts & Beds and Sussex & Coastway Divisions have been particular examples of this.

Although still lacking a Chair and a Secretary, the branch now has committee member Neil Middleton fulfilling the role of membership secretary and so this important aspect of our work, not just monitoring but actively welcoming and seeking out potential new members, is again receiving the attention which it requires.

We do need to continue to raise our profile by being seen to be active and campaigning, especially in the increasingly-important social media sphere, maximising opportunities for publicity and telling others about Railfuture, so that we can attract more active members and continue to grow our activities and our influence.

Although numerically the largest, the branch as one of Railfuture's 14 could be considered to be over-represented on the national Board of Directors, with four of the nine (not to mention the Company Secretary / Accountant, and national house magazine editor!). National Chairman, Policy Director, Infrastructure & Networks Director, and Communications Director who is significantly increasing our social media output at branch and national levels. In this 24/7 information age Railfuture volunteers, as all members including Directors are, aim to keep Railfuture's independent and informed analysis in the public eye via press releases, website articles, various Twitter accounts, Facebook, LinkedIn – all linked off the website.

6. Treasurer

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to severely curtail the activities of the London & South East Branch in 2021. For the third consecutive year, the Branch did not take up financial support from national funds, hence the deficit in the Statement of Comprehensive Income. With the exception of the production and distribution of the Branch newsletter, all cost centres were underspent against the 2021 budget. The main features of the year were expenditure of £1,010 on the quarterly Branch newsletter and £15.00 on Campaigns & lobbying. The Branch did not take up its allocation from the national budget for 2021. Our bank balance was £506.30 at 31 December 2021.

The Statements of Comprehensive Income, Financial Position & Cash Flow are set out in Appendix A to this document.

Railfuture's policy is to provide for 20% depreciation on cost in each of the first four accounting years of use, and to write down the value of non-current (fixed) assets to £1.00 in the fifth year. Thereafter, the non-current assets remain at £1.00 until they are disposed of. Following this policy, I have charged £120.43 for depreciation in 2021 (see: Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 31 December 2021). Following this, the net values of the Gazebo, the first Projector, the two Leaflet Stands, the Thameslink 2 Banner, and the Trestle Table are now down to £1.00.

Branch proposals for the 2022 budget have been approved by the Railfuture Board of Directors. The branch accounts are examined by co-opted committee member Gordon Pratt, who has no financial role in the branch, and then passed to the national accountant. The national company's accounts are examined in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act. As the branch has its own bank account, Board requires that it must have three current signatories, one of whom must be a current Railfuture director (not necessarily a branch member). Each transaction must be signed by two signatories. The third signatory is required for business continuity if either of the other signatories is unavailable. Branches are responsible for ensuring that all signatories and Branch officers are current members.

7. Membership

Membership numbers at the start and end of 2021 were static: both were 381. We gained 16 members and lost 16 members; this is slightly better than the national trend (a loss of 2.8%). Included in membership are 18 affiliated Rail User Groups and 22 members who have expressed an interest in L&SE who primarily belong to other branches. As regards Railfuture 'Supporters' (broadly, non-members who have expressed an interest in being kept up to date by Railfuture), those tagged as being interested in L&SE amount to 26, and we have a further 781 on our Uckfield / Lewes 'Bridge the gap' campaign list.

The pandemic has shown that we can operate effectively online with virtual meetings, social media and e-mail (indeed your Membership Secretary's local Division has been able to meet more regularly, with more attendees via Zoom).

Our ability to communicate effectively with some members is restricted by missing email addresses and permissions. If you are fully opted into communications, you will receive:

- ~ Railwatch – by post or email, including the 8-page quarterly branch newsletter '*railse*'
- ~ the branch monthly news update '*inter-railse*' by email (just two pages)
- ~ updates from at least one Division by email
- ~ occasional other emails on national and local matters.

There are three ways to update your preferences:

by self-care on the website: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/member/> (recommended, but if struggling, do switch to choice 2 or 3)

email Lloyd Butler at renewals@railfuture.org.uk

email me neil.middleton@railfuture.org.uk

Your email address will not be passed outside Railfuture and will be used in accordance with the permissions you give us in accordance with GDPR requirements.

8. Divisions

a Eastern

Eastern Division's activities were again severely curtailed by the Covid-19 pandemic during 2021. The Division met every two months by Zoom on dates normally scheduled for face-to-face meetings. Zoom meetings have been attended by typically 6 people.

During the year, the Division has kept an overview of how the railway reacted to the pandemic – the level and quality of service provided – and various developments.

The continued introduction of new rolling stock on Greater Anglia services has meant that there are now relatively few services operating with rolling stock over five years old. Great Eastern outer suburban services still see the use of Class 321s (nicknamed 'Dusty Bins' after the TV programme) which are now about 33 years old. Likewise, TfL Rail / Elizabeth Line services between Shenfield and London Liverpool Street are now mostly provided by new Class 345 emus. A few Class 315s are still in use. The introduction of new trains on the London–Norwich 'inter-city' service was completed by December 2020.

Other developments have included progress on proposals for a new station east of Chelmsford at Beaulieu Park. The Division has noted an increase in interest on the part of some local authorities in the possible reinstatement of the Hall Farm Curve.

During the year, the service provided on Greater Anglia routes had recovered to more-or-less pre-Covid levels, although there was some (short-term) reduction in frequency towards the end of the year. Generally, reliability and punctuality have been very good. It seems that Greater Anglia has had a much more positive and constructive approach to timetable recovery than some other TOCs serving the Greater London area.

For the future, the Division will continue to meet on the second Wednesday of the odd months, either by Zoom (at 19:00hrs) or face-to-face, probably at St John's Church, Stratford, at 18:30hrs when circumstances permit.

b Herts and Beds

The Division met 12 times in 2021 – 11 times as our (approximately monthly) regular meeting on Zoom and once for an in-person social. Attendance at our regular meetings has been around 15 – 20; we met on a mix of Saturday mornings and mid-week evenings, which allows those with regular scheduling conflicts to come to at least some of our meetings.

The general view of participants is that Zoom will be the dominant choice for our meetings in the future, given the difficulties with east west public transport in our area north of London (although submitted in 2022, see our submission to Hertfordshire County Council's HERT Mass Rapid Transport Proposal: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2929>). Indeed, we held our social in central London for ease of transport.

During the year "headline" topics included:

- ~ Timetables and performance, including contrast and compare between the TOCs;
- ~ Lack of service on both the Abbey Line and the Marston Vale line was a regular dissatisfaction;
- ~ East Coast Mainline Timetable consultation – the Division supplied the content for south of Peterborough: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2742>;
- ~ The East West Rail Second Statutory consultation (in conjunction with Thames Valley, East Anglia, and Infrastructure & Networks): <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2717>;
- ~ An update from GTR on the challenges they face with driver availability;
- ~ HERT (see above).

Looking ahead:

The Division will continue to meet approximately monthly for the foreseeable future – a combination of mostly Zoom and occasionally in-person meetings.

In one sense, 2022 will be an important flex point as we return more to the focus we had pre-pandemic of more traditional rail campaigning content. By this I mean that 2021 was dominated by a combination of immediate Covid pandemic issues (eg lack of drivers) and what portion of the December 2019 timetable could/should be run. We are moving to a world in which we will have a timetable (eg GTR for May 2022, LNWR outline for December 2022) and are again focusing on seeking improvements based on gaps between supply and expected future demand.

If you live in Hertfordshire or Bedfordshire, use the trains in the area, or just have an interest, we hope to see you at our next meeting. At the moment this is written, the plan is to meet in person in central London, during the morning of Saturday 14 May. More on both Rail Events (<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Events>) and the Division page (<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Herts-and-Beds>).

c Kent

Meetings have been held on Zoom; an attempt to meet in person at Tonbridge failed at the last minute when there was an outbreak within the church which we had booked.

The COVID restrictions were compounded with issues regarding the main train operator in Kent (Southeastern) and the denial of a further extension to their contract and it being taken in-house by the Department for Transport.

There have been a number of online meetings with Network Rail regarding their "North and East Kent Connectivity study" which is aimed at identifying the barriers to rail travel in that corridor, and use of cars to travel to locations such as Ebbsfleet International to pick up trains there. The detailed study identified many issues that could be addressed, given priority and funding - including removal of a number of minor speed restrictions which would add up to make a significant change.

The progress of the Medway Council Local Plan is being monitored (c. 30,000 homes), with an associated Housing Infrastructure Fund for £170m that includes restoring passenger services on the Hundred of Hoo freight-only branch to a new station / transport interchange near Hoo St. Werburgh (Sharnal Street) - working with Medway Council officers. A way forward was identified by using an extension to the third rail supply to allow existing trains to extend from Gravesend to the new station, but it appears a connection at Hoo Junction towards Strood, the Medway Towns and Maidstone / Paddock Wood is not possible. Further consultation has been carried out on just running a battery-powered service to a new

platform at Northfleet to connect to existing services has been explored. This project is not making the progress expected and Medway Council have had to request an extension to the deadlines - there is a great deal of opposition from some local residents as they feel that the railway will bring more housing development, although that will happen anyway - and with minimal infrastructure provision and most of the £170m funding could be lost.

Plans for involvement in the Faversham Transport Festival weekend had stalled due to Railfuture commitments elsewhere and COVID, but is now set for 14th & 15th May 2022 - in the historic Faversham Guildhall.

We continue to work with the Kent Community Rail Partnership and monitor activities on other Kent CRPs.

d London Metro

The Covid pandemic continued to cause problems with train services in the London area. The continuous changes of government policy often resulting in reduction in usage and a timetable change every few weeks. In discussion with train operators Railfuture was keen to promote a return to rail. It was interesting to note that Stratford overtook Waterloo as the busiest station in Britain.

We supported GTR in withdrawing the Gatwick Express and the supplementary fare. We did an analysis of the different fares from Gatwick and concluded that the Gatwick Express brand was a valuable brand for promoting rail services, but the supplement was no longer value for money. We supported the interim service using Gatwick Airport stock being extended to Brighton. We lobbied for the interim service between Victoria and Brighton to call at Clapham Junction rather than East Croydon which has four other trains per hour to Brighton. This was not accepted by the DfT. At present there is no longer a direct service from Clapham Junction the busiest interchange station in Britain is the Brighton is the busiest station on the south coast. We will continue to lobby for the restoration of a through service.

In December we made representation to South Western Railway about the reduction of metro services, where many routes with 4 trains per hour were reduced to 3 trains per hour and in outer London and the surrounding area from 4 trains per hour to 2 trains per hour, and in the worst-case London to Guildford via Epsom from 2 trains per hour to 1 train per hour. We also expressed concerns about reducing the number of long-distance trains stopping at Clapham Junction. We joined with our colleagues in the South West to lobby against the withdrawal of the Waterloo and Clapham Junction trains to Bath and Bristol via Salisbury. Similar reductions are foreseen in the May 2022 GTR timetable.

It was pleasing in to see the opening of the Northern Line extension to Battersea Power station and Nine Elms, although the opening of the Elizabeth line (Crossrail) continued to be put back. We have expressed concerns over the discussion between TfL and the DfT over future long-term funding of TfL.

We are very concerned that there is pressure to undo the present integrated ticketing between National Rail and TfL that has been with us for more than 40 years. This could affect the ability to buy a London Travelcard ticket at national rail stations (See Railfuture survey). Passenger numbers are starting to recover and at present are strongest in the London on the Underground, Overground and Metro area.

e Surrey

This has been a quiet year caused by COVID lockdown and fewer members using rail to become motivated by travel difficulties but Surrey members have been made aware of other Divisions' activities through branch Vice-Chair Roger Blake's excellent publicity through the Railfuture publications and web pages.

Looking ahead, this Division has plans for future meetings; these include an update on the Croydon CARS scheme to expand East Croydon station plus the Selhurst Triangle and the 3rd platform project at Reigate. But we are aware that any positive action by the CARS team is very dependent on budgetary matters currently under review by the DfT being concluded and their views on priority work for Network Rail to develop. Also, of interest will be any moves to 3rd rail electrification of the gaps in the North Downs Line between Redhill and Reading. Another potential meeting, either virtual or face to face, will be Accessibility matters with updates from the TOCs in Surrey on their Accessibility support services. This may be organised with the involvement of the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People.

f Sussex & Coastway

Sussex and Coastway have been meeting regularly through the year via Zoom. We also managed to have a Christmas face to face meeting at The John Harvey Tavern in Lewes when permitted. It was good to meet with fellow members of all ages and remind each other that we still had arms and legs etc attached to the heads and shoulders seen (or not) on screen. We have been joined by members from Wessex as we discussed services along West Coastway and also through the Arun Valley to destinations such as Portsmouth - and beyond! Both Southern and Great Western provide these services so there has been plenty to be shared. A special thanks to those who represented Railfuture at public events once lockdown started to be eased.

Much of this would not have been possible without the technical input supplied by Neil Middleton so I need to say how much this is appreciated. It has also been good to have Chris Page join us. I am particularly pleased that Zoom has enabled Branch and Divisional representatives to meet most months to plan ahead with the AGM and other events being discussed and deadlines for Railfuture responses to Public Consultations and even appropriate Planning Documents being on our agenda.

9. Branch campaigns

Railfuture continues to occupy the unique, valued, and increasingly-respected position of being Britain's leading, longest-established, national, independent, voluntary, and exclusively pro-rail lobby group. Our campaigning for expansion and improvement to develop a bigger, better railway in Britain for passengers and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities, continually seeks to inform and to influence, to promote and persuade at all levels, local-regional-national, and across all sectors and agencies.

Our particular commitment to support the Kent and East Sussex Coastal Connectivity Programme developed by Network Rail has led to an evolution of our distinctive justification for the infrastructure investment required. In that sense there are similarities with our unique proposition for what we refer to as the Wealden Line Extension, more popularly known as Uckfield-Lewes. Planning for sustainable local growth and regeneration are vital to establishing a strategic socio-economic case for any specific transport intervention. A broader series of conversations has developed with key economic and other stakeholders such as the new All-Party Parliamentary Group for the South East, chaired by Hastings & Rye MP Sally-Ann Hart, and its independent research arm the thinktank Localis. As 2022 sees the culmination of the public processes in the development of Transport for the South East's Transport Strategy with consultation on their draft Strategic Investment Plan, with close Railfuture engagement throughout, our narrative has developed some key themes, which may at the risk of over-simplification be summarised in these ways:

- ~ differentiate between means and ends, expressed as 'better lives through better journeys'
- ~ transport as a necessary but insufficient pre-condition for community regeneration
- ~ creating competitive places which are visionary and outward-looking

~ making 'levelling-up' work: empowering communities to become winners – through greater self-governance with restored local capabilities to generate and retain revenues based on existing accountabilities to local communities.

Details of the various campaigns undertaken within the regional branch area can be found on the Railfuture website – find the branch page in 'Railfuture near you'. As well as our continuing efforts to justify restoration of a rail link between Uckfield and Lewes, and to extend Southeastern HS1 services into the east of East Sussex mentioned above, we have variously supported, for example, the restoration of passenger services to the Hoo Peninsula for the 12k new homes planned there, the Bakerloo line extension to support regeneration in inner south-east London, and the West London Outer Orbital for improved connectivity. Our other principal campaigning activity has been responding to the steady flow of consultations and calls for evidence throughout the year. For our branch 27 are listed in the Railfuture library for 2021, some unique to our branch while others included our branch's contribution to a broader submission. These responses and submissions can be viewed at or downloaded from 'Consultations responses' under '[Campaigns](#)'. Experience in our Branch and others is that evidence of active campaigning is one of the surest ways of attracting new members.

10. Branch newsletters and bulletins: quarterly *railse* and monthly *inter-railse*

Four eight-page colour issues of the quarterly newsletter *railse* were published during 2021 as in previous years, and were as usual distributed with each *Railwatch*. December 2020 marked the 150th edition.

Twelve two-page colour issues of the monthly e-bulletin *inter-railse* were published for the start of each month during 2021 and, like the longer-established monthly Rail User Express, is available by email at the time of publication on request. In addition, views / downloads are always available from the branch web page at [Branch news](#). While very little comment on the now-familiar formats, or material considered suitable for publication, has been received such anecdotal feedback as there is has remained positive and encouraging.

11. 2022-23 Priorities

Priorities for the year ahead, for discussion with regional branch members at their annual meeting.

Appendix A - London & South East Branch Accounts

Railfuture Limited London & South East Branch Statement of Comprehensive Income (Trading, Income and Expenditure Account) for the year ended 31 December 2021			
TRADING INCOME	£	Year to	31/12/20
			£
Sales			
<i>less</i> Cost of sales:	£	£	
Inventory (pens) @ 01/01/21	14.25	14.25	
Purchases	14.25	14.25	
	<u>14.25</u>	<u>14.25</u>	
<i>less</i> Inventory (pens) @ 31/12/21	14.25	14.25	
	<u>14.25</u>	<u>14.25</u>	
	0.00		0.00
TRADING PROFIT/LOSS FOR YEAR	0.00		0.00
NON TRADING INCOME	£	£	
Budget (excluding campaigning)			
Campaigning			
Donations		30.00	
Other			
	<u>0.00</u>		<u>30.00</u>
	0.00		30.00
EXPENDITURE	£	£	
AGMs			
Branch meetings			
Division meetings		188.50	
Campaigning & lobbying	15.00		
Liaison with other branches			
Newsletter	1,010.00	1,040.00	
Publicity, promotion & advertising			
Donations	<u>1,025.00</u>	<u>1,228.50</u>	
Depreciation of non-current assets	120.42	120.43	
	<u>1,145.42</u>		<u>1,348.93</u>
DEFICIT FOR YEAR	-1,145.42		-1,318.93

Railfuture Limited
London & South East Branch
Statement of Financial Position
(Balance Sheet)
as at 31 December 2021

NON CURRENT ASSETS	Cost £	Depreciation £	Net £	<i>as at</i>	<i>31/12/20</i> £
Gazebo	189.97	188.97	1.00		1.00
Projector 1	329.54	328.54	1.00		1.00
Leaflet stands	55.98	54.98	1.00		1.00
Thameslink 2 banner	75.00	74.00	1.00		1.00
Trestle table	32.99	31.99	1.00		7.39
Projector 2	369.99	295.20	74.79		148.59
Table cloth	173.42	137.92	35.50		69.86
HDMI cable	16.99	9.60	7.39		10.59
Tool box	14.33	8.01	6.32		8.99
	<u>1,258.21</u>	<u>1,129.21</u>	129.00		<u>249.42</u>
CURRENT ASSETS					
Inventory (pens)		14.25		14.25	
Trade receivables (pre-booked room hire)					
Cash at Bank		506.30		1,531.30	
		520.55		1,545.55	
<u>less</u> CURRENT LIABILITIES					
Trade payables (newsletter)			520.55		1,545.55
NET TOTAL ASSETS			649.55		1,794.97
Financed by:					
ACCUMULATED FUND (CURRENT ACCOUNT)					
Balance b/f at 01/01/21			1,794.97		3,113.90
<u>less</u> Deficit for year			-1,145.42		-1,318.93
Balance c/f at 31/12/21			649.55		1,794.97

Railfuture Limited		
London & South East Branch		
Statement of Cash Flow		
as at 31 December 2021		
	£	as at 31/12/20
		£
Deficit from operating activities	-1,145.42	-1,318.93
Adjustment for depreciation	120.42	120.43
Adjustment for decrease in inventories		
Adjustment for decrease in receivables (debtors)		
Adjustment for decrease in payables (creditors)		
Net cash from operating activities	-1,025.00	-1,198.50
Cash used in investing activities		
Purchase of non current assets		
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents	-1,025.00	-1,198.50
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January 2021	1,531.30	2,729.80
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December 2021	506.30	1,531.30

Appendix B – 2020 Reports

Reports on 2020

5. Vice Chairman

The Vice Chairman notes that the London & South East regional branch still has c.25% of the entire national membership of Railfuture, and London postcodes alone have c.25% of that branch total. Due to our numeric size and geographic spread we are unique among Railfuture branches in having a sub-structure of essentially county-based Divisions and it is at that level that much of the engagement with members, rail user groups and other organisations and campaigning activity takes place. It is therefore pleasing to be able to report that after the inevitable period of adjustment at the start of the pandemic over a year ago, the branch quickly regained much of its rhythm with regular committee and Division and meetings held online. The one notable casualty was our AGM in April 2020, so the record of branch activity in 2019 is confined to our quarterly newsletters and monthly e-bulletins.

As well as a Chair and a Secretary, the branch has lacked a membership secretary for a while now and so this important aspect of our work, not just monitoring but actively welcoming and seeking out potential new members, is not receiving the attention it requires. We do need to continue to raise our profile by being seen to be active and campaigning, especially in the increasingly-important social media sphere, maximising opportunities for publicity and telling others about Railfuture, so that we can attract more members and continue to grow. One of the few beneficial side-effects of the pandemic, not being able to travel for meetings in venues, has been increased levels of participation in some of our online meetings; Herts & Beds and Sussex & Coastway Divisions have been particularly good examples of this.

6. Treasurer

The year ended 31st December 2020 saw the deficit carried forward from a year earlier of £2271.51 reduce to £1318.93 due largely to dramatically-reduced expenditure on division meetings, and net total assets reduce from £3113.90 to £1794.97 due largely to less cash held in the branch account, the year closing with £1531.30. Branch proposals for the 2021 budget have been approved by the Railfuture Board of Directors. The branch accounts are examined by co-opted committee member, Gordon Pratt who has no financial role in the branch, and then passed to the national accountant. The company's accounts are audited.

7. Membership

We gained 39 members over the last two years, including one new affiliated Rail User Group: SE5 Forum for Camberwell. This did not however make up for the loss of 71 members. The net loss is 32, a marked decline in our membership. We currently have 418 members, including 20 Rail User Groups and 17 members who primarily belong to other branches.

The pandemic has shown that we can operate effectively online with virtual meetings, social media and e-mail. If you have not already done so, please let the national membership secretary lloyd.butler@railfuture.org.uk or the branch's acting membership secretary chris.page@railfuture.org.uk have your email address, and confirm your permission for us to use it - it will not be passed outside Railfuture.

8. Divisions a Eastern

The Division held five of its six scheduled alternate-monthly meetings, the first two as usual in Stratford and then, after cancelling May, continuing the remaining three online. An enduring topic of interest was the prospects for establishing direct services between Chingford, Walthamstow and Stratford, with capacity at the south end of the Lea Valley line and in Stratford station being a core issue and the possibility of an only half-hourly service being insufficiently attractive. A key consultation as the year closed was Greater Anglia's new timetable for the Great Eastern Main Line planned for December 2021, neighbouring East Anglia branch leading on Railfuture's 'single-voice' response.

b Herts and Beds

Prior to Covid-19, we met approximately quarterly in St. Albans and since March 2021, we have met monthly via Zoom, either on Saturday mornings at 10:30am or Monday to Thursday in the evening (7:30pm); we have varied times to increase options for attendance and to avoid consistent calendar clashes for some members. Our meetings are typically attended by 15 - 20 people, a mix of local

Members, representatives of adjacent Branches and Divisions, Rail User Groups, GTR and other stakeholders (eg local councils); this is an increase from our in-person meetings. We have generally debated live railway topics including service levels, Railfuture's flexible fares campaign, performance problems et al. We have also explored topics in more depth such as 'The challenges of Data in the Railway Industry'. Once the Government allows us to again meet in person, we intend to switch to a mixture of further Zoom sessions and in-person sessions; hopefully our first in-person gathering will be outside in July. We are of the view that Zoom has a continuing role in our meetings, as it significantly reduces the time commitment for a meeting and makes it easier to meet during the week from time to time; but on the other hand, we are also keen to see each other in real-life, not just Cyber space!

c Kent

The Division began 2020 with a stall at the annual Erith Model Railway Society weekend exhibition at the Longfield Academy. The Division's February meeting was held in Tonbridge, however all three subsequent quarterly meetings had to be held online, and the hope of having a stall and giving a talk at the annual Faversham Transport Festival to coincide with the May meeting was dashed by the pandemic. Topics for the Division have included the new Rail Strategy for Kent, the Housing Infrastructure Fund for restoring passenger services to the Hoo Peninsula to support 10.6k new homes (local resistance hoping to halt the new homes), London Resort Company Holdings' proposed theme park at the Swanscombe Peninsula, and Network Rail's North and East Kent Connectivity Study.

There has been an expansion of Community Rail Partnerships in Kent. A new one on the Ashford to Otford Line (Kent Downs) has been added to the two existing lines in the Kent CRP, Tonbridge to Hastings to the Southeast CRP lines, and new lines (White Cliffs (Dover/Folkestone), Thanet (Ramsgate/Margate) have come alongside recent newcomer Darent Valley CRP (Sevenoaks to Swanley). The new CRPs come with new money from the train operator and the involvement of their local communities (including Railfuture members).

Outside Railfuture, Gordon Pratt continues to press the benefits of a light rail / tram solution between Ebbsfleet / Gravesend and Grays / Purfleet in Thurrock.

d London Metro

Although led by Herts & Beds Division as that area would be the more significantly affected, a live issue for both Divisions has been the gathering momentum towards the transfer of GTR's Great Northern Metro operation to TfL. As part of London Overground it would be a very substantially greater extension of TfL's geographic 'reach' beyond the GLA boundary than other parts of that network; TfL Rail reaches into Essex and extensively into Berkshire.

e Surrey

Common interests dictate that most Surrey Division meetings are held under the auspices of Sussex & Coastway Division. The exception was in October when Gareth Owen, Communications Manager for Crispin Blunt MP (President of the Reigate & Redhill Rail Users Association) spoke about *Effective campaigning strategies for rail issues* and concentrated on:

- * The importance of a co-ordinated approach – community and pressure groups to combine campaigns to make them more effective. More than one MP involved in campaigns and communications with Ministers, if possible.
- * Identifying and prioritising issues in order of importance and likely success with DfT/ Ministers
- * Remembering the wider national and regional context when pressing for local changes
- * The difference between operational, strategic, and policy issues – making representations at the right level
- * Monetising proposals. Anything that sounds as if it will cost more is unlikely to be welcomed.

Consultations responded to during the year were on the draft Local Plan for Mole Valley District and Surrey County's survey for their new Rail Strategy.

f Sussex & Coastway

This past year or so has been interesting for us all. However, I am pleased to report that this Division has managed to meet most months on the first Thursday or its nearest substitute. In some ways it has been easier to secure guest speakers from within the industry and beyond since they are not having to travel to our meetings, which had been deliberately spread across the whole of Sussex and occasionally into Surrey, after a day at the office. My thanks to them all. We have continued to focus

on the planning to improve the West Coastway as well as other hot topics such as the Passenger Benefit Fund – from water butts at Winchelsea to chairs at Chichester! All have featured. I wish to thank all those who have assisted this division to be such a hive of activity both from within and beyond to the wider Railfuture family.

As Convener I shall finish by marking, with much gratitude, the passing on the 5th October 2020 of Rev. Michael Davies who had, only a few weeks before, handed over the Minute Secretary tasks to his successor. Right to the end he had maintained his enthusiasm for a bigger, better Railway by being part of Railfuture, and building a suitably sized model layout at his home!

9. Branch campaigns

Railfuture occupies the unique, valued, and increasingly-respected position of being the only long-established, national, independent, and voluntary exclusively pro-rail lobby group. Our campaigning for expansion and improvement to develop a bigger, better railway in Britain for passengers and freight users continually seeks to inform and to influence, to promote and persuade at all levels, local-regional-national, and across all sectors and agencies.

Details of the various campaigns undertaken within the regional branch area can be found on the Railfuture website – find the branch page in 'Railfuture near you'. These include continuing efforts to restore a rail link between Uckfield and Lewes, and to extend HS1 services to the east of East Sussex.

Our other principal campaigning activity has been responding to the steady flow of consultations throughout the year; for our branch 17 are listed in the Railfuture library for 2020. These responses can be viewed at or downloaded from 'Consultations responses' under '[Campaigns](#)'. Experience in our Branch and others is that evidence of active campaigning is one of the surest ways of attracting new members.

10. Branch newsletters and bulletins: quarterly *railse* and monthly *inter-railse*

Four eight-page colour issues of the quarterly newsletter *railse* were published during each of 2019 and 2020 as in previous years, and were as usual distributed with each *Railwatch*. The March 2020 edition marked the completion of a decade under new editorship, his first for July 2010 (and not a few which followed) now a pale comparison with current issues! After a couple of years colour was introduced for the June 2012 issue.

Twelve two-page colour issues of the monthly e-bulletin *inter-railse* were published for the start of each month during 2019 and 2020, having commenced in July 2018 and, like the longer-established monthly Rail User Express, available by email at the time of publication on request. In addition, views/downloads are always available from the branch web page at [Branch news](#). While very little comment on the now-familiar formats, or material suitable for publication, has been received such anecdotal feedback as there is has remained positive and encouraging.

11. 2020-21?

Regular readers of the quarterly branch newsletter will be familiar with our five national campaigns, reflected on our [website](#):

Attracting passengers back to rail – improving the travelling environment

Climate change and modal shift – how the railway can help reduce the carbon footprint of transport

Restoring Your Railway – restoring communities' rail connections by reopening lines and stations

Fares and ticketing – making the system easier and fairer

Industry structure and Williams – taking the opportunity to move to devolution and concessions.

Also worth noting for celebrating is that 2021 marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of Railfuture's forebears, the Society for the Reinvigoration of Unremunerative Branch Lines in the United Kingdom (SRUBLUK) – soon reduced to the Railway Invigoration Society – and the Railway Development Association, which came together in 1978 as our immediate predecessor the Railway Development Society.