



campaigning for  
all Britain's rail users

Thames Valley Branch  
Chairman  
Richard Stow  
richard.stow@railfuture.org.uk

**AGM 2022 - Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

## **Chairman's Report – Thames Valley Branch**

### Review of 2021-22

The Branch has had another busy year, in what is turning out to be a much more challenging period for the “Rail Sector of Transport”, however Railfuture has experience in dealing with adversity gained over 60 years and I have confidence we will keep up lobbying, for a “Bigger and Better Railway.”

At last year's AGM, we had presentations from John Ellis and John Morgan, together with Charlie Maynard, who went through the bids they had made for the “Restoring your Railway” Ideas Fund for Honeybourne - Stratford and Witney - Oxford.

Both were excellent bids; however, they failed due to the strength of competing bids and the limited funds. However, I am pleased to report a further study of Witney – Oxford is progressing, thanks to the hard work of the team and the County Council; in addition, work is developing in land value capture, which may be a way to develop rail schemes in what will be a cost constrained future.

The branch had very interesting discussions with Berkeley Homes, about plans for a new settlement ½ mile east of Twyford. Our well briefed team, involving a former Councillor and a leading Chartered Surveyor and Economist, was able to point out the chances of a station within 750m of Twyford was possibly not a starter; they had incredibly spent sums with consultants who failed to tell them this. This demonstrates the strength of having an Independent Lobby Group.

Railfuture has been lobbying for re-instatement of some CrossCountry services and I thank the Wessex Branch for taking the lead during this process and maintaining the constructive relationship with CrossCountry. A Thames Valley Branch member was skillful enough to get a full reply and explanation from the Department for Transport. As to the future, we look forward to a gradual restoration of services. (I cannot go into detail, due to confidentiality, but spoke to this at the AGM).

The Branch has continued to meet Councillors and MPs to lobby our case; the only disappointment is Buckinghamshire, but I am hopeful for dialogue very soon.

Other matters during the year have involved Cowley Branch, Oxford Remodelling (which we supported at the inquiry), East West Rail, which is now much more a matter for East Anglia Branch, and the slow progress of the Cotswold Line Task Force / Hanborough project, but these are, as is Cowley, reliant on the Oxford Station Remodelling. Progress with Trams for Oxford will be dependent, I suspect, on the Coventry ultra-light rail project.

Going forward to next year, I am pleased to say the Branch will be supporting the Grove Wantage station re-opening and I look forward to working with the team. No one disputes the need for a station, like Oxford Parkway, at Grove/Wantage, 2m passengers a year are projected. The only issue is line capacity but my thoughts are this is now winnable.

The Branch is also not letting up on Witney-Oxford or improvements at Hanborough, Cowley and the need to push back on service reductions, if these are proposed.

There have been disappointments during the year too, the failure to make progress on the Marlow Branch Frequency upgrade with work at Bourne End is frustrating, to say the least.

I have been involved with an EEH, (Oxford Swindon Arc) study which like many things seems to have just stopped, I have no idea why.

However, one thing concerning all Branches is the lack of people with authority to lobby; the industry is presently very much re-organising, with limited overall control. However, we have great experience and will seek out any opportunity to put our case.

I must thank the entire branch for support during the year, in particular the committee, without which we could not exist, Dave Richardson who has handled press matters expertly, and I would welcome new members to help.

Richard Stow

07/12/2022