



West Midlands Branch eNews

Issue 6 - November 2014

Readers who received eNews by e-mail also received the following attachments

- Birmingham New Street Demolition Leaflet.pdf
- Case for HS2-B2D link - Options Overview.pdf
- Case for HS2-B2D link - option 1 map.pdf
- Case for HS2-B2D link - option 2 map.pdf
- Case for HS2-B2D link - text.pdf
- Cross Country News (In Focus) 22.pdf
- Rail Action 7.pdf
- Rail User Express, 17 Nov 2014.pdf
- Railfuture Groups and Branches Away Day - Summary Feedback - final.pdf
- Railfuture Action Plan - West Midlands.xls

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Railfuture Awayday - Branches and Groups Day 2014

On 11th October the West Midlands branch chairman and secretary represented our branch at the annual *Railfuture* Branches and Groups Day, which this year was held in Birmingham. Unlike previous years, we weren't allowed to sit back and listen - we were organised into table groups for brainstorm and workshop sessions. The challenges and opportunities for Railfuture are clear: our core of active members will shrink unless we campaign and recruit new members, whilst the current popularity of rail travel gives us the unique opportunity of an independent voice to represent rail users.

We found a lot to agree on - we are a nationwide organisation that also delivers successful national and local campaigns, we are well-informed and well-respected in the rail industry, and we successfully deliver high profile campaigns. We are independent and open minded, campaigning on the issues that affect rail users. We stand for better and more integrated rail travel.

The national groups, for example the Passenger, Freight and Infrastructure & Networks Groups, can help us to campaign locally - they have a wealth of experience of what makes a campaign successful

which we can draw on. If you would like to help *Railfuture* campaign nationally, volunteers are always welcome!

Through the workshop sessions we identified our stakeholders, the people and organisations that can benefit from our activities. We need to interact with them so that they appreciate the value of what we do; for example we must engage with MPs, councillors and council officers to help them understand transport issues.

We also brainstormed our hopes and fears for the future, identifying the issues that we have to address an organisation and the areas where we can grow. These formed the basis of a 90-day action plan to which we and all the other delegates committed.

Our immediate actions are to brief you, the branch members, on the outcome of the meeting and to set you the target of each introducing a friend, colleague or relative to *Railfuture* as a new member by 31st March 2015.

As part of the normal budgeting exercise at this time of year we will also identify our objectives and the campaigns we plan to run next year. Then with the branch committee we will identify whether we need any training to help us campaign effectively, and re-engage with the stakeholders that we identified in the workshop.

The article in Railwatch 142 will tell you more about the day. It was a thought-provoking, rewarding, enjoyable and successful experience. Our job now is to inspire you to work with us to campaign for a bigger better Railfuture and a bigger better railway!

So, don't forget, we'd like all of you to do your best to recruit one new member each by the 31st March 2015! (But carry on finding more prospective members after that too!)

At the last meeting of the West Midlands committee we discussed the actions agreed upon at some length and are in the process of preparing a list of possible do-able campaigns within the West Midlands region. Many of these are listed on our page of the Railfuture website but we are reviewing them to see which to pursue first.

Cross Country Trains News

Cross Country's Stakeholders newsletter, In Focus (issue 22) is attached to this newsletter. Its most interesting items are:-

- Direct Award

Arriva Cross Country are to start negotiations with the DfT for a franchise extension to 2019. Early in 2015 they will begin consulting stakeholders. Could this be Railfuture's chance to get some significant changes to the train services and to the on-board facilities? For instance, a major refurbishment of their train toilets is overdue judging by Railfuture experiences recently (One out-of-order and the others very dilapidated on all four of the trains the branch secretary travelled on recently). How about improvements to the Cardiff to the North East service? We'd like to hear what you would like XC to improve before 2019.

- The December timetable has some small changes to the Nottingham and Leicester services, in particular use of a 3 (instead of 2) coach train on the 0724 Leicester to Birmingham. (Can any of our members confirm this is actually happening?)

- They have started putting stickers on the outside of their carriages acknowledging (at last) that they are part of Arriva which is in part of Deutsche Bahn

- Reservations On The Day (RoD)

XC have started installing new labels on the overhead luggage racks alongside the electronic seat reservation displays to warn passengers that a seat shown as 'Available' might be reserved during the journey. The exact design of this is shown in the attached 'In Focus'. However I've been on a few Bournemouth – Manchester trains lately (and return). None had these advisory stickers.

- On the subject of Reservations On The Day (and Advance Purchase on the Day), XC have introduced some restrictions on their availability in an attempt to meet criticisms from organisations like ourselves and from staff:-

- Coach C is now the only standard class coach in which reservations on the day (of either type) can be made. The displays should now say (for instance) 'Available Manchester Picc – Bournemouth'. This will change if the seat becomes reserved en route;
- Coach B on 5-car Voyagers is always unreserved and Train Managers should be announcing this;
- Unreserved seats in coaches D and F at the start of the train's journey remain unreservable on the day and the displays will say "Available" throughout the journey.

- Turbostar services, Cardiff to Nottingham and Birmingham to Stansted, are to have wi-fi. Installation is due to start towards the end of the year and be complete by April 2015.

- Other items in In Focus are:- mobile phone signal improvements, performance statistics, pre-ordered catering for 1st class passengers, smartphone App enhancements and customer research activities.

Watford Area Renewals Progress

Network Rail's work to replace three critical junctions to the north and south of Watford continues until April 2015. This includes renewing the signalling system in the area and replacing track crossovers with track that is easier to maintain. This should reduce future disruption due to maintenance, resulting in fewer delays, better punctuality and providing more comfortable journeys.

The line between Watford Junction and London Euston will be closed on the following dates to allow for this work:

- Thursday 25 December 2014 to Sunday 28 December 2014
(the line between Wolverhampton and Stafford is also closed this weekend. For more information on this see www.nationalrail.co.uk/service_disruptions/83778.aspx)
- Saturday 14 February 2015 to Monday 16 February 2015
- Saturday 21 February 2015 to Monday 23 February 2015
- Friday 3 April 2015 to Tuesday 7 April 2015

HS2 - Inter-regional Services. The Birmingham Link

As part of our response to HS2, phase 2 we have expanded our proposal for a link between HS2 and the Cross Country line between Water Orton and New Street station. This includes maps of possible connection sites and some thoughts on the future services by the link.

See attached document and please let us have any comments – for or against!

International Conference on High Speed Rail

On this same subject, the Birmingham Centre for Railway Research and Education (BCRRE), is holding a conference on High Speed Rail on 8-10 December at Birmingham University. This initiative is intended to cement the long-standing friendship between the staff of the railways of Japan and the UK. This conference is quite expensive but if you're interested, see www.birmingham.ac.uk/high-speed-rail for the full programme and registration information

Lichfield to Burton & Derby Re-opening Petition

Lichfield Rail Promotion Group's web site went live on Wednesday with an online petition supporting restoration of services between Lichfield and Derby, with a station at Alrewas for the National Memorial Arboretum. Over four hundred "signatures" already! The website is www.Lichfieldrailusers.org.uk.

From their website:

A direct railway line leads from Lichfield to Burton and Derby but has no regular passenger trains, being used as a freight and diversionary route. (Passenger services which had run since the 1840s—it was Lichfield's first railway—were a victim of the Beeching cuts in the 1960s.) We now believe that it is time to restart this service.

- Nationally, we have seen a massive move from road to rail, with rail passenger travel up by 50% in the last ten years alone.
- The A38 is one of the busiest and most dangerous roads in the country and a parallel rail service would alleviate this.
- The National Memorial Arboretum has been a fantastic success, with hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over the country who cannot get there by public transport. This line runs alongside the NMA, and a new station at Alrewas would serve the Arboretum as well as the village, and serve as a "park and ride" station for a wide area.

For these reasons, we want to see hourly trains from Lichfield at least to Derby (for connections throughout the north), preferably continuing to Nottingham.

We have had encouraging meetings with Network Rail, local Councils and other stakeholders. Now, more pressure is needed: if you agree this project would be good for Lichfield and area, please add your name to our petition.

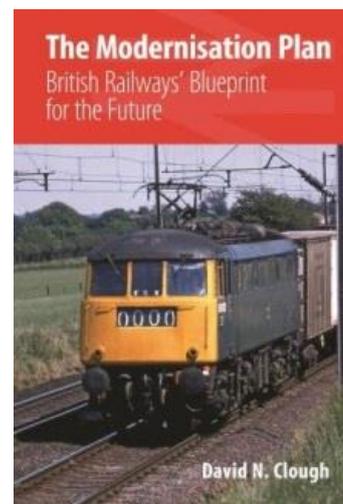
New Book on 1955 Modernisation Plan

Railfuture's Jerry Alderson has negotiated a really good price from Ian Allen Publishing on their brand new book by David N Clough (who sometimes writes for RAIL Magazine) on the Modernisation Plan of 1955. It is a hardback book with 24 pages of black and white photos from the era, and totals 192 pages.

The recommended price £22.50, which is fairly standard for a hardback book like this. We are selling it on our web-site for £17.50 including P&P. Every book sold should, hopefully, make about £3 for *Railfuture* to put into campaigning.

See: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/shop/books.php>

You can pay by credit card, debit card or using a PayPal account



West Coast Rail 250 October Meeting

The consortium held their last meeting on 14th October 2014 in Lockerbie and had three presentations:-

1) Virgin Trains. Key points were:-

Growth of 15% on Anglo Scottish routes with a first class lounge now available in Glasgow.

Direct services to Shrewsbury and Blackpool to commence in December 2014. Shrewsbury to have two services a day each way and Blackpool North one using Voyagers.

Extended franchise to March 2017 will deliver 21 first class carriages converted to second class with a net gain of 2100 seats.

4g wi-fi on all Voyager and Pendolino trains

Nectar points if you book via website or app!

2) Transport Scotland gave a presentation on the ScotRail refranchising process. Highlights were:- Introduction of smart ticketing

23% more carriages

New trains for Edinburgh to Glasgow and Dunblane/Alloa.

Refurbished HST fleet for the inter city services north of the Central belt.

3) TransPennine Express gave a presentation majoring on the timetable changes for Anglo Scottish services.

From May this year there have been extra early and late trains between Edinburgh/Glasgow and Manchester Airport so that it is now possible to commute to Edinburgh or Glasgow from Lockerbie and Carlisle, and a 0622 train from Carlisle allows arrival before 9am in Manchester. Traffic has already increased by 25% with these enhancements.

The 350's are not yet cleared for 110mph. This will be done but gains will not be reflected in the

December 2014 timetable changes.

2015 will see a fourth platform at Manchester Airport in the spring and electrification extended to Liverpool – Earlstown and Ordsall Lane – Victoria.

4) Other matters:

The West Coast 250 committee are in the process of redrafting their HS2 position paper in the light of recent changes. Revised draft will be produced later this year. They will also review their strategy for the next 14 years before the introduction of HS2. Network Rail are also looking at their plans up to the introduction of HS2 and they would be invited to present at the next meeting at Atherstone in January.

A day in the life of the *Railfuture* West Midlands branch Chair, William Whiting



Sometimes things go wrong on the railways and this was certainly a day for me when my wife and I travelled to Paris on the last Sunday in October. I had booked advance purchase tickets on London Midland from Birmingham New Street to Euston, cost £3.95 each single with a two together railcard. We travelled on the 10.14 from Birmingham New Street which should have arrived at London Euston at 12.37. Our booked Eurostar was at 14.31 so that allowed two hours grace. The train crawled into Northampton at about 11.25 and we were sat on the train for 30 minutes before it was announced they were awaiting a driver from a late running train. A short time

later the train was now cancelled due to "an emergency line blockage at Watford". Passengers alighted and were told not to take any notice of the electronic displays as these were operated from Birmingham so did not accurately reflect the situation in Northampton station.

So it was after 12.00 and it seemed clear there were no trains to London Euston for the foreseeable future. We asked a London Midland member of staff what to do and he suggested we take a taxi to Wellingborough on the London St Pancras to Sheffield line. He also gave me a Delay Repayment Compensation Scheme form and pre-paid envelope. There was a taxi available to take us to Wellingborough, which cost £31. We arrived at Wellingborough at 12.50 to find the 12.58 to St Pancras was running 10 minutes late. At 13.10 it was announced the train was about to depart from Kettering. Five minutes later it had been cancelled due to a train failure. There was no way now that we could get to St Pancras to check in for our booked Eurostar train. The next train at 12.27 came on time but was packed and arrived 15 minutes late into St Pancras. It was now 14.50 so we immediately went to the Eurostar booking office and a most helpful lady booked us on the 16.22 train but we had to pay a supplementary charge of £39 each as standard class was full. So we had incurred expenses of £110 because of the failure of the system to mitigate delays or cancellations.

Shortly after this episode I attended the autumn conference of *Railfuture* in London when I think the most challenging speaker I have met, namely Anna Matthews (pictured right) from Delta Rail, spoke about the digital age on the railways and the fact the railways have simply not kept up with it. The above events caused a great deal of stress to us and there was a complete lack of information about how passengers in Northampton would be able to complete their journey.



Neither do I understand why the electronic displays on platforms were not accurate and the fact that we waited 20 minutes on the train before we were told a driver was awaited. Surely London Midland should be able to keep a minute by minute check as to where drivers are on their network. Time was lost as had we known of the true situation we would have taken a taxi to Wellingborough much earlier. Hence that is why and many others at the conference thought the speaker had raised a very important issue.

With regard to making a claim in addition to the train tickets which qualify for a full refund I am claiming the cost of the taxi fare and the cost of the supplementary charge for tickets on Eurostar. There was a recent case which I found on the Passenger Focus website whereby a passenger had to pay a taxi fare of £242 from Newcastle to Edinburgh because of a signalling failure to catch a plane. Initially East Coast Trains refused to pay up as it was considered to be a "consequential loss" but the passenger took up the issue with Passenger Focus and it was agreed to pay the taxi fare.

The next Railfuture West Midlands eNews will be issue 7 in December 2014.

Other issues of *Railfuture* West Midlands eNews are available at
www.railfuture.org.uk/branches/?branch=West+Midlands

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