

Railfuture in London and the South East

quarterly branch newsletter

Campaigning by the Railway Development Society in London and the Home Counties - Kent, Surrey, Sussex, south Hertfordshire, south Essex, Bedfordshire, Greater London

The *independent* campaign for a better passenger and freight rail network

Summer regional forum for members – Robertsbridge

Saturday 18th August will be the date for the latest in our series of rotating regional get-togethers for all branch members and fellow-campaigners. With an 11.00 start the venue will be the Robertsbridge Hall on Station Road, only minutes' walk from Robertsbridge station on Southeastern's Hastings-London line.

Topics will come from all four points of the compass: north – the Tunbridge Wells-based Spa Valley Railway and its direct interchange at Eridge with Southern's Uckfield branch; east – the Robertsbridge-based Rother Valley Railway, its partner the Tenterden-based Kent & East Sussex Railway, and their plans to re-connect via Bodiam; south – rail issues near the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road, eg new stations and coastal metro services; west – the gap in East Sussex's rail network between Uckfield and Lewes, with the Isfield-based Lavender Line in between, and the development of Railfuture's campaign to 'Bridge the gap:Link up Sussex'.

Despite being in East Sussex, the quarterly meeting of Kent Division will be held after lunch and is open to all, especially our hosts Sussex & Coastway Division.



Building bridges back to Bodiam – Rother Valley Railway to rejoin Kent & East Sussex Railway



Javelin shuttle services to spearhead support for sports at Stratford

Other campaign calendar dates

Saturday 21st July is planned as the third **St. Albans** forum, emerging as a centre for our new Herts & Beds Division, focussing on the new, combined and standard-term Thameslink-Southern-Great Northern franchise from September 2013. The DfT consultation was published on 31st May, closing on 23rd August, so drawing together a composite Railfuture response is the task before us. Passenger Focus have already published their initial response on their website.

Saturday 28th April saw the branch annual general meeting in Stratford, centre of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and hosted by Greater Anglia's London Academy. We heard about the rail plans for 'the public transport Games' from two principal speakers: Network Rail's Olympic Programme Manager (Readiness) Paul Ellis and Greater Anglia's Projects Director Thijs Jan Noomen, in a new post for the Olympics and then Crossrail preparations. Chris Fribbins ably stood in for Southeastern, operator of the Olympic Javelin services at Stratford International.

Rail infrastructure investment update – IIP, HLOS, SoFA, SBP

Network Rail published proposals, last September, for infrastructure investment in Control Period 5 (2014-19) and beyond, in their Initial Industry Plans [IIPs].

The whole timescale up to CP5 on 1st April 2014 is:

Development phase

2011

May – ORR starts the 2013 Periodic Review [PR13] with first consultation document

July – ORR stakeholder consultation events

September – ORR consultation closes

September – Network Rail publishes IIPs

October-November – ORR seeks views on IIPs

Formal review phase

2012

March – ORR advice to Ministers on PR13

July – DfT's High-Level Output Specification [HLOS] and Statement of Funds Available [SoFA]

August-September – ORR consults on Network Rail's outputs for CP5

2013

January – Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan out

January-February – ORR seeks stakeholder comments on the SBP

June – ORR draft determination on SBP

June-September – ORR consultation on draft determination

October – ORR final determination of PR13

Implementation phase

2014

March – Network Rail publishes CP5 Delivery Plan

April – start of Control Period 5.

Station Usage 2010-2011

The Office of Rail Regulation published its latest estimates of usage of the country's then-2531 stations on 29th March 2012. Full details can be viewed on the ORR website www.rail-reg.gov.uk

Passenger journeys 2010-2011

The ORR published its latest estimates of national rail passenger journeys on 26th April. 1.16bn journeys in Great Britain in 2010-11 were 8.9% more than the previous year. 60.7% of all GB journeys started and/or ended in London, with a 17.3% increase in rail journeys within the capital. ATOC said rail travel is now more popular than at any time since the 1920s.

Passenger satisfaction scores

Passenger Focus was due to publish the latest twice-yearly **National Passenger Survey** [NPS] in late-June, based on the results of fieldwork conducted in Spring 2012. See www.passengerfocus.org.uk

Franchise renewals update – OJEUs, Eols and ITTs

Our attention continues to focus on re-franchising, and another set of initials. As reported in our three previous issues, last August the DfT announced its programme for re-letting franchises, in what has emerged as seven-stage process:

- 1 - publication of notices in the Official Journal of the European Union [OJEU notice];
- 2 - submission of Expressions of Interest by potential bidders [Eol];
- 3 - announcement of short-listed bidders;
- 4 - public consultation by DfT on new franchise;
- 5 - issue of Invitations To Tender [ITT] to short-listed bidders;
- 6 - announcement of franchise award;
- 7 - franchise contract start date.

The re-franchising programme updated since the previous newsletter now looks like this:

2011

December 19th – OJEU notices published for Great Western, Essex Thameside, and Thameslink.

2012

January 20th – ITT for InterCity West Coast – short-list: Abellio, First Group, Keolis/SNCF, Virgin.

February 5th – start of short Greater Anglia franchise.

February 9th – Eols for Great Western, Essex Thameside and Thameslink.

March 29th – three short-lists – for Great Western: First, Arriva, National Express, Stagecoach; Essex Thameside: Abellio, First, MTR, National Express; Thameslink: Abellio, First, Govia, MTR, Stagecoach.

March 31st – Great Western consultation closed.

May 11th – Essex Thameside consultation closed.

May 31st – DfT consultation on Thameslink started.

June – ITTs for Great Western, Essex Thameside.

August – franchise award for InterCity West Coast; OJEU notice for InterCity East Coast; close of DfT Thameslink consultation on 23rd.

October – ITT for Thameslink.

December – franchise award for Great Western; start of 14-year [+20m?] franchise for InterCity West Coast; OJEU notices for South Eastern and Greater Anglia.

2013

January – franchise award for Essex Thameside; ITT for InterCity East Coast.

April/May – start of 15-year franchise for Great Western.

May – start of 15-year franchise for Essex Thameside; franchise award for Thameslink; ITT for South Eastern.

August – ITT for Greater Anglia.

Summer – franchise award for InterCity East Coast.

September – start of 7-year [+2-yr?] franchise for combined Thameslink/Southern/Great Northern.

end-2013 – franchise award for South Eastern.

December – franchise start for InterCity East Coast.

2014

March – renewal or extension of concession for London Overground.

April – franchise start for South Eastern.

Spring – franchise award for Greater Anglia.

July – franchise start for Greater Anglia.

Network RUS – Alternative solutions

An initial scoping document for Network Rail's final **Network RUS – Alternative solutions to efficiently deliver passenger demand** was published on 28th February, for consultation until 30th April. See www.networkrail.co.uk/aspx/4449.aspx

The scoping document “recognised that in considering alternative solutions there may be a wide range of views and experience from other industries and contexts which may be relevant. Unlike other RUSs there will be a two stage consultation process with the scoping document forming the first part of the consultation. All responses received will be considered in developing a draft strategy which will be published for a second consultation stage later.

The RUS has so far examined three alternatives to see if different ways of working can help the industry become more effective and better value for money:

- 1 - Can the application of tram and tram train technologies deliver savings in capital, operating and maintenance costs, whilst simultaneously improving the offering to the travelling customer?
- 2 - Are there cheaper and more innovative ways of replacing diesel with electrically-powered trains?
- 3 - To what extent can the further development of community rail initiatives provide locally applicable opportunities for adding value to railway operations?

The aim of analysing these solutions is to identify the areas in which their contribution might be most valuable in order to focus the resources of the rail industry and its stakeholders.”

Reforming our railways: Putting the customer first

This government Command Paper was published in March. It embodied government's response to Sir Roy McNulty's Rail Value for Money Study “Realising the potential of GB rail”. “The Command Paper sets out the Government's vision for the railways, alongside the policies that are needed to realise that vision. Making life better for customers – both passengers and freight users – is at the heart of our approach. We must also make the railways financially sustainable in the longer term, so they can contribute to the country's economic growth and environmental goals.”

Its publication was accompanied by the launch of two public consultations, both closing on 28th June. One is an initial consultation designed to gather evidence to inform the government's **Rail Fares and Ticketing Review**, the other is **Rail decentralisation: devolving decision-making on passenger rail services in England**. The DfT's website – www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-09 and www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-10 - has them and Railfuture is responding to both.

Network Rail and LTPP – a new Long Term Planning Process

It “runs, maintains and develops Britain's rail tracks, signalling, bridges, tunnels, level crossings, viaducts, and 17 key stations” – Network Rail is now approaching its 10th anniversary in October. It is also perhaps worth noting that we have just passed the 20th anniversary of the unexpected re-election of a government which went on to fragment the national railway in a model predicated on ‘managed decline’.

From the nineties through the noughties to the teenies and the national railway now enjoys unprecedented levels of peace-time use, and unabated growth. While commuters and other rail users are understandably pre-occupied with their trains and services, we as railway development campaigners recognise that those trains and services can only increase and improve as the capacity and capability of those ‘tracks, signals, bridges, tunnels, crossings, and viaducts’ – the national rail infrastructure over which those trains and services operate – are also increased and improved.

Commuters and other rail users may be concerned with their seats aligning with windows; our outlook as railway development campaigners concerns ourselves no less with alignments between their ambitions and the practical - which includes the financial - means to bring them to fruition. While we maintain our focus on future franchises and engage with incumbent operators through their stakeholder events, we ignore at our peril the even more tortuous path through the byzantine processes for securing infrastructure investment in the railway, for whose development we are the champions.

In recent years we have become used to a steady stream of consultations on, and our responses to, Route Utilisation Strategies, the responsibility for which Network Rail took over from the former Strategic Rail Authority. Through 17 Generation One [for one decade ahead?] to three Generation Two [for two decades ahead?] geographical RUSs, a national Freight RUS, and five parts to the Network RUS, we have contributed responses advocating investment schemes to support our economy and environment through improving the nation's access to, and the capacity and capability of, our national rail network.

We have also become familiar with the language of Control Periods, Initial Industry Plans, HLOS, SofA, Strategic Business Plan, Delivery Plans, and Route Plans. Last September Network Rail's planning for the next five-year CP5 from 2014 saw their publication of Initial Industry Plans, supported by ten Network Specifications and associated Route Specifications which have replaced the previous Route Plans. That was but the latest step in the process overseen by the Office of Rail Regulation known as the 2013 Periodic Review [PR13] – the year the process concludes. Even as CP4 began three years ago however, and before ORR began PR13 two years ago, Network Rail had published ‘Planning Ahead 2009’ and Planning Ahead 2010: the long term planning framework’, taking

a 25-year forward view. Now as the national RUS programme concludes, its role in supporting the IIPs' Network and Route Specifications will be replaced by the emergence of Network Rail's new Long Term Planning Process.

The LTPP will be undertaken by Network Rail's Network Strategy and Planning team under its Director Richard Eccles. It will take forward the evidence base for long term rail industry planning. This has been developed in consultation with rail industry partners to build on the success of the RUS programme and go forward to inform future franchises and discussions on rail industry funding requirements – loosely-expressed it might perhaps be referred to as Predict and Prioritise.

The LTPP is designed to facilitate the strategic planning of the rail network to meet future demand through market studies, cross-boundary analysis and route studies.

Local authorities and stakeholder groups are now being asked for initial contributions towards the LTPP, the first stirrings of preparations for Control Period 6. This comes even as we have almost two years of CP4 still to run [and on 29th March Network Rail published their CP4 Delivery Plan update for 2012 and their Network Availability Implementation Plan March 2012 update, followed on 10th April by their Enhancements Programme: statement of scope, outputs and milestones March 2012 update] and are still some way yet from finalising CP5's Delivery Plan!

Soon after this newsletter comes through your letterbox the Secretary of State for Transport Justine Greening will publish the High Level Output Specification – what government wants to be achieved by the railways – and Statement of Funds Available – the public financial resources that are or are likely to be available – for Control Period 5 for the five years from 1st April 2014.

The ORR's PR13 programme is crystal clear: the stage between its March 2012 advice to Ministers and its final determination on Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan in October 2013 is a key stage of the Periodic Review and "it is important for stakeholders to make their views known to government in relation to the issues and priorities that they (that's us, folks!) consider are most important."

What this all amounts to for us as railway development campaigners is the vital need to think and operate within different timescales simultaneously. At the risk of over-simplifying through generalisations, in the short term we have to engage with established franchisees through the remaining months and few years of a number of current franchises, our contributions to re-franchising consultations, and the remaining 20-odd months of Delivery Plans for CP4. In the medium term we have the start of new franchises of different durations, continuing contributions for CP5, and the beginnings of thoughts for CP6. In the longer term we have further franchise renewals and the formal processes for CP6.

Bridge the gap: Link up Sussex

With this theme we have begun to immerse ourselves in a new approach to reopening the line, closed in 1969, between Uckfield and Lewes. For some time last year members of our Sussex and Coastway Division had been picking up developing news about proposals "to reduce traffic congestion in Uckfield town centre" which could take the form of an inner relief road which might cross the trackbed, and at worst make the already-challenging task of reopening the rail link even harder.

As your previous newsletter was about to go to press it was able to report an update to East Sussex County Council's website announcing a three-day mid-March exhibition in Uckfield to launch a public consultation until late-April. With help from Railwatch editor Ray King a leaflet was produced with the central message that a new road should indeed be built to cross the old track-bed, and the adjacent flood-prone River Uck, but at an elevation with sufficient headroom for the reopened railway beneath. The re-birth of the railway will anyway require the permanent closure to road traffic of the High Street where it crosses the former rail route over the old level crossing, taken out of railway use with the re-siting of Uckfield station to the opposite side (Sheringham-style) in 1991 – a two-tier inner relief road serving a dual purpose!

Financial contributions from developers to mitigate impacts arising from their local developments are already reported to amount to around £4 million. Although less than the estimated cost of a rail-river road bridge, it is likely that there are ways it could attract match-funding from other sources. Railfuture is calling on the County and District Councils to commit to a scheme which resolves Uckfield's road and rail needs together, and to lead a new multi-agency, cross-sector and cross-party partnership which will achieve that as a first step in moving on to reopen the railway.

One of our starting points is the Network Rail study published in 2008 which estimated roundly eight years to move forward through its GRIP stages 3 to 8 to reopening. A second is the start of the next-but-one, long, combined Thameslink/Southern franchise from 2020, or with an extension of up to two years by 2022 at the latest. A third is the start of CP6 in 2019. Aligning these three strategic elements into a coherent whole, a 10-year Project Plan begins to emerge, culminating in a potential target of services starting on the reopened link with the December 2022 timetable.

Since that March exhibition we have not only responded to the consultation but attended a number of local Council meetings to gauge support for our approach. In Uckfield, Crowborough, Buxted, and Edenbridge we detect an appetite for a practical approach to realising a long-held and widely-shared aspiration. This aspiration, for a simple stage-one link, is achievable within 130 months from that March exhibition. The key will be the breadth and depth of real commitment a new partnership can harness, and Railfuture with its half-century of reopening campaigns experience is ready to play a leading role.

Branch AGM 2012 – report-back

The Annual General Meeting of our London and South East regional branch was held in Greater Anglia's London Academy, Stratford, London, E15 4LJ on Saturday 28th April 2012.

The principal Agenda items were:

2. Election results

Nominations for branch Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer, and up to six other branch committee members, were uncontested so all were re-elected unopposed, as follows:

Chairman – Keith Dyll

Vice-Chairman – Roger Blake

Hon. Secretary – Chris Fribbins

Hon. Treasurer – Trevor Jones

Other members of the branch committee:

David Berman, Norman Bradbury, Chris Page,

Howard Thomas, Peter Woodrow.

Graham Morrison was co-opted at the first meeting of the new committee in May. Its two ex-officio members are Dick Tyler for Sussex & Coastway division and Ray King as editor of the Society's national magazine Railwatch. The established Kent and Eastern divisions continue to have a presence in branch committee meetings through Chris Fribbins and Howard Thomas; the emerging divisions for Surrey and Herts & Beds are overseen by Chris Page and Keith Dyll.

5. Chairman's report for 2011

The Branch Committee for 2011 was:

Chairman – Keith Dyll

Vice-Chairman – Roger Blake

Hon. Secretary – Ian McDonald [until April];

Chris Fribbins [from September]

Hon. Treasurer – Trevor Jones

David Berman, Norman Bradbury, Chris Fribbins,

Graham Morrison, Chris Page [from September],

Martin Parker [until April], Howard Thomas, Peter

Woodrow; Dick Tyler [ex-officio].

2011 was an extremely busy year for the committee with a heavy workload for consultations. Because of our geographical situation the branch gets involved in more Route Utilisation Strategies and franchise renewals than any other branch. Whilst we are not the lead branch on all of those which we are involved in, we still have considerable involvement putting our views forward for inclusion in the final document.

During the year we acted as lead Branch in the response to the major London & South East RUS. We contributed to the Anglia RUS, the West Coast Main Line RUS and the Chilterns & West Midlands RUS. We also contributed to the Greater Anglia franchise response lead by East Anglia Branch. At the end of the calendar year we were preparing responses either alone or with other branches to the franchise consultations to come for the Essex Thameside and combined Thameslink/Southern franchises. We also responded to the DfT consultation on converting the Watford Junction to St Albans Abbey branch into light rail and we also responded to the consultation on the Croxley Rail Link. We also responded to the County

Council's Rail Action Plan for Kent. Your branch committee members were significant contributors to the Society's response to the controversial HS2 rail scheme.

We have participated in Stakeholder meetings for London Overground, First Capital Connect, Southern, Southeastern, and Network Rail. We have also attended meetings with Passenger Focus.

We have developed during the year a series of members' meetings throughout the branch area, in addition to the divisional meetings, at Tunbridge Wells and St Albans. Both of these brought us into direct contact with representatives of rail user groups which are affiliated to Railfuture and which all found very useful to meet on this basis. It will be useful if we can align our responses in order to produce a more effective result. We have started to change our responses to consultations by specifying desirable outcomes rather than methodology.

During the year issues with new standing orders were settled, and members have settled down to working well together without having to refer to them. It is interesting to note that other parts of the organisation are considering adopting them. Your national Board has insisted that there will only be one response to any consultation in the Railfuture name and this must reflect the views of all branches. This should give us as a Society a more authoritative voice, as differing responses from different sections of the Society has reduced the message that we all wish to bring to junk status. It is something that your committee welcomes.

We have over the year spent a lot of effort supporting and advising our divisions in the work that they do to great effect. Much of the correspondence has been jointly signed by both the divisional chair and the branch chair which indicates to the recipients that the mailing has both local input and is supported by the Society at large and hopefully has greater impact. In addition to the existing divisions we have started to lay the foundations of a resuscitated northern Division [Beds & Herts] with a meeting in St Albans and also looking at the possibilities of a Surrey Division finding an easily accessible location within the county to meet.

Members of the branch, besides supporting the work of the branch itself, have given considerable time and effort in working for the Society nationally, as below:

National Board of directors - 3 members;
Finance and Internal Affairs - 4 members;
International & EU - 3 members plus 1 corresponding;
Network Development - 1 member plus 2 corresponding;
Freight Services - 1 member plus 1 corresponding;
Policy Lobbying and Campaigns - 5 members plus 2 corresponding;
Passenger - 2 members plus 2 corresponding;
Railwatch Editorial Board - 7 members plus 1 corresponding;
Information, Publishing and Communications 2 members plus 1 corresponding;
Corporate Governance Review Group - 4 members;
European Passenger Federation - 2 members.

Besides serving on national committees, branch members represented the society at meetings with national politicians, ATOC, Network Rail, Passenger Focus, and Transport Activists Round Table.

2011 has seen years of hard campaigning bring some success within the year (if only just) - the completion of work on upgrading the North London Line, the West London Line, the East London Line, and the Gospel Oak to Barking Line - and 2012 will see the completion of the orbit to Clapham Junction via the South London Line, all under the banner of London Overground. At the very end of the year came news that two other campaign targets were to go ahead, namely the Croxley Rail Link and the East-West Rail Link. Who says that with a good case and hard work, effective campaigns do not pay off?

On a personal basis, many thanks to the officers and committee members, including divisional ones, for their hard work and to the general membership for their support and encouragement.

6. Hon. Treasurer's report for 2011

Our income was the annual branch subvention from national funds of just over £1600, and expenditure was mainly on this quarterly newsletter and on room hire for meetings. Excluding adjustments in early-2011 carried over from the late-2010 national Rail Reopenings conference hosted by the branch at Shoreditch, there was a net surplus of just under £200 over the year.

7. Divisions' reports for 2011

a. Eastern

During 2011, the Eastern Division met six times to discuss a range of issues. It continued to look at developments surrounding the Olympics, London Overground (LO), and Docklands Light Railway (DLR). It also kept a watching brief on issues such as reliability problems on National Express East Anglia lines, especially the Great Eastern Main Line, NXEA's fare restrictions, and other local issues including the Chingford line, the Lea Valley line, and the possible reinstatement of Lea Bridge station and Hall Farm Curve. It has also kept a watching brief on proposals for refranchising both Great Eastern/West Anglia and LTS line services in the near future.

The Division has continued to keep a watching brief on developments surrounding the Olympics. It continues to be concerned that the volume of passengers predicted for the event may have been underestimated, notwithstanding the current economic recession.

The Division has also been concerned with overcrowding and potential crowd control problems both in and on the approaches to Stratford station. Members of the committee had a very useful meeting with NXEA's Station Manager at Stratford station. They were given a tour of the station and shown the steps being taken to alleviate crowd problems. These have been seen to be very effective since the meeting during times of disruption. It was interesting to learn that Stratford station's 'Safety Case' is held by LUL. The Division has been reassured about crowd control

on Stratford station, but remains concerned about overcrowding and crowd control outside railway territory, and therefore Eastern Division's sphere of influence, on the approaches to Stratford station, especially from the Westfield shopping centre direction.

Good progress is being made on the replacement of overhead line equipment (OHLE) between Liverpool Street and Chelmsford. Where the work has been done, disruption due to OHLE problems has been virtually eliminated. The main problem now seems to be the theft of signalling cable. New signalling had been installed in the early 1990s. At first, it worked well. In fact it did so over a number of years. Recent signalling problems suggest that the 1990s installation is now life-expired, and may possibly have been 'done on the cheap'. The Division noted that the December 2012 timetable allowed for work on this project to be carried out on Monday to Thursday nights as well as the occasional weekend possessions.

The Division has continued to campaign for the reopening of Lea Bridge station and the Hall Farm Curve. It had been successful in accessing Railfuture's Fighting Fund to help with the campaign. By the end of the year, there were some positive indicators about the future of Lea Bridge station. The Division will follow these developments closely during 2012, and continue to campaign on this and related issues as appropriate.

Meanwhile a new airport station opened to passengers on 18th July. Southend Airport station on the Shenfield-Southend Victoria line was opened officially in September by Rail Minister Theresa Villiers.

Towards the end of the year, Eastern Division received an invitation to a meeting in the New Year with Arriva in relation to the proposed Essex Thameside franchise. Although Arriva are not now in the frame for the franchise, the Division appreciated the courtesy of the invitation. The Division will follow this development closely in 2012, and will be preparing a response to the consultation.

b. Kent

The usual quarterly meetings took place at Faversham, Broadstairs, Deal, and Paddock Wood. Average attendance was ten, boosted by the successful Deal and Paddock Wood events, which each attracted several non-members. There was also a Branch Members' Meeting in Tunbridge Wells in July, which concentrated on community rail partnerships and local commuters' concerns. It was followed by a ride on the Spa Valley Railway, to celebrate its recent extension to the National Rail station at Eridge.

The year saw the welcome extension of HS1 peak-hour services to Ramsgate via Deal, and from Strood to Maidstone West. The temporary Javelin service to Sandwich for the Open Golf Tournament was successful in attracting more visitors to use rail.

Branch committee members performed an all-day passenger count at two minor Marshlink stations, with

encouraging results. The lengthy tunnel closure on that route in early 2012 was expected to allow multiple infrastructure repairs, potentially leading to quicker journeys and other benefits. It was a good example of cost-saving joined-up thinking by Network Rail and Southern, as they adopted a more integrated approach following devolution of the Network Rail Kent Route.

Railfuture benefitted from Chris Fribbins' connections with Network Rail, in the splendid welcome, facilities and presentations made available during our February visit to the new Network Rail training site at Paddock Wood. Murray Motley, Network Rail Senior Sponsor, expounded the infrastructure enhancements under way, planned or visualised. Many stations had had platform extensions. Gillingham was undergoing a major revamp, and a third, bay, platform would soon be installed at Gravesend. Progress had been made with the East Kent resignalling. Much investment had gone into more robust preparations for the recent winter, such as points protection. The new co-operation with the TOC had made fitting anti-icing fluid tanks to 20 (?) Class 375 units possible.

DB and Eurotunnel were pressing ahead with expansion of international rail freight, with HS1 cleared for use and more Class 92 locomotives being employed.

The organiser took part in the annual Wealden Line Campaign walk, which was successful despite heavy rain. The old station site at Uckfield is being threatened again by a road scheme. Efforts to bring it into use for expanded station car parking have not yet borne fruit. Roger Blake attended the Wealden Line Campaign's AGM. He thought that WLC was not being effective at persuading ESCC, NR etc.

The Division organiser attended the RDS branch and national AGMs, and the Railfuture conference in July on HS2. The latter was well-attended, and featured lively and largely informative debate. He also enjoyed the October visit of a Rocket replica to the Lavender Line.

Chris Fribbins once again made a most creditable contribution to the division's activities, especially by participating in community rail partnerships, and as the Branch committee representative. He attended the South Eastern stakeholder forum in November, where there was much concern about above-inflation fare rises.

c. Sussex & Coastway

Two Southern Stakeholder Forums have been attended by Sussex & Coastway, on 5th September last and on 17th February this year. There were some good and informative presentations indicating how seriously Southern take their franchise commitments particularly with regard to station improvements, stock maintenance and train lengthening. They are gradually rolling out 'The Key' smartcard ticketing system across the Southern network.

We carried out passenger counts in July 2011 at Three Oaks and Winchelsea stations on the Marshlink line to measure the success of the newly reintroduced stops by Southern. The results were striking, suggesting

that after only 7 months since alternate hourly services were restored, the use of the two stations was already back to around what it was when they last had hourly services six years ago.

Two other features emerged also; the predominance of traffic towards Brighton and the increased patronage on the Saturday. The first indicates the popularity of a through service and the second the need for a similar Sunday service, at least in the Summer, for tourism.

The Ore Tunnel blockade was a main talking point for us. We were able to placate many, up in arms about this 9-week closure, by relaying how well Network Rail would capitalise on the closure by carrying out many other tasks that would have required further closures. This would not only save time but also money as each closure requires Network Rail to compensate the TOC.

One welcome inclusion in these works was elimination of the long-standing 20mph speed limit just south of Ashford due to an unstable embankment. This will give a saving of 90 seconds alone and should be the basis for reintroduction of the Sunday service already mentioned above. We are pressing for this to be introduced as soon as possible.

The fruit of all this work should be a 75mph line-speed but this has yet to be introduced. Combined with the East Coastway signalling work, which should be completed in 2013, 15mins journey time savings will be achieved. We await developments

As Network Rail promised, work has started on a new platform 7 at Gatwick Airport to facilitate Gatwick Express trains terminating on Platforms 5 & 6 and free up the slow lines. This is all part of the ongoing problem of Brighton Main Line becoming full.

The problem is serious already with severe overcrowding. The refranchising process will give opportunity for the BML timetable to be recast (as Southern have indicated they would if chosen), but more drastic action will be needed in the not too distant future.

For this and other reasons we are now concentrating efforts on the reinstatement of the Lewes-Uckfield line. This was prompted by one of the options put forward by East Sussex County Council's consultation to solve Uckfield town centre's traffic problems, which cuts the line at grade on the site of the former station.

d. Herts & Beds

After many years of attempting to establish the division - the last attempt was a couple of years ago in Bricket Wood - a new meeting was called in St Albans on 28th October. For a first meeting there was a reasonable attendance including a number of affiliated rail user groups which we felt was particularly heartening. The principal purpose was to introduce ourselves to each other and review priorities. We then had a review of where the potential rail developments in the division had reached. We also had a discussion on the new Thameslink franchise. It was agreed that until the DfT had published which routes would be taken over by Thameslink a final and meaningful document would have to wait. All agreed that the meeting had been

useful and that another meeting would be held in January. Currently the division positions are occupied by the main branch officers until divisional members come forward.

e. Surrey

The Great Western, Thameslink, South Western, Southern and (just!) CrossCountry TOCs serve Surrey. An initial meeting titled 'Developing Rail Services in and around Surrey' on Saturday 9th June in Guildford was announced in the March RailSE. Representatives from RUGs in Surrey were invited to join us for an interactive discussion on topics specific to the Surrey area, including the forthcoming refranchising of Great Western and Thameslink/Southern. The agenda was emailed to Railfuture members in Surrey. Hopefully this can become a regular quarterly meeting which will form the basis of a future Surrey division.

9. Future branch activities

A members' open forum then discussed recent and forthcoming branch meetings around the region, maintaining our input to Railfuture responses to rail industry consultations, our active campaigns for the Lea Valley line [Lea Bridge station, 4tph services through 3/4-tracking, Chingford line links with Stratford aka Hall Farm Curve] and reopening the Uckfield-Lewes line, TOC liaison through Stakeholder Forums, and Community Rail Partnerships and the County Council's Rail Summit in Kent.



'The Station', Uckfield – venue for Sussex & Coastway Division meeting at 18.00 on Thursday 6th September.

This branch newsletter is free, published quarterly and usually distributed with each edition of the national **Railwatch**

The copy deadline for **raillse** issue 117, due to be published in September, will be Monday 30th July

All items for this newsletter and the branch Local Action column in Railwatch to be sent to branch Chair Keith Dyall

The Railfuture mission: to be the number one advocate for the railway and rail users

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Branch divisions' meetings – open to all members of our regional branch

Eastern [south Essex and north & east London]

– usually meet bi-monthly on the second Wednesday of the odd-numbered months at 18.30, in Stratford – next on 11th July and 12th September. Contact Howard Thomas at howard.thomas@railfuture.org.uk or 24 South Primrose Hill, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2RG or phone 01245 280503 before 21.00 hours.

Herts & Beds – next meeting Saturday 21st July in St. Albans – contact Keith Dyall for details.

Kent – usually meet quarterly on the third Saturday afternoon, in a different venue around Kent – next on 18th August in the Robertsbridge Community Hall, Station Road, Robertsbridge, East Sussex, TN32 5DA. Divisional Organiser is Peter Collingborn at 82 Burnham Walk, Parkwood, Rainham, Kent, ME8 8RX or phone 01634 364744; email contact is Chris Fribbins at chris.fribbins@railfuture.org.uk

Sussex & Coastway – usually meet monthly on the first Thursday [except in mid-July, then in September; and after New Year in mid-January, then in March] at 18.00. Next on 19th July at The Crown Inn, 191 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2NA, and then on 6th September at The Station, 43 High Street, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 1AJ. Contact Dick Tyler at richard.tyler@railfuture.org.uk or 27 Windsor Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN39 3PB or phone 01424 211500.

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