



British Regional Transport Association

(BRTA)

Main Postal Address: 2 Leigh Road, Hildenborough, Tonbridge, Kent, TN11 9AB

Patrons: Sir Edmund Verney, The Rt Hon. the Lord Newby OBE, Mr George Bathurst, Professor Andrew N Williams BA, BM BCh, MSc, PhD, MRCP, FRCPCH, FRHistS, Mr Trevor Garrod, Mr Leonard Lean
+ others welcome of professional, business, or other acumen and of good repute.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Media and Newsletter Coordinator, Campaigns Coordinator, Bedfordshire Area Rep, Overall Coordination, Delegation, Volunteering Liaison Officer and General Advisor: Mr Richard Pill: T: 01234 225068 E: richard.erta@gmail.com

Treasurer, Membership, Grants and Westminster Team Coordinator:
Mr David J. Start T: 07535 641055 E: davidjstart63@gmail.com

Always welcome offers to help, assist, volunteer and be an area rep where you live to help recruit new members and support to BRTA and its causes. Please contact Richard Pill, BRTA CEO using contact details above.

<https://brtarail.co.uk/>

<https://linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-brta>

<https://brtarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/>

Newsletter No. 57

September-October 2024

Price where sold £1.50/Donations welcome

BRTA reaches out via our meetings and sets an agenda able to get pro-rail people 'fired up' for pro-affirma rail development actions!



Taken by Simon Barber Saturday 18th May 2024, as BRTA EC reps headed to Westbury for a tabled forum. Some did attend, but need to grow it. We aim to make it an annual forum place to recruit, to share views and gather momentum towards delivery, even at the foothills. Our agendas sow seeds which we hope will engage and encourage joining up with us or sharing with others and loose alliances more.

Notes from the BRTA Westbury Forum held on Saturday, 18 May 2024 at the Railway Inn, Station Road, Westbury BA13 4HW – By Simon Barber.

Present: Simon Barber and David Ferguson (BRTA), Peter Grant, Graham Ellis (Melksham Town Council), David Northey (Travel Watch South West) and Christopher Maltin

Apologies: Sarah Dyke (MP Somerton and Frome), Christopher Jones and Dan Norris (West of England Combined Authority), Cllr. Sarah Warren (Bath and NE Somerset Council), Cllr. Adrian Dodgson (Radstock Town Council), Colin Crawford and David Start (BRTA members).

1. **Radstock – Frome:** More people tend to commute from Radstock to Bath rather than Frome, since Radstock faces Bath. Therefore, we agreed that it would be more convenient from Radstock to connect to Limpley Stoke (on Bath-Westbury Line), and a light rail was suggested which in fact was the site of the Titfield Thunderbolt film from 1952. **BRTA CEO:** There should be

a feasibility study to evaluate choice and options. What of integrity of route for example either way?

2. **Taunton – Barnstaple:** Barnstaple has a parking problem and most people commute to Exeter Central which is the centre of that town. **BRTA CEO:** That is now, but A361 needs a rail option to take volumes off roads and onto rails more. Exeter from London or Bristol for North Devon is a great way round!
3. **Bristol Metro:** Upgraded stations at Filton Abbey (site of University of West of England). Also, stations at both Patchway and Pilning which is close to the Aztec Business Park.
4. **New stations on the West of England main line:** All these stations are needed (Devizes Parkway, Somerton, Langport, Cullompton, Wellington).
5. **New stations on South Wales main line:** Grove Road Wantage is a top priority, since Great Western Railway is planning to run direct services to Bristol Temple Meads and Oxford as proposed by England’s Economic Heartlands (EEH). Also, Corsham and Wootton Bassett stations are needed.
6. **Gravity Site near Bridgwater:** Bridgwater has a transport problem, and a light rail is suggested for that site. **BRTA CEO – Why?** What is the comparative cost-demand with heavy rail options? What evaluations have been made? What about the Cirencester’s of this world?
7. **Bristol Temple Meads – Weymouth:** We call for more frequent services along that corridor i.e. 1 per hour. Castle Cary station needs upgrading which caters for Glastonbury Festival and the Shepton Mallet showground (e. g Bath and West); plus, Yeovil Pen Mill station which is close to Yeovil’s town centre. **BRTA CEO:** What about the Yeovil Curves?
8. **New bridge over River Severn:** Severn tidal barrage is in its early planning stage which will be close to the M4 bridge. **BRTA CEO:** A study is needed with options for more by rail/capacity.
9. **Gloucester – Ross-on-Wye – Hereford:** The Gloucester – Ross-on-Wye section is easier since there are no bridges across the River Wye, compared with the other section from Ross-on-Wye to Hereford where there are several bridges. Michelden station is a possible site for re-opening. **ED.** Terminal branches ok, through routes enable more.

Contact Simon Barber T: 0208 940 4399 E: simon4barber@gmail.com

BRTA needs and wants: If BRTA has 50 members at £20 per year, that gives us about £1000 per year to plan with and allocate finite resources to such a programme. Please help recruit new members to BRTA to enable more and better. Likewise, we need our members to engage more with us like feedback, attend forums and meetings, get involved, take more of an interest, and help steer the direction and relevance of our association more. We are seeking to build teams to enable thoroughness. The next Bedford Midland Station Stall is Saturday 26th October, all welcome. Bring cash to all meetings. We are only as good and effective as a growing membership informs! Thank you. richard.erta@gmail.com

People gather at Westbury and the debate is on... clearly some more would be good and to be able to envisage what we would like matched with realism and overall, where we need to be for modal shift by 2035 within a fiscally tight generation?



News from the Lakes Line Bulletin:

Once again, we have a celebration to report. The meeting on 29* February this year was the actual 40* anniversary of the foundation of the Group, and saw an unusually large turnout of members and friends. We were pleased to receive formal congratulations from the representatives of Northern, and from our MP and elected members of local councils and the CRP. Such support is much appreciated by the wider membership.

As you can't have a proper birthday party without a cake the manager of the Stonecross Manor made one for L-BR us.

The actual meeting was in two parts with a break for cake in between. In the routine business the Chairman explained why we had not carried out a February passenger count this year: the ideal date followed a period of disruption due to industrial action by ASLEF and we thought this would make any count unrepresentative and possibly awkward for the volunteers who might be the target of complaints.

On a brighter note the Treasurer reported good sales figures at the Model Railway Show, and a healthy bank balance of over £6,000, including the ring-fenced Windermere Station portion. Northern colleagues Jane Murray (Stations Manager) took away a list of jobs to be done and Martin Keating (Regional Community & Sustainability Manager West explained about the next round of funding for the Friends of the Lakes Line projects. Ian Conway has written about the projects elsewhere in the Bulletin. We decided it would be worth running our 'Welcome' programme again over Easter, though not on Easter Sunday when there will be no trains and volunteers were invited.

Railfuture, the organisation co-ordinating and supporting User Groups, has issued an update stating that "Our position on HS2 was simple - stick to the plan. Build HS2 from Euston to Manchester and East Midlands Parkway." Its verdict is "Like building a house without a roof, the replacement package

will not deliver the same economic growth or decarbonisation benefits." We have more on HS2 in another article

Turning to recent performance, we heard that Northern is cancelling fewer trains now thanks to a Rest Day Working Agreement while talks between the management and unions continue. Members have been very disappointed with the recent Avanti West Coast record, with many cancellations and, on days of disruption for other reasons, effectively turning Preston into the Scottish border and running replacement buses to stations further north. In our view it is much better to run the trains as far as possible, even if that means running fewer trains because of limited storage space further north. One of the joys of the meeting was seeing so many people who have been important in LLRUG since the early days. It was thus appropriate that Jenny Borer, Ian Conway and Alan Noble jointly cut the cake (which was very tasty). Lakes Line Bulletin.



Rail Enhancements, Realism, and a Route to Realisation

Talk given on 27 April 2024 by Tiff Lynch, freelance transport planner

The talk reviewed the current government policy position on rail – and how it wants large scheme proposals to be evaluated and assessed – in the context of really challenging national finances. The Treasury’s position is clear: it spent a lot on rail during Covid and now wants the railway to save it money.

Any large transport project must have a very strong and clear set of objectives – what is it trying to do? So, understand the potential outputs and outcomes of the proposed scheme. So, what it will deliver, for example, for the national railway? For its direct customers? For other commercial businesses? For local communities? And the surrounding environment and ecology?

A railway is *not* just about running trains!

A good transport project will be seen by many people and organisations see as a good thing. The best way of achieving that is to try to understand what sorts of problems need to be addressed; and then link these to potential solutions. So, try to find those potential win-wins when talking to politicians, people who work in government (at whichever level), business representatives, the rail sector itself, the wider public and more. Find the evidence that will link their problems with your solution – so that you and these stakeholders have a “common cause,” where your scheme then becomes *their* scheme. Developing business cases for large infrastructure schemes is *very* expensive. The Strategic Case is a key part of any business case to the Treasury and must be considered first. What issues need to be solved? What different solutions have been considered (not just rail)? And how well does each option help solve those issues? Thinking these things through avoids wasting a lot of money on a poorly based business case.

The speaker left the audience with some ‘challenging questions,’ when thinking about supporting large potential rail-based investment:

- What problem(s) are we trying to solve?

- When is Rail (part of) the answer? Or not?
- How do we build common cause? And who with?
- Where is the (robust) evidence?
- Where might we be pushing against open doors?

We are grateful for Tiffany Lynch for sharing this and any questions can be sent via:

tiff@tpltransportplanning.com Director **TPL Transport Planning Ltd**

Dates for Diaries:

BRTA Leicester Public Meeting Saturday 5th October 14.00 Leicester Quaker Meeting House, 16 Queens Road, Leicester, LE2 1WP Guest Speakers:

1. Andrew Playford and associates, Account Manager, Energy and Industrial from GB Railfreight Limited – more freight by rail!
2. Professor Andrew Williams, a briefing on efforts to reopen the Northampton-Market Harborough rail link, to give direct rail access between Leicester/East Midlands and Northampton, Milton Keynes and Oxford and vice versa for people and more freight off roads, back on rails.

Both talks will be followed Questions and Answers (Q&A) Light Refreshments, Mini second-hand railway book and magazine stall, light refreshments and possibly more.

Admission Free. All Welcome. Please bring cash for perusing our stall. Contact Mr Simon Barber: T: 0208 940 4399 E: simon4barber@gmail.com or Richard Pill T. 01234 225068 E. richard.erta@gmail.com

Can you help with diagrams? BRTA is seeking an able person/s to work up rough diagrams to look proportionate, pretty, and clear as possible for our marketing and audiences to illustrate our rail expansion desires and interests. The programme used was **Microsoft Visio** or variants thereof. If willing to do the as a volunteer, email richard.erta@gmail.com We are seeking to grow teams to enable more and better. Please think about what you can do.

Association News:



Association News – help to build the association up! BRTA needs more active volunteers to help us with the workload.

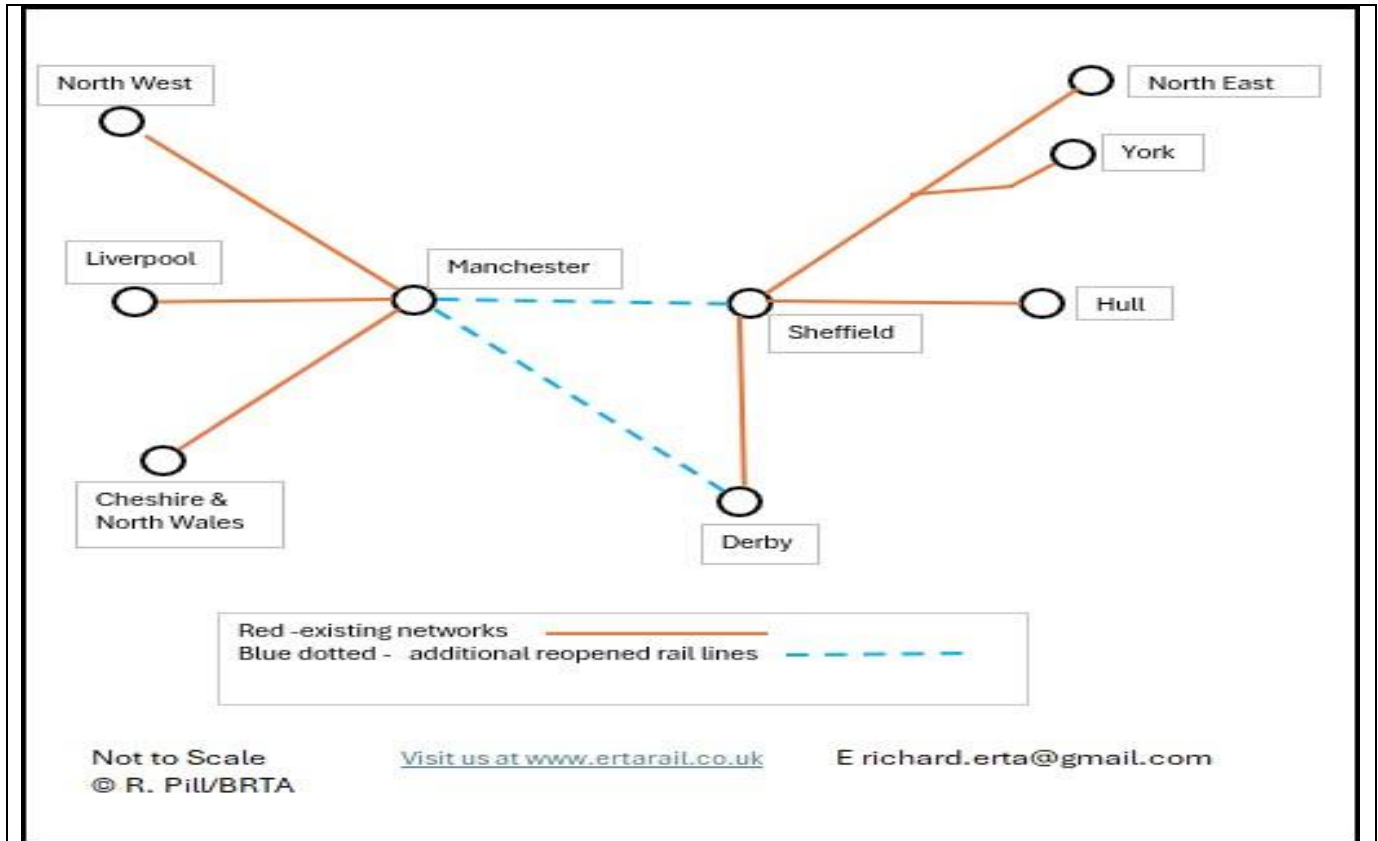
David J. Start is doing a Prize Draw – contact him to sign up and details (see page 1 of newsletter for contact details); the more people who get involved, it may raise vital funds for BRTA. Likewise, peopling our forums and other meetings, ‘a crowd attracts a crowd’ they say. We need our membership to rally and get vitalised!

That is the only way we can do, be and aspire to more and better. Our voice goes to the heart of government, we do engage with consultations and put our suggestions forward. But we need more people, a growing team and more membership across Britain to enable more and better. Burscough Curves in Lancashire, could be a small spend, but enable more by rail too! See <https://opsta.chessck.co.uk/BurscoughCurves> Small schemes like that can make an impact. But the new Parliament needs a nationwide plan and a more inclusive switch to rail.

Photo above: Members of the Executive Committee continue to meet and do their best to keep the show going. We have said before, how much we wish our members engaged more and we appeal to members to help recruit new people and help grow the reach and range of the association please. Our bi-monthly pitch at Bedford Midland Railway Station in Bedford gives us a chance to meet local rail users and discuss our propositions with them and get vital feedback. We can only do more elsewhere, as and when we have capable people to competently do it. It is your association, please work with us.

Amphill Challenge: The town council does not want it, but with more volunteers, could we turn around opposition to see the new station as a community asset? Help us get there. We need willing volunteers and resources to enable creative engagement.

Other News:



Colin Crawford: BRTA would like to offer our deepest sympathy and condolences over the recent passing away of Colin Crawford, a stalwart member of BRTA and the Executive Committee. He was always willing to take-on new challenges and troubleshoot for us knotty issues. Photo left at Westminster 2023. We will miss him!

BRTA is a voluntary membership-based association with a membership of 52 people scattered across mainly England but with our new remit, we do seek new members in Scotland and Wales too. We do not randomly fire-off at any scheme, rather we tailor and focus on specific schemes and work within our human and financial resources. In short, if you want more and better, be willing to be a part of the answer to make that a reality. Growth is not a problem! Together we are stronger.

AGM Accounts: English REGIONAL TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION (ERTA) period

Accounts summary for the period 1.4.2023 to 31.03.2024

Receipts £ Payments £

Membership 406.00 P/I Insurance 234.20

Misc repayments 744.50

Printing 628.60

Room Hire 274.65

AGM 15.00

Misc postage 4.85

Bank charges 75.37

Committee travel 111.35

RAILFUTURE 25.00

Other printing 13.71

Misc donations/

PayPal receipts 1353.27

Sales 134.00

Total receipts 1893.27 Total payments 2127.23

Deficit for the period (233.96)

Opening bank balance 416.13

Credits 1893.27

Total 2309.40

Payments 2127.23

Balance c/f 182.17

David Start 3rd July 2024

All enquiries to Mr David J. Start T: 07535 641055 E: davidjstart63@gmail.com

Please donate or join via: <https://ertarail.co.uk/become-a-member/>

Northampton – Wellingborough rail reopening musing, is it a bridge too far?

On one extreme, some say they support 'viable reopenings and rebuilds' but never lift a finger to assist prior and only follow professional schemes and voice up after reopening saying they back winners including top football teams. Never mind the hard graft of campaigns conceiving a scheme, campaigning for it in season and out until it happens and yes, most reopenings have exceeded expectations. In short, the lie of no-one used railways hence the 1960's closures, is based on a false premise and requires appreciation of national government policy, public preferences (cars/roads/freedom connotations). The switch from coal to oil and the efficiency of low fuel costs and greater private car ownership, again backed by government pro-affirma deliberate switch from rail to road across the board.

BRTA supports the principle of reopening railways. It has long called for Bedford-Northampton but recognises new deviated alignment as a new-build for about 10 miles would be needed. Likewise, we support Northampton-Market Harborough. On Northampton – Wellingborough, it has this in its favour:

1. It is all within Northamptonshire
2. Is a popular idea
3. Makes logical sense.

However, practically, here are some problems:

1. Leaving the slow lines facing south, you need to cross-over on the flat on-coming main lines with on-coming points, which at speed would probably be seen as problematic.
2. The old spur to the old Northampton-Peterborough line is considerably built on and doubles up as a cycle-footpath to a river-basin flood plain. So, a new alignment and bridge would be needed.
3. Then you have an industrial estate on your left with access road, Whitworths Flour Mills on it and if you get through that, you have a triple stack of railway, A509 and A45 bridges to negotiate access over or under on a river basin area.
4. Then it is more-or- less open country to the edge of Northampton, where council and other offices block the route, access over A428/Bedford Road a problem, then new houses adjacent to Ransome Road/Delapre – is the clearances for 25 KV robust enough and would these new-build residents want regular passenger and freight train's rumbling meters from their gardens?

In short, if these and deviations can be done, we welcome a study to show the how, we can envisage the demand and usefulness already thank you. Whether Network Rail, Council, Agency or Government, engineering is the main issue not demand a surely?

Ideas for a new link up a steep gradient to Irchester and the Wymington slows, would be challenging and access to slows means under or over fast lines. Not easy!

By contrast, we have a 2020 study showing Northampton-Market Harborough can be done, the figures for traffic flows to rail/off roads should be released and the study finished to everyone's satisfaction and the scheme courted with delivery in mind.

From the CEO: Problems spelt out with Northampton-Wellingborough are not anti the idea. Indeed, Leicester-Northampton via that way would encompass Leicester/Corby, new stations like Desborough and Kibworth to Northampton and beyond. Bedford would either need to change at Wellingborough or have a north-west direct curve, which given the issue of a viaduct at proximity to the river and station, may be problematic. These considerations and issues are typical of what many reopening/rebuild/new-build local railway campaigners face up and down the country. It needs a nationwide plan and a network of reopenings, properly funded instigated by government and then delivered by a third-party agency which takes the risk, liability and is also balanced and charged with minimising disruption, houses being demolished and other problems. We need government to have honest discussions with electorate on proportionate Income Tax and other funding pots, for the plethora of demands which leap-frog rectifying closures. The impacts and need to reverse many now and the longer left, costs spiral, windows for accessing/junctioning diminish and so locks-in roads, congestion, pollution, and ill-health, which then compounds other costs and problems, including casualties and NHS waiting lists for example. All political parties need challenging and reminding of the local rail solution structural need and in-order to do that, people need to both to write to candidates and MP's as more than 5 such letters they are obliged to act I understand.

BRTA can respond by all of us being paid up members of BRTA and donating regularly and being willing to take on some responsibility, attend our meetings and constructively offering to voluntarily assist and enable more and better x nationwide. Only by more team-building and local-based advocacy; not of the impossible, but schemes need approval and scrutiny of a critical Executive Committee, but also more people with good sense helping to advance our schemes and much more. This is exactly what we must be over a 5–10-year cordon making a difference to not bothering. Development is happening like it or not. In 1992 I went to the British UN Meeting following Rio 92 on Climate Change and the Environment at Manchester for the then Railway Development Society (RDS), now Railfuture. They paid my rail fare and accommodation and I in turn produced a report as best I could. The event marked the exact second and minute when the threshold from a mainly rural planet was crossed to being a majoritively urban-based planet. That was 32 years ago. Now, as ever in our business, we are at the 11th hour, much denial and heads-in-sand, so the need to nurture, work up good cases and win-over by the many not just the few for local rail solutions, is acute, the benefits many if we succeed. To forever keep putting down the priority list or long-grassing is damaging public, national and global well-being and it needs cross-party consensus.

Only by constituents writing to MP's and them in turn getting coalitions and consortiums to pool talent, resources, and solutions to problems, can the network grow. Small schemes like curves (Burscough, Yeovil and elsewhere), terminal branches (Bangor-Caernarfon) and bigger schemes like Woodhead (Hull/Sheffield-Manchester/Liverpool) would make enormous strides to lower emissions, give choices, get lorries off roads, cut costs, and make a huge difference to the quality of people and places lives. Then export best practise around the world!

My local church recently did a series on the environment and basically Loving God, Loving People and Loving the Planet are inter-linked and an integral part of real Biblical Christian faith-walk, concern and endeavour. Have a listen:

<https://www.graceinthecommunity.com/resources/sermonseries>

BRTA Membership Form 2024 Onwards – Join or Renew
Official annual renewal date is circa 31st January in any given year.



Tear Off and Send with Your Subscription.

Please help us recruit more members!

Tick if a New Member: _____

Tick if renewing as an existing member: _____

I/we would like more information about volunteering opportunities with

BRTA _____

Membership of BRTA is as follows:

Ordinary Member/Family £20 _____

Corporate Members (Business/Organisations) £50 _____

Concessionary Membership (Students or on any kind of welfare/disability)

£10 _____

Name (Please Print): _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Tel/Mobile: _____

Email _____

I/We hereby give consent to our data being used and stored for the purposes of communication with BRTA and its purposes compliant with General Data

Protection Regulation (GDPR) _____

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Please send completed form and payment to BRTA Membership:

**BRTA, Mr David J. Start, 2 Leigh Road, Hildenborough,
Tonbridge, Kent, TN11 9AB**

Membership Payment can also be done on-line via our website:

<https://brtarail.com/become-a-member/>

Bank Details are Sort Code: 40-45-27 Account Number: 92086808

~ Please note use 'BRTA' for payment as HSBC has now accepted our new name! ~