



British Regional Transport Association

(BRTA)

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

Chief Executive Officer (CEO): Over all day-to-day Coordination with Executive Committee (EC), Media and Publications Coordinator, Delegating, BRTA Bedford Green Fair Support, Bedford Area Rep.; On-line engagement/Social Media links, Professor Andrew Williams Assistance, Team Growth and Role Allocations. Richard Pill (BA Hons), FAETC:

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We welcome membership-based offers to assist and volunteer especially for the Executive Committee, a Recruitment Officer, a Marketing Officer, a Fund Raiser, Area Reps and General or Focused Assistance.

<https://brtarail.com>

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

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

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59

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Price £1.50 where sold/Donations
welcome.

BRTA lobbies Parliament, please join our team!

British Regional Transport Association (BRTA) is a voluntary membership-based association seeking more, better, and affordable public transport. In particular, commensurate with putting 'people, places and the environment' at the centre of all we do and aspire towards in policy and practise terms, we want more local rail solutions and local rail reopenings/newbuilds of local, conventional rail. This must be part of a nationwide plan.

This must be part of a switch of funding from £27 billion new roads budgeting to equality or tipping in favour of the Local Rail Reopenings Fund, which the new Labour (!!!) government cut whilst retaining majority of new road schemes.

The Local Rail Reopenings budget was a mere £500 million for the whole nation, hugely inadequate and equality would pep it up more, tipping in favour of returning to a rail-based logistics and transport strategy and implementation on the ground, would do a lot to help with the following: 1. Better land use stewardship, 2. Less

land - take pro rata 3. Better and more public transport options 4. More freight by rail of all shapes and sizes, post, pallets, and parcels to containers 5. Cutting congestion, air pollution (from exhausts and tyres) and associated health issues which expands NHS waiting lists on multiple fronts. 5. More speed and efficiency 6. Better connectivity from growing urban and rural places to a nationwide and indeed international rail network which Britain gave to the world. 7. The jobs, the supply chains, and things like incentives to send more by rail can only happen if we commit to implement a rolling programme of local rail reopenings - grassroots upwards and outwards to enable more by rail and reduce congestion, blight, and give real choices for all ages and needs, boosting footfall and spend and sustaining local town centres, which congestion and bypasses at great costs just cannot service properly without massive land use consequences. You can only spend the same £1 once, rail delivers, whereas endless and unadulterated demands for parking takes space which otherwise could be allocated for housing, employment, conservation and indeed, producing quality food!

BRTA is bemused by the constant reference to a financial black hole!

Any economy needs to bear in mind what we are trying or purporting to achieve. In layman's terms £27 billion new roads, £21 billion financial black hole, cut the new roads budget and you have £6 billion over after filling the black hole with a surplus. To use that surplus for restoring the Local Rail Reopenings Grant but broadening to incentives for parcel delivery firms to engage and use rail lion's share, to inform sidings and infrastructure for more road to rail switch and get lines reopened and ensure new junctioning where old routes are lost or compulsory purchase and relocations are properly funded and ensure that the planning system, proposed new towns and land use are working for the good to deliver the rail infrastructure so savagely cut during the 1960's and early 1980's. If you wish to be involved in meeting MP's and helping grow our Westminster Team, please contact David J. Start in the first instance.

Sustainable Britain needs re-railing and too many times facing up to this structural need, has been leap-frogged by other agendas, which add to pollution and bads, rather than holistic repair and a more balanced approach to sustainable transport.

Join our free email loop to keep up-to-date via richard.brta@gmail.com

N2MH- LET THE TRAIN TAKE THE STRAIN!

TRAVEL between Northampton and Leicester could be revolutionised if the train line to Market Harborough is re-opened.

Northampton and Leicester are only 33 miles apart but the journey currently takes more than 100 minutes by train – including two changes – and 90 minutes by bus.

This could be dramatically improved by re-opening the Northampton to Market Harborough Railway (N2MH) which has been closed since the 1980s. According to a 2020 Network Rail report, full re-opening of N2MH was not only possible but gave a journey time of 34 minutes – including three stops. However, this report is incomplete and in part still suppressed. We are seeking that the report be updated and completed.

Re-opening N2MH could provide transformative social, economic, and environmental benefits for Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and further afield. We believe the updated and complete report would enable a fully-informed decision to be made.

We believe a re-opened N2MH has the potential to improve social inequality, create jobs and reduce excess deaths from pollution through better access to hospitals, economic growth and impact on the environment.

A written parliamentary answer from former Rail Minister, Huw Merriman in October 2023 supported re-opening the line – which although closed is still in existence.

This can only happen if Northamptonshire and Leicestershire WANT it to happen and we are urging the public to support our cause and lobby their local and county councils.

Contact Professor Andrew N. Williams

T: 07923489254 E: anw@doctors.org.uk and Join BRTA and get involved as a volunteer.

BRTA enquiries via Mr Richard Pill:

T: 01234 225068 E: richard.brta@gmail.com

Be part of the answer will Britain be re-railed? Be part of the local rail solution appreciation near where you live, there is a nationwide need! BRTA is only as good as people are prepared to inform a growing membership, volunteer to assist and help expand our work, enable our thoroughness to improve and generally provide reliable resource, time, and enthusiasm to making BRTA a success. It is a team effort and everyone matters and counts. Science, engineering, and studies would be nothing if people did not matter, bother, and exist. Please join us and re-rail Britain.

Photos from our Leicester Meeting 05-10-2024



Photo Caption Left: Left is James Chick, Political Science Student from Leicester with Professor Andrew N. Williams at the Leicester Meeting. These two are working tirelessly to bring to the attention of all who need to know and courting public interest for reopening the Northampton to Market Harborough (N2MH) Rail Link. We want to grow a team of people who can inform widespread council, agency, MP, and public support and get the reopening done within 10 years. The benefits are huge and walkways can be reworked.

Photo Caption Right: James Chick poses (left) with BRTA CEO Richard Pill at the Leicester meeting. Good meeting with a diverse range of interest in the matters put before the meeting. On the one hand people take the chance to opt out in good weather and likewise blame bad weather for not turning out. What BRTA needs is 'all-weather-people' who turn out regardless and give generously in interest and support. Act now, join BRTA!



Photo Caption Left: GB Railfreight (Andy and Gemma) gave a varied and interesting talk on the diverse work of GB Railfreight which is delivering freight by rail to an ever-increasing range of customers nationwide. Loads of questions, comments, and two-way feedback. Leicester Station 'box' needs more paths and capacity for more passenger and freight operations plus electrification!

BRTA Attends the Northampton Umbrella Fair on Saturday 21st September 2024 – made a bit of a splash! Below: Richard Pill and James don the new T-Shirts printed for this event!



The new T-Shirt which top-to bottom says ‘N2MH’ (Northampton to Market Harborough), the BR Sign and then ‘Northampton 35 minutes Leicester’.

We collected over 100 signatures on a mixed-weather day, whereby half way through a massive thunderstorm and heavy rain intervened. Otherwise, a good day, many people, much discussion, and a good vibe.

We hope to make it an annual attendance to tap into potential like-minds and support. Other photos on our Facebook webpage:

<https://www.facebook.com/RebuildNorthampton2MarketHarboroughRailLink>

BRTA is voluntary and relies on the good will of people to join, turn out and engage positively. We currently want to build teams and delegate roles to enable more and better. We seek a new Recruitment and Marketing Officer, someone willing door-to-door leafleting, area reps, fund raisers, and someone to help court the media too. Externally, we need a national government who understands the real issues, is willing to make a whole hearted switch and fund from road to rail for people and goods and build railways which handle people and goods. Away with the view HS2 creates capacity for more by rail, which may be true at cost, but does not fill the gaps the closures informed. Likewise, more buses fine, but they do not handle freight!

On Saturday 21st September Professor Andrew Williams, James from Leicester, David Ferguson, and Richard Pill attended the 'environmental' Northampton Umbrella Fair at The Racecourse in Northampton. We had a stall and did the following:

1. Gave out leaflets promoting the 5th October Leicester Public Meeting
Sought petition signatures in favour of a Northampton-Market Harborough new-build rail link which would give a mere 35 minutes Leicester-Northampton direct rail-based transit time, contrast James, a Student from Leicester University, who tried to use rail via existing lines and service and took 150 minutes each way on a very circuitous existing set of lines and connections. We had a pleasant day, but then it rained and thundered.
2. Collected signatures for a petition. Despite the rain and thunder which interrupted an otherwise pleasant day, we collected hovering 100 signatures and aim to repeat the exercise.

Caption below, Richard Pill, CEO of BRTA and standing to his right Professor Andrew Williams donning the new T-Shirts promoting a direct rail link between Northampton-Market Harborough-Leicester, which would give a direct 35 minutes transit time, contrast by existing circuitous rail links of 150 minutes each way with 2 changes of train! Over the years buses have been cut, but A508 traffic proliferates with development abounding.



BRTA does not work in a vacuum but rather context is everything with a hope to not reverse the clock, but move forward positively, sensibly and strike the right notes! By Richard Pill.

Arguably history is multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. Sure, you have time lines, dates and chronological orders and research reveals potentially the unappreciated as well as what made the news. You select a time-span and run into the fact of what went before and what follows the selected period.

For example, like the mobile phone revolution, as buy-in occurred so proliferation as prices came down, and so we get to a stage where land lines are becoming possibly a thing of the past whereas even a decade ago, every serious business needed one. Now websites hide their contact details be it email or phone lines and a wait is guaranteed because they will not service at cost adequate cover for the ratio of people needing to communicate directly with a real human being in real time, no AI or overseas call centres who only have crude google mapping systems and have never been here to this country and possibly fail to understand spatial distance, time, speed, and cost considerations. From Bedford you can get to Bristol via London or Birmingham, but when quoted Derby or other destinations via lengthy detours, one must ask am I saving money or time or both?

So crudely, from Bedford to Oxford via London (the existing landscape) was quoted to me about £35 with a railcard. It takes about 3 hours each way to cover 47 miles as the crow flies. One can but hope when in 2025 Oxford-Milton Keynes services start up direct, that time-span will be much less 1-2 hours each way and cost down too ideally.

The railways were developed by private individuals, land owners and wealth investment to move first freight and then people in bulk to principal centres from a rural agrarian landscape where industrialisation was courting migration to where the jobs were as the agrarian revolution and enclosures resulted in a displacement from land-tied to urbanisation. The railways could deliver coal and other goods safely, faster, and efficiently and over the 19th century there was mass buy in. Indeed, I have had it said Britain had the most comprehensive rail network in the world and exported the railways to the rest of the world. But the laissez-faire nature of whim-market meant loads of competing companies building their own infrastructures resulting in duplicate lines, multiple urban main stations separate to each other and as in the case of Thrapston, two east-west rail lines with no physical connectivity whatsoever, so potential could not be optimised. Then firstly capital started to dry up. The Railway Act of 1844 (note 1) brought in regulation and minimum standards of operations by William Gladstone who later became Prime Minister. So, at the turn of the century the Midland Railway and the London North Western Railway Company (LNWR) – two separate companies, could not afford the outlay to build a rail link between Newport Pagnell and Olney, so substituted a bus link, which saved money but was useless for freight. Likewise, the only 20th Century Railway to be built was the Great Central, which was originally to link Britain with mainland Europe, but WW1 curtailed it leaving an unsatisfactory remnant and amalgam with the Metropolitan Railway which choked access to Marylebone and limited what could be done. Having said that the 19th century extensive network of railways meant over the 2 World Wars when government took over, the railways were the bedrock of logistics and carrier of goods, munitions and fuel for the aerodromes from whence the home and abroad flying campaigns from Battle of Britain to the Dambusters were enabled. Likewise, with Great Central, it was massively used for coal, also iron ore

from South Wales to Sheffield for the steel industry, which was a proud export industry. But the following happened as well as the wars, were:

1. Coal waned to the power and demand of the combustion engine and oil. Henry Ford made the private car, like the later mobile revolution and the 19th century rail proliferation, affordable, accessible, and universal buy-in on a scale proliferated throughout the 20th century. (note 2)
2. The wars bankrupted the railways which were heavily used and the nation, loss of empire and an impoverished British Government sent John Maynard Keynes to America for a grant, but instead were offered loans not paid back until the 1990's. (note 3)
3. The combination of these factors was no money to renew the railways, plethora companies had merged to the Big Four and Nationalisation of the railways happened in 1948. (note 4) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Railway_nationalisation#:~:text=After%20the%20war%2C%20the%20Transport,later%20the%20British%20Railways%20Board. However, what panned out was modernisation (1955) was on the back of economies. Winds of change post-war was growing private car ownership, the advancement of lorry efficiency and scope, giving new freedoms on costs and flexible working to the choice of businesses, courted governmental switch of investment to roads, oil and not in railways. There was also a backlash to the Victorian era, played out in the 1960's when many fine buildings were swept away for concrete and modern images. Although trickles of closures started after 1918, in 1952 the Crystal Palace Higher Level Line was closed following the burning down of Crystal Palace – moved there from the 1851 Great Exhibition. The Midland and Great Northern Line closed 1959. This was the same year as the first part of the M1 opened. Bedford-Hitchin closed 1961, Bedford-Northampton 1962 and Beeching was 1963-1966 when Great Central also closed. The closures continued until about 1984 then the Thatcher Government under Serpell closed Woodhead, Northampton-Market Harborough, and Tunbridge Wells to Eridge.

What campaigners have done successfully over the decades is to stop the closures of local railways, inform a new agenda of reopening some lines and many stations. But in the new climate crisis, land-use stewardship balances and reduction in congestion blight is to restore and new-build local-based rail links and BRTA calls for a year-on-year regional by region programme where sensible and do-able. That is why our voice counts and we call on you to join, donate and get involved to enable more and better for all our sakes. It is that simple, but unless we do break through, the danger is a slippery slope of more of the same affecting public health and informing deteriorated quality of life for many especially poorer people is very real. Woodhead was King Coal demand once, now a new future of express passenger services, containers and other freight including capacity for modal shift is but one example we need to embrace, get a vision, and make steps to progress to delivery. Time is running out!

Notes:

1. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Ewart-Gladstone#ref241000>
2. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Ewart-Gladstone#ref241000>
3. <https://www.newstatesman.com/long-reads/2008/11/bretton-woods-keynes-british>
4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Railway_nationalisation#:~:text=After%20the%20war%2C%20the%20Transport,later%20the%20British%20Railways%20Board.

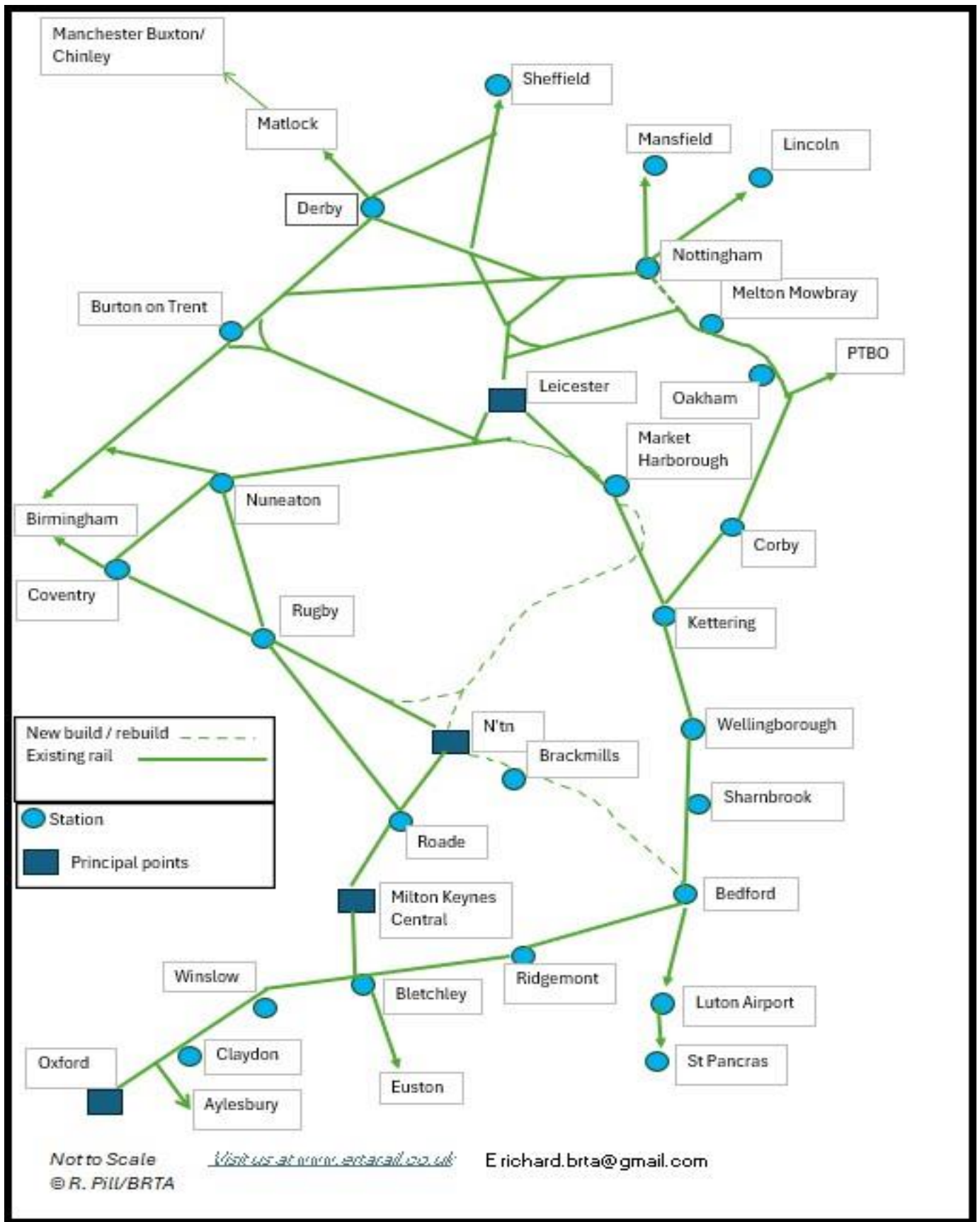
Leicester, Gateway to East Midlands, Nottingham East Midlands Heartland and Derby the engine room of the East Midlands! BRTA wants the following:

1. Full Midland Main Line electrification not just to Leicester, but Sheffield and Leeds as one main line continuum. Services between Leeds are precarious at best of times and one identity as a seamless London main line is required to give choice to Kings Cross services. This would give Leeds people more choice! Likewise, if electrification is done, came about utilising good refurbished stock, you save cost and enable better use of what can be cascaded. London St Pancras-Luton Airport-Leicester-Sheffield-Leeds. Then extend Thameslink from Bedford to Corby with a new depot (frees up land at Bedford for East-West Rail) and have a seamless East Midlands Railway electric service linking Bedford with Leicester finally with fasts and slows. The slows can serve new stations modelled perhaps on Wixams (twin platforms, modest booking hall, parking, toilets, and a coffee shop) on the slow lines. Stations North of Bedford, Irchester, Desborough and Kibworth Harcourt and possibly Wigston too. It would still save time changing at Kettering and enable more trains for diversity of services.
2. Leicester has capacity issues so more tracks/new designs and a study to look at how to rebuild a Melton Mowbray to Nottingham direct rail link; speed is not everything, but would free Leicester up more for more and enable Corby/Peterborough direct trains to Nottingham,
3. Northampton-Market Harborough would need more capacity into Leicester but the two-way passenger and freight potential means more receipts and modal shift to the railways which is what a better environment looks like.
4. BRTA supports the Ivanhoe Rail reopening linking Knighton with the Birmingham-Burton upon Trent line for direct freight routing to Derby and Nottingham as well.

A passage to Leicester:

In the 1970's I visited Leicester by rail. In the 1980's the 4 central tracks were reduced to two with giant plant boxes installed to brighten the station in a revamp which has lasted 40 years. In those days, rationalisation was the name of the game. Now refurbishment of the station in aesthetical terms is upon us, but what BRTA calls for is as follows:

1. More passenger and freight by rail means we desperately need more tracks to enable getting through the station by rail, freight uninterrupted and more tracks for more by rail.
2. More passenger platform capacity for more trains from more destinations be it London, Sheffield, Nottingham, Derby, Birmingham, Norwich, and Cambridge for example, but also the reopenings of Burton-upon-Trent to Leicester (Ivanhoe Line) and Northampton-Market Harborough for Leicester (N2MH)
3. Electrification stupidly stops outside Leicester so people must get on a train from Bedford, change at Kettering as electric trains go to Corby and it is diesel haulage from Kettering. Electrification needs to go to Nottingham, Derby, and Sheffield, but also to Leeds for seamless journeys by rail more and while we are at it, Felixstowe-Ely-Peterborough-Leicester-Nuneaton, and Birmingham for more freight by rail with electrification. If we go half-baked and fail to get Leicester right with expansion on all fronts in mind, we fail to meet the need of the hour and let all rail users down.



From the CEO: So, this was Christmas (and a Happy New Year!), and what has the Government done? The Tories were a mixed bag for rail. HS2 sums it up, 'in out and shake it all about' and then cancels Birmingham to Crewe and then concerned about finances, when half-cock; definitely (London-Birmingham) may be dubious financially for a very long time? Labour, we had high hopes, but within weeks of being elected cancelled the Local Rail Reopenings Fund whilst keeping majority of £27 billion new roads and then wailing about a £21 billion deficit! If the goal and stated commitment of any government is 'putting people, communities, and the environment first,' it is a no-brainer that you switch funding from roads to raiing Britain for staple transport of people and goods, less land take (at a premium) and better for public health, well-being, and the environment. But no, Labour is not doing this and whilst strengthening of existing rails make sense and picking up the baton of 'making something out of HS2' for wider capacity benefits, it leaves large swathes disenfranchised from reasonable rail access, seaside resorts, cut off from walking rail access, gaps in the network and new market flows like Felixstowe to Birmingham need a brand-new, direct railway along the A14 corridor, not faffing about for paths between Ely, Peterborough, through Leicester and Nuneaton, which is circuitous and time-laborious. Indeed, a spat between the PM and his Transport Secretary Louise Haigh, shows that electability, governance and integrity of positioning, policy and not selling out to the highest bidders, is a temptation for all governments and does mere profit care about the quality of life for all?

Association News:

BRTA Executive Committee has taken the decision, amidst a cost-of-living crisis, spiralling costs, and a wish to recruit a lower age profile with digital wherewithal and talent, to lower the membership rates and have a new 'Student' rate for these purposes. We want to grow the membership, whilst ensuring we have the finances to do justice to the many causes we support, follow and indeed, lead on sometimes. Please also, accept that we vary the official deadline for renewals from time to time, but generally the EC will deliberate further. David J. Start is handling membership now and so all enquiries via him please. Together we can do more!

Other News:

1. East-West Rail August 2025 Oxford-Milton Keynes we are told, but Bedford-Cambridge rumbles on over routes.
2. BRTA has its view of 'east of Bedford via St John's' and 'physical rail linkage with the main north-south main line at Tempsford with the Cambridge twin tracks going onwards as per the new route design, all others being severely blocked or ruined.
3. Stations North of Bedford now has a Facebook page, please link to it: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61566833106949>

BRTA Membership Form 2025 Onwards – Join or Renew
Official annual renewal date may vary 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 £15 _____

Corporate Members (Business/Organisations) £50 _____

Concessionary Membership

(Any kind of Welfare/Disability) £10 _____

Students £5 _____

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 forms, payments, and donations to BRTA Membership and Finance: BRTA, Mr David J. Start, 2 Leigh Road, Hildenborough, Tonbridge, Kent, TN11 9AB Mr David J. Start T: 07535 641055 E: davidjstart63@gmail.com 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 make a difference!

