



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, 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 Events Support, Bedford Area Rep.; On-line engagement/Social Media links, Professor Andrew Williams Assistance, Team Growth and Role Allocations. Richard Pill (BA Hons), FAETC:

T: 01234 225068 E: ceo@brtarail.com

Vice Chairman, Treasurer, Membership, Marketing and Recruitment Officer, Grants, Westminster Team Coordinator, On-line Sales Coordinator and South East Area Rep.

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

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

https://brtarail.com	https://linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-brta	https://brtarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/
BRTA Newsletter No. 62	July-August 2025	Price where sold £1.50/Donations welcome.

BRTA is a team effort or it is nothing! Join and offer to serve to positively answer the question of “will it ever happen?” Yes, it can with us! Be part of the answer!



Left to right, Ben, Richard, and David pose for the camera at Bedford Midland Railway Station 29th March 2025. Our monthly stall informs good connectivity with real people!

BRTA seeks to have a growing membership and voluntary pool to pro-actively help us do more and better! What can you offer? Join us.

East – West Musings... We need Bedford twin-track bays now!

If we do not retain St John's and Northern Route flounders, Cambridge/East Anglia is still cut off from East-West Rail etc. If we build housing on the railway site, we throw away default options that still service the town of Bedford. Bays will be needed interim, Platform 1A is inadequate, so if 2031 is when Bedford/Bedford-Bletchley gets upgraded and a look-in; then action at Bedford Midland is needed now in ANY CASE! A can't, won't and don't culture will have no answer, whereas BRTA has, does and probably will!

Want to discuss more, please email ceo@brtarail.com

But bays will be needed, solve that and I suspect legally, East-West Rail bandwagon, could be challenged why one-per-hour Bedford-Oxford cannot be included now, not 2031? Likewise, if baying at Platform 1A is too short, longer are needed now, and by 2031 as in all probability the Northern Route will not be available before 2035 - by which time we also need, quite separately, new Parkway Stations akin to 'now' Wixams by 2035 too. The via St John's route is available, challenge needed to ORR for special dispensation for a few level crossings (automatic ones) and/or a bridge over railway at both Cardington Road and Bypass Raised (A421) for the railway to proceed.

See: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/files/bedford-ewr-station-choice-wider-impacts-final-11-01-24.pdf/download?inline> and <https://www.bedfordindependent.co.uk/is-east-west-rail-still-on-the-right-track-after-universals-announcement/> We need leadership and openness now!



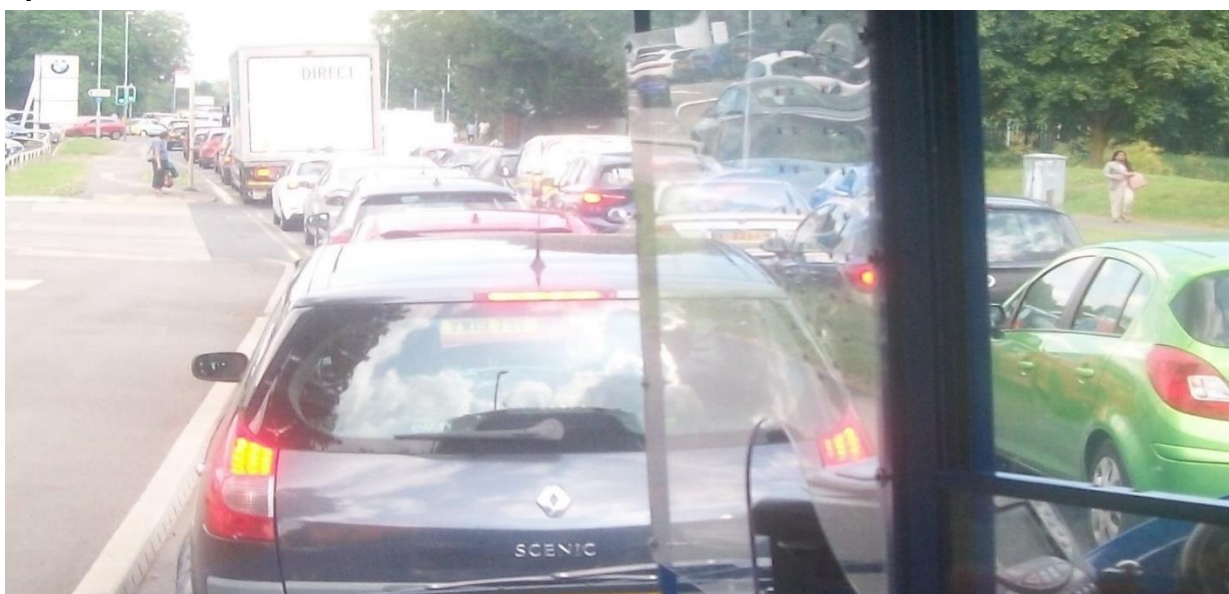
Caption Left: Class 150 DMU at Platform 1A at Bedford Midland Station. It was only 8-coach maximum after the points for Thameslinks to also use it for reversing to a washery. Given Bedford-Cambridge Northern or 'our' preferred route will not be done for use before 2035, interim Oxford-Bedford trains 2031 or before if common sense and pragmatism were to prevail, will need to bay at Bedford, not on through routes used by other trains. So more baying capacity is required and so redesign of Bedford Midland with improved facilities for rail users is a 'must have' now! Yet silence, indifference, or blanket opposition for different reasons on all side whilst despite bypasses, Bedford's congestion gridlock gets worse with pollution taking a toll.

For a reader, please see <https://brtarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/> and <https://brtarail.com/our-campaigns/> For a positive response, please email your MP in support of BRTA and its calls: <https://members.parliament.uk/members/commons> Join BRTA and offer to volunteer.

Then together we can do more and better and answer “yes” to progress.

The Greener Transport Revolution does not need ‘Rocket Science,’ rather to get on with it now!

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-65921577> What transport-wise this country needs is a network of cycle/walk-ways alongside trunk roads and motorways across England and retain former railway corridors for re-railing wherever possible if demand can be ascertained? Instead, we are clashing local rail connectivity with nature, cycling and walking, which should not be the case! We need the government to demand every agency and council work together for traffic reduction strategies not just on paper but in delivery terms with rewards for doing it and over-ride if they do not. We desperately need modal shift from road to rail - people and goods, without the robust network a programme of local rail reopenings and select new pieces of railway can deliver, modal shift is not do-able on any scale like turning a mere 10% freight by rail to 80% by rail and off the roads. Emissions from vehicle pollution is harming people, boosting NHS waiting lists and costing everyone avarice. The 1960's local rail closures are the root of where we are today and people, places and environmental concerns need choice of transport, affordable public transport, and capacity enhancements to enable the trains, the freight, and more access rail routes to enable volume switch from road to rail. Switching funding from new roads to local rail reopenings can also mean in austerity times, new money is not necessarily required. All regions need their fair share! <https://members.parliament.uk/members/commons> Please email your local MP and request support for these things nationwide as well as local particulars. Join BRTA and offer to help: <https://brtarail.com/become-a-member/> Walking and cycling is essential as is a decent and comprehensive local rail network... which is where British Steel could also be extremely useful. **Join the dots, now is the time to re-rail Great Britain. Today, Lewes, from now, the rest of the UK please! Otherwise, this is the norm...!**



BRTA Public Meeting at Market Harborough 12th April 2025



The BRTA Market Harborough Public meeting courted just 9 people! A video advocating the reopening of Northampton-Market Harborough rail link was shown followed by a talk by Professor Andrew N. Williams on it and the wider merits, history, case, and emergent dynamics. Northampton could be central to a new and emergent north-south railway linking Leicester/Gateway for the East Midlands to Old Oak Common Station with links to HS2, Elizabeth Line and Heathrow for example and if BRTA gets its way, Guildford and beyond and vice versa.

BRTA organises meetings like this to bring people together, rally support for our causes and build through membership and donations the resource base to do more and better. It is a real challenge between people using what railways we have and getting reopenings/new-builds and bridging that gap also, getting people to turn out on a Saturday afternoon to show support, give the beef and enable the proper resources we need through giving and volunteering to take things forward. It is not the case 'things can only get better,' but 'things must get better if we are to realise our goals.'

The association needs YOU!



Nostalgia and Pragmatic Realism



Caption Left: 1992 Class 104 Diesel Multiple Unit heads towards Bedford Midland Railway Station and the River Great Ouse bridge. To the left is what is now a Bedford Borough Council car park, the Special Needs Education Unit and to the right, the sad remains of what was Brick-built Britannia Ironworks built on land formerly of Cauldwell Priory. It is now flats. Decision makers knew the cost of everything and failed to see the value of a revived rail network and links and built akin to a Soviet Block design?

East-West Rail Thoughts:

1. 2 options could be tabled, either relocate Kempston Fire Station and duck under the Midland Main Line and a new route sandwiched between the Maintenance Depot and 4 tracks, new bridge over River Great Ouse and abandon routing via St Johns. Elstow Road, Kempston is in the way!
2. OR, re-route existing Bedford-Bletchley line under Hitchin Arches of Kempston Road/Cauldwell Street Road Bridge and that of Ampthill Road and onwards with both 1 and 2 sharing new twin tracks and additional platforms at Bedford Midland Station and onwards via Northern Route.
3. Bedford-Bletchley Railway is fully operational now, so why can't/isn't vehement advocacy being done by elected leaders for Bedford to be included NOW in an hourly semi-fast (exploiting end-to-end whilst the local shuttle does all stations to feed other lines and places). Instead, a 5 year wait whilst the line is gold plated at cost and still no Sunday Services for a Leisure Line?
4. In any case, Bedford-Cambridge even if Northern Route proves 'robust,' it is about 10 years away, so key point is interim, baying at Bedford will be needed!
5. That is longer trains and relocation of booking hall and early retail improvements with other public services and value-for-money services like toilets and buses calling. BRTA stands ready to talk, cooperate, but via St John's should also be retained for rail purposes like relocate a 12-coach washery for any trains? Watch this space!
6. If we do not retain St John's and Northern Route flounders, Cambridge/East Anglia is still cut off from East-West Rail etc. If we build housing on the railway site, we throw away default options still service the town of Bedford. Bays will be needed interim, Platform 1A is inadequate, so if 2031 is when Bedford/Bedford-Bletchley gets upgraded and a look-in; then action at Bedford Midland is needed now in ANY CASE! A can't, won't and don't cultures will have no answer, whereas BRTA has, does and probably will!

Westbury Report: We plant and facilitate ideas; the rest is up to YOU!



- Radstock-Frome - We suggest that the West Wilts Rail Users Group would be best - which includes the Bristol-Weymouth service that uses Frome and Castle Cary. Both routes to Bath (for leisure/cycling rather than commuting) and Frome need route protection.
- Barnstaple-Exeter - Crediton Junction uses a signal token where the Okehampton line diverges from the Barnstaple Line. In the longer term the refurbished Class 175s could be used on that route which will boost capacity.
- Bristol Metro - We avidly support **Pilning** (on the South Wales main line close to the Severn Tunnel) which originally had 2 trains per week. That station is close to the Gloucester County Cricket ground and some business parks. The former freight-only Tytherington branch is the proposed site of a new town at **Thornbury**, which needs a new station.

- New Stations West of England - **Cullompton Station** is expected to be given the go-ahead by Devon County Council soon. Meanwhile **Devizes Parkway** is a top priority. There is an alignment at Savernake Junction which used to run to Marlborough and is only 5 miles, which is better than the present terminus at **Bedwyn**.
- New Stations South Wales Main Line - Grove Road Wantage is a top priority.
- New Stations South West Main Line - Chard Junction is a top priority.
- **Disclaimer:** This is a small summary, more via ceo@brtarail.com Forums inform ideas and table suggestions, but BRTA Executive Committee (EC) and CEO make policy. Want more? Then engage!



Westbury extras!

- New Stations South West Main Line - Chard Junction is a top priority.
- Bristol Temple Meads-Weymouth - Upgrade of Castle Cary Station very important, since it is used for the Glastonbury Festival and the Bath & West Show at Shepton Mallet. Also, Yeovil Junction-Yeovil Town should be double-tracked.
- New Bridge River Severn - The River Severn is the second largest tide in Great Britain. The Western Gateway partnership has no money at present.
- Bridport/Seaton/Lyme Regis - There is only 1 mile from the South West Main Line at Seaton Junction (between Axminster and Honiton) to the Seaton Tramway, which could be useful from road to rail access.
- Bere Alston-Tavistock - A further 260 homes are being developed, so the rail link must be a top priority.



BRTA is voluntary! We rely on members to join and participate and offer to volunteer. We have a range of opportunities and welcome enquiries via ceo@brtarail.com Our regular pitch at Bedford Midland is but one outlet we engage with real rail users and advocates for more and better public transport. Join us and help make our reach, range, and voice louder and nationwide as much as possible. It is worth it, most improvements come from amateur campaigning!

Restoring Your Railway Fund - Stratford- Honeybourne- Worcester/Oxford (SWO) 30-1-25 DfT Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) Part 1

To wide *acclaim from the rail industry and media*, the last Government launched a long

awaited, 'Restoring Your Railway programme,' Beeching Reversal Fund, in January

2020, with a budget of £500m. The DfT invited MPs, local councils, and community

groups across England and Wales to propose how they could use funding to reinstate axed local services and restore closed stations. The funding was split into

three categories to ensure DfT could support different projects at different phases.

SWO was promoted in the Ideas Fund, for early-stage ideas to restore rail services.

Through the Ideas Fund, the DfT were seeking proposals for projects to restore lost rail connections to communities, restoring track and services to an old alignment, including modifying an old route due to construction or other unavailability over the original route. The DfT would fund 75% of costs, up to £50,000, of successful proposals to help fund transport and economic studies and create a business case. Future funding to develop projects would be subject to agreement of the business case.

Applications for the Ideas Fund had to be sponsored by one or more Members of Parliament, whose constituencies would benefit from the scheme. The group promoting the scheme could include local government, community groups, local enterprise partnerships or other interested parties.

In our case Nigel Huddleston, Mid-Worcestershire, agreed to be the Sponsoring MP

and our bid was endorsed by 11 MPs in total. The bid was also supported by 18 others

organisations including the local authorities along the route.

Any bid for funding had to focus on making the strategic and economic case for the scheme, as well as setting out any recognised challenges. This will include socio-economic benefits, services proposed and infrastructure and operating costs.

The main purpose of the SWO study was to commission a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC), for the restoration of passenger rail services, between Stratford-upon-Avon station to Worcester and Oxford via Honeybourne Junction on the Worcester-

Oxford, (North Cotswold Line), as a heavy rail through route, as part of the national rail network. Services south of Stratford to Worcester, could potentially be part of a circular service via Kidderminster, Birmingham, and Solihull, subject to line capacity on the North Cotswold Line.

It also had to look at the broader regional impact of the reopening proposal on both the area served between Stratford and Honeybourne, including the proposed new housing developments at Long Marston Airfield Garden Village and its hinterland, but also across the wider region. Overall, it will consider the wider economic benefits of any such reopening proposal, including tourism, employment, and education.

Following discussions between the four rail promotion groups, i.e. the Cotswold Line

Promotion Group, Stratford Rail Transport Group, the Shakespeare Line Promotion

Group and the Solihull & Leamington Rail Users Group, it was agreed to promote a

second round Bid. This was duly submitted to the DfT, by Nigel Huddleston, as the

Sponsoring MP on 19 June 2020.

On 25 November 2020, the DfT announced that the SWO Bid had been successful, as one of 15 successful bids out of 50 submitted and included in the National Infrastructure Strategy. Stantec were appointed to carry out the study in February 2021.

As the Scheme Promoter, we have various responsibilities. These include: -

- Putting the organisation needed for the proposal in place;
- Managing the work, the progress and delivery of the project;
- Working with the community on support and concerns about the proposal;
- Reporting into the Restoring Your Railway Programme on progress, risks, and Issues;
- Producing a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC);
- Managing the costs, timescales, quality, scope, benefits, and risks;
- Setting up governance;
- Submitting monthly progress updates to the RYR Leads.

As a community group, we asked Wychavon District Council to act on our behalf for the procurement of the study and tendering. The support for this scheme from the Council's Leader and Officers has been particularly noteworthy, for which we are

very grateful. Thanks, should also go Nigel Huddleston and his staff, the other 10 MPs and 18 supporting organisations.

During our involvement in SWO, we have been asked why should this rail link be restored when there already is an alternative northbound route to Oxford via Leamington, albeit 12 miles longer, as well as to Birmingham?

The real challenge is to capture the latent demand for rail travel from Stratford and South Warwickshire that will never be realised as long as it remains at the truncated, stub end of a branch line with slow and infrequent services.

A letter from an American tourist to the Stratford press summed it up quite neatly:

Editor's note: If a reopening of a modern railway can accommodate a preserved railway, it sets a precedent for other places as well, such as N2MH for example? See: <https://brtarail.com/n2mh/> See our dedicated webpage: <https://brtarail.com/s2hb/>

From the CEO: "Think not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." The late President of the United States of America, John F. Kennedy.

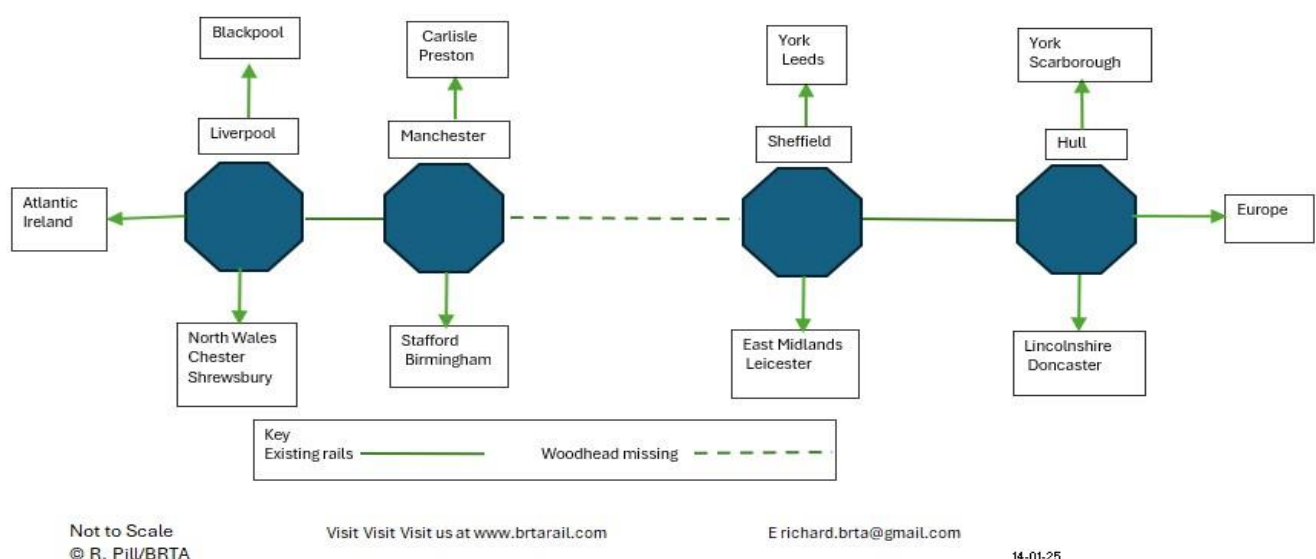
Substitute 'country' with 'BRTA' and you have where we stand and ideally, our principled stance on engagement with us. What can you offer, invest, bring, serve, and share? That is what we need and seek. Join, Volunteer, be willing to serve, willing to negotiate, you can offer, share, and serve, the Executive Committee has a list of jobs and roles and some negotiation to your available time, need, circumstances and what we face, can be sorted to effective use of that time and talent. There is a load of 'pluralism' at work across the world, society and on the transport and rail scene. We have a thread of despair in a land of 'hope and glory' and there is a timely check and balance in the mix of those experiences which we can all learn from if willing.

On the one hand we have the spectrum of north versus south, east, and west, centre grounds, specific reopening projects and the national picture. People come to us with requests for more, when they need to negotiate what they can do. But undergirding the landscape of hotch-potch some reopenings here and some destroyed by development there randomly, seemingly, although we are aware of under-currents and vested interests putting profit before people, ideology before pragmatism and failing to grasp that the environment affects us all and some even love things and seem to hate people plethora alias 'society'?

BRTA wants the Government of all shades, even in shadow form, to now sign up to the policy and approach of "a nationwide programme, region by region, plan and actioning of local, conventional rail reopenings, select new-builds and capacity enhancements year-on-year." That means switching funding from new proliferation of road building to re-railing and encouraging, fostering, and enabling modal shift of people and goods to rail more and more. That saves land for other things, that lowers emissions en-masse, that cuts pollution, NHS waiting lists and fosters not only a green and pleasant land, but objectively to proliferate and share best practise by example to the rest of the world too and learn from others. Holland and Switzerland are often cited, but Britain gave railways to the world and should be leading from the front as much as possible, not exporting 'anything goes' but real modal switch from road to rail and taking on aviation with pan-continental

High Speed inclusive of freight too, as HS1 does, but sadly, HS2 seems to have got it all wrong and rather than lower speed-design specification and catering for a Parkway Station at Brackley and limiting initially to a Channel Tunnel-London Orbital-Birmingham and Manchester goal, it we too much too soon, got the vision and cost out of all proportions. My own take is that rebuilding the Great Central and fulfilling the Watkins dream of linking with the Channel Tunnel, HS2 sadly does not do that and stops short of serving any principal airport like Heathrow and Elizabethan Line-Old Oak Common, still means a change of train and is less-than what is needed. Upwards of £80 billion HS2, £70 billion Simon Heffer's 'Reverse Beeching' agenda... Food for thought and lesson must be learnt. Likewise, the north is a complex set of dynamics. Many cry foul of London centric investment and 'southerners getting it all' when to be honest, maybe there is more cohesion, sense of direction and collective pragmatism in the south? There is the balance between doing what you can and being on your knees and accepting and crying out for a proverbial 'sprat' (anything) when focus and a vision all can agree on is the prize and goal. Misapplications or vacuums or barriers deter, incremental 'more of' can serve a real need and inform outcomes commensurate to a goal of traffic reduction great and small, regionally, and locally. BRTA supports local reopenings like Colne-Skipton and the government would do well to place it a top ten priority list for investment, recognition and go ahead if it is genuine on calls for economic growth for example. You do not get that without the rail investment, the capacity and versatility rail bring and bringing together (access for work and leisure) rail enables if local, accessible, and affordable for example. Woodhead would enable more containers by rail for example, unclog roads like the A628 and linkages and both Woodhead and Peak Rail could inform less traffic polluting the National Park of the Peak District and boost sustainable footfall and spend.

One lesson we can learn from HS2 and indeed, East-West Rail as a junior cousin to the HS2 model is blockages exist, there is a 'crisis' of perfect storm proportions (environmental, social, economic, and moral) and given the urgency "here's the cheque, move please." To reclaim old formations or indeed deviations, select new-builds, duplicate lines, capacity enhancements – modal shift costs



and is inconvenient, but then retrospectively and amidst many voices in a proverbial wilderness, calling for route protection "we told you so!" Meanwhile, BRTA is but one player in a market of

organisations. We are 'David's amidst the Goliaths' of some others like Railfuture and Campaign for Better Transport (CBT), but we bring our own dynamics to the table, seek to bridge and fill niches, flag up key routes not being silenced and ultimately a rail-based transport and logistics network to turn 10% freight by rail to 80% within 10 years is exactly what we call for... Think not what BRTA can do for you, but what you can do for BRTA!

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

