

New approach needed to unlock key rail reopenings



Andrew Roden
Contributing Writer
rail@bauermedia.co.uk

MOTHBALLED and freight railways could be brought back in to use and others reopened at a cost of around £4 billion to £6.4bn, but generate social and economic benefits of up to £12bn in Gross Added Value over 50 years.

That's according to new analysis by Campaign for Better Transport (CBT). In *The Case for Expanding the Rail Network*, published on

February 5, CBT argues that 33 schemes could add 343 miles to the passenger rail network (166 miles of reopened route and 177 miles of freight-only converted to passenger standards), generate up to 20 million additional passenger journeys per year, create 72 stations, and bring more than 500,000 people within walking distance of a railway station. Routes cited include March-Wisbech, Totton-Hythe-Fawley, and the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne.

However, it warns that bringing such a programme to reality will

require a "proactive and strategic approach" to expanding the rail network.

This would include a clear national policy on reopenings, setting out the social, economic and environmental benefits of an enlarged network; charging the National Infrastructure Commission with identifying where new and reopened lines would support national objectives across transport, housing, geographic balance and low-carbon growth; a national development pool of priority projects with a streamlined

implementation process; a new assessment of value for money taking in direct and indirect benefits; and a firm commitment to expanding rail (including freight capacity).

CBT has identified 33 schemes which met its criteria for investment based on their viability and social, economic and environmental benefits (see panel). These in turn are split into two categories: Phase 1 for schemes which could be implemented by 2025 (mostly conversion of freight-only lines); and Phase 2

which encompasses larger and more complex schemes such as reopenings.

It argues that local authorities and sub-national transport bodies should have the ability to formally recommend reopening and new rail schemes for adoption as part of a national programme, and that the detailed development of priority schemes should be undertaken by working groups involving the Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail and local authorities.

Network Rail's Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) process should be reformed to address the speed, cost and fragmentation of the current system, and a streamlined process for the development of projects should be adopted where

nationally significant proposals are being considered.

In those cases, development and implementation should be overseen by the DfT. Value for money, meanwhile, should "be judged as an investment in national infrastructure with direct and indirect benefits being used to assess overall value".

CBT Chief Executive Darren Shirley said: "Expanding the railways would transform the opportunities for people living in some of the most deprived areas of the country, giving them greater access to employment and services and providing a much-needed boost to local economies."

"The Government should invest in a nationally led programme of expansion of the railway to help disadvantaged communities and

tackle regional inequalities; reduce carbon emissions and air pollution; and create better and healthier places to live."

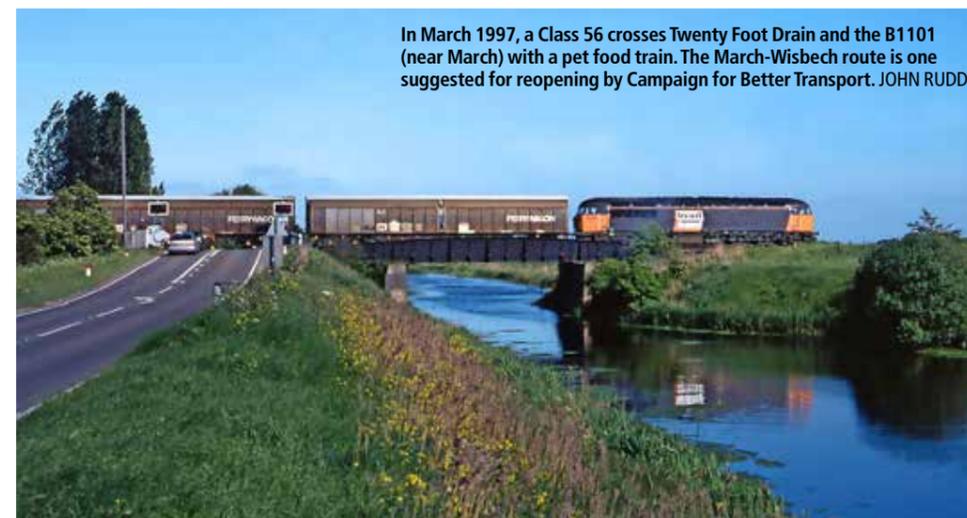
RMT General Secretary Mick Cash supported the programme, saying: "For years politicians have been talking up the benefits of reopening lines but few reach construction due to a lack of a national approach and public investment."

"That needs to change because there is an overwhelming case for a Government-backed national programme of public rail reopenings to help meet the huge economic, environmental and social challenges facing the UK. These reopenings will ultimately pay for themselves via the benefits they generate for society."

[@AndyRoden1](#)

CBT's 33 Phase 1 and 2 reopenings

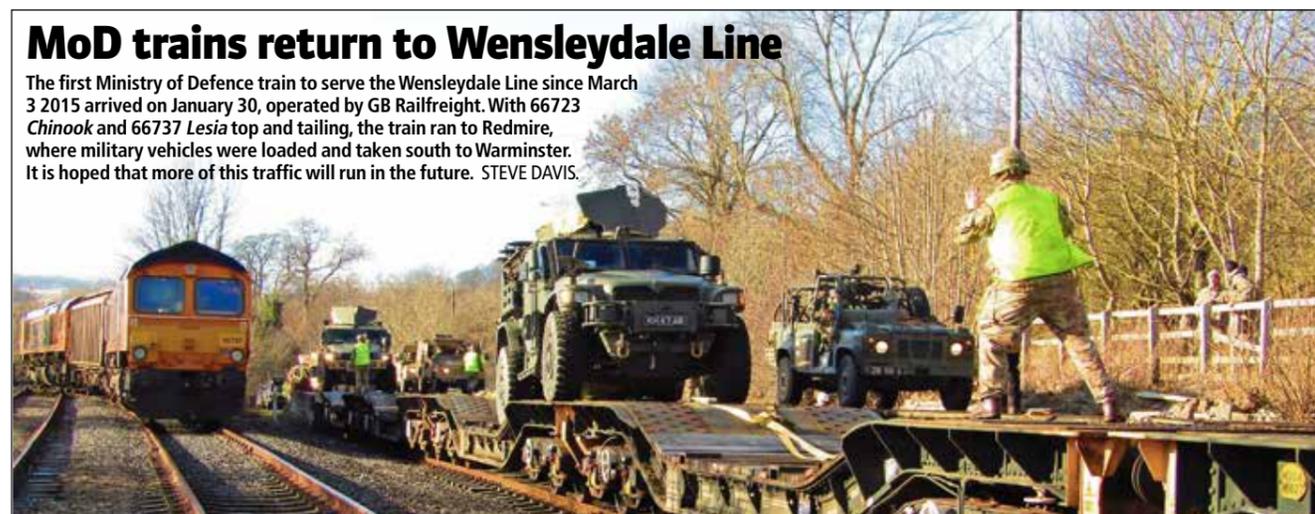
Scheme	Phase	Type of project	Length (miles)	Scheme	Phase	Type of project	Length (miles)
South East				Yorkshire and the Humber			
Oxford-Cowley	1	Freight-only conversion	4	Low Moor-Thornhill	2	Reopening	7
Totton-Hythe-Fawley	1	Freight-only conversion	10	Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton	2	Reopening	18
Brentford-Southall Crossrail Link (Brentford Docks Line)	1	Freight-only conversion	4	North East			
South West				Ashington, Blyth and Tyne	1	Freight-only conversion	16
Henbury Loop (North Bristol)	1	Freight-only conversion	6	Stockton-Ferryhill	2	Freight-only conversion	13
Okehampton-Tavistock-Bere Alston	2	Reopening	25	Pelaw-Ferryhill	2	Mothballed/reopening	18
Portishead-Bristol	2	Reopening/freight only	4 freight only, 3 reopening	North West			
Stratford-Long Marston-Honeybourne	2	Reopening/freight only	3 freight only, 6 reopening	Skeldersdale-Liverpool	2	Reopening	3
East of England				Poulton-le-Fylde-Fleetwood	2	Reopening	6
March-Wisbech	1	Reopening/mothballed	8	Skipton-Colne	2	Reopening	12
Bedford-Sandy-Cambridge	2	Reopening	27	Wales			
Haverhill-Cambridge	2	Reopening	17	Hirwaun-Aberdare	1	Mothballed	4
East Midlands				Aberbeeg-Abertillery	2	Reopening	2
Leicester-Burton-upon-Trent	1	Freight only conversion	31	Caernarfon-Bangor	2	Reopening	7
Shirebrook-Ollerton	1	Freight only conversion	6	Beddau-Pontyclun	2	Reopening/mothballed	3
Matlock-Buxton	2	Reopening	12	Scotland			
West Midlands				Dunfermline-Alloa	1	Freight-only conversion	14
Walsall-Water Orton	1	Freight-only conversion	15	St Andrews-Leuchars	2	Reopening/new alignment	5
Camp Hill chords	1	Freight only conversion	6	Thornton-Leven	2	Reopening/mothballed	5
Walsall-Wolverhampton	1	Freight-only conversion	7				
Leek-Stoke	2	Reopening	12				



In March 1997, a Class 56 crosses Twenty Foot Drain and the B1101 (near March) with a pet food train. The March-Wisbech route is one suggested for reopening by Campaign for Better Transport. JOHN RUDD.

MoD trains return to Wensleydale Line

The first Ministry of Defence train to serve the Wensleydale Line since March 3 2015 arrived on January 30, operated by GB Railfreight. With 66723 Chinook and 66737 Lesia top and tailing, the train ran to Redmire, where military vehicles were loaded and taken south to Warminster. It is hoped that more of this traffic will run in the future. STEVE DAVIS.



RAIB safety digest highlights RHTT risks

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) has issued a safety digest following a derailment of a railhead treatment train (RHTT) at Dunkeld and Birnam station on October 29 2018.

Its investigation found that the leading wheelset of the trailing bogie of the leading wagon began to slide rather than rotate, creating a large wheel flat on both wheels and creating 'false flanges'.

When passing over points south of the station, the 'false flange' on the left-hand wheel became trapped between the stock and switch rails. This caused the outside face of the wheel to run along the gauge face of the stock rail while the right-hand wheel was pushed up against the opposite stock rail.

This led to the wheelset pushing the rails apart, resulting in high lateral forces on the stock rails which in turn overloaded the rail fastenings and, in some places, the wooden sleepers. This derailed the leading wheelset of the bogie, shortly followed by the trailing wheelset. They ran derailed for approximately 100 metres before rerailling at another set of points.

RAIB's investigation found that the handbrake interlock which prevents air brakes from being released on the leading wagon had been isolated - but it is not clear why or by whom. Because the handbrake interlock was isolated, there was nothing to stop the driver driving the RHTT with the handbrake accidentally left on or

partially applied.

RAIB says operators and maintainers of RHTTs should closely monitor the condition of wheels and braking systems when operating in low-adhesion conditions.

It adds that operators of freight trains and other specialist trains derived from freight wagons should undertake suitable roll-by examinations on departure from yards to detect non-rotating wheels; that maintainers of freight wagons should have a process in place to control the isolation of handbrake interlocks on freight wagons; and that staff preparing freight trains for departure should check that handbrakes are fully released and do not place sole reliance on handbrake interlocks.

GBRf adds intermodal train

GB Railfreight launched a new intermodal service to Felixstowe on January 23, running from Birch Coppice in the Midlands.

The train left the Midlands at 1414, arriving at the Suffolk port at 2014. It will run five days per week initially, and will be formed of 33 platforms.

GBRf Managing Director John Smith said the train is taking boxes previously bound from Hams Hall, which in turn creates additional capacity for a customer at the original site.

Charity sleep out raises £25,000

More than 150 volunteers slept at Liverpool Lime Street, Manchester Piccadilly, Birmingham New Street and London Bridge stations on January 31, to raise money for the Railway Children charity.

Volunteers included directors from Network Rail, train companies, rail industry partners and politicians. The 'sleep-out' was sponsored by Virgin Trains and raised £25,000.

Bolton station to gain £1m facelift

A £1 million upgrade of Bolton station has been announced by Network Rail, Northern and TransPennine Express.

By the end of this spring, new seating and signage will be fitted, toilets and waiting rooms revamped, pigeon netting fitted, and underused buildings on Platforms 4 and 5 refurbished for potential retail, enterprise and community use.

Moorhouse is new RSSB chairman

Barbara Moorhouse is the new chairman of RSSB (previously Rail Safety and Standards Board).

Moorhouse is a non-executive director of Balfour Beatty, Microgen and Agility Trains. She is also a trustee of Guy's and St Thomas' charity.

SWR donates to homeless charity

South Western Railway has made a £1,000 donation to top up the Clapham Junction station team's festive charity shoebox collection.

The Ace of Clubs charity provides a range of services for local homeless people.