



**Regeneration and Development Panel**  
**Tuesday, 12th March, 2019 at 6.00 pm**  
**in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market  
Place, King's Lynn**

**Reports marked to follow on the Agenda and/or Supplementary  
Documents**

1. **King's Lynn to Hunstanton Railway (Pages 2 - 6)**

Documents from the campaign organisation.

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# Putting right Norfolk's £150m rail mistake

Agenda Item 8

## Hunstanton's new campaign to rejoin the national network is a 'how to do it' lesson for others, says HOWARD JOHNSTON

If you need any evidence that British Railways deliberately drove many of its secondary routes out of business in the 1960s, you need look no further than King's Lynn-Hunstanton, a once healthy and prosperous line that underpinned the North West Norfolk economy and did its job well.

It is now 49 years since the last trains ran, and locals are asking the same straightforward question: How do we get the 15¼-mile railway back into one of the UK's finest coastal resorts, and how quickly?

A petition that started on the worldwide *change.org* website by Ely-based campaigner Georgina Turner in May 2017 has gained such momentum that the idea of reinstatement is being actively discussed by Norfolk county transport strategists, district planners, and

MPs and local politicians forever looking for oxygen. At the same time, protesters are also mobilising themselves to stop any new railway ploughing through their back gardens.

The clear ambition is to get Norfolk County Council to include it in its definite transport plan. The King's Lynn-Hunstanton Railway Project team will then have done its job, and it can take its foot off the pedal.

We are talking about a line that was once closely associated with the Royal Family (the intermediate station at Wolferton is

on the doorstep to their winter retreat at Sandringham House and has hosted many European heads of state).

Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman also made a short black-and-white film in 1962, which is readily available on YouTube.

The project group has already been sensibly advised to steer clear of such romantic nostalgia, and study instead the tactics of successful groups such as SELRAP (the Skipton East Lancashire Railway Partnership), which started a campaign that has at long

last persuaded the Government to relay the 12-mile missing link between Skipton and Colne.

A rail revival in Norfolk as soon as practicable will defuse several potential time bombs. First, the number of residents aged over 60 in North West Norfolk is a worrying third above the national average, and they need

better transport to get to the nearest hospital at King's Lynn. Second, there is little skilled work for young people, who tend to leave the area as soon as they leave school.

Day tripper sun and sand seekers are crucial to the local economy, but they regularly turn the main A149 single carriageway road into gridlock for long periods throughout the

summer. This also prevents communities further along the coast being able to get to King's Lynn without long journeys.

A significant potential freight customer would be the exploiter of the vast silica sand deposits that are located near Dersingham, halfway along the old/new railway route. This would successfully address concerns from residents not wanting hundreds of noisy heavy goods vehicles keeping them awake at night.

Use of rail transport could, crucially, finance the reconstruction of much of the railway without having to resort to the taxpayer.

There has been a quantum shift in the

**“ This is part of a greater game plan to get control of disused railways everywhere in the county, even where they have been built over. ”**

Class 31 D5664 (31237) prepares to depart Hunstanton on Friday July 27 1962. The station's decline had begun two years earlier with the loss of direct services to London Liverpool Street. D OVENDEN/COLOUR RAIL.





Hunstanton's final passenger service is pictured at the Norfolk seaside resort on May 3 1969. COLOUR RAIL.



► attitude of local authorities over the last year. Transport policymaker Norfolk County Council has coincidentally turned pro-rail, and at the end of January announced a £350,000 study to acquire the trackbeds of the Hunstanton and Lynn-Fakenham routes with a view to converting them to cycleways

### The revivalists

The King's Lynn Hunstanton Railway Project group has a strong membership that includes senior former railwaymen, engineers, planners, local figures, and consultants.

Latest revival moves go a long way to answering comments by former BR Board member, Strategic Rail Authority executive director, and now Railfuture senior officer Chris Austin in his 2015 book *Disconnected!: Broken Links in Britain's Rail Policy*. He says: "Local support for reopening has been patchy and lacks drive and focus seen in other parts of the country where lines have been reopened. Hunstanton appears condemned to remain remote from the rail network, forever held back by road congestion and peripherality."

As well as raising public awareness with open days and exhibitions, the group has an online petition, and is a source of advice for MPs, Norfolk County and West Norfolk borough council members and officials. Its next ambition is to commission a professional feasibility study.

and footpaths. Sources close to the author have revealed that this is part of a somewhat greater game plan to get control of disused railways everywhere in the county (even where they have been built over), and identify detours around obstacles. Any new cycleway would have space for co-habiting with trains at some future date.

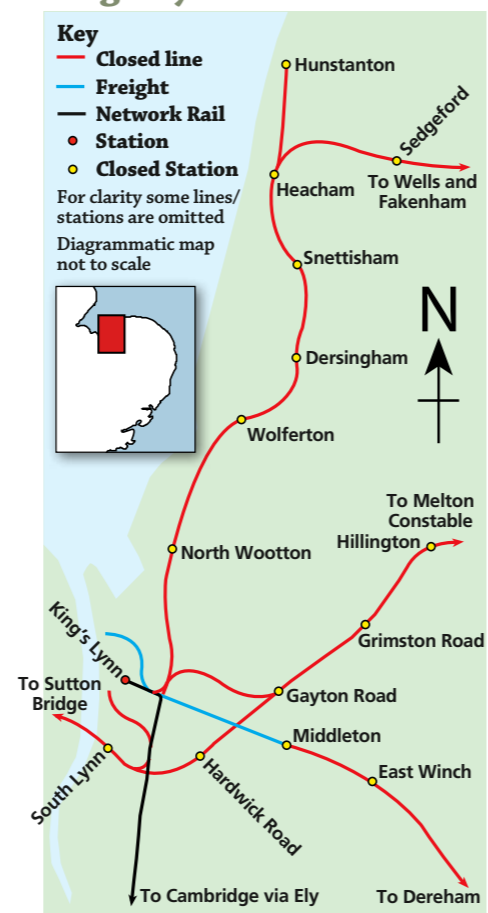
West Norfolk Borough Council, which is responsible for granting planning approval, soundly dismissed any railway revival in its 2008 Hunstanton town development document, describing it twice in a tiny 100-word panel as "unviable". The concept is now being actively discussed in open forum.

The builders of the original King's Lynn-Hunstanton line went to some lengths to avoid heavy engineering. Despite some encroachment by new development since closure in 1969, there is plenty of open space for a new route to be laid out to better serve the large-scale housing over the last 50 years.

Until just a couple of years ago, little or no regard was given to encroachment. The worst travesty is possibly the Lynnsport leisure complex, built across the trackbed just north of Kings Lynn in 1991 when there were clearly other sites available. The intermediate stations survive in relatively good order at North Wootton (private house) Wolferton (private homes and museum), Dersingham (builder's yard), Snettisham (private house), and Heacham (guest house and private museum). None is likely to be reused.

By-passes for the villages thankfully resisted the temptation to adopt the trackbed,

### King's Lynn to Hunstanton



A signal and a single bullhead track length displayed on the site of Hunstanton station (now a vast public car park) are a powerful reminder that North West Norfolk needs its trains back. Only the old coal office building survived when the main buildings and platforms were obliterated in the early 1970s. HOWARD JOHNSTON.

although the A149 severs the railway on the western edge of Snettisham and a large housing estate has been built immediately north of Heacham station. Immediately south of Hunstanton, a roadway uses the alignment to serve the Searles leisure and holiday homes complex. Just before the former Hunstanton terminus (now a council-owned car park), planners have quite recently sanctioned a new home on the site of the old level crossing, and a

“ The line could go either side of the A149 road, and there are still two ‘live’ Network Rail locations where junctions could be installed. ”

pub/restaurant close to it. You can take your pick - it could go either side of the A149 road, and there are still two ‘live’ Network Rail locations on the east and west sides of King's Lynn where junctions could be installed. A western line would use the docks branch, which despite being partly submerged in undergrowth is still officially operational, and follow the Wash coastline a little more

A two-car DMU waits at Hunstanton with a local stopping service to King's Lynn on June 20 1967. Lifting of the double track section between King's Lynn and Wolferton had commenced earlier in the year, turning the route into a 15-mile siding for its final two years of operation. COLOUR RAIL.





➔ closely. This would reach the silica sand deposits quite easily.

An eastern line would make use of the Middleton Towers branch, which the short remaining section of the old King's Lynn-Dereham line used by sand trains. From a new junction, it would run due north past the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (the area's largest employer with 2,400 staff), and new light industrial and housing developments. The line might then straddle the A149 to serve the major villages of Dersingham and Snettisham (one new station for both villages might suffice), avoid a blockage at Heacham, and reach a new terminus about a mile beyond.

At the northern end, the vast area once occupied by Hunstanton station and its sidings is now a vast asphalted car park, which is heavily used in the summer. The solution therefore might be new parkway-style platforms on what is currently a school sports field (relocation would need to be considered), and being next to the A149 would also be

## “ The construction cost might be in the region of £100m to £150m - two thirds of the cost of the Cambridge-St Ives guided busway in 2011. ”

convenient for large outlying communities such as Brancaster and Docking.

It can be hoped that service provision can be incorporated into the next Great Northern passenger franchise, with through services from London King's Cross if electrification is possible.

The present Cambridge-King's Lynn main line suffers from the short-sighted singling of the Littleport-Downham Market section in the 1980s. Train crews also blame much of the late running on the congestion caused by Virgin

Trains and local services over the double-track bottleneck Welwyn Viaduct on the East Coast Main Line south of Hitchin.

There is also scope to integrate with the proposed new March-Wisbech service. In the much longer term, if railways really are revived in a big way, the former King's Lynn-Wisbech line could be fairly easy to reinstate over agricultural land from the old main line junction at Watlington (formerly Magdalen Road), although there are problems with new development blocking the Wisbech end.

This service would take some of the pressure off the precarious A47 riverbank road between Wisbech and Guyhirn, and provide through trains again to the East Midlands via Peterborough (unavailable since 1968).

While breached here and there by development, the old 15¼-mile King's Lynn-Hunstanton line benefits from not having any major structures to replace; a new alignment would only require a single rail bridge over the A149 road.



The last Royal Trains ran to Wolferton station in 1966, and when Her Majesty The Queen travels by rail from London to Sandringham House every Christmas, she now goes the last few miles from King's Lynn by car. The ornate station is still maintained in immaculate condition, and the private owner of the eastern platform building welcomes summer visitors. HOWARD JOHNSTON.

## Dr Beeching not to blame for closure

For the record, 'Railway Doctor' Richard Beeching was not an enemy of North West Norfolk, as the Hunstanton line was not on his hit list. It features clearly on his 1963 retention map.

The closure decision was taken by Labour Transport Minister Barbara Castle, after severe operating economies and a nosedive reduction in service quality drove passengers away. She refused a Social Railway grant because the annual losses had risen to an unacceptable £40,000 a year by 1968 (almost £500,000 in today's money).

British Railways had actively turned away the holidaymakers that were the lifeblood of the King's Lynn-Hunstanton by cutting out through trains. They also diverted 80% of its revenue overnight by adjusting the accounts, tore up track to prevent excursions running, and allowed all the stations to become vandalised ruins by laying off staff in favour of conductor guards.

Peter Wakefield, vice-chairman of Railfuture East Anglia, has told campaigners: "It's safe to say that in 1969 we threw away an asset that today could be worth £150m."

A cursory glance at the rundown of the route between 1960 and its total closure nine years later reveals a startling list of actions that RAIL readers might well associate with routes elsewhere in the UK that were dealt the same treatment at this time.

Hunstanton, a slightly genteel but high-quality resort on the northwestern tip of Norfolk facing The Wash, is a Victorian version of the New Town. Pre-dating Skelmersdale, Stevenage, Newton Aycliffe, Corby, Basildon, Milton Keynes, Telford, Runcorn and Cumbernauld by many years, it was a table-top creation to stimulate new housing and prosperity.

It began when wealthy local landowner Henry Styleman LeStrange speculatively built the *Golden Lion* hotel (still in business) on windswept land close to the cliffs. He needed business, and building a railway was a quick route to growth. He enlisted partners to promote the Lynn & Hunstanton Railway Company, which incorporated in 1861, a year before his early death at just 47.

The ambition was to link up with the Great Eastern Railway at King's Lynn to provide

fast connections to London and East Anglia. Mapping out the Hunstanton line virtually on the level meant that rapid progress could be made with construction, and it opened on October 3 1862, just ten months after the first sod had been dug, and also within its £80,000 budget. The profusion of new holiday homes made it a success from the outset.

Rail users enjoyed the cheap day return excursions from London and the East Midlands, and evening expresses that allowed for long distance commuting even though it took three hours (ironically about the same as today, including the car/journey to King's Lynn), and many of them included restaurant cars. Pre-war, there were more than a dozen services at weekends, justifying platform extensions, expanded terminus buildings, and extra carriage sidings added.

In the peak summer season in the 1930s, the line (of which only the first six-and-a-half miles north from Lynn to Wolferton were double track), was traversed by a dozen locomotive-hauled excursions in a single day, so many that the operating staff developed a system of sending them all north in the

## “ British Rail diverted 80% of the line's revenue overnight by adjusting the accounts, and tore up track to prevent excursions running. ”

morning, parking them up, and returning them south in succession at teatime. Somehow, local stopping services and freight were slotted in between, making full use of the long passing loops.

The decline began with the closure of the Midland & Great Northern cross-country route from Leicester to King's Lynn (and onto Norwich and Great Yarmouth) on February 28 1959, cutting off a host of important connections at a stroke, particularly the East Midlands.

It is wrong to state that the growth of private motor car use, and road coaches, were wholly responsible for the rapid decline in business. The axing of through services from London Liverpool Street from November 1960, officially to use the rolling stock elsewhere, was the turning point, because holidaymakers now had to change at King's Lynn for an inferior all-stations DMU. They might not choose to do that twice.

As noted author and researcher Stanley Jenkins explains, over 210,000 passengers were logged as arriving at Hunstanton station in 1960, and the ticket office also issued 44,000 tickets to local people heading south. But then the rules were changed.

Was BR Eastern Region management deliberately massaging the figures with a sinister motive? New accounting procedures slashed the official annual patronage by over 80% by disallowing arrivals. Why were revenues logged at Liverpool Street, Cambridge or Bedford ignored, when it was clear that they were also generating business for North West Norfolk? Blame certainly does not rest with ER general manager Gerry

Fiennes and Norwich divisional manager Claude Hankin. They oversaw a cost-cutting exercise to keep the line open, including pioneering minimum-cost 'Paytrains' and staff reductions. However, the BR board was having none of it.

Dieselisation of most East Anglian local services had taken place in 1955 with the arrival of two-car Derby 'Lightweight' DMUs, which were declared non-standard in 1968 and withdrawn in favour of equally clapped-out Gloucester RC&W Class 100 units redundant from closures in Scotland. Their internal condition was memorably deplorable; works attention was possibly at a minimum because it was known they would soon also become surplus and making their own one-way journey to the breaker's yard.

The lifting of the double track section between King's Lynn and Wolferton in spring 1967 effectively turned the line into a 15-mile siding, and there was a simultaneous loss of passing loops, signalboxes (left in situ with unsightly broken windows and rusty levers), although a couple of crossings optimistically went over to automatic half barrier operation.

Further signs of dereliction and disinterest were the ripping out of the carriage stabling facilities at Hunstanton, leaving only one track into a central platform. Even the once prestigious *Sandringham Hotel*, just beyond the end of the buffer stops, and bought by the local council after the war, was bulldozed.

Closure day was May 3 1969 - right at the start of the summer season - and in common with other lines across the country, efforts by local groups to run the line could not keep pace with demolition contracts.

Compare this contemporary view of the windswept site of Hunstanton station (now a soulless car park) with those found in books, on websites (and on pages 66-67). On summer weekends in the 1950s, thousands of day trippers - more than the town's entire population - crowded the platforms, and the 20-plus departures included train formations of up to 13 coaches. HOWARD JOHNSTON.



The construction cost might be in the region of £100 million to £150m (two thirds of the cost of the Cambridge-St Ives guided busway in 2011). For comparison, the Edinburgh-Tweedbank Borders Railway (35¾ miles) cost £295m to reinstate (through rugged terrain) back in 2016. The new 8¼-mile Norwich Distributor Road, part of which opened at the end of last year, has cost £179m so far, and the final bill might be over £200m.

New railways need not be expensive. The last line to be completed by the Great Northern Railway across Lincolnshire was from Bellwater Junction (on the Boston-Grimsby main line) to Woodhall Junction (east of Lincoln) in 1913.

Similar to King's Lynn-Hunstanton, it was 15 miles long, but double track throughout. Including the purchase of land, constructing five intermediate stations with freight sidings, a number of bridges and level crossings, the planning-to-opening was achieved in just under three years. The cost was £215,000 (£24m today). ■

■ The opinions in this article are entirely those of the contributing writer, with special thanks to Peter Risebrow and Stanley Jenkins (author, *The Lynn & Hunstanton Railway*, Oakwood Press).

## About the author

Howard Johnston, Contributing Writer

Howard's long and varied media career has included spells with national newspapers and as an editor and publisher. A rolling stock owner, he is a renowned transport author, and has written for every issue of RAIL.





# Analysis

Getting to the heart of the matter

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## Rail reopenings: where is the money coming from?

WISBECH lies at the end of a closed eight-mile branch line from March. Its station closed in 1968, although the line lasted longer, carrying pet food until 2000.

The line's track is heavily overgrown in places, with some level crossings now hidden under tarmac. Nothing remains of the town's three stations, with one subsumed by the pet food factory and the others by housing.

Despite this industry and the surrounding fields of crops, Wisbech is reckoned to be economically poor in terms of skills and access to jobs by public transport, as well as having above-average youth unemployment. Local business talks of skills shortages.

A new report from the Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) suggests that reopening this and other towns' rail links could help. Its introduction says: "Reopening railways has the potential to

**A Campaign for Better Transport report has identified routes that could benefit from restoration of passenger services, but funding remains a problem to be solved. PHILIP HAIGH examines the problems**

transform communities. For both passengers and freight, rail is a high-quality national transport network that can give people access to a wealth of social and economic opportunities. It can support local economies; expanding labour markets and encouraging new investment and development. It can help tackle regional inequalities, making economically disadvantaged parts of the country more attractive for investment."

Wisbech lies 38 miles by rail from Cambridge and 23 miles from Peterborough, both of them centres of major activity and employment. A rail link could help bring people

to those jobs, just as the Borders line in Scotland helps feed (and was justified on) Edinburgh's need for workers. But that risks taking the life from towns such as Wisbech, rather than injecting new spirit.

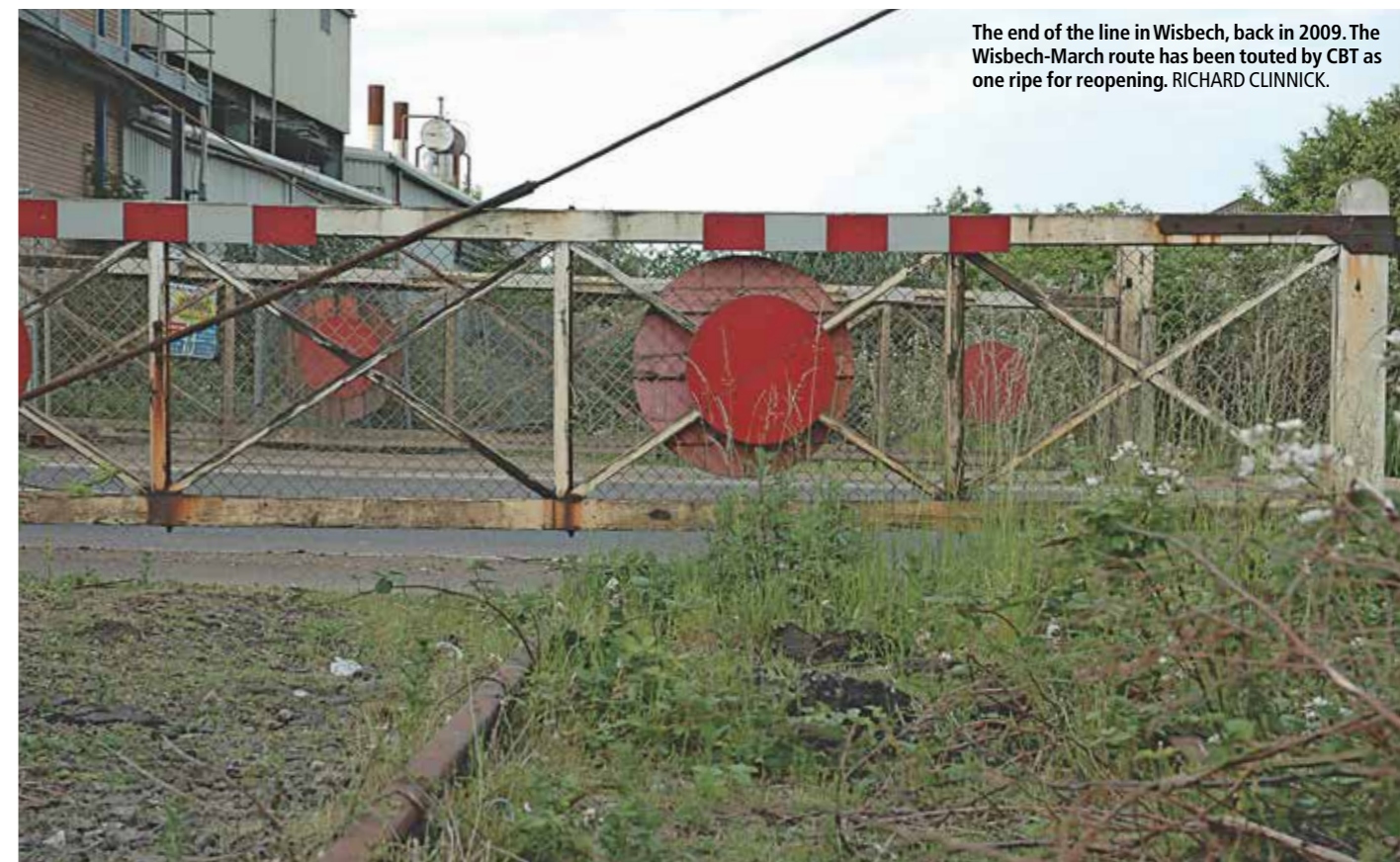
Talk of reopening rail lines captures headlines from time to time, but there's very little progress in returning passenger trains to disused rail corridors, or even to lines that already exist but only carry freight. Scotland has enjoyed some success, but that's beginning to be history with neither Transport Scotland nor the country's current government having ever authorised a line's reopening.

In London, trains have returned to the Dalston route that British Rail closed in 1986. But that reopening dates back to 2010.

The Department for Transport is now backing East West Rail to return trains to the missing and closed parts of the Oxford-Cambridge route. It has a hefty £1.1 billion price tag for its Bicester-Bedford section (RAIL 859), which is a mix of mothballed and open tracks. Nevertheless, it's making progress with a public inquiry opening in February.

Meanwhile, in Scotland, work to make the case for returning trains to the mothballed tracks to Levenmouth (RAIL 843) grinds forward with another round of reports being compiled.

The area is deprived and would doubtless benefit from its residents being able to reach jobs further afield, perhaps in Edinburgh. But the latest report suggests there's no evidence of rail freight demand for



The end of the line in Wisbech, back in 2009. The Wisbech-March route has been touted by CBT as one ripe for reopening. RICHARD CLINNICK.

### CBT's reopenings

**Oxford-Cowley:** Upgrade four miles of freight line, open stations at Science Park and Cowley and consider reopening subsequent 16 miles to Princes Risborough.

**Totton-Hythe-Fawley:** Upgrade ten miles of freight line, open stations at Marchwood, Hythe and Fawley.

**Southall-Brentford:** Upgrade four miles of freight line, open station at Brentford.

**Henbury loop, Bristol:** Upgrade six miles of freight line, open stations at Henbury, North Filton and Ashley Down.

**Okehampton-Tavistock-Bere Alston:** Reopen 25 miles, open Tavistock station.

**Portishead-Bristol:** Upgrade four miles of freight line and reopen another three miles, open stations at Pill and Portishead.

**Stratford-Long Marston-Honeybourne:** Upgrade three miles of freight line and reopen a further six miles.

**March-Wisbech:** Reopen mothballed eight miles, open station at Wisbech.

**Bedford-Sandy-Cambridge:** Reopen 27 miles, open station at Cambourne.

**Cambridge-Haverhill:** Reopen 17 miles and consider further nine miles to Sudbury, open stations at Granta Park, Linton and Haverhill.

**Leicester-Burton-on-Trent:** Upgrade 31 miles of freight line, open stations at Swadlincote, Ashby, Coalville and Leicester East.

**Pelaw-Ferryhill:** Reopen 18 miles of the mothballed/dismantled Leamside Line, open stations at Washington North, Washington South, Penshaw, Fencehouses and Durham Belmont.

**Liverpool-Skelmersdale:** Reopen three miles and open Skelmersdale.

**Poulton-le-Fylde-Fleetwood:** Reopen six miles and open Thornton and Fleetwood stations.

**Skipton-Colne:** Reopen 12 miles and stations at Earby and West Craven Parkway.

**Hirwaun-Aberdare:** Reopen four mothballed miles and station at Hirwaun.

**Aberbeeg-Abertillery:** Extend Ebbw Vale line by two miles.

**Caernarfon-Bangor:** Reopen seven miles and station at Caernarfon.

**Beddau-Pontyclun:** Reopen three mothballed line and stations at Talbot Green/Llanstrisant and Beddau.

**Dunfermline-Alloa:** Upgrade 14 miles of freight line and open stations at Kincardine, Valleyfield and Cairneyhill.

**Leuchars-St Andrews:** Reopen five miles and open station at St Andrews.

**Thornton-Leven:** Reopen five mothballed miles and open station at Leven.

**Shirebrook-Ollerton:** Upgrade six miles of freight line, open stations at Ollerton, Edwinstow and Warsop.

**Matlock-Buxton:** Reopen 12 miles and open station at Bakewell.

**Walsall-Water Orton:** Upgrade 15 miles of freight line, open stations at Sutton Park, Sutton Coldfield Town, Streetly and Aldridge.

**Birmingham Camp Hill:** Upgrade six miles of freight line and open stations at Moseley, Kings Heath, Balsall Heath and Hazelwell.

**Walsall-Birmingham:** Upgrade seven miles of freight line, open stations at James Bridge and Willenhall.

**Stoke-Leek:** Reopen mothballed 12 miles, open stations at Endon, Stockton Brook and Leek.

**Low Moor-Thornhill (West Yorkshire):** Reopen seven miles, open stations at Oakenshaw, Cleckheaton and Heckmondwike.

**Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton:** Reopen 18 miles, open Ripon station.

**Blyth and Tyne:** Upgrade 16 miles of freight line, open stations at Ashington, Northumberland Park, Seaton Delaval, Newsham for Blyth, Bebside, Bedlington and Woodhorn Museum.

**Stockton-Ferryhill:** Upgrade 13 miles of line used by freight and diverted passenger trains, open Stillington station.

the branch, which weakens the case for reopening. There is also a hint that ScotRail's timetables may leave no space to serve the branch as they concentrate on existing stations.

Across Britain, CBT suggests there's potential to add 343 miles to the passenger rail network (166 miles of reopened route and 177 miles of freight lines upgraded to passenger status), and open 72 stations to bring 500,000 more people within walking distance of a train.

It says: "If rail's potential is to be realised, then a new approach to reopenings is needed. This should take as its starting point that there is a case for enlarging the rail network. It requires a new methodology to identify and prioritise those projects which bring the biggest benefits to the country. Crucially, it should be able to draw on new investment to deliver an expansion programme."

CBT's research found 224 projects worthy of further consideration. It then filtered these for broad viability before subjecting those that passed to further tests, based on social, economic and environmental factors that examined their potential to support new housing, tackle regional disparity, decrease

social exclusion, create skilled jobs, invest in local economies, create integrated transport networks, create healthier towns and cities, bolster rail freight, and reduce environmental impact.

This cut the 224 down to 13 for which there was a clear case and 20 that needed further development or a change in circumstance (such as new housing proposals) to strengthen their case.

CBT suggests the first group could be delivered in 2020-25 for £1.2bn-£1.8bn, and the second group in 2025-35 for £3.5bn-£4.6bn. It uses a mix of early project estimates and final costs from projects such as Stirling-Alloa and Oxford-Bicester to arrive at its costs of £9 million to £16m per mile.

However, the £1.1bn for East West Rail covers reopening 12 miles of mothballed railway and upgrading a further 35 miles of

open tracks, and equates to £23m per mile.

Which makes it more likely that any expansion plan needs a large pot of money rather than a new methodology to prioritise which lines to reopen. And that's money not only to reopen them, but to cope with any ongoing subsidy if operating costs outstrip fare revenue.

On the basis of the gross value added (GVA) benefit of rail of £10bn (a 2015 figure), CBT has estimated that expanding the rail network could add between £155m and £245m GVA. Up to 1,600 railway jobs could result from the expansion.

Prominent in CBT's list are lines that today carry freight trains or only have passenger trains during diversions. They should be among the easiest to add to the passenger network, and should relatively easily bring more trains to more

passengers.

Yet years of campaigning in south east Northumberland has brought regular passenger services to Ashington no closer. Amid general agreement on the benefits of rail services to the area, no one appears willing to commit money. Department for Transport could find it, but prefers that it comes from local sources that have none.

And that's a problem for which CBT's report provides no answer. Spending on rail reopenings is entirely discretionary and depends on DfT's largesse. There's no sense that DfT would be worse off for not spending, and therefore little incentive to put money towards rail. Air pollution might, for example, load heavier costs on health authorities, but proving a link between higher DfT spending to encourage a switch from cars to trains and lower health spending remains difficult.

Then there's the rail industry's reputation for overspending and its inability to deliver major projects without major disruption. It doesn't make rail a safe place to spend scarce resources.

Fix this and there'll be more chance of a welcome reception for the lines in CBT's latest report. **✉**

**"For both passengers and freight, rail is a high-quality national transport network that can give people access to a wealth of social and economic opportunities."**

**Campaign for Better Transport**

Source: Campaign for Better Transport.



# New approach needed to unlock key rail reopenings



**Andrew Roden**  
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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."

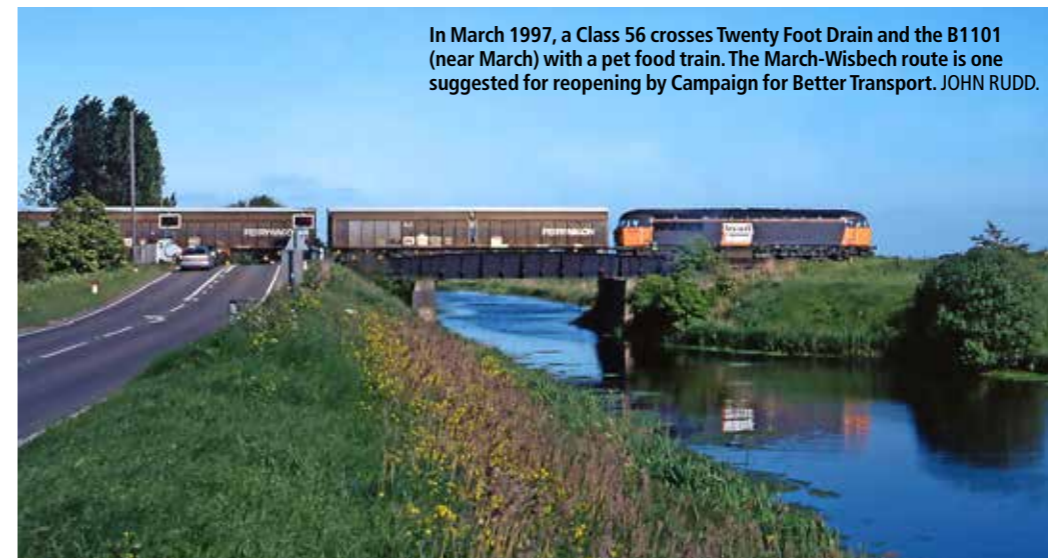
RMT General Secretary Mick Cash supported the programme, saying: "For years politicians have been talking up the benefits of reopening lines but few reach construction due to a lack of a national approach and public investment."

"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

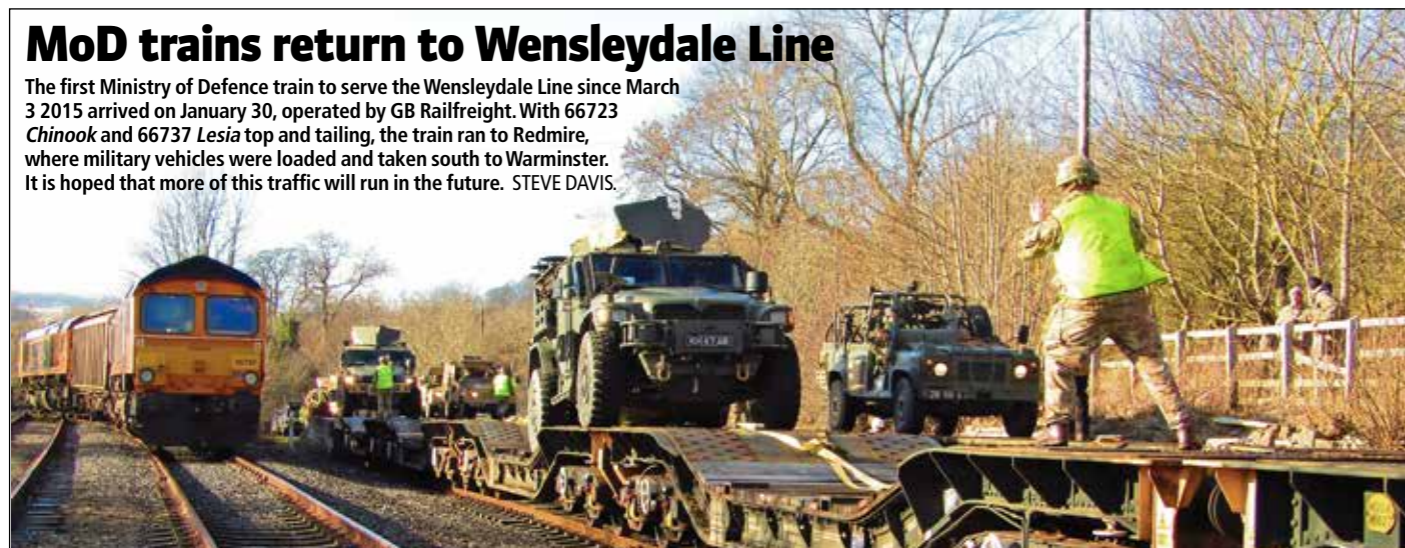
Scheme	Phase	Type of project	Length (miles)	Scheme	Phase	Type of project	Length (miles)
<b>South East</b>				<b>Yorkshire and the Humber</b>			
Oxford-Cowley	1	Freight-only conversion	4	Low Moor-Thornhill	2	Reopening	7
Totton-Hythe-Fawley	1	Freight-only conversion	10	Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton	2	Reopening	18
Brentford-Southall Crossrail Link (Brentford Docks Line)	1	Freight-only conversion	4	<b>North East</b>			
<b>South West</b>				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	<b>North West</b>			
Stratford-Long Marston-Honeybourne	2	Reopening/freight only	3 freight only, 6 reopening	Skelmersdale-Liverpool	2	Reopening	3
<b>East of England</b>				Poulton-le-Fylde-Fleetwood	2	Reopening	6
March-Wisbech	1	Reopening/mothballed	8	Skipton-Colne	2	Reopening	12
Bedford-Sandy-Cambridge	2	Reopening	27	<b>Wales</b>			
Haverhill-Cambridge	2	Reopening	17	Hirwaun-Aberdare	1	Mothballed	4
<b>East Midlands</b>				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	<b>Scotland</b>			
<b>West Midlands</b>				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 rerailing 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.