

# English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

~ An unincorporated membership based association seeking reopening of select rail lines making for a better environment as a result. ~



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W. <https://ertarail.com/>

F. <https://www.facebook.com/ERTACobblerLine>

G. <https://plus.google.com/+ERTAVoluntaryTransport>

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90p Where sold.

## ERTA Newsletter: Great Central Focus

**Introduction:** ERTA has like others (see: <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/re-opening-rail-lines> and <https://ertarail.com/campaigns/>) its own list of 'other-plethora' wish list of reopenings but owing to low active members and little in the way of resources, we are focused mainly on East-West Rail (Oxford-Cambridge via Bedford) and Bedford-Northampton and we're seeing the strategic gains of a Guildford-Brighton line via Cranleigh and Horsham, Great Central south of the Leicester area to Old Oak Common (OOC) and the bit linking these two lines that of Old Oak Common – Heathrow (tunnel and sub-surface station and concourse)-the Feltham-Woking-Guildford line – 2 way junctioning for Waterloo or South London Lines and/or via Woking – Guildford. Leicester – Brighton via Heathrow/West London and Guildford makes approximately 150 miles of new railway with some bits already there (principally Calvert, Grendon-OOC, Feltham (or adjacent area) to Guildford and of course Shoreham into Brighton.

The benefits are numerous like: a. more north-south capacity, b. more London seats, c. better access direct to Heathrow from East Midlands and vice versa 'not via London and change' d. Oxford-Reading-Guildford exists, quick, direct access to Brighton without changing at Redhill or Gatwick and vice versa for example. Protection now is vital work to do by all.



**Caption Above:** Near Newton Purcell in North Buckinghamshire mid 1990's scene of the old Great Central trackbed. This was a sun scorched countryside wildlife landscape with a few tale-tale signs a railway once existed. Blockages do exist between Calvert and Leicester, this is a main line, costly, reclaim a 20 year turn around bid which requires the scheme to be backed by big bidders but much cheaper than HS2!



**Caption:** The Great Central trackbed on a warm summer's evening in the mid 1990's just north of Calvert. Will this trackbed ever see rails again? Local scheme A43 Park and Ride Station and commute to Aylesbury/integrate with Chiltern services is maybe a first phase of a bigger scheme. But as our dossier says, if we cannot afford to entertain it going forward, the congestion elsewhere demands we cannot afford to junk it either. Free pdf copy of said dossier via email requests to [richard.eta@gmail.com](mailto:richard.eta@gmail.com)

Diary in Brief

**1. SATURDAY ANTIQUES & COLLECTORS  
FAIRS IN BEDFORD**

**26 Aug, 30 Sep, 28 Oct, 25 Nov  
10am – 4pm**

Entrance £1.00 Refreshments are available at the Fair.

<https://ertarail.com/events/>

St Paul's Church, St Paul's Square  
Bedford, MK40 1SQ

ERTA has a regular stall selling our railway books, magazines, newsletters, flyers and discussing topical transport related matters in a congenial setting.

**2. NORTHAMPTON FORUM MONDAY 11  
SEPTEMBER 1pm**

Costa Coffee (Upstairs Room – First Floor)  
32 Abington Street, Northampton  
NN1 2A, All welcome. Contact Mr Simon Barber  
for more details: T. 0208 940 4399

**Why we're going to need Great Central tomorrow...**

The reality is London terminal capacity is at a premium and in the example of St Pancras, there is not the capacity for the intense East Midlands trains and Thameslink 12 coach electric trains to share the same platforms. Thameslink sub-surface is a through route, a twin track solution which has no terminal baying capacity in the design. Therefore, with growth in development, population and the concentration of jobs relative to demographic spread, commuting has a tension of demand, supply and demand management via pricing regimes which are eye-watering. A day return to London sets one back some £30 odd and for many pockets the train is becoming an anti-social cost to a daily requirement – to court a living relative to time, effort, argie-bargie and reward.

**Something must give... what?** Then turn to the roads, gridlock congestion bedevils buses, the drive to and from a railway station, parking and costs and on-street access and the “yes, we have a cycle network” P.R. of many a local authority, but the hidden “...but it does not join up.” Is often found out in experience of trial and error. In short roads and rails are congested and so any new or growth must have a new corridor to go to, engage with and branch out from. Enter our Leicester-Heathrow-Guildford-Brighton main line run. 125 mph, limited stops, twin track, realignments where blockages exist. This is on a larger scale than our branch-line jaunts of Bedford-Northampton, important as they are; this is a big push. We have produced a dossier which has been widely circulated and summarised in an article in the national fortnightly publication of Rail Issue 829. Oh, yes, we're making tracks, we're making the media and branching out, reaching out and raising the game for re-railing the English Regions. Others do elsewhere and their own particulars. Railfuture, Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) and ERTA could be accused of being rivals, but we agree on far more than we disagree on and the fact we're coming to the same conclusion quite separately in a call for a rolling programme of rail reopenings and new builds is telling. This, however minute and miniscule the Treasury, Department for Transport and Government may allocate priority and funding, none-the-less the adage of “you have a network, ensure it is well used and not closed first” has had its day and retention with growth is what is required now going forward. This is if we want society and individual partnership with market capacity to offer comprehensive employment and access to be working properly. Otherwise it is dysfunctional and structurally deficient.



**Caption:** The M1 frequently clogs up and grinds to a halt. With Great Central more juggernaut lorries (Piggyback) and freight can be sent by rail and distributed locally. It's time to cut the long hauls out!

### Other Opportunities

## AUTUMN RAIL RE-OPENINGS FORUM

SATURDAY 14 OCTOBER

1pm Food and Social\*, 2pm – 4pm Business

In the Function Room, The Tavistock Pub  
117 Tavistock Street, Bedford  
MK40 2SB

All welcome.

\*Please note everyone is responsible for paying for their own food and drink  
All welcome. All other dates via our website page: <https://ertarail.com/events/>

### AGM 2017 Report in Brief:

Low numbers continue to dog our meetings but of those who come good cheer and encouragement was to be found. Full minutes, membership and finance reports available on request via [richard.erta@gmail.com](mailto:richard.erta@gmail.com).

**Richard:** A mixed year, the highs were that our membership, despite losses is overall growing and now we have the PayPal option was starting to prove useful. We are a stand-alone organisation, which operates in a market of other organisations of all shapes and sizes. Good Railfuture, CBT and ERTA all agree the need for a rolling programme of line and rebuilds for the regions.

**Leonard** said he had been keeping an eye on BON matters, especially as far as routes around Olney, interplay with Town and Milton Keynes Council and local MK matters generally and liaising with information, objections and instigation of ideas and with Richard has spoken at Council Planning meetings and sending letters.

**Simon** has led delegated meetings to a variety of people and places and whilst some were interested in aspects of what we are doing, no single champion comes out comprehensively as champion for us. He has sought to recruit reliable and stick able volunteers from 3 different volunteer bureaus but none have translated into active members and helpers for the long haul

**David** helped with the meeting at Roade about a Northamptonshire Station in same said place. Poor result from Parish who were blocking it but results of leafleting did show 30 potentials interested and new development would be monitored to court new interest. He had accompanied Simon to delegated meetings including one at Daventry District Council which was about seeking to save Catesby Tunnel from a planning application

**Michael** said it had been a turbulent context in which we operate year whereby many elections including Brexit, changes of and uncertainties of Government, Terrorist attacks and much else has dominated the media and made people cautious about supporting causes and tight with their wallets. He said that ERTA and its railway agendas are important messages to get across and should be persevered with in all weathers.

### Simon's Column

Simon Barber and David Ferguson provided an overview of the interests of the ERTA, which are focused particularly to the north of London, at the southern end of the West Coast and Midland Main Lines.

Simon and David offered their opinions on the East-West Rail project, in particular options for the route in and around the Bedford area. The potential benefits offered by the various reopening schemes in the area were set out, together with some of the barriers which might prevent the realisation of these schemes.

They provided a summary of the discussions they have had with the relevant local authorities, and key bodies within the industry. Mark provided an overview of the work of the Rail Delivery Group in the field of long-term planning. Much of this activity is led by Network Rail in its role as System Operator, with the Rail Delivery Group integrating this with wider industry activity. The consideration of reopenings is typically led by local authorities, who would then seek to make the case to Government and the rail industry. Mark advised the ERTA to continue their engagement with local authorities, as the parties' best place to pursue these schemes.

### East-West Rail – Cambridge Consideration in brief

From Long Road Bridges, Cambridge you have the Guided Busway cum cycle track on the old trackbed. Then you have the Trumpington Park and Ride and then a school and then luxury flats then Trumpington Meadows where the old trackbed is traceable to the discerning eye and then you hit the River Camb, Trumpington Estates, M11 and then the Cambridge Observatory on the old trackbed. In short getting into and out of Cambridge is blocked and fraught with problems to recover and no small cost too via the old route. The tracks into Cambridge are 3 in number and this fans out to two twin track railways going south, two for Bishop's Stortford and Stansted and two for Royston and Hitchin. To link across to Shepreth from a Bedford-Sandy traditional trajectory is the shortest length of new build but capacity into and through Cambridge and via Newmarket is a bottleneck. Intensive services, diverse services and add to that lengthy freights and we're looking at long hours of intensive operations and use and what of objections? You could build a new link off Shepreth Junction – not to be confused with Shepreth – to east of Fulbourn via the Wandlebury area, the earth moved from the top of the hill could inform an incline gradient for a more even trajectory – especially if a flyover is built at Shepreth Junction akin to Hitchin – means freight could avoid the Cambridge 'box'. Of course, consultants want paying, quangos have their briefs, contracts and elements of the rail industry act more like a secret society than a public service – and the public is not a joined-up entity but divided multiple directions, confused and confusing. In short, we have silence one side and laws of chaos the other. ***Our main focus and concern as an association is delivery of the railway.*** As a free, independent, small voluntary association we can tell it as it is or how we believe it to be, any advances must be tested on equivalent costs and delivery – more receipt of funds and non-delivery as theatres of opportunity diminish on the ground is a great error. Government must task delivery components as to time frame and if bypassing Network Rail, then we should expect sooner, if with Network Rail East and West of Bedford must be worked on and delivered together in tandem, as time has gone and middle of 21<sup>st</sup> century is unacceptable to be relevant to people's hopes, dreams and lives. That defaults to a message of 'the world has moved on' – alas we have £3.5 billion for an equivalent new road and congestion gridlocks Cambridge and other places in a context of development pressure. The call is think again – the railway must be delivered now.

### Bedford-Olney-Northampton Northampton Forum

**Report by Simon Barber:** The meeting (Monday 22 May 2017) went well, with ERTA represented by myself, David Ferguson and Pat Mayall. We were also joined by Mr Simon Dishman, who is the Policy Executive at the Northants Chamber of Commerce. We felt that ERTA should be in contact with the Midlands Connect Partnership (which co-ordinates LEPs, Local Authorities, Chambers of Commerce etc.) and the England Economic Heartlands Alliance. In fact, I had just e-mailed the Midlands Connect Partnership (on-line) and I had already recently contacted the England Economic Heartlands Alliance and had just followed them up, awaiting a further response. We all felt that co-ordination between the different LEPs, Local Authorities, Chambers of Commerce etc. is vital, and that we should give feedback to the Northants Chamber on any fresh development.



**Above Caption:** Governments since the mid 1980's has invested in roads but not reopening and new rail links to address gaps which the 1960's closures in hindsight went too far creating glaring gaps. Here the East-West Felixstowe-M6/Lutterworth A14 bestrides as the top bridge over the East Coast Main Line circa 2006. The A14 has and is having £millions spent upgrading and widening it to take a lion's share of juggernaut lorries between the East Coast ports and the Midlands there being no comprehensive East-West Rail link for 100 miles north of London. Rail can't compete, is taking less-than its rightful market share and a new Cambridge-Bedford-Northampton rail link would be just the ticket. Thus, we insist the design of the new railway must cater for passenger AND freight handling including serving Bedford via St John's!