

English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

~ ERTA, starting in Bedfordshire and now continuing across the regions, advocating the advancement of select public transport solutions! ~

	<p>Chairman, Local Government Transport Liaison, Co-London Coordinator and Stations Officer: Mr David Ferguson, 12 MacDougall Court, North Road, KEW TW9 4EH T. 020-8876-3340</p>	
<p>Bedford-Northampton Project Officer, Media and Bedford Area Rep.: Mr Richard Pill, 24c St Michael's Road, BEDFORD, MK40 2LT T. 01234 330090 E. erta.9rails@yahoo.co.uk</p>	<p>Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Administrator: Mr Simon Barber, 20 Fitzherbert House, Kingsmead, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 6HT T. 0208 940 4399 E. simong4barber@gmail.com</p>	
<p>Twitter: @ERTAVoluntary @ERTACampaigns @ReopenAmphill @ERTACobblerLine ERTA on Google Plus/ERTA Voluntary Organisation: https://plus.google.com/u/0/112439282775857662175/posts http://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.co.uk http://erta.uk.com/</p>		
<p>ERTA... the voluntary association which likes to help others, as well as <u>just</u> ourselves!</p>		
<p>Newsletter No. 7</p>	<p>May-June 2016</p>	<p>Price where sold 90p</p>

SOS Please help save the Northampton-Bedford railway trackbed

Northampton (Population approximately 200, 000) is half way between London and Birmingham off the West Coast Main Line (WCML) and Bedford (Population approx. 150, 000,) on the Thameslink/Midland Main Line, half way location is Olney (population 6500 but 5 mile catchment of villages adding up to 33, 000). There is a 20 mile gap between Northampton and Bedford. Bedford has services to Luton Airport, Luton and London, Gatwick Airport and Brighton, Northampton to Birmingham via Rugby. The two towns stare at each other, but the gap means awkward travels by lengthy bus (1.5 hours each way with congestion) and the service is not commensurate to the timetable of the railway. Different operators means different and not transferable ticketing and changes means delays and cost. Traffic queues form on the A428 into Bedford, whilst Northampton suffers gridlock with A14 (Felixstowe-Thrapston)-A45 to Northampton/M1. We are seeking reopening of this rail link, this missing 20 mile gap in the rail network. It would link 4 airports (Gatwick, Luton, Coventry and Birmingham), one train, one ticket, and offer more joined-up options. However despite our best efforts, the Local Authorities are not showing the sort of interest we would wish for. They don't seem interested, committed or talking to each other to find common ground for route protection for example. Laissez-faire development without proper safeguarding of the route means it is subject to development encroaching on it and on deviation space making reopening prohibitive. DFT tells us to consult local government, but local government seems to have no enforcement or mandatory obligation to listen, respond congenially or adopt route protection policies. Whatever is on paper, is not translating to the grassroots in actioning terms.

We face an inner road scheme at Northampton, piecemeal development and multiple development threats at Olney and Bedford junctioning remains under a cloud of uncertainty. The railway would play a role in creating more capacity through Milton Keynes Central Station in terms of a loop off the West Coast Main Line (Bletchley-Bedford-Northampton/Rugby) and feed more business into the supported East-West Rail link (Oxford-Bedford-Cambridge/Corby). This scheme (Bedford-Olney-Northampton dubbed 'The Cobbler Line') needs professional support, interest and champions. We should not let a strategic corridor be assassinated by piecemeal developments of dubious worth and I therefore ask you to help us get the official and strategic support we need. ERTA Spokesperson said "We are dismayed that despite our complying with recommended procedure to talk to local authorities, they are not responding in the way we would wish for and rail operators are allowed by weakness in their Franchise remits to cold shoulder us, when we represent a swathe of public opinion and enhanced opportunities for sustainable communities' agendas." For further comment, please contact Richard Pill, ERTA Media Contact: 01234 [330090/erta.rails6@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:330090@erta.rails6@yahoo.co.uk)



Caption: A London Midland Franchise Desiro Train awaits for departure from Bletchley. London Midland operate local services on the West Coast Main Line from London-Liverpool, Birmingham and West Midlands to Northampton. ERTA's call is for tracks to be extended to Bedford, a mere 21.5 miles, for a more joined up rail network. It needs a champion or two of professional calibre and standing to lead and take to the heart of decision making.

Medley of News			
<p>Bedford</p> <p>Whilst the big issue on East-West Rail is the 'must' that it serves Bedford and approaches Bedford from the East via the old trackbed i.e. into the Old St John's, dissenting voices, objections and issues like a level crossing over Cardington Road means dissent is the operative word informing degrees of silence.</p>	<p>Olney</p> <p>The Sainsbury's application and request for appeal following the Planning Committee of Milton Keynes Council turning it down, has been withdraw by Sainsbury's itself. This leaves the field for the Handley Alignment should we find a backer for reopening the rail link. However other lesser developments around Lavendon Road are a cause for concern.</p>	<p>Northampton</p> <p>ERTA desperately needs members and a team to be active in Northampton to take on the inner road link known locally as 'The St James' Road Link' which will feed into and out of London Road via the Brackmills Branch, now a trackbed only having had rails removed. We don't mind if its friends meeting over a pint, preservationists or same as us rail campaigners – if it's rail, we want the case to be argued and the road sent packing!</p>	<p>Ampthill</p> <p>Our backer sadly has been taken ill and so for the time being the project is on hold. We hope to develop a page on our website, a slide show using power point and when funds are realised, to do another leaflet drop with our new brochure. Pdf or hard copies are available on request from Richard Pill. Anyone willing to sponsor, be a backer or join a team meeting at The Swan at Flitwick can contact Richard Pill.</p>
<p>Website</p> <p>http://erta.uk.com/Index.html</p>	<p>Facebook</p> <p>Richard24c</p>	<p>Consultations</p> <p>There are a plethora of consultations, be they Local Government, Regional/LEP's and Whitehall/Department for Transport – please plug the case for Bedford-Northampton and other of our reopening projects. If in doubt, put this date in your diary:</p> <p>ERTA National Reopenings Forum, Thursday 6th October 7.30-9.30pm, The Calthorpe Arms, Upstairs Room, 252 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8JR.</p>	
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>If you feel able and willing to help, please make offers to Mr Simon Barber for due consideration.</p>			
<p>Roads</p> <p>Leafleting of half the village has been done with the rest being done over following weeks. Responses have opted for a bypass and a station ahead of either or more of the same. The citing of busy main road putting pedestrian safety, especially given the large school are local concerns.</p>	<p>London</p> <p>Whilst the debate of a need for a plan for an East London Rail crossing between Purfleet and Grays to Dartford/Slade Green and Barnehurst rumbles on, the idea of a slow line off the West Coast via a new curve onto the North London Line heading west and the connection to the Waterloo lines for Watford-Windsor and Eton cross city line still requires the tube to be diverted into tunnels and maybe go on to link with Heathrow or Feltham or both.</p>	<p>West Coast Main Line</p> <p>The consultation for the Franchise is out with Government seeking to rearrange deck chairs on the Titanic than solve the real issues affecting this busy line principally a lack of terminal capacity, a lack of line capacity and an absence of diversionary routes south of Rugby which could help free up seats, take returning empty non-time-critical freight and bring new flows where empty seats abound, principally contra commuting, leisure off peak travel and any time outside peak flows. Enter our call for Northampton-Bedford and the context of our call makes more sense.</p>	<p>Blogspot</p> <p>http://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.co.uk/</p> <p>Our Blogspot contains a wealth of information and is worthy of a thorough perusal for keeping up with where our promotional efforts are focused and targeted. We're on track to work at a Lowest Common Multiple (LCM) basic effort, building a team who can take it on to higher levels of specification and outputs where they count in power, authority and structural realms. For some of us, that stuff should be but one access avenue to the heart of being given a fair hearing by Government, alas science-business seems to reject other forms of intelligence, artificial or just common sense!</p>

Northampton-Bedford. A mere 21.5 miles of rebuild, it would inform a loop from Bletchley-Bedford-Northampton. An extra half hourly Croydon-Northampton via West London and Bedford could alternate with the hourly to Milton Keynes which is very popular contra commuting wise. Milton Keynes lacks baying capacity and thus the plethora of trains wishing to access it is beyond what the tracks will allow: Bedford-Bletchley-Milton Keynes Central, Aylesbury/Oxford-Milton Keynes (East-West Rail). Bedford-Northampton would allow Birmingham-Northampton-Bedford and extension of Thameslink to Northampton and Rugby. This would give more choice for Luton Airport by rail off the West Coast and contra commuting to Northampton e.g. the University as a traffic generator. Route and alignment spaces need protecting via strategic planning guidance filtering down to local government, this is not happening and the route is vulnerable. The business case needs exploring, not within the gift of local activists but more Franchise Awarding incentives should be made to command TOCs to study and get that side of the equation done with partnerships like LEP and other inputs. The line crosses 3 regions (Eastern, Southeast and East Midlands) and would create and help fill empty seats/capacity for diverse marketing to inform broader commuting hours, leisure and contra commuting options. It would also allow non time critical freight including empties to return via the Bletchley-Bedford-Northampton loop in busy periods keeping trains on the move than wasting time sitting on the cushions.

<p>What Your Association has been doing</p> <p>We have had successful meetings at Olney and London on Reopening Bedford-Northampton and much of our effort has been orchestrating to desperately stave off the plethora of piecemeal planning applications seeking to develop north of Olney to the foot of the hill which the A509 climbs out of Olney towards Warrington.</p>	<p>Leicester-Marylebone:</p> <p>Rebuild the Great Central South of Leicester. Coming off the Leicester-Nuneaton line you serve Lutterworth, link with West Coast Main Line:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. at Rugby (on-off links) b. loop to link with the Northampton loop for Rugby/Northampton direct to Leicester service capability on one core line. c. loop to link Daventry and Buckingham with Aylesbury for commuter and expansion purposes with d. the fast line via Catesby Tunnel (needs saving from development blockages) – Brackley (new bypass needed) – Calvert (HS2 needs to ensure it can get in). <p>The Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. New railway using old trackbed in part, creates capacity end to end of Midland Main Line south of Leicester, b. Creates capacity onto and off the West Coast Main Line at Rugby – enter via the north, exit via the south and loop round via grade separated junctions. c. Can be used for a variety of long and short conventional passenger and freight workings. d. Can be designed and engineered to cater for new and experimental freight flows like Roll-on, Roll-off, Piggyback and Motor-Rail as well as more capacity for growth. Blisworth freight depot, a pre-planning condition should be that it invests in reopening Northampton-Bedford to keep its freight off the busy West Coast Main Line, currently these developers have no guidance or incentive to make that contribution, and they should.
<p>National Reopenings Forum</p> <p>It is part of our major contribution to the wider context of what we are about – seeking select line and station reopenings. We do not seek to duplicate what some other larger organisations do and unlike some of them, we are open to all congenial people to come together and make common cause. We had 8 people including a London representative for the Borders Railway and Campaign for Better Transport.</p>	
<p>What we need</p> <p>The key need as ever is around issues of Resourcing, human and fiscal. Hopefully our new website with electronic means of payment will bring a load of new members, casual donations and other support our way and pay its way. The LCM contribution as well is leafleting, which helps keep Richard fit! Seriously, we need more volunteers to help with this task and should be reliable, able to work solo to designated locations. Guidance is given, common sense essential.</p>	

Diary Dates

<p style="text-align: center;">Roads</p> <p>Saturday 18th June 1pm, The Cock Inn, 1 High St, Road, Northampton NN7 2NW. Tie in with X4/X7 which ply between MK Central and Northampton via A508/Roads. Items to discuss are Roads Station new-build reopening, Blisworth Freight Depot, Brackmills congestion, Northampton-Bedford reopening benefit, freight by rail and any other related business. http://www.thecockatroads.co.uk/</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AGM</p> <p>Thursday 21st July 7.30pm-9.30pm The Calthorpe Arms, Upstairs Meeting Room, 252 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8JR T. 020 7278 4732 from 19:30-21:30. http://www.rampubcompany.co.uk/visit-pubs/calthorpe-arms</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">August</p> <p>Although we have nothing specifically planned, we often meet for socials of one sort or another. If you would like to be included and notified of anything going on like that, please notify Mr Simon Barber.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">National Reopenings Forum</p> <p>ERTA National Reopenings Forum, Thursday 6th October 7.30-9.30pm, The Calthorpe Arms, Upstairs Room, 252 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8JR.</p>
	<p>Caption Left: A Class 47 loco hauled postal train heads north across the River Great Ouse in the early 1990's. A train of contaminated soil from Forder's Sidings also awaits the right away. This was and remains our vision for East-West Rail to be a vibrant new network for passenger and freight operations and plans for line-born freight should be being crafted now, not as an after-thought! The risk culture informs a degree of churlishness in the lack of vision and charisma about what we may expect in modal shift as an instigated action.</p>

_____ Fill In, Tear Off and Send with Your Subscription Please help us recruit more members! _____

ERTA, come to our local Forums and offer time and talent as you may?

Tick if a New Member: _____ Tick if renewing as an existing member: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Tel/Mobile: _____

If you wish to renew your membership, please indicate category:

New Member: £5 for the first year _____

Business/Corporate/Sponsor/Benefactor: £20.00 _____

Fully Waged Adult/Family/Individual £10.00 _____

Concessions: £5.00* _____

(*Students, Low Income Households, or on any kind of Benefit/Pension or Disability)

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Please send completed form to ERTA Membership Secretary:

Mr Simon Barber, 20 Fitzherbert House, Kingsmead, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 6HT T. 0208 940 4399

E. simon4barber@o2.co.uk <http://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.co.uk/>