

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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~ Making a contribution towards retention and improvement in better public transport. ~

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

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

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

Newsletter No. 15

September-October 2017

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From the Chair... The common question in the vacuum of pro-affirma seems to be steady as she goes, but where are we (transport-wise) going? ERTA is leading from the front!

The summer months are always a mixed bag. On the one hand you have people going away for their holidays, Proms in the Park or other extravaganza entertainments and on the other, it and Christmas are times when campaigners are aware Government of whatever descript or tier seeks to sneak and time consultations, planning applications or some other 'scheme' which just happens to cross the line on public or individual acceptance and this coincides with the silly season and press seeking copy even from 'campaigners' they may ignore the rest of the year. For ERTA, this has been no exception: East-West Rail Consultation, alternative routes around Bedford which do not add up, silence from Bedford Borough Council rather than defending the Bedford corner publicly in lead baton holding position and much more. Even so, ERTA has been on local TV, in the papers and following events as well as interjecting our penneth worth, whether it gets listened to or not. We are 'friends', hence we wish to see the structural local rail deficit addressed. Local newspapers have covered alternative routes around Bedford for East-West which we think are nonsense purporting bypassing Bedford in essence. St John's Bedford is where tracks need slewing to ease an east-north curve to enable better access.



Caption Above: Standing on what was once the Bedford-Cambridge Railway trackbed in 2017 on what is now Trumpington Meadows looking eastwards towards flats being developed over the old trackbed, with then a school, Trumpington Park and Ride, Guided Busway before you hit Addenbrooke's and Long Road Bridges into Cambridge. Quite a challenge; the Shepreth option seems more likely? The idea of using former Chesterton Junction then requires reversal out of Cambridge going East. Or you face a need to bridge a lake and conservation area off of Newmarket Road.

Updates

<p>Great Central: Our dossier has been well received and Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/G8Central/) has had a number of hits and comments posted to it from a variety of opinion and interested persons. Many a scheme gets “what’s the business case?” which people really ought to spell out what THEY mean by such a term, as any search on Google can indicate there are many types of business case and any list of benefits, merits and attributes the railway offers also begs a consideration of the state of the line now 51 years after closure and what hope of getting around serious blockages and obstacles like Woodford Halse, Brackley and Rugby? It is an economy of scale surely whereby if a big enough backer like those behind HS2 (which cowers Government to a free-for-all) then it can be done, if not, then it is a challenge except for the fact existing arteries are full, terminal capacity is at a premium, motorways are developed either side and here lies a dormant corridor in its own right which is needed. Only a determined team of activists can make a difference.</p>	<p>Bedford-Olney-Northampton: Our goal is to raise up volunteers at the Northampton end. That is critical to get people working on canvassing Northamptonshire County Councillors and others to invest in studying the credentials, merits and benefits of reopening the line for Northampton in its own right, standing on its own two feet. It has been set back by the asking of insurance as a pre-requisite of the Volunteer Bureau for them fielding volunteers for us. Insurance is a cost we cannot afford as a small association of individuals with disabilities. So, we have a gap to fill. Northampton desperately needs to recognise the benefits a direct Thameslink train to Luton/Airport and vice versa to town and gown (University Waterside Campus site) and much more so they start leading on the effort for full line length cross-border cooperation of route recovery policies, planning sensitivities especially but not peculiarly around Olney and elsewhere too. We need people to join ERTA, grow our team, reach and range to achieve these goals and progress the schemes candidacy. The County Council is key to nurture the case and support with others together.</p>
<p>Simon’s Column: The main topics we discussed were the future of the Electric Railway Museum in Coventry which is scheduled to close in the autumn, and also the main rail priorities for London. Everyone was delighted about the support for London's Crossrail 2, which even Mr. Grayling (Transport Minister) backs and he has since become on good terms with Mr. Khan (London Mayor). Furthermore, another avid supporter of the project is Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham's new MP) since one of the route options is intended to serve some parts of his constituency. Among the other top London priorities include re-opening the South Acton - Kew Bridge freight line to passenger traffic which would involve a London Overground service from Old Oak Common - Kew Bridge (close to new housing developments on the north bank of the Thames) -Heathrow; Gospel Oak - Barking extended to serve new housing developments in Barking Riverside, and we felt that the line should be extended under the Thames to Abbey Wood; the Lower Thames River Crossing.</p>	
<p>Amphill: Our Facebook page gets the numbers looking at it and giving likes (https://www.facebook.com/ReopenAmphill/) but translating it to members, funds and human resources (in layman campaigners terms the 3 M’s – Members, Money and Manpower!) is proving challenging. The town council does not seem very responsive to us, the public are not roused sufficiently to join and get involved, yet a continual flood of letters to local newspapers perennially moans about Flitwick, the inadequacy of their road system, the lack of station parking and the fact that the station is catering for a park and ride from places like East Milton Keynes, M1, Marston Vale and closer to home. If you wish to assist please make offers to Richard Pill e. richard.erta@gmail.com or ring 01234 330090 and leave your contact details and a brief message and/or tap into one of our meetings and make yourself know. One small step for a person, one giant leap for making a difference! The answer to many a conundrum, is action and whether it is fund raising, leaflet improvement and delivery or table top talk it is YOU!</p>	<p>Access to Bedford Midland: Whilst a battle for saving inter-city East Midlands Trains and stops at Bedford Midland Station courts the great and good of civic and public interest to avoid rubbing shoulders with working classes and chattering classes consigned to Thameslink stopper services, the battle on the rails needs to broaden to station design, relocating to the top of Midland Road, track layout for more baying and East-West through track access from St John’s to Midland Main Line going north and a third track under the arch of Bromham Road-A428 road-rail bridge. Otherwise the default is a push by Central Bedfordshire Council for East-West Rail to avoid Bedford, a Wixams Station beit of flat junction with crossovers slowing everything down or a two-tier station with lift shafts making Bedford people change to go to Cambridge taking an unacceptable amount of time and cost making road access still tempting. We want people out of their cars in design intent, Bedford central and courageous leadership by all. Alas it is a bit hotch-potched to say the least of opportunistic cherry picking rather than grass-roots understanding, care and diligence upwards!</p>

Diary and Notes

September

GET BEDFORD MOVING FORUM – MONDAY 4 SEPTEMBER – 5pm – 7pm

The Tavistock Pub, 117 Tavistock Street, Bedford, MK40 2SB
Email richard.erta@gmail.com to notify your wish to join us so we can look out for you. There's no obligation but obviously if people join and support our goals generally that is a great start. Starts 5pm. We usually have something to eat and move to discussion mode finishing roughly by 7pm. This repeats first Monday of the month. All welcome.

SATURDAY 9 SEPTEMBER NORTHAMPTON HERITAGE WEEKEND

ERTA is seeking to have a stall. Further details and offers to help/support our wish to do a weekly market stall and other coverage of Northampton please make offers for practical help to Mr Simon Barber simon4barber@gmail.com All other details of all other meetings please see: <https://ertarail.com/events/>

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

October: AUTUMN RAIL RE-OPENINGS FORUM, SATURDAY 14 OCTOBER 1pm Food and Social – please note everyone is responsible for paying for their own food and drink 2pm – 4pm Business Function Room, The Tavistock Pub 117 Tavistock Street, Bedford, MK40 2SB
Contact: richard.erta@gmail.com



Simon Barber St Albans Report:

I would also like to add a bit about the St. Albans Forum in late June, which did not seem to get a mention in the last Newsletter. It was held in the town's Waterend Barn pub (Wetherspoons).

Four people came; apart from myself were Michael Hustwait and David Ferguson, plus my friend Conway Castle-Knight. The main interest was the Abbey Line (Watford - St. Albans Abbey), which we all felt should be extended to link up with the Midland Main Line at Napsbury, where a freight terminal has already been approved but a planning application has apparently not yet been submitted. We also considered future delegations with St. Albans City Council (which apparently wishes to keep the Abbey Line as part of the national network) and Hertfordshire County Council (who do not seem particularly enthusiastic on rail matters). The new station at Napsbury could also act as a South St Albans Tube extension terminal via M25 and London Colney.

Association needs: Our meetings are attracting a few more people, but often not the same people! We need more members and more members to turn out to meetings to make them more viable. They are key for tapping into where campaigns and things are at, identifying needs and seeking to work at meeting them. Whether being in a team doing direct meetings or helping behind by raising funds, helping with logistics or just following and interjecting events like with objecting to planning threats or consultations – ERTA is building its circle of friends and putting it to good use – a live network!

Caption left: Taken on the day of destruction, this was the Power Station at Goldington Bedford in the mid 1980's. It was rail served from St John's by rail bringing the coal for it down the Midland Main Line and snaking around the then tight curve at St John's on a north-east axis to head along the stub of the former Bedford-Cambridge railway to Goldington. Rail stopped in 1978, closure completely came in 1982. Tracks were systematically lifted to west of Cardington Road and the crossing decommissioned. It was the end of the line, literally! The Power Station site is now housing. It is ERTA's conviction an East-West Rail must be rebuilt via St John's.

Olney The Lonely! Although there are numerous towns without a railway or railway station since the 1960's closures some are in a more precarious position than others. Ampthill for example is about 1.5-2 miles from the nearest Flitwick Station and so for healthy individuals walking and cycling is do-able, albeit in mid-winter when it's cold, dark and maybe wet, a taxi is ever tempting to and from and cost is added to wherever else you go. Buses die at around 7pm, so the default is the majority have cars, use cars and everything but the commute to London is car-based. Olney unlike Ampthill is a good 10 miles in any direction to a nearest railway station be it Milton Keynes Central, Bedford Midland, Wellingborough or Northampton, depending upon where one wishes to go. Apart from London, the temptation and default normalisation process trends towards someone having driven 10 miles, apart from going to London, may as well do the next 10, 20, 50 or 100 miles by the same vehicle. Our endeavour has been to try and bring the railway back to Olney, but the support from the town, based on a low belief that it can happen given the subsequent developments on the old station site and elsewhere, has been patchy to say the least. No, they have settled into a car dependency normative lifestyle and so apart from London commuters, who needs trains? But the nagging question remains, will the car based economy provide sufficient footfall and spend to keep Olney shops buoyant? Will parking access be sufficient for optimum footfall and spend contrast elsewhere? Will a bypass be the death knell or a panacea which optimises ambiance and tranquillity for the High Street or congestion galore locked-in? Olney the lonely indeed, as Woburn Sands, also on the A509 enjoys still having a railway, a *Saving Grace* if not *Amazing Grace*!



Caption left: Olney High Street looking north near Midland Road; which also doubles up as the A509 linking the M1 and Milton Keynes urban areas with the A428 (Bedford-Northampton road) and A45 at Wellingborough in an unusual quieter moment. Usually the road-way is teeming with traffic, many of which are juggernaut lorries saving derve from going to Wellingborough/A45 via M1 and turning off at Northampton – an artery often choked with congestion and delays.

A bypass is mooted which may remove these articulated vehicles from the town centre and High Street, but given the area is a rail link desert, would the volume of cars needed to sustain the town centre eventually clog the High Street anyway, making for a road pickle?

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Membership of ERTA costs £10 per annum. I/We wish to join _____

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Please send completed form to ERTA Membership:

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