

# English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

~ A membership-based association seeking reopening of select rail lines making for a better environment. ~



**Patron:** Sir Edmund Verney +  
Others welcome of professional,  
business or other acumen and  
of good standing.

~ Contributing towards  
retention and improvement  
in better public transport. ~



**Chief Officer and Coordinator responsible for (Finance, Delegated Meetings, Recruitment and Administration):**

Mr Simon Barber, 20 Fitzherbert House, Kingsmead, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 6HT T. 0208 940 4399, E. [simon4barber@gmail.com](mailto:simon4barber@gmail.com)

**London and South-East Area Rep., Stations and Field Officer, Delegations Team and Northamptonshire Liaison Officer:**

Mr David Ferguson, 25 Virginia House, 19 Kingston Lane, Teddington, TW11 9HL T. 020 8977 4181 E. [daferguson1212@gmail.com](mailto:daferguson1212@gmail.com)

**Executive Committee, Campaigns Advisor, Membership, Publications, Sales, Media Spokesperson and Newsletter Editor:**

Mr Richard Pill, 24c St Michaels Road, BEDFORD, MK40 2LT T. 01234 330090. E. [richard.erta@gmail.com](mailto:richard.erta@gmail.com)

**Chauffeurs/I.T. Aids:** Seeking reliable and enthusiastic volunteers. Likewise, we need a **Bedford-Northampton Rail Link Coordinator** to help generate support for the reopening, produce power point talks to audiences and find means and ways to get the line on the current agenda. Please contact Mr Simon Barber: T. 0208 940 4399, E. [simon4barber@gmail.com](mailto:simon4barber@gmail.com)

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

[www.linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-erta](http://www.linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-erta)

G.

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

**Newsletter No. 22**

**November – December 2018**

**90p where sold**

## ERTA Produces Great Central Rail Reopening Report – Give it your support!



**The English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)** has produced a report calling for serious consideration of reopening part of the former Great Central Railway. ERTA's call is for a new chord off the Leicester-Nuneaton existing railway onto the old trackbed of the Great Central and rebuild with a new link into Rugby West Coast Station and beyond Rugby with a new link from Rugby West Coast to the GC Main Line via Barby meeting in the Willoughby area to head south to Calvert and the East-West Rail for links to Aylesbury/Heathrow and Oxford/Reading respectively and from these places plethora of associated links. Running passenger services into Leicester, freight via Knighton-Burton upon Trent – Derby for wider dissemination and East Midlands at large. Photo left by Stephen Byatt, one of our members. More original trackbed remains as is compromised, so recovery is more choice than impossibility! **See:** <https://ertarail.com/sales/> in due course for details.

## News and Notes

**New Webmaster:** After 2 years of asking and searching, we welcome Mr Samiur Chowdhury as our new webmaster. He is already making a beneficial difference to our on-line presentation and performance.

**Other Volunteers Needed:** We need more members to become area reps to help recruit more members, grow teams and promote our causes across the English Regions. Reliable and Realistic are key qualities, a little can be great gain!

**12 years left to avert climate change!** That is the dramatic picture painted by teams of climate change researchers and scientific scrutiny. Yet the reality is that it coincides with reports of catastrophic consequences impacting lives and communities of air pollution from congestion, emissions and from Sulphur and Nitrogen-Dioxides to particles from chemical spraying, braking and rubber. Taking the long-term view, we can see the closures locked into our whole way of doing things to roads for majority of passenger and goods mobility; globalism has boosted aviation to a top strata of masse usage/demand. As far as land-based transport goes – a key element is a rolling programme of local line rebuilds/reopenings/new builds for passenger and freight with start up capital funds by Government indicating leadership for modal shift through more choice and capacity, which would be a step in the right direction. Our ERTA Reopenings Pamphlet – available off our website – calls for a modest 33 such schemes to be considered for the English Regions; Wales and Scotland have their own already. If the principal road artery between London and Birmingham along the M1 and M6 is 25mph due to volume/capacity, a railway at 125mph seems quite fast enough to be competitive on time, if not price? So why are we wasting £100 billion + on HS2 which cannot even cater for freight whereas a partial rebuilt Great Central railway could? Government stalls on the announcement for a preferred route for a Bedford-Cambridge rail link, which means a ribbon could be cut for opening in 12 years' time when it will be too little, too late and many areas will still be locked into road reliance. What of technology turning our planes and shipping 'greener' using renewable energy? Sounds far off and many are insistent that time is critical. ERTA continues to sow seeds and interject ideas, but relies on the public to yes vote with their feet where they can like walking, cycling, using bus and train, but also joining and giving of their time to help usher our projects along. In short there is something we can all do, without costing the earth! If Government cannot determine the direction and rolling out of schemes like Bedford-Cambridge, the strategic infrastructure for accommodating growth and denting trends to damaging effects, then there is intransigence at play. The old route was the most direct route. Some needs modest deviations but end to end it should be recoverable if we get on with directing intent of purpose and actions commensurate now. Alternative routes are National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) direct line via Wixams to Shepreth which avoids Bedford or another idea which is a South Cambs 'no railway here' back door suggestion to have a railway well away from Gamlingay and surrounds. Leadership is required, not paralysis and when route is finalised/published, then consultation, then Inquiry and Transport and Works Act, a 12-year delivery period seems about right! It should never have been closed by stealth by Government and local areas should be compensated for the subsequent damage its absence has informed be it road congestion and costs or pollution, health and quality of life erosion.

### Further reading and sources:

1. <https://zululandobserver.co.za/afp/487164/un-warns-paradigm-shift-needed-to-avert-global-climate-chaos>
2. <https://www.fleetnews.co.uk/news/fleet-industry-news/2017/12/13/cost-of-congestion-to-uk-business-approaches-1bn>
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/play/m0000nhn>
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/17/air-pollution-kills-more-people-in-the-uk-than-in-sweden-us-and-mexico>

## East-West Rail – a call to action?

Space is limited here so can only give a basic over-view. But starting from the Bedford end first, we may observe the following:

- Milton Keynes Central will have trains from Aylesbury and Bedford will have trains from Oxford. Change at Bletchley Flyover new station for interchange between the two.

- Bedford Midland Station and tracks between it and St John's need reconfiguration more or less back to pre-1977 current Bedford Midland design. Accommodation, through running and capacity for more is what the current layout is not designed for.

- Carriage sidings need relocation to Wellingborough or Kettering or Corby with the new electrification.

- The old St John's is of a 4-coach configuration, so 8 coach trains will rule it out surely? But the redemption of the old route gives, with level crossings at Cardington Road and entrance to Priory off Barker's Lane and the raising of the A421 Bypass with an underpass for the railway 4.5 miles of relay-able railway corridor.

- From there we have 3 competing routes: 'C2-2' / 'CBRR'. C2-2 follows more or less the old route, CBRR going on a completely new route. To simplify, one suggestion is to follow the A421 corridor to parallel to St Neots Bypass, past Eltisley, Cambourne and enter Cambridge via Chesterton Junction. This idea is a great way around to the original route and basically a NIMBYS Charter!

- The National Rail Infrastructure Commission wanted to bypass Bedford via Wixams.

- Network Rail or whoever is responsible, are to bring forward a proposed Central Route in Spring of 2019. Development encroaches apace. Delay would haemorrhage progress/reduce options.

- ERTA prefers utilising the corridor of the old route as it is as straight as you care to find, serves East Bedfordshire linking to the County Town of Bedford and you can add tracks to link from St Neots north of Sandy, ditto St Neots – Cambridge via the same old Bedford-Cambridge railway and corridor.

- Sandy should be made an interchange. Yes, realignments are needed at Willington and Blunham, exacerbated by piecemeal interim planning decisions and the course of the River Great Ouse.

- Potton and Gamlingay old route are completely obliterated, recovery would be massively opposed and upheaval laden with cost. Bypassing the two with a shared Parkway Station would be sensible, but will Central Beds Council's laissez-faire approach to parcels of land for development, keep a window of land to allow Sandy – east of Gamlingay new deviation route to be recovered?



**Caption Above:** How times change? Taken circa 2005 by Richard Pill, these ex-Bedpan Class 317's stand in the former Bedford Bays at Cambridge Station facing south. Former flour mill in the background. Will Bedford bound trains ever arrive at this destination again? ERTA issues a call to action to inform they do in a timely manner.

- To go south encounters the Wrestlingworth and Clopden Hills. Hence wrapping around built Potton and Gamlingay and following more or less the old route is expedient.

- Raise the M11 with a bridge to allow trains to go under it and bridge the River Cam. Tunnel under housing and Trumpington Park and Ride.

- New Junction in the Long Road Bridges area, heads east for East Anglia via Cambridge!

- From Bedford Borough to Central Bedfordshire to South Cambs to Cambridge City and County Councils, the East-West Consortium has been around since circa 1995! Yet the pressure for housing and absence of a route of intent is inherently in conflict until such is published.

## Simon Barber's Column: A need to grow our team to object to trackbed threats!

**Guildford's existing bus and rail situation:** The town suffers from chronic traffic congestion and that investment in more public transport was necessary to reduce this problem. However, a new bus station is being planned at Guildford which is expected to be close to the railway station.

**Guildford-Cranleigh-Horsham re-opening:** There are very few blockages on the route; apart from problems at Cranleigh, but only in that the route would need a deviation. Several new housing developments are taking place or could soon take place along the route corridor, including Broadbridge Heath (near Horsham) and some in or around Cranleigh. Consequently, there will be strong pressure to get the railway line re-opened between Guildford and Cranleigh, and in fact the Guildford Councillor who came is pressing for the whole line to be re-opened to Horsham since re-opening to Horsham gave Cranleigh to Gatwick journey opportunities as well as to Shoreham and Brighton. Additional services on new through routes could be done by re-timetabling, using for the main, existing rolling stock. A tram-train link from Dunsfold to a re-opened Cranleigh station could be useful as taking pressure of local car journeys.

**Christ's Hospital Station** is about 400 metres from the A24 Horsham by-pass and was also the point where the Guildford-Horsham line had forked off the main line from London - Horsham - Bognor Regis/Littlehampton. There consequently seemed to be a strong feeling for a Park-and-Ride at that station.

**Gatwick- Redhill -Tonbridge curve:** The conclusion was reached that the existing rail service involved a change/reversal at Redhill worked, in that Redhill was an important rail junction and that a rail service that missed out Redhill would require more rolling stock and finding additional train timetable paths on the Brighton main line, already with capacity problems. The journey time savings would not be that significant. However, the curve could produce some possible freight opportunities. North Downs Line: Strong pressure for North Downs Line to be fully electrified (at present only Reading-Wokingham; Guildford-Ash; Reigate-Redhill-Tonbridge).

**Ed.** A High Speed (HS) Link proposes curve via Gatwick and Heathrow to Tonbridge/Channel Tunnel for their purposes too.

### Please Join ERTA and help us help you!



**Tear Off and Send with Your Subscription. Please help us recruit more members!**

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

Membership of ERTA costs £12 per annum. I/We wish to join

**Name (Please Print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tel/Mobile:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email** \_\_\_\_\_

I/We hereby give consent to our data being used and stored for the purposes of communication with ERTA and its purposes compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please send completed form and payment to ERTA Membership:**

ERTA, 24c St Michael's Road, Bedford, MK40 2LT (01234 330090)

Membership Payment can also be done on-line via our website:

<https://ertarail.com/membership/> Join our free email loop: E. [richard.erta@gmail.com](mailto:richard.erta@gmail.com)