

English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)



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. ~



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Bedford Assessment: Pedestrian, Cycle, Bus and Rail versus the road, car, lorry and van!

We are on the threshold of the law of averages and need to up our game!

Why Bedford? Whether criticism or praise, the reoccurring question of 'why Bedford?' arises. We are by the law of averages an indicative place of movement and change, a spiritual epicentre (the Bunyan and other legacies) and have been a first for stepping forward with mixed results be it Prison Reforms, Supermarket roll-outs, modernisation, redevelopment and 'brave new world' changes with mixed results from 1960's clearing away hundreds of years old gems to uglification.

Been up the mountain and have lost ground: In cycle terms places like Oxford and Cambridge are 'way out' in terms of a strong student population driving habits, trends and change from grassroots activism upwards and mass take-up of cycling in particular. In comparison to places like Milton Keynes we can't compete, as they have a deliberately planned and designed cycleway – the red-ways. This allows comprehensive off-road cycling. However, we can learn from these examples. On the one hand provide the off-road cycle networks which links estate to estate with key places and people will use them. So many design improvements seem to be within 1 mile of tele-visual sight of the local council offices, after that it is a design lottery. Bedford, in the late 80's and early 90's was making progress on cycle network and cycle share pathway upgrades and blue signage, but the job wasn't finished, has not kept pace with growth and in some cases has regressed to prohibit cycling or nuanced it for want of blue signage. Curate's egg, some parts like radial paths are okay, criss-crossing, less than satisfactory and on-road is prohibitively risky due to the volume and hap-hazard nature of traffic.

Extinction Rebellion wake-up call: Whatever the critics, this movement has brought about a wake-up call to the establishment at all tiers of Governance. No use putting heads in sands citing 'business, economy and jobs' if we're systematically undermining our very existence by failing to balance consumption with the available resources and the ecological balance fundamental to life. The debacle on whether the proposed Bedford-Cambridge rail link will serve Bedford Midland Station and by what route/how, the rolling out of supposedly congestion-busting measures consisting of road widening and less space for fauna and flora, pedestrians and cyclists and engaging these theatres safely. The political hard-sell that pandering to cars, oil, roads and related schemes get votes whereas walking, cycling and bus coordination just gets people angry but doesn't translate is no excuse not to try and bother. We must hold politicians of all colours to account and vote accordingly; voting with our feet as well as our wallets and ballot boxes!

Great Central Corridors: The English Regional Transport Association facilitates Forums in various places to enable people to tap into a meeting, make common cause and turn from looking inwards to what the executive can offer to being the answer to what is needed themselves as willing volunteers.

We are thin on the ground personnel-wise. We are committed to holding Forums in Aylesbury, Rugby and Leicester – subject to demand and supply of people responding to the opportunity afforded and choosing to join, get involved and take a proactive interest. Failure to respond, means we are limited in what we can do. The principle of reopening the Great Central Corridor are laid out in our report: <https://ertarail.com/sales/> where you can buy a pdf download, gem up and by all means come back with questions but also be prepared to be part of the answer. **Key areas we need people to beaver away are:**

1. Join ERTA yourself and work with us as part of a team.
2. We need trackbed watchers all along the line between Narborough-Rugby via Lutterworth and south of Rugby along the Canal corridor to Willoughby and south through to Brackley and south thereof to Calvert and the spur land use potential for direct Oxford and yonder running vice versa.
3. We need people to make business cases and work at getting the case made up to acceptance by Network Rail's GRIP process and at the Department for Transport (DfT).
4. We need people to object to planning applications and blockage threats, places like Woodford Halse are out in the sticks to non-car drivers like us, we need you to be our ears and eyes and report back.
5. We welcome people with time or talent or both to take pictures, monitor locations, lead and go with others to take delegated meetings with councils to win over to the principle of corridor re-railing, that is the goal and ticket, and can always be upgraded once established.



Caption Above: The Great Central Way near Rugby taken by our member Mr Stephen Byatt in 2018. We would like to see the idea of a green corridor extended to the whole line between Calvert and Willoughby and into Rugby via as much of the old route as possible.

Caption Below: Taken by our member Mr Stephen Byatt, this is the old Great Central Trackbed showing the Clifton Road Bridge. Again, a linear park corridor scheme could take lands for realignment spaces and new deviation spaces and in terms of Rugby-Narborough, be put alongside the M1 for example.



<p style="text-align: center;">AGM Notice: Annual General Meeting + Northampton And Shire Re-Railing – Tuesday 16 July 1.00pm AGM; 2.00 – 4.00pm Northampton And Shire Re-Railing Committee Northampton Quaker Meeting House (Emmeline Davies Room) Wellington Street Northampton NN1 3AS</p> <p>For further enquiries please contact: Mr Simon Barber 0208 940 4399, E. simon4barber@gmail.com especially if you intend to come, stand for election, offer to make a contribution or want to raise any issues. All other events, please see our web page: https://ertarail.com/events/</p>	<p>March-Spalding: We had a useful Spalding Forum on Saturday 4th May. Despite the inclement weather, we had visits to the Forum from local elected representative Rt. Hon. Sir John Hayes CBE MP and his wife and a prominent representative from the Spalding Transport Forum Mr George H. Scott. There is a need to get a survey to establish demand and a need to proceed carefully to try and bring people with us. ERTA has no money as such so a free-will contribution or the getting Councils to form consortia and pool resources remain our options albeit they will probably want to be convinced there is demand. Chicken and egg scenario. Meanwhile our report is produced and available on our web page: https://ertarail.com/sales/</p>
<p>Executive Committee Positions Needed: ERTA welcomes members to join the Executive Committee which deals with policy and administration of the association and the Finance and General Purposes Committee which deals more with implementation and practicability. We welcome any offers based on a reliable track record of willing volunteering to help us with our forums and projects. Failure to get a steady stream to swell our ranks and share responsibilities hampers our progress and that costs us dear.</p>	<p>Consolidation: Different officers do different roles of a combination of campaigns and association well-being. It is incumbent on every member to seek to recruit new members to ERTA and seek to address gaps in our personnel infrastructure to shore us up and make ERTA as robust as possible please. We have a mammoth fight on our hands, trying to get National Government to support a rolling programme of line rebuilds and reopenings. Please also write to your MP and alert them to more of what we wish for too.</p>
<p>The Leicester-Northampton/M1/Rugby ‘Gap’ There is no north-south rail alternative between Northampton (West Coast) and the Coventry-Nuneaton link. Yet the principal M1 goes through between Rugby and Leicester but no equivalent railway. Northampton-Market Harborough and Rugby-Narborough (Great Central new build) are both needed to provide and fill in the rail deficit. If we are to see carbon emissions reduced, facilitating modal shift to rail is an essential provision. Please help make others aware of it.</p>	<p>Guildford-Horsham Role: This is a vital missing link in the South-East of England and needs more support. Trackbed watch, report threats, recruit new members, raise funds, join the team are all practical things people can do. Our Forum meets in Horsham. Guildford and Redhill and we need more active people to raise support and get the Local Authorities and Agencies on board. Otherwise it remains a missing link! Our latest meeting had 12 people present.</p>

Simon Barber's Column

Delegated Meeting with Karl Watts (CEO Rail Operations Group)

One day in March, two ERTA members (Colin Crawford and I) had met up with Karl Watts, who is the Chief Executive Officer of the Rail Operations Group. That company is the UK's most innovative train operating company which is dedicated to the rolling stock manufacturing, engineering and leasing sectors. It specialises in train movements relating to rolling stock delivery, testing and maintenance, but is also involved with some freight services, particularly ad-hoc freight movements.

Karl highlighted the fact that the company had recently started the campaign to drive a modal shift from road to rail for logistics- type goods. Brought about by the demise of heavy industry and an upsurge in ecommerce, the transportation of light goods on UK roads has increased dramatically over recent years. In recognition of this change, the company have ordered the first two class 769 4-car bi-mode units (BMU) to pioneer this modal shift. It has also ordered 20 Class 93 tri-mode locomotives which should be delivered sometime in 2020.

Karl seemed extremely supportive of the ERTA's aspirations such as re-opening the Bedford – Northampton 'Cobbler' Line. He also purchased copies of our two main reports. In addition, the company had been involved with the East-West Rail project.

ERTA now has its 3 main publications for sale as either hard copy or pdf downloads on our excellent sales page on our website: <https://ertarail.com/sales/>

Use form below. Please Join or Renew your Membership of ERTA and help us help you!



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

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)

Join our free email loop: E. richard.erta@gmail.com