

English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

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



Chairman, Coordinator, Media and Bedford-Northampton Rail Link Contact:
 Mr Richard Pill, 24c St Michaels Road, BEDFORD, MK40 2LT T. 01234 330090
 E. richard.erta@gmail.com
 Patron: Sir Edmund Verney + Others welcome of professional, business or other acumen and of good standing.



Vice Chairman: Mr David Ferguson, 25 Virginia House, 19 Kingston Lane, Teddington, TW11 9HL
 T. 020-8876-3340 E. daferguson1212@gmail.com

Treasurer and Membership: Mr Simon Barber, 20 Fitzherbert House, Kingsmead, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 6HT
 T. 0208 940 4399, E. simon4barber@gmail.com

West Herts. Area Rep: Mr Michael Hustwait, 52 Eastfield Avenue, Watford, WD24 4HJ
 T. 01923 350726, E. mhustwait@gmail.com

East Herts. Area Rep: Mr Tony Bush, 26 Berwick Close, Waltham Cross, Herts. EN8 7PU T. 01992-701485

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

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

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

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

Newsletter No. 16

November-December 2017 Edition

90p where sold

The Bus question, is it a solution to a problem or a problem awaiting a solution?



Like many areas, Bedford has seen its share of bus cuts. The No. 40 which ran between Bedford-Astwood-Newport Pagnell-Coachway-Milton Keynes Central was axed as Milton Keynes withdrew funding due to poor usage figures. Now we have the situation where a separate bus serves out along the A422 as far as Astwood and Olney and villages and an alternate half hourly to the Bedford-Northampton No. 41, serves the A422 as far as Stagsden. That leaves a gap of about 1 mile between the two services. It is not beyond wit for both to lap each other village for a joined up rural bus link bringing shoppers to local towns at both ends. X5 serves the Coachway and the MK Shops and Station but Newport Pagnell requires a change of bus at Milton Keynes now. **Caption left**, No. 40 awaits at Bedford Midland Railway Station.

Caption right: Stagecoach have been supplementing coaches on the X5 with these sorts of double-deckers. Is this due to a failure to invest in adequate maintenance regime? It is unclear. However, having a standardised bus or coach on fixed routes enables people to better plan. For example, X5 coaches have good boots and can take luggage, prams and bikes for example, there is no equivalent rail service. Double-deckers, though quaint, catch passengers by surprise and cannot take luggage or bikes and do not have a toilet facility. The Bedford Bus Station toilet closes too early whilst Cambridge is a toilet desert almost with a 5-minute walk at least to primitive provisions unbecoming a place of presumably learning.



Straight Lines for Bedford



ERTA has been monitoring the replacement of Ford End Road Bridge (immediately south of Bedford Midland Station) which translates to the fast tracks being bridge clearance altered for overhead power lines to be installed on the fast lines. We were concerned that the whole bridge would be demolished and the replacement arches would be for existing tracks as now, rather than as was (comprehensive) and as needs be in the future with the on-coming of East-West Rail betw Oxford or Cambridge or ideally both via St John's. We called for adequate clearances to enable straightening of tracks between Danfoss/1984 St John's Halt to north of Bedford Midland Station linking the slow lines. This is crucial to enable direct to and from access for passenger and freight workings, vital for reducing regional juggernauts!

Above Caption: A Class 150 from Bletchley winds its way between River Great Ouse Bridge and towards Bedford Midland Station. The tracks to the right are sidings only but a straightening of tracks for better speed and efficiency would need to utilise some of them.

Centre Right Caption: Looking the other way to top caption, these sidings although new for the Class 700 12 coach trains, could be moved to Wellingborough, Kettering or Corby as part of the electrification of the Midland Main Line to Corby, retaining 2 for the East-West Rail direct access and straightening to and beyond Bedford Midland for passenger and freight usage.

Caption Below: These arches or the adjacent were once used by the Midland Railway when it had ambitions to reach London from Leicester. It initially came through Bedford to join the Great Northern line at Hitchin, then bolted on the Luton-St Pancras lines.



ERTA is keeping a constant watch on the unravelling of rail developments around the regions. Trackbed watches, objecting to development threats, consultations, exhibition engaging and following through on planning processes are part of our basic spade work to keep options open but also to interject to ensure that the powers that be are aware of what is at stake. For example, as well as straightening tracks between St John's and north of Bedford Midland, there is the idea of moving Bedford Station hub back to the top of Midland Road, there's the extension of Thameslink to Corby and East-West Rail interchange and accommodation. These pieces are seemingly fragmented in time-line allocation and scheduling and some still very much in the air. ERTA brings joined-up-ness with the hope of cohesion.

2017, A Year of Anniversaries! Whilst everyone will have their own 'memories' and 'take' on 2017 the anniversaries we are mindful of are as follows:

1. 1967 The closure of the **Oxford-Bletchley and Bedford-Cambridge Railways**, the last cross-country railway for 100 miles north of London, all others closed on the basis Oxbridge be kept open, alas!
2. The 50th founding of **Milton Keynes**, grown into a major population of some 200, 000+ people, punching above its weight as a region business, employment, learning, logistics and growth hub and stimulus.
3. My birth-day was August 1967 and was taken in the pram to **Willington** prior to closure. My gran also used the train from **Blunham**, living at Chalton and my dad commuted to Cowley near Oxford when he worked at Kennings Garage (now Olivia Court in Bromham Road) and Showroom and brought the first Mini to Bedford. They drove them back one at a time in those days.
4. The thirtieth anniversary (October 1987) of the founding of the first formal advocacy of reopening the line East of Bedford, the **Bedford and Sandy Rail Reopening Association (BASRRA)**. People laughed then and now, but things are stirring rail-wise, bypass roads at huge cost have attracted more traffic making the situation perilous. Some 'professionals' are trying to re-write history than picking up the phone and being inclusive!



Caption Left: Source photo bought from the Bedford Borough Council Archives of a local steam hauled train in the 1950's approaching Willington. This landscape is now occupied with extended gardens and Dane's Camp, a popular riverside café and bird sanctuary. Question is, does East-West Rail politely cross the River Great Ouse twice to avoid and bypass Blunham further east to get to Sandy or do we like HS2 turn up with notices and buy them out? Horses for courses and better rails for Bedford!

At St John's in Bedford there was a triangle of track enabling freight to link around from east-north for accessing the Midland Main Line heading north or vice versa. ERTA wants that triangle to be

redesigned into reality upon reopening of the East-West rail to enable freight from Felixstowe and East Anglia at large to traverse from Cambridge to Bedford and along the Midland Main Line to utilise the existing but little used South Leicester curves to head towards Nuneaton, West Coast Main Line, Birmingham and the West Midlands at large. There are no east-north curves at Bletchley nor Bicester nor Oxford, so getting the piece of infrastructure designed in now, is critical for the East-West Rail to earn its keep and optimise the potential for getting more lorries off our roads creating more space and less wear and tear costs, but also freeing up paths on current operations into, across and out of London, freeing up paths for more diverse passenger operations and new to rail freight born of the capital as a port in its own right.

__ Fill In, 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 £10 per annum. I/We wish to join ____

Name: _____ Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Tel/Mobile: _____

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Please send completed form to ERTA Membership: c/o Mr Simon Barber, 20 Fitzherbert House, Kingsmead, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 6HT T. 0208 940 4399, E. simon4barber@gmail.com