


English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

	Patrons: Sir Edmund Verney, The Rt Hon. the Lord Newby OBE + Others welcome of professional, business or other acumen and of good standing.	
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	Vice Chairman, Coordinator responsible for (Finance, Delegated Meetings, Recruitment and Administration) and the oversight of the Northern Reach Team, March-Spalding, Guildford-Horsham-Shoreham Rail Reopening Group, Southern Reach Team, Great Central Group with delegated others and West Country Area Rep: Mr Simon Barber, 20 Fitzherbert House, Kingsmead, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 6HT T. 0208 940 4399, E. simon4barber@gmail.com	
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Newsletter no. 31	May-June 2020	Price £1.00 where sold

We need a steady stream of reopenings, rebuilds and route protection measures across the English Regions now!

Inter Alia: Among other things, the Government must get the reopening, rebuild and route protection agenda correct, not mere tokenism.

It is laudable that the Government commits £500 million to a reopenings application process. We do not wish to be like some who sit on the fence or who are negative and sceptical all the while. On the other hand, the scale of the task and challenge even to get a fraction of what a 'Reverse Beeching' rallying call may give rise to, however well the conception, working up and aspiration of reopening, rebuild and route protection maybe – it is delivery and timescales thereof which is all critical. Therefore, we note the following:

- We welcome the £500 million, but at £20 million per mile of double track, it is a very limited amount and should be just for the English Regions with the Celtic Fringes – Cornwall, Wales, Scotland and Ireland getting their own separate pots.
- Unless there is an equal drive to formulate a law or binding agreement to incentivise Local Government to pro-actively protect old routes, formations and deviation spaces, we face accelerating demand on the one hand and diminishing capability on the other, thwarting the roll and trend of delivery/practicability and do-ability. We need a Grade 2 listing-style of protection. Write to your MP and suggest it please.

Now some may suggest that this is eclipsed by East-West Rail whereby they have rejected the former route for brand new alignment and if you can do it there, you can do it elsewhere. Proof as ever is in the eating of the pudding! On the one hand, the new route probably will not be geared to taking freight by rail, leaving still a 100-mile gap in the rail network and trunk roads like the A421 and A14 unchallenged by a parallel railway. On the other hand, the using the old formation/route as a basis to platform the demand for a new rail link, served a purpose. In all campaigns you start where you are at and use what is available. The old route was the drum. We proverbially banged it to resonate the base note of the issues the lack of a railway threw up. Indeed, now that the new route focuses on Tempsford, it is possible at less cost and cater for more freight by rail to use the old route out of Bedford via St John's and new build to the north of Blunham alongside the course of the River Great Ouse with embankment to avoid any flood issues, saving distance, time and cost in construction/enabling more by rail. Will people from Stevenage northwards and Peterborough southwards really pay more, take more time to get on a train and change at a new station between Sandy and St Neots? Would they not rather get on a train where they live and travel direct to/from Bedford? Our call therefore remains, think again! See back page. We need more volunteers to swell our ranks to enable more.

Good-Bye to the old Bedford-Sandy-Cambridge Rail Route...



Caption Above: The old St John's signal-box sat in the centre of a triangle once, now all but the Bedford-Bletchley single track has gone. This picture taken looks westwards with St John's Station site behind us. Taken circa 1992.



Caption Above: The old Bedford St John's Remnant Station. A Class 104 unit sits at the Bletchley bound platform circa 1983. The Cambridge track is on the left. It went to Goldington Power Station until 1978, cut back with level crossing closed around 1982.



Above Left: Station Court, Blunham 1988. The approval for building on the old trackbed at Blunham was granted by the then Mid Beds District Council in 1985. It was envisaged post the founding of the Bedford and Sandy Rail Reopening Association (BASRRA) that realignment via the adjacent field could be done, upheld by the 1997 Steer Davis Gleave Report. Now, 23 years later a completely new alignment is to go ahead bypassing the blockages.



Above right: Consigned to history! The old approach into Sandy Station en-route towards Potton but now we know that the new route will in some fashion meet the East Coast Main Line at Tempsford either by a new additional station or by a physical linking junction enabling through services from both south of Peterborough and north of Stevenage to Bedford and Oxford respectively. ERTA wants the latter to optimise usage!

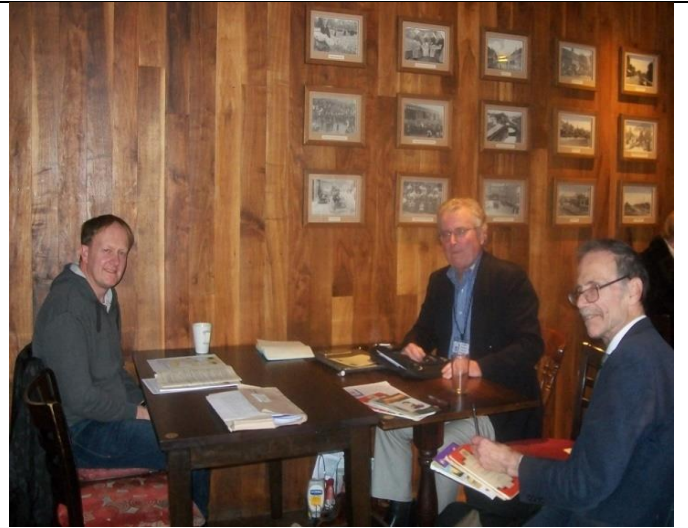
News and Notes:

Web Links and Hashtags: [#ertarail](#) is the hashtag we are using for ERTA linkage purposes. It conveys all we wish and brings up most often our website, which again contains further information for enquirers. Please give it a go and let us have feedback. <https://www.ertarail.com/>

Team Challenge: ERTA has agreed on various teams for focusing on specific projects like Great Central or areas like London, Northern, Southern and it is hoped volunteers will offer to join teams which they are interested in and willing to do something to assist and take the projects forward. Opportunities abound!

North Downs Rail Link Needs Investment

ERTA has the view that the North Downs Rail Link has been allowed to be a Cinderella railway for some time. It badly needs investment such as sprucing up of local rail stations, optimising parking and accessibility but more to the point, electrification. Current operations along it is a Reading – Gatwick diesel-based shuttle via Guildford, reversing at Redhill. This takes time and whilst we do need basic every stopper service, we also need semi-fast services which cut out some stops to give end to end competitive to road timings. Thus, were the North Downs Rail Link electrified you could run Thameslink services into Guildford and possibly on to Reading, just as they currently run to Horsham further south. This would save those wishing to get to Guildford and its many connections and could have a direct service from north of London (and London itself) saving changing at St Pancras for example, changing twice to get onto the Northern Line for Waterloo and then another change for trains to Guildford. The North Downs route would free up seats on the Tube, save people time and make rail options more relevant for more people. Time to act! See: <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/sussex/upgrading-the-brighton-main-line/reigate-station-upgrade>



Caption above: ERTA holds many forums across the English Regions for people to gather and make common cause with. Like everything in ERTA, we are voluntary and rely on public goodwill to make progress. Please consider how you can play your part. Our Spalding Forum Autumn 2019.

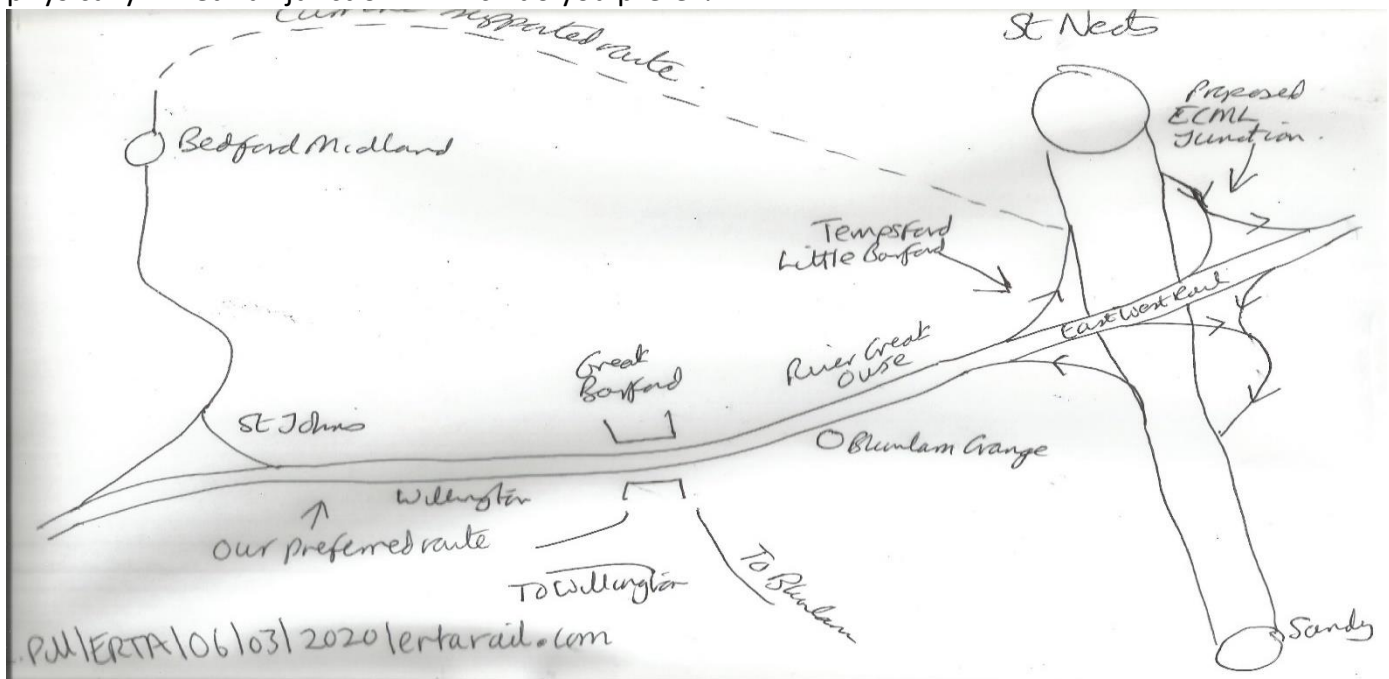


Caption Above: The front of Redhill Station. From here you can get to Tonbridge, Gatwick, Brighton, Guildford, Reading and into London. However, some have suggested the station itself is less-than user friendly. Tap into our Forums and compare notes. That Network Rail are looking at a turn-back to Reigate is a start!

Simon Barber's Column

One day in March two ERTA members (Colin Crawford and I) had met up with Lord Newby at the House of Lords. He lives in North Yorkshire and has been Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords since 2016. He is supportive of re-opening the old railway line that ran between Harrogate and Northallerton via Ripon, where much of the old track-bed survives. The meeting was successful and he is prepared to take our ideas on board; in fact, he planned to meet up with Transport Committee members of the House of Lords later in the month. He had stated that there are new housing developments in Ripon and the need for a railway would be vital. I had also given him a copy of the Press Release on Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton which was produced last year, and he also purchased a copy of our Great Central Scoping Report. Finally, he decided to become a Patron of the ERTA after accepting our invitation.

Below: A crude home-drawn diagram showing the difference (not-to-scale) in trajectory between the approved proposed route north of Bedford to Tempsford and a variation on using part of the old route but going north of Blunham and avoiding Sandy. The proposed route gives you a station, our route a physically linked rail junction – which do you prefer?



Any offers of help to work up our diagrams using computer technology is welcome to entertain.

It is all voluntary! Contact Mr Simon Barber with offers:

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Conference Update: Due to the Corona Virus, we had to postpone our conference. We have tentatively pencilled Saturday 26th September 2020 at The Court House, Berkhamsted 13.30-17.30pm. You can book at any time. If the virus is a prolonged affair and we are still in lockdown by 1st September we may have to, like many organisations roll forward until 2021. However, if you book before or now or interim until the day of the conference, your booking is retained, valid and we invite you to stay with us for the long haul. Thank you. News and updates will be posted on our website: <https://www.ertarail.com/conference-2020> and our pdf docs are progressively being put on our new publicity page: <https://www.ertarail.com/publicity-page> Please enjoy a perusal and recommend to others! We need a growing membership to pay the way and extend our reach and range please.