

# English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

	<b>Patrons:</b> Sir Edmund Verney, The Rt Hon. the Lord Newby OBE + Others welcome of professional, business or other acumen and of good repute.	
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<b>Newsletter No. 37</b>	<b>May-June 2021</b>	<b>Price where sold: £1.00</b>

**ERTA emerges from Covid19 episode with hope for a 'new normal' – physically and electronically. The campaigns continue non-the-less!**

Covid19 has affected us all and may continue to plague us one way or another for the foreseeable future. ERTA like many organisations have had to adapt during the dark months to cancelling out physical meetings and doing them on-line and Zoom. We are sad that about half our members do not have personal, private access to the internet and so those who could and did tap into these meetings were either members that do have access and new people interested in subject matter, debate or exploring what we offer. ERTA Officers have been working behind the scenes with emails, Skype Meetings and other Zoom Meetings. Numbers have been up on our physical meetings and so the new normal will contain a mixture of physical meetings but also some Zoom. Being able to transact business and debates from home saves time, energy and money, but physical meetings have other benefits including association in the broadest sense, company and our sales stalls for example, all of which have been on hold. ERTA traditionally is not some cold scientific pursuit, rather at best we are friends who work together for common causes.



ERTA believes rebuilding the Brackmills Branch and associated rail tracks would inform an asset for multiple on and off rail benefits. Please have a read and give us your support.

The English Regional Transport Association (ERTA) is a voluntary association whose prime income is via membership. We advocate local, conventional, accessible rail reopenings, rebuilds, select new-builds with people and communities at the centre of planning. We want less congestion, cleaner air, land-use properly stewarded and a balance between urban sprawl, sustainable transport choices and not assuming all must go by road for want of a rail alternative. The Brackmills Branch is the former stub of the Bedford-Northampton rail link. We want it re-railed to provide an example of the rail choice which could be made available. Choice extended as a business opportunity for people and goods to use rail and connect with the main station at Northampton. Brackmills Industrial Estate is a growing employment hub and many people wish to get to it and congestion on local roads is hampering operations and in logistics delays, time and congestion can be costly.

We see a phased incremental approach to the project:

- Phase 1 to re-rail between Northampton Castle Station and Great Houghton Village with a shuttle passenger service using lightweight trains and basic halt-style station provision.
- Phase 2 could see the project extended to the Brayfield Racecourse.
- Phase 3 would require about 10 miles of new-build local, conventional railway to the north of Olney as the old route as it is seriously blocked at Olney.
- Phase 4 would be a new interpretation crossing at height over the Midland Main Line to join the slow lines into Bedford Midland.

Integration with Thameslink services, East-West Rail and an audience range between Brighton, London, Bedford-Northampton and the West Midlands for example, takes on 3 airports, M1, Eurostar St Pancras and gives key and direct access currently broken because of this missing, strategic link, which was cited in numerous studies done.

© ERTA Publications/February 2021/Brackmills Rail Link Brochure/<https://ertarail.co.uk/become-a-member/>

**Caption Above:** ERTA has launched its new brochure promoting the reopening of the Northampton Brackmills Branch. If any want pdf versions, please email [richard.erta@gmail.com](mailto:richard.erta@gmail.com) Our thanks to all including the Brackmills Industrial Estate.

**News and Notes:**

<p><b>Simon Barber:</b> Sadly, Simon Barber has had a stroke and will be out of action for a while. We wish him a speedy recovery and give thanks for all he has done. He has been a stalwart for ERTA as an active volunteer member, we could always count on Simon to be brimming with enthusiasm, energy and dynamism. Meanwhile, if any wish to help, please do offer. Reliability is the key skill rather than specialist knowledge.</p>	<p><b>March-Spalding – Werrington good, but...</b> The Werrington Underpass north of Peterborough is good, but no replacement for a new March area to Deeping St Nicholas new rail link cross country. For Ely-Peterborough pathing is at a premium and upsurges of demand both passenger and freight by rail means not very long we either rebuild or turn more traffic onto the roads. 2050 is too late, now is the time for action.</p>
<p><b>Great Central Rail Project – what’s needed? Focused on Calvert/Banbury-Rugby</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need a growing team of support and willing reliable volunteers who together can combine to help take it forwards.</li> <li>• It needs the backing of MP’s, Tiers of Government as well as public to happen.</li> <li>• Route protection is essential and for deviation lands where blockages exist.</li> <li>• If we do not re-rail the corridor, then we cripple the rail network and add to road congestion.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Gloucester-Hereford – if we cannot afford to do it, can we afford not to?</b> Roads to and from the area like Ross-on-Wye are being progressively upgraded. That in turn delivers more demand and land use for parking as well as congestion and pollution. Then some councils have the nerve to ask us to provide £1 million business cases before they blink! No! We, the public demand the councils and Government take an interest in this fair land and invest in people and places by putting back strategic missing rail infrastructure.</p>
	<p><b>X5 Truncated at Bedford, 905 Pulls In:</b> Blue coaches may ply between Bedford and Oxford a 2.5 hour each way journey, but east of Bedford it is now the 905 double decker new experience with a new route to boot. It takes longer, has no capacity for toilet, bikes, luggage and is detrimental but for an expanded Cambridge Commuting interest. Gone is the strategic cross-county link and to cap it all the 905 still does not link Bedford and Cambridge Railway Stations. There can be no excuse beyond a prescribed ‘do as we say, not as we do’ convolution to long suffering public transport users. East-West Links are notoriously poor!</p>

## Nostalgia Page:



**Above:** Taken circa 2014 It is all change here. Firstly, the Danfoss Building in Bedford on the right has been demolished. This car park serves the Bedford South Wing Hospital and is like this in normal times during week days. Are there really that many people working and visiting at any one time? Believe it or not, part of this land used to have the Bedford-Hitchin Railway running through it. Everything changes, but car ownership shows no abatement. What would change it?

**Below:** This time, same year, but east side of now demolished Danfoss Building on the left and the Bedford-Bletchley Train comes round the corner from Bedford Midland to Bedford 1984 St John's Halt. Called 1984 Halt as that was the year it opened whilst the original Bedford St John's Station was closed at the same time. The extension to Bedford Midland brought a 60% increase in passengers and some believe extension from Bletchley to Milton Keynes Central could do the same!



**BRCC MVR CRP Ad and London Call**



**Great Days Out on the Marston Vale Line (Bedford - Bletchley)**

**Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre - a Living Piece of Railway History!** Enjoy afternoon tea in the original Ladies Waiting Room, a guided tour of the Museum and browse in the Gift Shop! Circular & linear walks available. Open Easter to December. **Free Entry!** Tea Room open daily except Monday & Tuesdays. Call **01525 287120**.

**Bletchley Park** (home of the Code Breakers), just a few minutes walk from Bletchley station! **2 for 1 entry for rail passengers! Plus new Symbol Spot Trail!** Collect your **free** pack from Bedford or Bletchley stations with a valid train ticket!

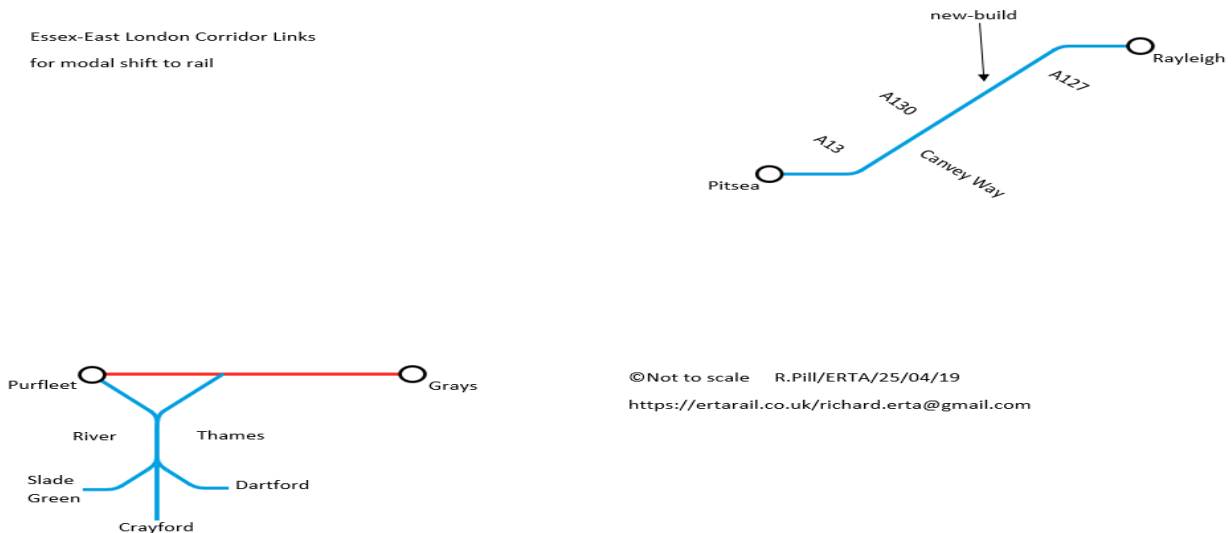
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Rail Tickets:  
Third off for adult  
groups of 3-9,  
children half price,  
under 5's free!**

**Bedfordshire  
bus pass  
holders travel  
at half price!**

**Diagram Below:** There can be no environmental justification for the Silvertown Road Tunnel, whereas better connectivity could be had by more rail based tunnelling solutions and related links. This diagram for a rail tunnel under the Thames, and a new build to Rayleigh with potential intersecting stations to take-on numerous radial roads, shows what a modest investment could deliver. Please give us your support.

Essex-East London Corridor Links for modal shift to rail



©Not to scale R.Pill/ERTA/25/04/19  
<https://ertarail.co.uk/richard.erta@gmail.com>

**Report Article in Brief: Small to Big Picture of Grasping what Guildford-Cranleigh-Horsham/Shoreham offers and what we lose if we do not buy-into it.**

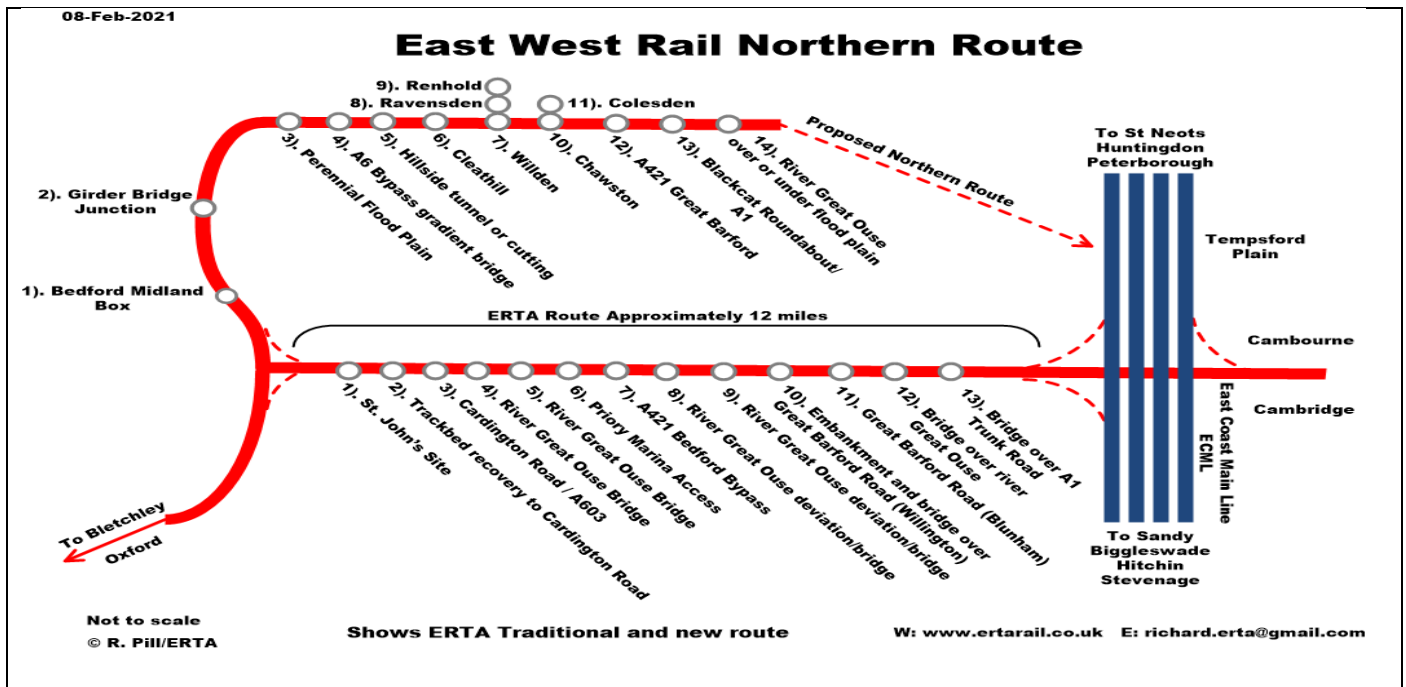
**If we rebuild the missing rail links between Guildford/Shalford and Cranleigh/Horsham and Shoreham we get the following:**

1. Commutes to and from local towns more by rail and less by roads with environmental/health benefits
2. Regional Rail access direct between Reading and Brighton, Heathrow/Old Oak Common and Horsham/Crawley/Gatwick from the south
3. More through trains, less changing, saving time, cost and inconvenience.
4. More capacity at busy places like Guildford for more and variety of diverse rail services.
5. A loop from London/East Croydon-Redhill-Shalford-Cranleigh-Horsham-Gatwick = a loop, which if electrified could be part of Thameslink. Electrification through to Reading would save changing elsewhere.
6. More opportunities for more freight by rail.
7. With a Tonbridge-Gatwick direct curve, linking east-west and South-East areas more by joined up rail, not fragments.

**Actions must follow if the rail link is to be realised:**

1. ERTA needs local people to join and get involved. Only by growing local support can we represent a body of interest and get things done.
2. Councils have a pivotal role to play. They must convince themselves that:
  - a. The rail link is do-able: engineering and practical considerations need auditing, listing and how blockages or impediments can be overcome.
  - b. If 'yes' to 'a' above, to then form consortia with other councils, agencies, Government, MP's and other Stakeholders including the public and invest in a full feasibility study, making the case, looking at diverse rail service options, on-off rail benefits, Benefit-Cost-Rating (BCR) and how you balance the rail corridor with environmental impact issues.
  - c. Progress towards delivery in a reasonable time frame.
  - d. Realise this extra rail capacity will alleviate overcrowding elsewhere including the Brighton Main Line and making more journeys by rail, easy, accessible and tempting away from road and car dependency cultures.
3. Membership of ERTA and encouraging others to join strengthens our hand in any case.

**Volunteers sought:** If you think you could reliably provide support and assistance to ERTA with either campaigns or administration or a bit of both, we'd love to hear from you. Things like help manning stalls, hosting Zoom Meetings, in normal times convening Forums, leafleting, taking our ideas and suggestions to elected representatives and working as part of a team to both grow the association and improve its reach, range and effectiveness is to be welcomed. In any case email: [richard.erta@gmail.com](mailto:richard.erta@gmail.com) Thank you.



ERTA has been upholding our view that the original route for East-West Rail via Bedford is the right one. The January 2019 consultation did not include it and was masked behind serve Bedford Midland Station or bypass the town altogether. Naturally people supported Bedford Midland option, but rather than linkage and passenger trains reversing in and out via St Johns, the Route E proposed going north of Bedford on the Midland Main Line and veering off south of Clapham. To put it shortly, the proposed route is fundamentally flawed being terrain, hilliness, flood plains, built environment and expandingly so. Contrast our route, which both serves Bedford Midland, but enables freight to pass straight on. 24x7 freight by rail if the line is built is exaggerated hype but oh for such a modal shift – just think how congestion busting it would be if only it were the case! Meanwhile our diagram above shows a list of major hurdles our route and the Route E presents. Heated discussions abound, but crucially, Government action and delivery is in the balance. If we do not re-rail, more congestion and pollution paint a bleak future. We have choices in life and choices have consequences. We need more joined-up-ness at all levels.



**Caption Left:** Bedford's River Great Ouse is a principal feature of the town centre. Every other year a River Festival is normally held to celebrate the restoration of navigation to Kings Lynn in 1978. Loads of boats of all kinds and people flock to it. In recent years there has been a campaign for a canal linking Bedford with Milton Keynes but the pace of other development, cost and the controversial issue of negotiating Brogborough Hill with a hoist and getting to it has proved a challenge to say the least. Could other options be less hassle and cheaper like extended navigation?

## Campaigns News

### Retail Park, Kempston and Surrounds Call for a Station on the Bedford-Bletchley Railway:

ERTA has produced a report calling for consideration of a station on the Bedford-Bletchley Railway. Hard black and white copies come in at £4.30 Post and Package (UK).

Please make payments to ERTA and send with request to ERTA, 24c St Michaels Road, Bedford, MK402LT.

The Retail Park is a very popular x7 days a week venue but chiefly accessible and popular for car users. Public transport does exist at 2 buses per hour approximately but the layout is full of cars moving about in confined spaces and crossing the get to other sites such as the M&S Food Hall requires crossing a busy road and half the time, the purported crossing is decommissioned. It adds up to a message 'pedestrians not welcome here'. Rope Walk Shopping complex is another example. Redesign needed.

### You can write in support of the station idea to places like:

1. Mohammad Yasin MP for Bedford and Kempston, 2A Duke Street, Bedford, MK40 3HR
2. Dave Hodgson MBE is the Elected Mayor and leader of Bedford Borough Council, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AP
3. Clerk and Council, Kempston Town Council, 104 Bedford Road, Kempston, Bedford, MK42 8BG

Together we can move towards sustainable public transport on and off the rails! E.  
[richard.erta@gmail.com](mailto:richard.erta@gmail.com)

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	<p><b>Patrons:</b> Sir Edmund Verney, The Rt Hon. the Lord Newby OBE + Others welcome of professional, business or other acumen and of good repute.</p>
	<p><b>ERTA Acting Chairman and Nationwide Coordinator, Also Responsible for the coordination of administration including Finance, Delegated Meetings, Recruitment, Administration, Membership, Teams (Great Central, Westminster, London, Northern and Southern Teams etc), the oversight of all forums, forwarding the route protection/reopening agendas, West Country Area Rep, Consultations, Media Officer (Newspapers, Magazines and main Spokesperson) and Raifuture Liaison Officer:</b>          Mr Simon Barber, 20 Fitzherbert House, Kingsmead, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 6HT T. 0208 940 4399, E. <a href="mailto:simon@barber@gmail.com">simon@barber@gmail.com</a></p>
	<p><b>Vice Chairman and Campaigns Coordinator, Bedford Area Rep/Forum/Coordinator, Publications, Deputy Media Officer (Social Media Platforms, Assistant Spokesperson), Co-Conference Organiser, Membership and General Advisor:</b>          Mr Richard Pill, 24c St. Michaels Road, Bedford, MK40 2LT T. 01234 330090/Mobile: 07541701718. E. <a href="mailto:richard.erta@gmail.com">richard.erta@gmail.com</a></p>
	<p><b>Treasurer and Business Liaison Officer:</b> Mr Colin Crawford, 21 Clunbury Court, Manor Street, Berkhamsted, HP4 2FF T. 01255- 507332 Mobile 07835-693977 Skype 020-3239-2841 E. <a href="mailto:colin.crawford1@btconnect.com">colin.crawford1@btconnect.com</a></p>
<p><a href="https://ertarail.co.uk/">https://ertarail.co.uk/</a></p>	<p><a href="https://www.linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-erta">www.linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-erta</a></p>
	<p><a href="https://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/">https://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/</a></p>

A Station for the Retail Park, Kempston and Surrounds on the Bedford-Bletchley Railway would be just the ticket for enabling more without the congestion!



~ ERTA Calls for a determined effort to implement a new station for inclusive benefit. ~

A Report by Richard Pill B.A. (Hons)

£3.00

February 2021

**Save St Johns Call:** ERTA has been busy calling for the saving of the former Bedford St Johns Station site and access from development of social housing blocking off access for a potential east-west rail route to the east off the Bedford-Bletchley Railway and vice versa. Ideally trains from Oxford would reverse into new bays at Bedford Midland – the latter needs a remodelling anyway – and out turning east towards Tempsford and Cambridge and vice versa. X5 and 905 Oxbridge Buses truncate at Bedford now anyway. We do not support the Northern Route.

**From the Chair: Why to renew, why to join and why to stay with us?**

People join ERTA for a variety of reasons and in different contexts. We are down your way, we tap into a cause dear to your heart, you agree with our stance x whatever. ERTA works when people join and tap into issues and are willing to be part of the answer of 'will it happen'. It relies on membership; it relies on activism to be dedicated to help out. This can be local, regional or national, this can be campaign specific, general and/or administrative. Without a core team at the centre, working together, liaising regularly and willing to take a chunk of responsibility for a something by mutual consent of the Executive Committee, the danger is we will be unable to cope, struggle to cover everything and things can be overlooked. That's not our fault, but with low active people, limited resources and high demands, we have to prioritise notwithstanding new people coming on board in some shape or form. Everything can be negotiated, fine-tuned and what suites you and us is where to start.

Therefore, if your membership is due, please re-join and consider what if anything you can do to help us. It could be introducing a friend to ERTA, it could be attending and peopling our meetings on-line and physical when they recommence. Please, if you can spare 1 hour per week, think of what you can contribute. The reward is every help, reliably delivered we have, assists to answer the question can/will it happen? It depends on getting people on board, galvanised, focused and pulling together. Some we may win, others maybe not or not as we would wish, but aggregately rail reopenings are firmly on the agenda and are trickling out! We can all take some of the kudos for nurturing that to happen.

Fill in the form below or go to <https://ertarail.co.uk/become-a-member/>

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



**Tear Off and Send with Your Subscription or Renewal or go to on-line:**

<https://ertarail.co.uk/become-a-member/>

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

Membership of ERTA costs £15 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](mailto:richard.erta@gmail.com)