

English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

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https://ertarail.co.uk/	www.linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-erta	https://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.com
Newsletter No. 51	September-October 2023	£1.50 where sold

Great Central Corridor 'New Build' for a New Railway Hope/New Dawn depends on willing volunteers working together at all levels and stages of a properly managed project! ERTA needs a dedicated officer to coordinate and run this project for the good of all. Unless and until, it remains a glaring gap!

Title of Project – can be re-shaped/Title of officership: Project Coordinator

Goal: The re-railing of the former Great Central Corridor from Calvert to Narborough area and beyond. This a new-build to 21st Century standards for passenger and freight. This will require new-build rails.

From Leicester going south we need to check:

1. Check where the old GC used to cross the Leicester-Nuneaton existing lines at Narborough area. Is there enough land to enable a ground level connection or is it developed over?
2. Is the route of GC free from obstruction to Lutterworth or blocked? If so what blockages/who owns it/name of company/individual.
3. Is there adjacent land to the blockage which may inform a deviation?
4. Talk to Lutterworth Town Council/ask for permission to inspect the old station site. Can it be used or is a new station required?
5. South of Lutterworth is more complicated. Old GC trackbed – it is available? What blocks it and what is missing? Likewise serving Magna Park with rail, a study is needed on best options and then:
6. You need to court local council support to the IDEA of a rebuilt or new-built railway corridor. They in turn could contact landowners and other developers like Gazeleys (developers of Magna Park) to contribute to a study for a new railway.

7. Rugby. A study is needed to:
 - a. Can an access to existing Rugby West Coast Main Line (WCML) Station be done/is it feasible and within or without what parameters/break down the objections and opportunities.
 - b. If coming across WCML by a new GC flyover/bridge and reopening Rugby Central as a second Parkway Station for the town going towards Brackley, Aylesbury and Oxford respectively and vice versa to Rugby.
 - c. Orbitals of Rugby: a study is needed for example, south of Lutterworth alongside the M1, serving DIRFT (Davenport International Rail Freight Terminal) and south and west to the former GC corridor. Could such a new link orbit south and east of Rugby built area and serve via a new station Barby and Willoughby areas (growth areas).
8. Woodford Halse a problem area, needs either compulsory purchase and relocation (extremely unpopular!) or a new alignment (expensive). If it were HS2 they would just plough through, deviate, or tunnel! All rail projects are equal, some more than others it seems!
9. Brackley East – new-build deviation with station along the A43 roundabout area for road-rail connectivity as a Parkway Station with a 10-mile catchment including the town of Brackley which is growing.
10. South of Brackley East is new-build to join with a western curve, the Oxford-Milton Keynes East-West Rail for wider linkages to Oxford, Bristol and Southampton for example. It would also have a new rail direct link to the proposed Milton Keynes-Aylesbury curve (former Claydon Junction knocked out by HS2) for Aylesbury, Old Oak Common (needs new Chiltern-served bays) and the proposed through tunnel (new) to link with (proposed) Southern Heathrow Rail Link for direct access (new east curve for Waterloo direction) and west via Woking to Guildford for Portsmouth, Redhill and if we get out way via Horsham/Shoreham to Brighton and Chichester for example/South Coast. These audiences to the GC corridor new-build.
11. Let me be clear, we are talking of £billions, say 1 mile of double track is £20 million per mile. It is a major project and goal which requires professional buy-in, adoption and taking all the way as did HS2 to Government adoption, support, and third-party funding.
12. Case studies should examine technicalities, feasibilities, engineering ‘can-do’ and where pinch-points arise be it Narborough, Lutterworth, Rugby, Woodford Halse, East Brackley, Claydon area linkages and so forth, to come up with solutions, options, and choices.
13. Once the case is made and the benefits direct and indirect formally appraised and evaluated from local to regional to national in scope, then the position may be more favourable to recovery and can-do. See No. 11 as a key coalition build goal to strive for.
14. You could break it down to segments like:
 - a. Capacity through Leicester (reopen Melton Mowbray-Nottingham direct for example)
 - b. Leicester-Narborough
 - c. Narborough Junction
 - d. Narborough-Lutterworth/Magna-Rugby
 - e. Orbitals for Rugby and new routes/alignments
 - f. South of Rugby
 - g. Brackley East (lollipop rail-head which could, if delivered serve Silverstone and feed connecting buses, helping sustain the public transport choice network more.

- h. Claydon Connectivity
- i. South of Claydon-Grendon and OOC
- j. OOC adequacy, capacity, and tunnelling options
- k. Heathrow Southern Rail – getting a broader vision and coalition on board
- l. Guildford
- m. Guildford-Cranleigh area, Horsham, and direct line to Shoreham for South Coast east and west.
- n. Reading-Brighton arc.

15. It needs a lead-volunteer and a team of volunteers coordinated working together. They need to be people committed to able-bodied action, who say what they do and do what they say in a timely manner.

All offers via richard.erta@gmail.com

If we don't act now, development is blinkered beyond own balance lines and councils complicit in such blinkeredness, it like other options will be lost within 5-10 years beyond recovery. Even now it is an 11th hour. Be clear, this is a new railway to 21st C designs for freight and passenger use, capacity and trying to decongest M1 and other roads. Development through these corridors is unsustainable without it, as all associated vehicles – passenger or business, goes by road as a norm, compounding an environmental problem of some magnitude nationwide and as of model, completely the wrong way.

“And our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible. We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator. ”

Ref: Secretary-General's remarks to High-Level opening of COP27, 07 November 2022.

Ref: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-11-07/secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-opening-of-cop27>

There are many climate change deniers, maybe not vocally, but quasi-religious ignorance, rooted in beliefs or indeed, unbelief (!) and many who dissent from denialism, find they are locked into a system which favours roads, traffic, and congestion.

The closures of most local railways including the Great Central happened best part of 60 years ago, decades of abandonment, neglect, other agendas, uses and entrenched lifestyle otherliness/indifference and so salvage what you may, but see opportunity for new creation and pragmatic what gives, what takes is 'it' in a new rail term.

16. A new railway presents new on and off the rail's opportunities.

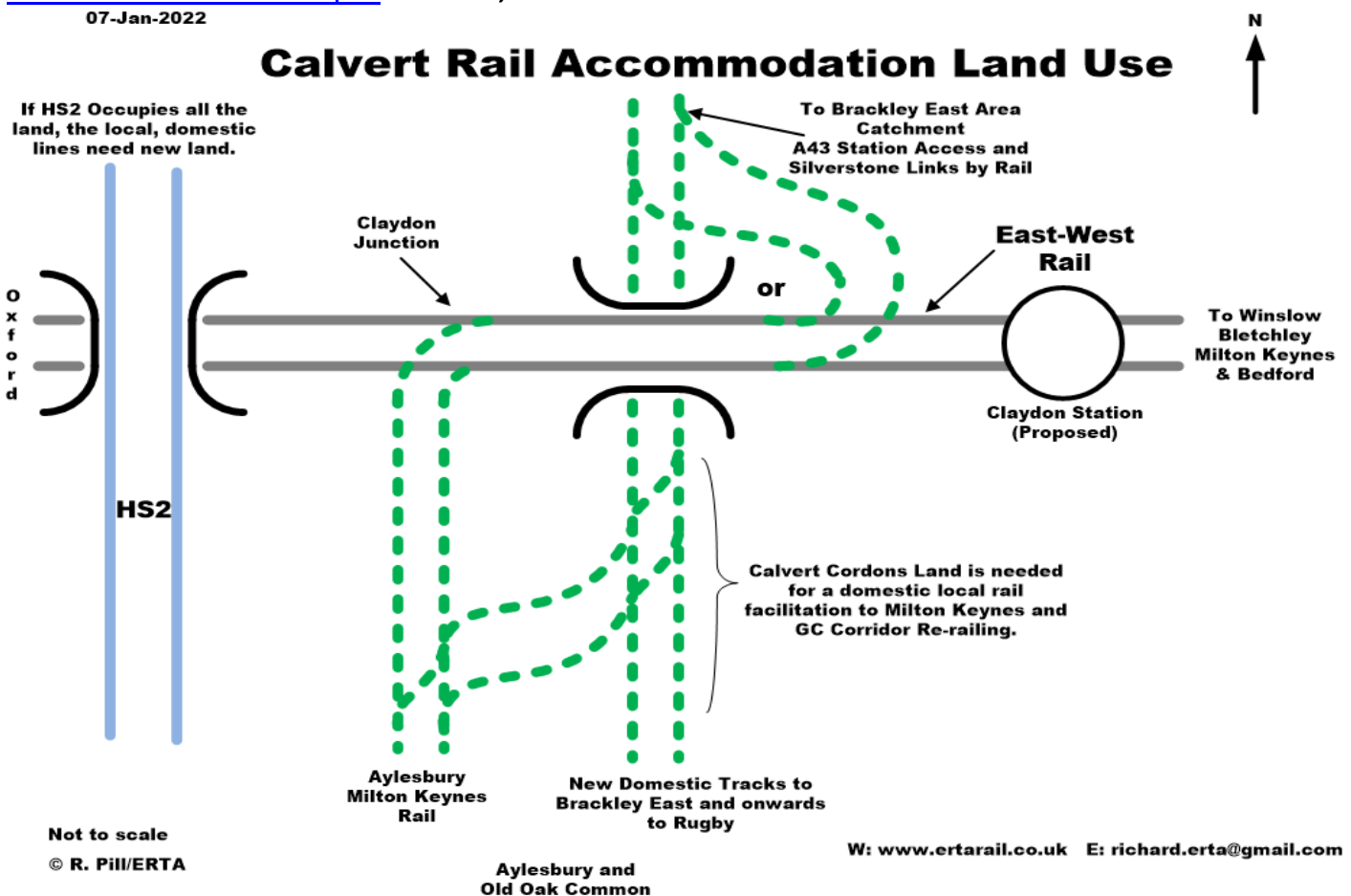
- a. Footfall and spend/new flows of business, income, and employment direct/indirect and associated supply chains
- b. Cleaner traffic reduction context of life and purpose
- c. More freight by rail, less congestion, less accidents, quicker end-to-end timings
- d. Could design, if national goals wanted Piggyback and roll-on, roll-off facilitations e.g Lutterworth-West London (Lutterworth area is where M1, A14 and M6 meet but has no rail whatsoever!).
- e. More seats as 'not via London or Birmingham' for North-West-South-West rail-based travel saves time and cost and frees up other tracks and main place stations for other growth and business.

f. Cleaner air, less litter, and more opportunities for creating wildlife habitats/ecology as well as saving land for farming, conservation, housing and employment sustainably.

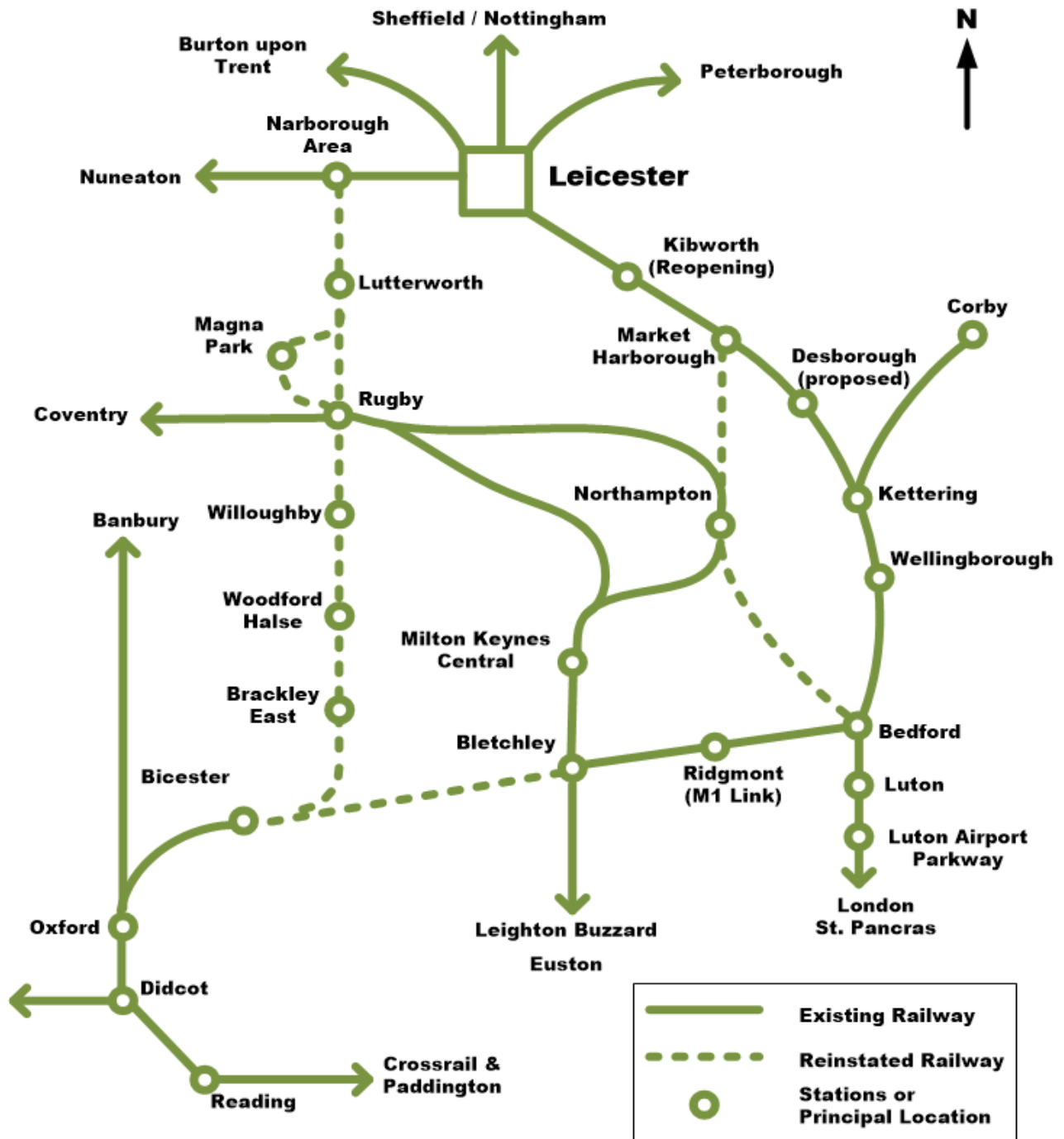
17. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-business-case/transport-business-case-guidance> Gov.UK Department for Transport

If you have the time and tenacity to wade through all the bits, pieces, and giblets of all the considerations, caveats, and minutiae here, we'd welcome your kind offer of help with open arms! There's always the kybosh that Government Elected/Treasury turns round and says "great idea but no money" and so having a strong coalition of support at all levels and third-party funding like developers sponsoring costs, contributing and professional leadership is crucial to court and maintain all the way along the corridor as well as trying to court and reach out to NIMBYs – there always will be – and win over where can do/invite helpers to find alternatives without bumping into other vested interests. Good luck, as in this game, it is exactly imprecise and un-guaranteed to win or find fortune, but in the scheme of things, every reason to bother. Again, ability to build teams of people and assign to reliable people chunks to focus on and then round-table to measure progress, identify challenges and prioritise are skills which come from know-how, but experience can also be telling. See: <https://ertarail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/ERTA-Campaign-Great-Central-Corridor.pdf> R. B. Pill, ERTA CEO 08-08-2023

07-Jan-2022



Leicester Rail Access & Capacity Solutions



Not to scale © R. Pill/ERTA Visit us at www.ertarail.co.uk E: richard.erta@gmail.com

This diagram is not the last word. It aims to give a flavour of intent and can be re-done, upgraded, modified as we go.

Rail Users Deserve Better - A joined-up railway and value for money/quality and prices people can buy into! Travel Diary:

On 11th March I took the train between Bedford and Market Harborough (MH) and back. I took a bag on wheels. Whilst government must take some responsibility, it begs the question also does the Unitary-Mayoral model of Local Government render to a quisling culture and a figurehead as 'the extended arm of Central Government' rather than a lobby-voice for the people and their 'local' aspirations? Bedford has a huge debate on routes and to be or not to be on East-West Rail but existing rail-based public transport leaves much to be desired. To get to MH one needs to change at Kettering, invariably go over the footbridge and do the same on return, meaning 2 trains to get to and from MH or Leicester from Bedford. That is a time-cost, that is an inconvenience. The gaps between low platforms and train steps in a context of many getting off and on, means for older people like myself, great care is required to avoid falling through the gap or breaking a bone on a hard step-off.

Cost and ticket were not such an issue, but NRES, which is fairly good, said pre-book when kind ticket office people said not required. I was thankful for the latter. Plenty of spare seats to Kettering, but only 5 coaches or so and choca-block on the East Midlands express services which call at MH. Standing room only, yes fast, yes only a few minutes, but had I of pre-booked a specific seat reservation: a. I could not get to it and where to put luggage? b. I could not get up and to doors to alight. No better coming back either. Lifts useful when working, not always the case, so I must carry bag on wheels over busy footbridges. Government cuts and 'reforms' mean less staff, stringent rationing and Mick Lynch is right to flag these up as dysfunction for rail and passenger needs also.

On 5th April I travelled off-peak to Guildford and the ticket with a disabled railcard cost £31.85 return. Now why get rid of Return Tickets? I bought it on the day at a ticket office and one ticket took me there with underground and the other brought me back via 'any permitted route'. I think Returns should be an option and should give a discount regardless plus concessionaries off-peak and singles should be either comparable or returns courting a discount for more rail usage? From Bedford, train was delayed due to no driver we were told, and then went semi-fast calling only at Luton to St Pancras and onwards as a Thameslink normal service. I alighted at St Pancras, got the tube, and ended up at Waterloo. As the sun shone, I thought Waterloo was at its best. I found a fast train for Portsmouth via Guildford and only one stop at Woking. There was a commotion by one lady and some others who discovered 3 out of 4 toilets locked out of action, this a busy 'express' service!

I did what I went to do and came back via Guildford-Redhill (for Thameslink connection). All fine as far as it goes, but no-one on that route checked any tickets, so plenty for freebies? Cause unknown and uncommunicated. I left Guildford approx. 15.15

I got a Thameslink train at Redhill but it was going to Peterborough, so I alighted at busy Blackfriars and due to a 10 minute wait at a signal en-route to London Bridge, the Bedford train came in within about 10-minutes. It was packed but by Luton plenty of spare capacity. One person walked through the train (Peterborough-bound) from East Croydon-London asking for money, food and any donations. One knows not whether genuine or a scammer,

but how did he afford a ticket if destitute/who paid it? Likewise, graffiti can be observed in many cases where one can think 'how did they get 'there''? Like bike theft, such is either well planned, organised and executed, an insider job or some grey area between? Lastly as far as Bedford is concerned, reinstate trains on the Bedford-Bletchley Railway as Vivarail stock is available elsewhere, why not exact same model and deal for our line too? Farce is how one observer describes it, darned reckless could be another. Government is not going public, is not communicating and surely Government must bring fragments together and ensure the rail wheels keep turning?

My conclusion so far is that whilst we need reopenings, rebuilds and reinstatements and that agenda, we also need some human-faced and funded TLC of customer care, seamless journeys, and more attention to detail and joined-upness. I am glad disabled people's views are being sought. I want one nation, one railway and basic standards from accessible toilets (Bedford male/female toilets are too small per volume/where is the 'disabled' cubicle?) and price/value for money and no, I am not an advocate for 'Third-Class' either!

A Class 700 Thameslink Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) sits at St Albans, Hertfordshire 2022. ERTA has been proactive in highlighting both existing rail user issues and expansion of the rail network to enable more and better connectivity. To be honest, the main things holding us back, apart from weird governmental communication and silences, is a lack of funding, adequate levels of volunteers to niche fill and help generally. Can you spare an hour per week and get involved with us? Fund raising can be done desk-top. Reliability is required as per patience with applying for grants and funding. Numerous other volunteering vacancies exist including committee work, technical support, and a sales officer.



Email richard.erta@gmail.com and please offer to help us do more and better. Thank you. We are only as good as a growing membership may inform. We can all do something!

ERTA Northern Thrust: Sheffield Calling!

On Saturday 20th May I attended the ERTA Sheffield meeting being held at the Benjamin Huntsman which is a Wetherspoons pub and there were 5 people there - our members David Ferguson and Christopher Hyomes, plus Stephen Chaytow (MEMRAP) and Chris Bell (Don Valley Railway). The following items were discussed:

- MEMRAP (Buxton/Chinley - Matlock) - There is expected to be an increase in aggregate production which is being planned.
- Buxton will be connected to Chinley via a freight-only line using a Very Light Railway (like what is proposed for Coventry).
- Ambergate North curve is being proposed, linking the Matlock branch and the line to Sheffield.
- Don Valley Railway - Outline Strategic Business case. Hopefully this will become a Full Business case and then the Department of Transport.
- Barrow Hill Railway - That is a freight-only line from Chesterfield to Woodhouse, and there is now a Full Business case.
- Woodhead - There is at present a shortage of construction workers.

We also discussed the re-opening of the Doncaster - Knottingley railway line (freight-only line) including the re-opening of Askern Station. Notes by Chris Hyomes and Simon Barber.

Photos associated with the Sheffield Meeting:



ERTA is only as good as its members inform. We aim to get back to Sheffield and welcome people to turn out and engage positively. We still need photos for Woodhead Report to proceed please. Contact richard.erta@gmail.com with firm offers. It is all voluntary for a good cause – reopening lines! See Facebook also:

<https://www.facebook.com/ERTAnorthernrailinks>

Op-Ed Opinion on getting focus, balance and determination instilled in many a debate!

Please can you head hunt to find someone willing to take photos of the former Woodhead trackbed - not more than half a dozen or so, Then I can finish my report. Then I can market it on-line and add a bit of weight to the debate on Woodhead rebuild itself.

I can't go there for many reasons, but we need photos asap to pep up the report and for me to use on social media of a 'now' railway, not past glories.

As a southerner I have to tread carefully, but feel a. there's a rivalry between Leeds and Sheffield and east-west of Pennines; b. there's a diversity of views which means translates to varied agendas which then gets interpreted as 'not knowing exactly the definitive answer' so we get fudge of agencies courting high salaries, trading reports and organising conferences, but absence is spades on the ground as far as reopenings/rebuilds are concerned. Correct me if wrong, but that is my impression. It may also be elsewhere around Britain too, but with limited resources, we can but reach out via the forums, people can use them to introduce new-comers to ERTA, join and volunteer to be either area reps or general helpers where they live. The more we grow, the more we can aspire to do and better. That is how it works, delegated responsibility and leadership from the Executive Committee/EC in prioritising.

We do not wish to be like some organisations who plum for popularism and never get to the Haverhill's and Cirencester's of this world as they don't believe in them! We can aspire to try and raise the game across a wide spectrum and be inclusive. In the 1980's I was told by a Labour MP that Robin Hood Bay line linking Scarborough and Whitby was too far gone and no demand, yet now we see renewed interest and probably desecrated by development as per north of Ripon to Northallerton? We need teams who get in there, make the case and oppose blight/foster reworking to ensure new-build rail can be got through.

Some of you may find this of interest: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/6719/gmipr-evidence-update-transport.pdf>

On the one hand HS2/3 offers principal place to principal place and nothing in between.

So, driving to a principal place to catch a long-distance speed train is probable and/or existing rail commute and change? But what about interim places of places where existing rails and/or criss-cross rail links don't exist anymore thanks to closures or new patterning? More drive-time/default to roads seems likely and their swallowing money in upgrades whilst we still long-grass rail? I am not saying 'reopen everything' even as some give that impression, but neither am I saying throw the baby out with the bathwater either and reject everything and swallow Beeching era negativity whole. All offers to help Richard via richard.erta@gmail.com Better with a Parkway Station and new-built local-region rail for people and goods off local roads! <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Woodhead,+Glossop+SK13+1JA/@53.496728,-1.8717302,15z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m6!3m5!1s0x487bce3038b1bd91:0x4b20a2b276dc139b!8m2!3d53.496729!4d-1.861409!16zL20vMDVuMmsw?hl=en&entry=ttu>

Dates for your Diary:

ERTA Northampton Public Meeting: Saturday 30th September at The Northampton Quakers, Quaker House, Wellington Street, Northampton NN1 3AS <https://www.quaker.org.uk/meetings/northampton> 2pm-4pm (core time) with Guest Speaker: **Andrew Meaney, Partner in Oxera** <https://www.oxera.com/> An economic and finance consultancy. Andrew will be speaking around “Rail funding, and effective business cases” followed by **Peter Doveston of Northants Streets Campaign**, both with **Questions and Answers (Q&A)**. There will also be discussion for a **Northampton-Market Harborough rail link** as well as a general rail and transport discussion and a general mingle and sales stall (old magazines mainly). Please bring **cash** with you. Any enquiries please ring 01234 330090 or email richard.erta@gmail.com All welcome. A retiring collection will be available. Please invite others and help spread the word. Parking is limited. All offers to help get people there and support on the day welcome. Successful meetings can inspire other to get involved. Northampton-Market Harborough rail needs a dedicated team!

Next Bedfordshire Forum is: Wednesday 6th September 1pm food for 2pm business at The Albion Pub, 36 Dunstable Street, **Amphill**, Bedfordshire, MK45 2JT T. 01525 634 857 e. bexlane2201@gmail.com All welcome. Please help spread the word. You can bring your own food, as pub only does crisps and drinks! Help inform an Amphill Parkway Station! Read our narrative document via requests to richard.erta@gmail.com It must be done!

Bedfordshire Forum: the King William pub in **Kempston** <https://kingwilliamkempston.co.uk/>, which will be on **Wednesday 4 October from 1pm lunch and 2-4pm business**. All are welcome. We will be looking for volunteers to help inform a team to get and progress a Retail Park Kempston new station on the **Bedford-Bletchley Railway** with a disabled-footbridge between Southfields and the compound. The King William Pub is on the Nos 1 and 53 bus routes out of Bedford and C1 from Milton Keynes Central. An agenda will be issued nearer the time. Contact richard.erta@gmail.com or dial 01234 330090 for enquiries.

St Albans Public Meeting: Saturday, 14 October at the Quaker Meeting House, 7 Upper Lattimore Road, St. Albans AL1 3UD. Phone 01727-764454. An agenda will be issued on the day. Lawyer Mr Tony Houghton will be one speaker on the **Croxley Rail Link (Watford to [Croxley Rail Link] - WC2L** and associated Hertfordshire and radial matters and, we hope, another speaker as yet to be confirmed. Good chance to meet, you do not have to be a local – it is open to all, so all welcome. Bring cash for the mini sales stall.

For updates and other information, please check our website events page:
<https://ertarail.co.uk/events/>

Volunteers needed to attend and help out with ensuring smooth operations on the day with helpers for refreshments, setting up and packing away.

AGM Results 2023:



Above: 6 people attended our AGM including our Patron Mr Trevor Garrod from Lowestoft.

Below: End of meeting, Richard packs our stock for next time. Join us for next time!



On 15th July at The Swan Pub at Flitwick, adjacent to the Thameslink Train serves railway station, some 6 members gathered for the AGM. It was congenial and we managed to get the mandate for the bank coinciding with the new appointment of Mr David J. Start as our Treasurer taking over from Colin Crawford. We also managed to agree our membership is approximately 42 people including 3 councils. We discussed the threat and consultation around closure of ticketing offices at local rail stations and agreed Richard would make a formal intervention on behalf of ERTA. We discussed the 'Narrative on an Ampthill Station' paper Richard had prepared. Most agreed that 3 minutes may be added to journey, but Wixams and Ampthill could share trains and stagger frequencies if timetable and pathing is a real issue and not a smoke screen! Membership goes up to £20 per annum from the new year of January 2024.

For last year's accounts (below)

c/o: colin.crawford1@btconnect.com

Summary	ERTA Accounts year to 31.03.23	£
01.04.22	Opening Balance	522.81
	Receipts	
	Subscriptions	320.00
	Donations	750.28
	Refund	
	Total	1070.28
	Expenses	
	Public Liability Ins	219.06
	Printing postage etc	790.00
	Subscription Rail Future	25.00
	Travel	64.00
	Bank Charges	78.90
	Total	1176.96
	Deficit	106.68
	Closing Balance	416.13

From the CEO: The summer again proved the adage right that summer and winter are when governments bury bad news knowing people are otherwise distracted be it summer holidays or Christmas. On the one hand we have had the spectacle of ticket office closures and the withdrawal of the Travelcard and on the other industrial action over pay and conditions including the cuts masked behind the digital agendas, which arguably puts profit before people x the whole public sector. Then on the other side, we have a floundering cost-benefit HS2 project which seems as incongruent as the hokey-cokey – in Euston one minute, out of Euston the next, and to be or not to be Manchester Piccadilly or going underground? Personally, if we are to have such a new railway, it should go from the Channel Tunnel, serve Gatwick and Heathrow, Birmingham and rebuild the former Manchester Central Station for an interchange with local services creating more capacity and a triangulation with Piccadilly and Victoria of footfall and spend. Alas, having rubbished such and done everything to prevent re-use of the former Central Station, now the bleating is where to put HS2? I have never been a fan of HS2 personally. **Simon Heffer** in his Observer article ‘The New Age of the Train’ (**August 2017, The New Stateman**) says the Beeching closures were foolish and in the round for a mere £70 billion you could have reversed all and still have £25 billion for an electrification programme, creating capacity, reconnecting communities and many environmental, socio-economic gains and saving land. Instead, £100 billion HS2 and a turbulent and dubious delivery date, time-cost ratio of uncertainty whilst Government says the rail x57 other pots are empty and economies must be made. To lay people, it comes across as a bit rich!

ERTA Membership Form 2023-2024 – Join or Renew

(Official annual renewal date is circa 31st January in any given year. Exemptions apply, see, or notify Mr Tony Houghton if you joined recently for example).



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 just £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)

Membership Secretary: **Mr Tony Houghton**, T. 077659 77318 tony.houghton@keystonelaw.co.uk

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

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