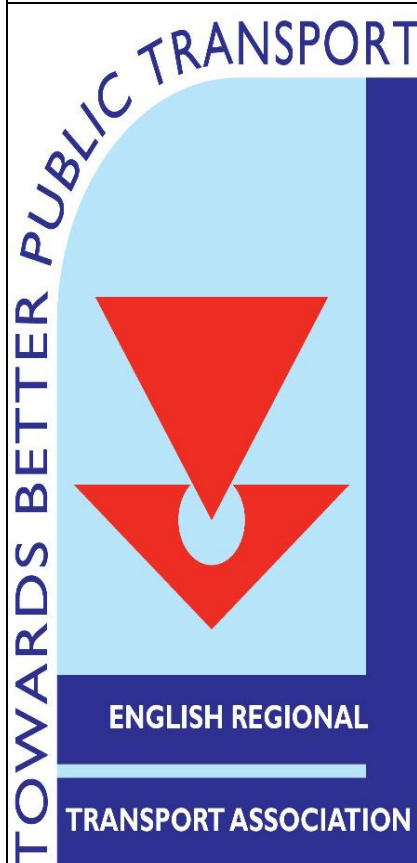


English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)



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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W. https://www.ertarail.com/	www.linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-erta	https://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/
Newsletter No. 32	July-August 2020	Price where sold £1.00

From the Chair: Squaring a transport system which does not add up! ERTA produced a pamphlet as we do, extolling virtues for a Gloucester-Ross-on-Wye-Hereford rail link (email richard.erta@gmail.com to request the pdf or see our publicity page on our website: <https://www.ertarail.com/publicity-page>) and sent to councils and elected representatives to gauge their views and reactions to see the lie of the land politically. A response from a senior planner at one of the councils said: *'[the Council] will only support the re-opening of railway lines where a robust business case can be provided by the scheme promoter. The business case must provide clear evidence of benefits to the economy and deliverability'* [] mine. Almost to the day we had another report from Cambridgeshire that various parties involved had agreed a package to bid to Government for funding for a March-Wisbech rail reopening. The business case had cost £1, 445 376. Like where are ordinary members of the public, who passionately care, supposed to find such sums to get those in good jobs to 'take any interest'? Solutions on a postcard maybe, but give up cannot be an option in a Climate Emergency or even responsible stewardship of resources in a world of need and diminutives. Current Government in 2020 have awarded £27 billion for new roads and a mere £500 million for their Rail Reopenings Fund. The difference is not lost on us, and what signal does it send out that the Government is taking environmental and land use matters seriously? #ertarail
See: <https://www.elystandard.co.uk/news/wisbech-march-rail-link-gets-board-approval-1-6687693>

Reopening News and Reflections:

Gloucester-Ross-on-Wye-Hereford:

Although a long time closed, this direct rail link on the one hand has against it that some places are blocked needing new alignment/pieces of new build. We are aware that double-track new build comes in at around £20 million per mile. On the other hand the route if recovered, would link not only Gloucester and associated rails with Hereford, but enable a direct line from Reading-Shrewsbury 'not via Oxford and Birmingham' which could create not only new traffic in itself but free up much-needed capacity elsewhere, enabling more passenger and freight movements via rail transport. The jewel in the crown is re-railing the Ross-on-Wye area, a location associated with ANOB Status. The A40 plies and brings many volumes of traffic to this rail desert area and the proliferation of traffic is a major eyesore, nuisance and land use for parking is land which cannot be used for leisure, employment or housing for example, let alone conservation! ERTA hopes, when unlock allows, to table forums to bring people together. Please try and attend and swell our ranks. We need to grow our membership, please help us with doing that.

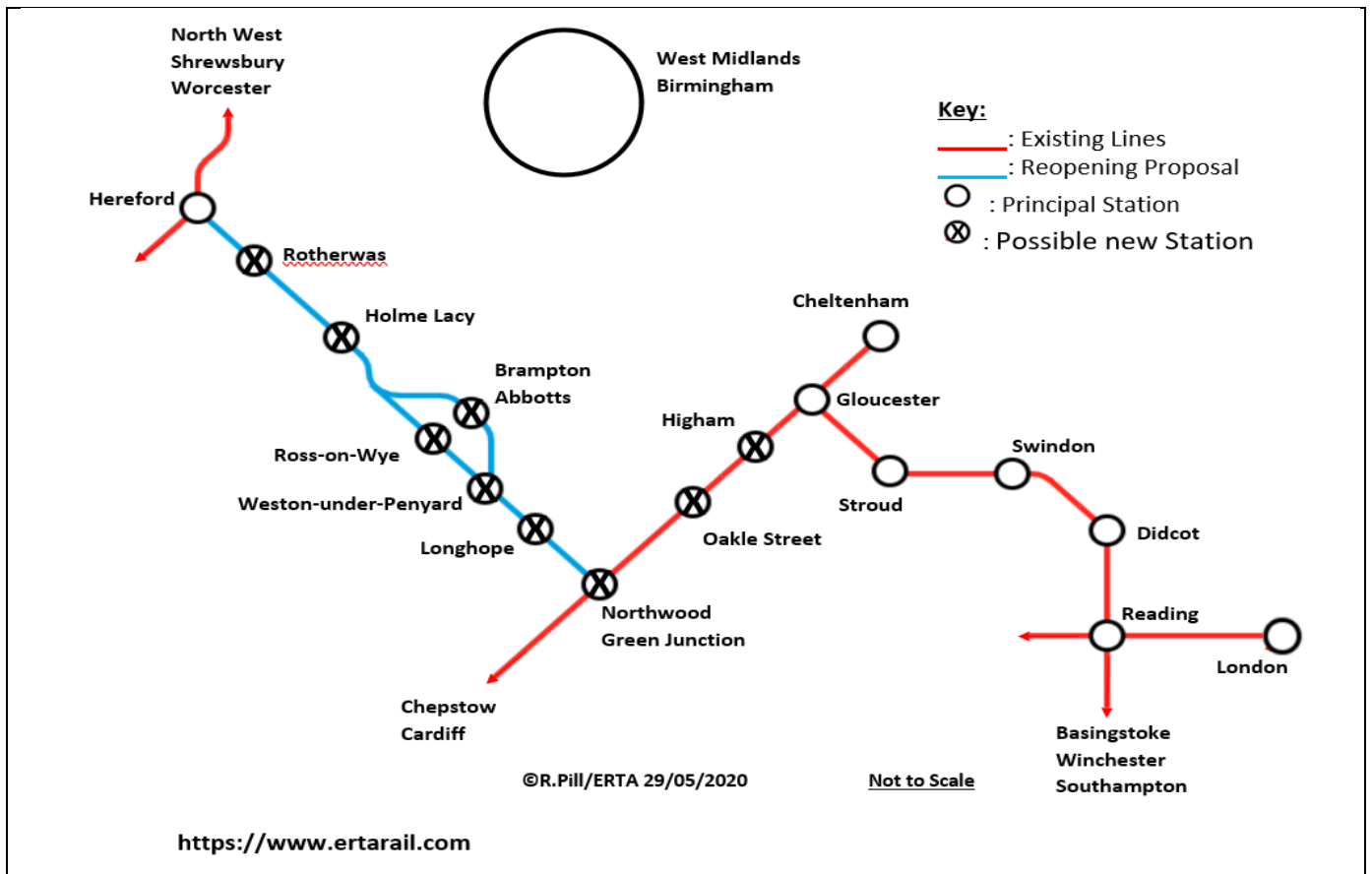
March-Spalding: In Rail Magazine Issue 903 Page 56-57 there was an interesting article of an agency called UK2070 advocating new-build rail solutions. One was a Peterborough-Wisbech-Kings Lynn rail link, but ironically, a new build March-Spalding was not included. The map indicates east of Kings Lynn, there's a bus link to Norwich, handy but less-than going all the way by rail and what of freight by rail? Currently, whilst the Werrington duck-under being built at Peterborough is a good thing, paths between Ely and Peterborough are premium. A direct link is needed in any case to cater for more by rail and economies.

Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton: It is laudable that a submission for Harrogate-Ripon is listed in the bids for some government funding for reopenings (or studies thereof) and given Ripon, a historic town and place attracting growing numbers of visitors, and expanding as a place, only has buses and the busy A61 road. This commuter link is a first step, but we should not lose sight that for real optimum benefit, you need the through rail route capability realised in rebuilding back to the main line at Northallerton. That would de-congest York and free up more capacity.

Great Central from Banbury or Calvert-Rugby area/Narborough via Lutterworth. In normal times, we have tabled forums at Rugby, Leicester and Aylesbury. Some have suggested rather than Oxford-Bicester-new link north of Calvert, we go for a rebuild of the Banbury-Woodford Halse instead. Our retort is fine, who gets there first wins. If someone can get funding and support for it, make a case and get it accepted as a GRIP project, we will not object. But meanwhile we hold out that all the old route needs formal protection interim anyway and there is a need for solutions to problems studies. Getting around, connecting with Rugby is a study in itself, but worth it.

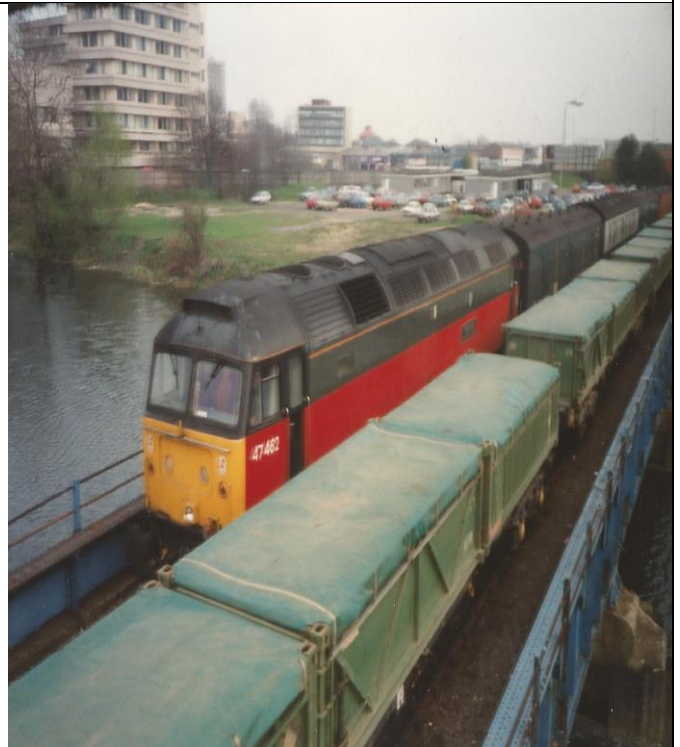
Guildford-Cranleigh-Horsham-Shoreham:

A key impediment is Cranleigh where old station site is lost and development encroaches on the old trackbed. Realignment is not straight-forward and numerous pinch-points means objections and NIMBYISM more likely and support tepid unless it becomes a real top-down all tiers of government buy-in and say "must have" and bulldoze through or make alternative arrangements. Traffic will only get worse with associated issues. The rail link would enable local commutes as well as linking Brighton with Reading and Heathrow direct and all in between. We pioneer in hope! Our pamphlet is on our website publicity page.



Caption below: Looking east-wards from London Road Bridge circa 2011 on to the old Bedford-Cambridge trackbed. Negotiations would have had to be found to accommodate Stagecoach parking spaces were this corridor to be reused.

Caption below: Taken during the mid-1990's, a postal train from Bletchley passed a waste train for Forder's Sidings on the piece of track between the 1984 St John's Halt and Bedford Midland Station. ERTA has called for upgrading and straightening.



St John's Reflections – a missed opportunity?



Above caption: The old St John's Station site in Bedford, taken amazingly from a moving train in the 1980's. It is even more amazing (and sad) that the site was not considered for other railway purposes before demise in 1984 when Bedford-Bletchley services moved into Bedford Midland or in the 36 years interim, even with an east-west consortium! Now we have 12 coach Thameslink trains and an 8-coach length washer siding, could a 12-coach washer facility be put on the old site down to Cardington Road? Off through tracks, plenty of space and by default keeps this eastern access corridor open. Given the old route was double track, could a fenced off second half be used as a pedestrian-cum-cycleway from the 1984 St John's Halt to Cardington Road to join the Sustrans old trackbed route to/from Sandy? Indeed, given 2024 we have Oxford-Bedford rails restored with services, could you not reinstate the old triangle using auto points and have a run-around for steam and other 'specials' south of Leicester or east from Didcot or Quainton Road for example based on Bedford as 'leisure line'? Alas, none of these possibilities have been realised or flagged up or considered. Rail industry shows no leadership or vision, council wants every bit of urban brown field for development and that it seems is the way this rail corridor and piece of land will go – lost forever to rail purposes, more cars on the road and a very poor deal for cyclists trying to get from the cycle path in Ampthill/Victoria Road to the Embankment via Ampthill Road Bridge and Rope Walk for example. It is a nightmare with busy roads and plenty of pollution. No green spaces. Could the St John's site have been a conservation-cum-parkland with the cycle-walkway facility integrated? Alas, none of this seems in the minds of our industry, developers or leaders and we are poorer for it as development without sustainable infrastructure and green spaces is a recipe for locked-in dysfunctionality.