

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 repute.	
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https://ertarail.co.uk/	www.linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-erta	https://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/
ERTA Newsletter No. 42	March-April 2022	£1.00 where sold

As in all cases, change is inevitable, the nature of change is what counts surely?

ERTA is 7 years old and needs to update and reform to maintain its growth. One way is to reform the constitution, it needs an overhaul and we aim to hold members meetings to facilitate that review and tweaking. Likewise, we may not have an Executive Committee for the time being, but thrice yearly plus the AGM Members Meetings to better link our members with power, decision making and hopefully involvement. These will alternate between Zoom, Bedford and Berkhamsted for the time being. Our public meetings and forums work aims to continue. More comes by members being willing to take responsibility and enable/facilitate with consent. Bedford, Horsham and Northampton are key centres but growth is not constrained merely by geography. If we have the reliable assistant volunteers, our reach is stronger.

Individuals need to assess what they can reasonably do. Whilst we do need reliable leafleting, admin assistance and help with marketing, basics like catering and ensuring smooth running is also open to extra helpers. Our St Paul's Stall (pictured below) is an opportunity to serve and gain experience engaging with the public. All sorts of spin-off benefits can arise, including better communication, x2-way exchanges and networking opportunities.



Events and Opportunities:

Public Meeting:

Saturday 26th March 2pm 2022

With Guest Speaker Mr George Bathurst, on the Windsor Rail Link and possible others. All Welcome!

in the Meeting Hall, Horsham Unitarian Church,
Worthing Road, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 1SL

<https://horshamunitarianchurch.com/how-to-find-us/>

To discuss the rebuilding of a Horsham – Shoreham and Guildford rail links and associated matters. All enquiries and offers of help like pre-event leafleting please contact Richard Pill richard.erta@gmail.com Leafleting is aimed for distribution in March, so diary/act_now please.

Our meetings are open to all, so all welcome and bring your friends too!

ERTA Ampthill and Flitwick Forum: Saturday 30 April 2022, 1pm food* 3-5pm business.

Times will be shored up nearer the date of the event. Venue is The Swan Pub, 1 Dunstable Road, Bedford MK45 1HP T: [01525 754777](tel:01525754777) E: steph@theswanflitwick.co.uk

It is adjacent to the Thameslink-served railway station and with ample parking and bus links too. <https://www.swaninnflitwick.co.uk/menus/>

All welcome. If coming please email richard.erta@gmail.com

Any offers with reliable leafleting around Ampthill and Flitwick ahead of this event, please let Richard know. All offers are welcome to entertain please. It is all voluntary.

*Everyone is responsible to buy and pay for their own food and transport costs.

Write in support of a new station to:

1. Ampthill Town Council: <https://www.amphilltowncouncil.org.uk/contact>

2. Central Beds Council: [https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/directory/14/a to z/B](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/directory/14/a%20to%20z/B)

3. MP for Mid Beds: Ms Nadine Dorries <https://members.parliament.uk/member/1481/contact>

ERTA London Forum

Saturday 12th March 2022 14.00 food,

15.00-17.00 business

The Barrel Vault, Unit 23, St Pancras International Station, Pancras Road, London N1C 4QP T. 020-7837-5151

<https://www.jdwetherspoon.com/pubs/all-pubs/england/london/the-barrel-vault-st-pancras>

Contacts:

Mr David Ferguson –

E. daferguson1212@gmail.com

Mr Simon Barber –

E. simon4barber@gmail.com

T. 0208 940 4399

If you have any issues, concerns, schemes or wish to help with promoting ERTA, its aims or assist with advancing projects, please let us know. Forums are open to all/all welcome.

If you would like to help with affordable venue finding, please let us know.

Sara Homer/Brackmills Rail Link News

An update from Brackmills Northampton.

The Brackmills Industrial Estate Business Improvement District is forming a GID (Green Improvement District).

This will form a coalition between Brackmills, Delapre Abbey and the University of Northampton (Waterside).

Our aim is to create a triangle between us to enable all the three factions to work on reducing congestion, emissions and to make the area a cleaner, greener area to live and work in. The idea is to improve easier and better ways to commute to and from work and to also improve fitness of our employees, residents and students that live and work in the area.

This should give us more of a voice to apply for grant funding and any other available monies to move forward to the potential of reopening the railway track on Buryport Road. This will run from Brackmills, passing by the University of Northampton at Waterside on Mid-Summer Meadow and finally stopping near to town centre.

To be on Sara's email loop send requests and support to:
sara.homer@brackmillsindustrialestate.co.uk



Captions: Top Left, Mrs Sara Homer, CEO of Brackmills Industrial Estate, top right Delapre Abbey signs and bottom right University of Northampton Waterside Campus. ERTA is delighted the drive for a re-railing of the branch is getting under way and we wish it well. Sara as a local resident and CEO with excellent links, is well poised to lead the charge for better public transport.



News and Notes:

Great Central Corridor: Again, with Simon's stroke and David's heart attack and triple bypass operation and my eye operations coming up, operational manpower is at a critical stage with ERTA and we appeal to our members to offer to come forward to take on admin and project roles and generally take responsibility for manning key aspects of our work please. Offers to richard.erta@gmail.com The main qualification is reliability. The corridor needs re-railing, not necessarily on every inch of old Great Central alignment, but a new-build rail link which may assume part of the trackbed where appropriate. It needs key backing from Councils, Agencies, Businesses and ultimately Government vision! It is a clear choice between more road or rail outcomes.

West Country Drive – We need YOU! Our intervention has fanned flames for activism to get happening in the Devon area. There was aspiration for Ilfracombe, Bideford, Bude, Tavistock and Sidmouth to name but a few as well as a direct London-Taunton-Barnstaple rebuild to take-on trunk roads and congestion through rail-based modal choice. The reopening of Okehampton is a catalyst for extension to Tavistock and so with others, the ultimate re-railing the aforementioned key resorts and outlying places for better all-year-round footfall, spend and connectivity with associated benefits like sustainable jobs, land freed from parking demand and cleaner areas to show off their natural beauty and charm can be better realised with these local-based rail links restored. We need Government to have a nationwide plan of implementation and year-on-year delivery coming from equitable funding between rail reopenings and the current unjust £40 billion allocated to new roads which needs top-slicing! Again, from a growing membership pool, is anyone up for being an Area Rep in the South West or anywhere else to wave our agenda and recruit and grow a team to enable more.

Leicester-Market Harborough-Northampton Rail Link Actions and Concerns: "West Northamptonshire Council is responsible for building phase two – the section of road across the railway line connecting the developer's road to the A5199 Welford Road. Several traffic calming measures, and junction improvements are also planned as part of the scheme. The development of the new junction on the track-bed of the Northampton to Market Harborough railway line will not prevent the reopening of the line in whatever form in the future." Source: <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news/cabinet-consider-ps20-million-funding-bid-north-west-relief-road> ERTA is concerned that putting a flat road junction on an old railway formation WILL in fact make reopening the rail link much harder. We want all councils to form a loose coalition with MP's and other agencies to support the idea of rail reopening and the practical steps to move it towards delivery in a as timely a manner as may be fortuitous? The benefits would be huge including increased end-to-end transit timings for East Midlands to Northampton, Milton Keynes and Oxford (via east-west rail) and vice versa to Leicester and East Midlands and wider connectivity. Therefore, we do need all help to make these concerns and aspirations known to MP's and others and ideally, we would have an ERTA Member acting as a coordinator to move the whole project forward. Key Councils are West Northants Council, Harborough District Council and Leicestershire County Council. The idea of a multi-use 'green corridor' could be envisaged and nurtured over time with the railway as the main continuum throughout requiring specific engineering stability. Footpaths and cycleways can be more flexible generally and should be slewed. Again, consistency of goals and year-on-year commitment is just the ticket for delivery!

All Things Yorkshire!

Our Member Mr Chris Hyomes, gives us the load-down on all he's been doing for rail causes in 'God's Own Country'!

Queensbury Tunnel - 2021 Round up

It's been another tumultuous year.

National Highways spent £2.8M erecting a plug below No.3 Shaft, rather than agreeing to the dewatering arrangement offered by the landowner which would have allowed RamArch/sprayed concrete strengthening to be installed at a fraction of the cost. The rent on the pumping station has still not been paid almost six years after the first instalment became due.

The work at No.3 Shaft was probably the most expensive and high-risk single project ever undertaken by the Historical Railways Estate, yet no formal progress reports were produced and practically no emails exchanged about it amongst their team. They have adopted a scorched-earth approach to record-keeping, demonstrating again just how disreputable the company is.

National Highways' technical report into options for reuse of the tunnel - no doubt contrived to blow repair out of the water - and Sustrans' draft study into the benefits of a cycle network connecting Bradford/Keighley to Halifax via the tunnel are being reviewed by Bradford Council.

"We are now starting work on understanding the inter-relationship between the technical report into the tunnel repair and the economic assessment by Sustrans in order that a holistic picture of the initial costs and benefits of a cycleway through the tunnel can be fully understood, as well as the on-going liabilities which could arise", says the Council.

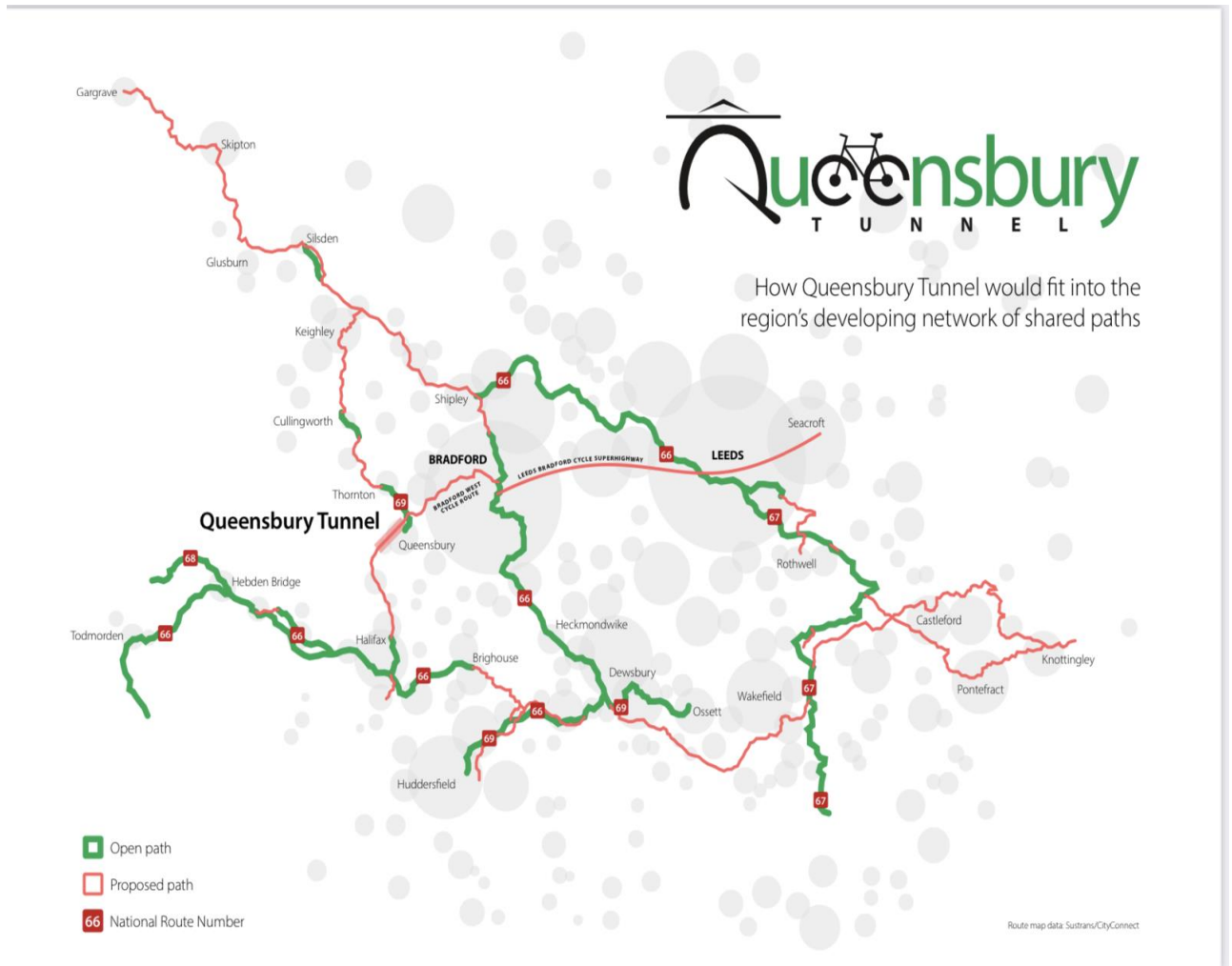
There are pots of Government money for levelling-up and transforming cities which could provide funding for a cycle path through the tunnel. A route from Bradford city centre to Thornton - providing access to the existing Great Northern Railway Trail - is going ahead and Calderdale Council is looking to develop an active travel scheme from Halifax to Trinity Academy at Holmfield. A two-mile link through Queensbury Tunnel would connect these emerging networks either side of the hill.

The planning application for the tunnel's partial infilling still sits dormant on Bradford Council's planning portal; the objections currently stand at 7,772 - a huge number. With £7.8M of taxpayers' money frittered away on work that mostly wasn't necessary and serious reputational damage incurred as a result of its incompetence over the unpaid rent, we suspect National Highways will not be keen to return any time soon, but they are nothing if not full of surprises.

We'll let you know when there are developments to report. In the meantime, have a fabulous Christmas - as best as you can in the prevailing circumstances - and let's hope for a much better 2022.

Queensbury Tunnel extends for 1.4 miles beneath a ridge in the Pennine foothills of West Yorkshire. Halifax lies at its south end (2.5 miles), whilst Keighley is located to the north (7 miles) and Bradford to the east (4 miles).

The tunnel could help to establish a strategically important link within the emerging network of shared paths across the region, allowing a connecting route to be formed between the Aire and Calder valleys where paths are already under development, as well as a link into Bradford. The existing Great Northern Railway Trail would form part of that route.



Minsters Rail Campaign

Reinstating the Beverley to York line

Hull and Beverley are linked with Market Weighton, Pocklington, Stamford Bridge and York by the increasingly congested A1079. The Minsters Rail Campaign believes that the former 32-mile Beverley to York “Minsters” rail line (closed in 1965), which branched off the existing Hull-Scarborough line at Beverley and served these places, should be reinstated. This will contribute substantially to the long-term economic and social future of the East Riding, improving public transport, reducing car dependency and encouraging sustainable development. It will also be an alternative link from Hull and the East Riding to the rest of the rail network, needed because the existing rail infrastructure serving Hull lacks resilience. Regionally, the line will contribute to the Government’s “Northern Powerhouse” initiative, improving east-west connectivity between East and North Yorkshire.

Following their successful bid to the Restoring Your Railways Fund earlier in the year, The Minsters Rail Campaign are working towards a Strategic Outline Business Case for submission to the Department of Transport in February 2022. Assistance is being given by infrastructure consultants Aecom and the East Riding of Yorkshire Council in compiling the case for reinstatement, with cross-party support from Members of Parliament in York and Hull. The Campaign is confident that the line will meet all the criteria required for reinstatement and the benefits for the region will be significant and far-ranging.



SELRAP (Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership)

Update on the Current Situation with Our Campaign

The Airedale line is a modern and fast train service running from Leeds and terminating at Skipton. SELRAP's proposal is to extend this by reopening the closed railway line from Skipton to Colne, this will allow passengers from East Lancashire to travel directly into Leeds in less than 60 minutes.

This proposal is supported by Arriva Northern Trains and Skipton Building Society, who both recognise that it will open up employment, educational and leisure opportunities throughout Lancashire and Yorkshire.

It also allows the possibility of a direct link to Manchester airport from points from Shipley to Skipton.

The aim at present is to progress the project which is within the 'Develop' phase of the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP).

A critical engineering study was endorsed by DfT ministers 6 months ago but has apparently being 'blocked' from going ahead on the grounds that the Skipton to Colne rail reopening proposals are now deemed to be too expensive. They have done this without the evidence to back it up.

This assumption has been made in advance of this critical engineering study that would have determined on the ground the practicalities for the scheme and its final cost to be built.

SELRAP are contacting local MPs, the rail and transport ministers plus other supporters to try to get this study carried out.

The reopening of this line is essential in helping to 'level up' East Lancashire which has some of the most deprived communities in the UK. It would bring social and economic regenerative benefits to them.

Boris Johnson himself stated that 'we're going to unite and level up across the country' whilst also talking about 'building back better'!

Please visit our website for further information www.selrap.org.uk

You can also view there a promotional video made last year about the benefits of reopening the line. For any further information, questions or comments, please send to chris.hyomes@hotmail.co.uk

ED. We thank Mr Chris Hyomes for these articles and very much hope we will have more news from 'up north' in coming editions of our newsletter. Suffice to say "Woodhead... bring-it-on!!

From the Chair: I am writing this column before a couple of eye operations. Recent members of the Executive Committee's ill-health and the challenges that brings for a consistent continuum of action and tailored filling gaps to ensure our message gets across time and again where a deficit of pro-affirma rail action is the case; reminds me that ERTA is about people as much as agendas. Many organisations err on the secular and leave God out and following that are about 'things', material objects and forget or are remiss that it is people who make things happen or not and the purpose and benefits of any aspiration must be for people, communities and their betterment specifically and generally. Lose sight of that in our campaigning and we forget the essence and 'spirit' of the endeavour in my opinion. I reflect some organisations said they were broad churches, but were full of divisions, thankless and whilst their failure to grasp the real nature of the challenges thwarting by the day reopening aspirations, they were of a view that reopenings were fanciful or icing on a proverbial cake and not really mainstream. The default on the closure of Woodhead some 40 years ago, is that subsequent movements across the Pennines in that part of the world tend towards the parallel A628 which then has high stats, gets congested and planners then inform bids for upgrades and new roads agendas. This traffic junctions with Sheffield and Manchester urban interfaces and congestion is the order of the day. No, rail reopenings needs to be bread and butter common sense and as a nation, we are poorer if that goal is not properly acknowledged, realised and campaigned for. A growing membership is essential with galvanisation to make progress. All our people matter and we thank all who contribute. You make us stronger.