


English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

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	Chairman: Position Vacant. However, we appoint or designate a 'Chairman' for our meetings to give people experience. Members can volunteer for the post.	
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Extract from Friends of Narborough Station (FONS) Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange Consultation Comments to Tritax Symmetry. See <https://www.railfreight.com/railfreight/2022/12/08/fresh-opposition-to-hinckley-rail-terminal-proposals-in-leicestershire/> for background information. For the full response document from FONS, please email requests to richard.erta@gmail.com. But it is clear steep gradients and heavy, long freight trains are not happy bedfellows! More can also be found on our Blogspot: <https://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/> Can lessons be applied elsewhere?

1. BACKGROUND

2.1 There are at least ten Existing, Proposed or Planned Competitive Warehouse and Container Facilities already within 50 miles of Hinckley, these are at:

- Northampton Gateway
- Wellingborough
- DIRFT
- Coventry
- Hams Hall
- East Midlands Gateway
- Magna Park
- Birch Coppice
- Landor Street, Birmingham
- and now proposed at Hinckley

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2.2 The developer argues that the project will bring jobs to the area and that employees will not have to travel any significant distances between home and work. This is not true as the unemployment rate in the area, is well below the national average and one of the lowest in England.

2.3 The site would be situated in what is already a heavily polluted area, with the additional road journeys by employees over a 24-hour period making the area even more polluted.

2.4 Light and Noise Pollution would be tremendous with local residents having to suffer at all times of the day and night. This is in addition to the noise of cranes, lorries and train movements coming into and from the site itself.

2.5 Local people would lose the enjoyment of their long-standing conservation and leisure areas, such as Burbage Common and Aston Firs.

2. RAIL OPERATIONS AT THE SITE

4.1 All Freight Train Rail Heads in this country have what is called a "Cripple Road". These are situated for instance at Power Stations, Mines, Collieries, Oil Terminals, Quarries and other locations where freight trains are loaded and unloaded. These facilities are where "Red Carded" Wagons and Containers are shunted out of the way in order to prevent delays to both freight and passenger trains.

4.2 Will these facilities be provided and will they be covered? Will covered facilities be provided for the inspection, maintenance and repair of both locomotives and wagons and if so, what will be the level of noise emitted? Will wagons have to be lifted by crane making its own noise or will below ground inspection pits be provided?

4.3 In some overseas countries these "Cripple Roads" are called "Sick Roads". Whatever they are called, their importance in support of a safe operational railway cannot be stressed too highly.

4.4 Will the terminal have an auditable "Fitness to run Certification" procedure in place for all Locomotives and Wagons that depart from the Interchange?

3. EFFECT ON THE OPERATION OF THE SOUTH LEICESTERSHIRE LINE

5.1 There is no doubt these long and heavy extra trains will have an effect on the operation of the South Leicestershire Line. We understand the longest trains at present are some 600 metres, the extra trains proposed will be 775 metres long.

5.2 Containers themselves are specified to measure up to 40 feet long and 8 foot 6 inches high. How many of these will be on one train?

5.3 Whatever Tritax Symmetry may say, the South Leicestershire Line is not a main line and was not built as a main line.

5.4 The line only has three aspect signalling, as opposed to four aspect signalling on a main line. There are no refuges, no passing loops and no facilities for Bi-directional working. Putting that simply, it means that any breakdown or other incident could close the line for hours or days. Who would pick up the bill for its effect on the country's economy?

5.5 Local residents hear the trains and feel the vibration from freight trains, during the overnight period now. It could be argued that the railway line was here first. When residents moved to the area, the trains were not as heavy as they are today remembering it was not a main line with no intention of taking such traffic.

5.6 Has the geology underlying the line been analysed to ensure it is capable of supporting the longer, heavier trains? Will the additional cost of maintaining the tracks, be picked up by Tritax Symmetry or Network Rail? If the latter, it will be a cost to the taxpayer, remembering that Tritax claim there will be no cost to the taxpayer and that every aspect of the project will be 100% privately financed.

5.7 Further constraints are the fact that both Wigston North and South Junctions were some years ago, reduced to single rather than double lead layouts.

1. SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL AND SAFETY FACTORS

9.1 Tritax Symmetry claim the Interchange will have NO impact on the environment or wildlife. We consider this to be a totally unsubstantiated statement. Tritax Symmetry also claim that Blaby District Council and that Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, were both happy with the way measurements were taken.

9.2 Interestingly the outcomes and results of these measurements, have we understood, not as yet been disclosed.

2. OVERWHELMING CONCLUSIONS

10.1 Both of the webinars posed more questions than answers, supplementary questions were not allowed. There was no mention about passing loops, refuges, bi-directional working or that freight trains even today cause delays to passenger trains.

10.2 Tritax Symmetry claim there will be “No Impact” on the environment or wildlife and “Little Impact” as far as the railway line was concerned. No evidence of these claims has as yet been provided.

10.3 Safety matters relating to Narborough Station highlighted by FONS have not been addressed, in fact Tritax Symmetry seem to have no concern about the effect their project will have on the station, the level crossing or indeed the village itself including the overall community.

10.4 A question to be asked relates to the genuine requirement for the use of rail, or is it solely to expedite planning consent. Could it be there could be railway sidings and other related railway facilities built with all the loss of green belt land, never to be used or even see a train.

10.5 We have highlighted a number of serious problems with this application, with huge implications not just in the Elmsthorpe and Hinckley area, but in an extremely wide radius from it.

10.6 FONS supports the widespread opposition to this proposal from the Leicestershire Parishes and Action Groups, and hopes the Secretary of State, will consider all detailed aspects and unanswered questions, relating to each of the safety and environmental concerns raised in this response.

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Ed. If Tritax Symmetry wishes to email us a response, happy to put edited in a future newsletter and on our social media platform e. g. Blogspot. From the ERTA interest perspective, if majority of freight is north-south and vice versa, east-west rails are not going to court optimum modal switch? Therefore, our Northampton-Market Harborough and Rugby-Magna Park-Lutterworth area to link existing lines somewhere, remains our focus, notwithstanding there should be a pre-planning threshold of demonstrable percentage by rail from day one not casual free market speculations? We desperately need more volunteers to swell our ranks and presence in the area and for these projects to nurture progressive support, studies, corridor protection and move agendas towards delivery. Incrementally, chipping away and coalition building is needed. Principles apply elsewhere? Apologies if numbering system is a bit out of sync. Our fault not authors! We produce an edited version here, due to space. But feel it raises important points. Feedback via richard.erta@gmail.com

Other News: We welcome Mr Tony Houghton as our new **Membership Secretary** and Mr David J. Start as our new **Treasurer**. Tony is also boosting our presence in the Croxley area (near Watford) and raising the ideal and goal of re-opening the Croxley Link to bring the Metropolitan Line Underground Trains to link with Watford Junction and has a legal background. David describes himself as “Employed by Post Office Counters Ltd as a Postal Officer, cashier and cash manager. Experience of journalism and publishing as a published author and photographer.” If you wish to join or make a donation or have any enquiries, please contact them Their details on our updated notepaper on page 1. ERTA would welcome more new members and a donation please to help us. Casual one-off contributions welcome: <https://ertarail.co.uk/become-a-member/> We are only as effective as our members inform. All members count and matter for more success! Association **Reform for Growth:** ERTA has 2 sides at least to it; one is the campaigns front foot and the other is the back-room administration. Both are vital for the well-being, health and vitality of a strong association. We are seeking to recruit more volunteers to assist us with upping our game. For example, a **Marketing, Media and Meetings Officer** to help us get our messages across. Some roles are desk-top and can be done remote, others, more hands-on, people engaging internally via our committees and forums and externally with full blown public meetings, getting equipment, planning and execution flowing smoothly. Both are needed as well as younger age profile people to inform that we do indeed, represent and diverse and inclusive audience, not just enthusiasts, hacks and buffs! **The Executive Committee** (EC) meetings more-or-less bi-monthly needs better discipline to be organised, follow an agenda and not go off on ramblings which could be done before, after or elsewhere. Chairing meetings takes skill and having people who print their agendas beforehand and follow them or indeed, in a digital age, read them on their i-phone, can help ensure we are discussing the pertinent issues and not at cross-purposes. Can you make a contribution? The door is open to explore further. Please email ideas, offers and suggestion of what roles you’d like to be considered for and be patient with us for an answer! Finally, thank you to all who have renewed. **Membership is a bed-rock of our association;** it helps us show we represent people and communities and also helps to pay the bills – printing and hall hires cost money and we wish to move on from Wetherspoons meetings to cater for more people. Therefore, please make our meetings the priority to attend and introduce others to us.

Northern Lights continued ...

DON VALLEY RAILWAY PARTICIPATING IN STEERING GROUP TO RE-OPEN LINE

Don Valley Railway have been invited to participate in the Steering Group Meetings by South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to assist Arup in their study setting out the Strategic Outline Business Case for the Restoring Your Railways Bid for the reopening of the rail line to Stocksbridge to passenger trains.

Arup are initially considering 4 basic study options at hourly and half-hourly service frequencies:

1. Deepcar to Victoria via Oughtibridge, Wadsley Bridge and Neepsend
2. Stocksbridge to Victoria via Deepcar, Oughtibridge, Wadsley Bridge, and Neepsend
3. Stocksbridge to Nunnery Square via Deepcar, Oughtibridge, Wadsley Bridge, Neepsend & Victoria
4. Stocksbridge to Chesterfield via Deepcar, Oughtibridge, Wadsley Bridge, Neepsend Victoria, Nunnery Square presumably in combination as an extension to the Barrow Hill Line proposal.

DVR are considering and discussing these options and wish to work with Arup to ensure the most viable options for introducing the service are adequately considered.

Locally we want the railway to best serve the travel needs of the communities in the Upper Don Valley. This has to be measured against affordability and value for money.

As well, the introduction of the service could have much wider transport benefits, particularly if considered in combination with the Barrow Hill Line Restoring Your Railways Bid.

DVR welcome options being considered of extending the Barrow Hill line up the Don Valley Line alongside simpler options.

Ed. ERTA supports all these projects as well as Skipton-Colne, Keswick Re-Rail and completion of the Borders Line to Carlisle for example. We'd prefer these local solutions to some expensive and much ado road agendas or High Speed, which of nature leaves a swathe of communities out. Getting tracks back is not easy, but every practical and environmental reason to do just that! Write to your MP and ask for these schemes to be made easier, like cycleways and footpaths can be diverted, railways of nature cannot always be. We think of Matlock-Buxton/Chinley for example. Would link Derby-Manchester direct. Think what support and interest you can show and give and let's get delivery under way! We need a nationwide plan and transfer funding from new roads and road widening to local rail solutions more for people and goods. It can be done if the framework is made easier, cost-effective and do-able. Any offers of interest or support, contact our Northern Area Rep. Mr Chris Hyomes:
E. chris.hyomes@hotmail.co.uk T. 07971766207

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Dates for your diaries: If you want more, be prepared to do more or convene a meeting!

ERTA Bedford Forum Public Meeting,

Saturday 25th March 2023 2pm

**at Bedford Quaker Meeting House, 5 Lansdowne Road, Bedford
MK40 2BY with Guest Speaker Mohammad Yasin MP for Bedford
and Kempston on East-West Rail.**

http://www.lquakers.org.uk/bedford/web/?page_id=25

12 Noon Pilgrims Progress Wetherspoons Lunch then walk or No. 10 bus to (Union Street) for Lansdowne Road round corner to venue. 1.30pm enter and set up/brew and 2-4pm business and out by 5pm. <https://www.jdwetherspoon.com/pubs/all-pubs/england/bedfordshire/the-pilgrims-progress-bedford> Please give support. There will be a mini-sales stall and plenty of chances to ask questions, discuss issues and give support to ERTA. Please offer to assist if a member. Venue 10 minutes' walk from Bedford Midland Railway Station. **Contact and convenor:** Mr Simon Barber, T. 0208 940 4399 E. simon4barber@gmail.com

Market Harborough Public Meeting, The Methodist Hall, MH.

Growing support and volunteers

for a rebuilt Northampton-MH rail link. 11th March 2pm.

Cllr David Bill of Leicestershire County Council will be a speaker.

12 Noon Wetherspoons lunch 1.30pm set up meeting room, 2-4 business and 5pm out. Market Harborough Methodist Church/Hall, Northampton Road, Market Harborough, LE16 9HE www.harboroughmethodistcircuit.org.uk
Opposite the Market Hall. Local contact Cllr Peter James: peter341@btinternet.com

ERTA Public Meeting Saturday, 15 April 2023 from 2-4pm at

St. Nicholas Church Hall, Bury Street, Guildford GU2 4AW

Guest Speaker: Zoe Franklin, Guildford Lib Dems on

'Rail Improvements in the Guildford Area'

~ Better Public Transport for the Guildford area

~ Re-Open the local rail link to Horsham and Shoreham

~ Keep options open and help inform traffic reduction strategies

~ Join ERTA and help us do more and better with local inputs.

<https://ertarail.co.uk/events/> Join our free email loop: richard.erta@gmail.com Tel:

01234 330090 or 0208 940 4399

Bedford-Bletchley Rail has no trains update:

Good to have a response from the DfT on Bedford-Bletchley Railway lacking rolling stock following the taking into administration the Vivarail outlet. However, the 20+ year bat and ball last paragraph is but one tension of deferment whereby Local Authorities either don't want to know or say they have no money and government slants funds to roads despite the environmental concerns and on the other hand, LEPs do they actually do anything? They may cost money, produce and trade reports, conferences and court high salaries, but what have they done to reopen local links like the Brackmills Branch in Northampton for example? It has been a slippery slope to lostness. Where is their vision for rail, where is the cutting-edge rail reopenings/reinstatements agendas like Colne-Skipton or are they leading on re-railing Devon? No it is lay campaigners doing a lion's share and both Government and Government Organised, Non-Government Organisations (GONGOS) seem non-plused and an array of professionals won't muck in unless there's upwards of £50k on offer or a flotilla of swathes say "no business case" or refuse to support because YOU have produced no business case. These 'business cases' tend to be specialist subjects, courting complicated maths and formulas and disenfranchise the lay public (majority paying out in most cases!) and that conundrum 'system' is why nothing much is happening on local rail reinstatements. Some say "roads are cheaper and easier" without showing evidence, but then begs the question of £27 billion for new roads by Government spend and a mere £500 million for the Rail Reopenings Fund. HS2 does not come into it, it is neither a panacea or cheaper solution coming anywhere soon, rather it is an outlandish exception and arguably elephant in the proverbial 'room'. ERTA wants to a more equitable deal and policy from Government with leadership, direction, system reform and delivery with spades on the ground in mind for local rail projects, reopenings and reinstatements to be brought to the fore. Please write/email to your local MP (<https://members.parliament.uk/>) and give us your support. Email richard.erta@gmail.com to see the letter or visit our Blogspot and scroll down: <https://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/>

Caption right: An afternoon train heads westwards out of the suburbs of Bedford towards Bletchley Summer 2022. Although no formal 'business case' for electrification and lengthening platforms, the role such as an infill could offer in versatility is not lost to ERTA. Indeed, we have floated it with an end-to-end semi-fast Watford-Bletchley-Bedford-Corby for cross-country commuting and possibly efficiency in more freight by rail. Nothing moving fast here!



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From the Secretary:

Call me a misery or a scrooge, but I hear estimated numbers that transport emissions are 'only' 16% and on other occasions are 45%. But when I hear of politicians parading their planting trees as some kind of carbon footprint trade-off, I am tempted to think it mere photo opportunism and greenwashing not solving anything per se. Land is lost to development. We need growth, but also land-use balance stewardship. Too much focus on oasis' and not enough on overall joined-up habitat. Historically, we once, as said before, had the most intense joined-up transport rail-based infrastructure in the world and on the back of exhaustive use during 2 World Wars, the inability to pay to renew it; ripping it to bits was done instead. The switch of government from coal to oil and post-war from rail preference for expansion and investment to road infrastructure, which takes more land, was not without effect. Disenfranchised communities and transport reach then, mass buy-in, lifestyle and systems dependency now. We need to revert back to rail. Vehicle emissions are not just exhaust, tyre pollution and accidents, but also volume making for congestion and the reality is we can't simply build more roads to reduce the impact, it only fuels more buy-in to the roads lie of solutions to problems. ERTA signposts the way forward, but sad reality is whilst half a loaf is better than none, in many cases the cry goes out too little, too late. As the UN Secretary General in his address to COP27 said "We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator. " There can be hope and redemption, but goes beyond merely planting trees! **Further Reading:** [https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-and-environment-statistics-2022/transport-and-environment-statistics-2022#:~:text=transport%20is%20the%20largest%20emitting,emissions%20in%202020%20\(406%20MtCO2e%20\) and https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/cost-of-congestion-in-capital-revealed#:~:text=This%20is%20estimated%20to%20cost,in%20TfL's%20traffic%20speed%20data.](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-and-environment-statistics-2022/transport-and-environment-statistics-2022#:~:text=transport%20is%20the%20largest%20emitting,emissions%20in%202020%20(406%20MtCO2e%20) and https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/cost-of-congestion-in-capital-revealed#:~:text=This%20is%20estimated%20to%20cost,in%20TfL's%20traffic%20speed%20data.) And <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-11-07/secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-opening-of-cop27>



Please Join ERTA Help us help you! <https://ertarail.co.uk/become-a-member/>

Tick if a New Member: _____

Membership of ERTA costs £15 per annum. I/We wish to join _____

I/We wish to explore volunteering opportunities (optional) _____

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

c/o T. 077659 77318 tony.houghton@keystonelaw.co.uk

Join our free email loop for news and views: E. richard.erta@gmail.com and see our website:

<https://ertarail.co.uk/events/> Postal Membership for paper cheques etc, via ERTA, 24c St Michael's Road, Bedford, MK402LT still! Never too late to join/renew, use the form above or go to our website.