

## NORTH WEST REGION

### CHESHIRE AND NORTH WALES GROUPS

#### Borderlands (Wrexham to Bidston) rail line



The Borderlands line runs from Wrexham Central Station to Bidston Station

**T**his event was held in the strategic location of Chester, close to the border between England and Wales. The location chosen was apt, as the Borderlands line is a key strategic passenger route between North Wales and Merseyside. John Allcock, Chairman, Wrexham–Bidston Rail Users’ Association (WBRUA) was our guest speaker.

The route runs from Wrexham Central Station to Bidston Station at the northern end of the Wirral peninsula. From there, the line continues into the Liverpool area via the Merseyrail network. John Allcock covered the history of the route, the passenger and freight services operated, current service issues and the potential for improvement. He also spoke about why the WBRUA exists and how it is engaging with the railway industry and other stakeholders, particularly the local authorities and councils in the region.

The line is 27 miles long and has 15 stations. Freight capacity is limited, but it is a key commuter route within the towns of North Wales and into Merseyside. It is operated by Arriva Trains Wales as part of its Wales and Borders Franchise. One key issue is that the line straddles the borders not only of England and Wales but also several counties. This makes for complex arrangements with interested parties.

Although rail use is growing in Wales, usage levels in Flintshire are typically around half the Welsh average. The WBRUA feels that this situation could be improved dramatically were some of its main suggestions to be adopted, such as better timetabling and connectivity with other services, through trains into Liverpool, more affordable tickets and a new station at Deeside Parkway.

The presentation was followed by a lively question-and-answer session, during which the future of the line and its potential were discussed.

#### Paul Flanagan FCILT

Committee Member, Cheshire Group ☹

#### UPCOMING EVENT

*Bicycle Logistics expanding across Europe*

13th February 2018

Peter Jost  
Building, Byrom Street, Liverpool L3 3AF

## LONDON REGION

### HEATHROW GROUP

#### Crossrail becomes Elizabeth Line

**A** full house greeted speaker John Goldsmith, Community Relations Manager for Crossrail. Some 43km of new tunnelling is now complete under central London, and 65 million tonnes of material have been excavated. Building work on the whole line is now 87% complete. The first trains of the new Elizabeth Line are now in service between Liverpool Street and Shenfield where a new platform has been built for them, and the roof garden at the seven-storey Canary Wharf station has been open for some time.

The 70 trains, built in Derby by Bombardier, are some 10–15% lighter than those now in use and will be in nine-car sets, 200m long, seating 450 passengers, with an estimated total capacity including standing passengers of 1,500 at peak times, most of whom are expected to be short-journey passengers. Seats will be sideways, forward facing and backward facing, giving plenty of circulating space. The early trains now in service between Liverpool Street and Shenfield are only seven cars long, because the main line platforms at Liverpool Street will not accept nine-car trains, but this is an interim measure until the lower level new station is operative.

Building work west of Heathrow includes a dive-under at Acton to allow Elizabeth Line trains to cross the GWR main line. A second flyover is being built at Stockley junction to give Heathrow up and down trains separate tracks. Old Oak Common will be the main servicing depot, with sidings at Maidenhead and other sites in Essex as well as in Plumstead in south-east London.

When the service is running, TfL will take over the stations between Taplow and London (except Slough), offering benefits to passengers in the form of staffing from first to last train, keeping waiting rooms and toilets open. The trains themselves will have no toilets. Slough, Maidenhead, Twyford and Reading stations will remain with GWR. From May 2018, the Elizabeth Line will subsume the Heathrow Connect service, but the Heathrow Express and all Heathrow stations will remain with Heathrow Airport Ltd.

The proposed service will offer two trains an hour from Reading to central London, plus two from Maidenhead and two extra from Reading in the peaks. One change to the original plan is an extension of service to Heathrow Terminal 5, in addition to the originally planned Terminal 4 station. This will offer four trains an hour to Terminal 4, plus two to Terminal 5. In the east, there will be 10 trains an hour from Abbey Wood to Paddington, plus 10 from Shenfield (12 in the peaks). Heathrow to Paddington is scheduled to start in May 2018, Paddington to Abbey Wood in December 2018, to Shenfield May 2019, and finally through running end to end Reading to Abbey Wood & Shenfield in December 2019. Operation will be by MTR as a concession from TfL.

#### Michael Peacock FCILT

Chairman, Heathrow Group ☹

#### UPCOMING EVENT

*14th Annual London Student Conference*

21st February 2018

University of Greenwich, 30 Park Row, London SE10 9LS