



July 2017

## Welcome to the Rail User Express.

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No fewer than three major consultations are now ongoing that will shape rail services in the South East for years to come: the GTR timetables for Thameslink, Southern, Gatwick Express and Great Northern services from May 2018, the new South Eastern franchise, and the Mayor of London's Transport Plan. Make your comments count twice by copying them to [Roger Blake](#), to feed into the Railfuture responses.

*Roger Smith*

*We continue with the usual roundup of news items from groups around the UK. Please keep your contributions coming: they are all gratefully received.*

## Friends of the Far North Line

Fergus Ewing MSP addressed FoFNL's AGM and Conference in Inverness on 23 June by video. It also heard from Tony Glazebrook, a Director of Aliona Ltd, whose report has given FoFNL the clout to impress some urgency on the industry. Bill Reeve, Head of Rail at Transport Scotland, confirmed that the FNL is still a vital part of the nation's strategic rail network. Alex Hynes, MD of the ScotRail Alliance and Alex Sharkey, Head of Operations of NR's Scotland Route, outlined plans for the line. The Review Team set up by Fergus Ewing to identify short- and medium-term actions to improve the service will deliver a faster timetable from December, with further improvements in 2018 as level crossing work allows line-speeds to be raised. FoFNL looks forward to the High Level Output Statement (HLOS) in July, and the more detailed Investment Plan. It also awaits the outcome of the ongoing consultation on the commercial viability of a new Sleeper service between Thurso (for Orkney) and Edinburgh, using stock cascaded from new trains.

## Levenmouth Rail Campaign

LRC is disappointed with the tone of letters from Scottish Transport Secretary Humza Yousaf: he wants more work on the STAG 2 Report, already 466 pages of expert evidence compiled over 2 years; his rail investment strategy will focus on developing the existing core network before considering any infrastructure-led solutions, whilst a new pipeline system is proposed for rail enhancement projects such as Levenmouth: "The decision to commit to [such] a project will only be taken when the business case is clear and price and affordability are certain." LRC finds it "difficult to escape the conclusion that this stance is tantamount to, at best, deliberate delay - clearly a rationing tactic."

## Copeland Rail User Group

There are still problems with the loco hauled trains, and a single Class 153 is not an adequate replacement. Sellafield has expressed its disquiet about the unreliable service. However, punctuality at Whitehaven markedly improved in the four weeks to 9 June. According to an article in the May issue of In-Cumbria, NR is to invest £400 million in the Cumbrian coastal line. CRUG is compiling a list of its achievements – *once complete, why not use it as the basis of a nomination for a Railfuture RUG award?* – Ed.

West Cumbria Mining has submitted its planning application. The envisaged six trains north a day each way would seem to require the Maryport-Wigton signalling section to be split into three. Then there are the demands both of Arriva's 2018 timetable and Nugen for an additional 20 trains a day between Whitehaven and Workington, and the aspiration for a further increase in passenger capacity to provide a half hourly service north of Whitehaven and possibly south of Millom.

### **Ormskirk-Preston-Southport Travellers Association**

In the draft Northern timetable from May 2018, just two peak services each way between Wigan and Manchester Piccadilly via Bolton would start and end at Southport, using bi-mode Class 319 Flex trains. Diesel powered alternators under the driving trailer cars of these units power the existing DC electric motors and on-board systems, so they can run both on electrified lines and to non-electric destinations.

OPSTA believes that with just two more Flex trains, through services to Southport could be retained all day every day, though the extra trains may not be ready until Oct 2018. Local councils and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority back the idea, and Northern is helping OPSTA to build its case, but has yet to be convinced of the need for a Sunday service, which is not specified as a franchise requirement.

The 2018 timetable also proposes an hourly Preston - Ormskirk service from Monday – Saturday between 0626 and 2236 from Preston and 0701 to 2301 from Ormskirk, with a half-hour journey time. The trains arrive at Ormskirk and Preston from Colne, and Blackpool South respectively. Although not be shown as such in the timetable, these through services should make for both shorter and more convenient journeys.

However, there is very little recovery time in the timetable, so any delay could have a lasting effect, albeit mitigated by the newly replaced passing loop at Rufford. Also, whilst the timings and connections at Preston look good, those from Liverpool at Ormskirk would be 17 mins, increasing to 24 mins in the evening. However, the Merseyrail timetable will change when Maghull North station opens in 2018.

### **Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester Lines**

STORM had a useful meeting with Northern Rail's timetable planners, with two of its four major points incorporated into the draft. The early Rochdale to Manchester train will now also call at Castleton, Mills Hill and Moston, whilst the late evening service will run later, Saturdays excepted. However, a train from these stations arriving Victoria at 0702, 15 mins later than now, would be too late. Another concern is the proposed reduction in the morning peak from 6 services to 4. Stopping the 0626 from Rochdale would help. Northern felt that the very early train just before 0600 might suffice, but an hour's gap would be too long. Finally, Littleborough merits three trains an hour off peak, which could be achieved by inserting stops in the Leeds – Manchester Airport trains, two of which already call in the morning and afternoon peaks, and all day from about 1030 on Sundays. The higher line speeds should enable this kind of adjustment. If these additional calls were possible, the decision would then be a commercial one.

### **Wirral Transport Users Association**

WTUA believes that prospects are growing for a new station on the Wirral at Town Meadow (Moreton) on Merseyrail's West Kirby line, as the improved performance of new rolling stock from 2020 will create sufficient extra time within the existing timetable to accommodate an additional stop. Rail Minister Paul Maynard has visited the site with local councillors to back calls for the station.

### **Harrogate Line Supporters Group**

HLSG is dismayed that the extra local services in Northern Rail's proposed December 2017 timetable would call only at Leeds, Horsforth and Harrogate. To cut just 6 minutes off the journey time, it would deny nearly 40% of the route's users at Burley Park, Headingley, Weeton, Pannal and Hornbeam Park stations from any benefit. Nor do the proposals provide the early and late services needed to connect at Leeds with the Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) services to and from London Kings Cross, and with Cross-Country (XC) trains to and from Birmingham and the South West.

The May 2018 timetable is even worse for the same five stations, and for Cattal, Hammerton & Poppleton to the east. Other than in the peak, the only through trains between Leeds and York are semi-fast. Passengers travelling across Harrogate would have to use a footbridge to change trains. The five stations south of Harrogate would in effect be on a branch line from Leeds to Knaresborough rather than a through line to York; the hourly Leeds – Harrogate – York service calling at all stations must be retained.

HLSG has developed what it believes is a viable 4 trains per hour timetable that would provide all of the intermediate stations with a standard interval, 15 minute walk up frequency service. However, Northern's senior management explained the complexity of interactions of the extra services with the existing Leeds NW services using Leeds City Station platforms 1-4, and with the many VTEC and XC services entering York Station via Skelton Junction. In order to realise the Line's full potential, several planned or proposed improvements to its infrastructure would also be needed.

### **Kettering Rail Users Group**

When Corby station opened in 2009, Kettering lost its half hourly off peak service to Leicester, with its easy cross platform connection to Derby and Nottingham. On Monday to Saturday, there is now just an hourly off-peak stopping service to Nottingham. Three developments sparked the new Group:

- East Midland Trains has proposed to switch the Sunday afternoon service from the old pattern to the weekday one
- The hourly Nottingham service is often full and standing when it leaves Kettering
- Following line speed improvements, the Corby – London service arrives in Kettering just after the Nottingham service leaves, so passengers have to wait almost an hour to go north.

Stopping Sheffield/Derby trains at Kettering would double the connectivity from there and stations to the south to Leicester and the north, give Corby a good connection to Leicester, and provide a fast service from Kettering to and from London every hour. The Group is calling for the restoration of the all day half hourly service between Kettering and Leicester as part of the new East Midlands franchise.

### **East Suffolk Travellers' Association**

Seasonal attractions in the area are now in full swing, and the more people who reach them by public transport the better. So it's a shame that from 29 July to 6 August, the East Suffolk Line will be closed between Halesworth and Ipswich for major track work. One reason that trains on the line do not run at even intervals is the need to allow paths for Sizewell freight trains. Although the nuclear flask trains no longer run, their paths are occasionally used by other freight workings. NR has described suggestions for improvements from an ESTA committee member as "inherently sensible", but there is still a contractual requirement on Direct Rail Services to retain these paths.

### **Hitchin Rail User Group**

HRUG's main concern with the draft Thameslink timetable from May 2018 is the perverse pattern of GN services out of Kings Cross in the morning and evening peak. Ashwell and Morden, a village station on the Cambridge branch, gains a half-hourly non-stop service taking just 32 minutes, whereas Hitchin's 25 min service would call instead at Stevenage and Biggleswade; its peak GN service would call at Welwyn North and Knebworth, and so take 31 minutes, almost the same as the Thameslink service that also makes two intermediate stops. The fastest journey to Hitchin, 28 mins, would actually be made by taking the Stevenage train, and making a one minute cross-platform connection to a Thameslink service.

### **Association of Public Transport Users (Thameslink North), Bedford Commuters Association**

Pending an ongoing review of its fare structure, GTR has relaxed the restriction on Super Off-Peak tickets that were only valid on Thameslink trains arriving in London after 1055. All Off-Peak and Super Off-Peak singles, returns and Travelcards are now valid on trains arriving after 1000.

### **Chesham & District Transport Users' Group**

TfL has [confirmed](#) that Amersham Station will be among the next six to gain Step-Free Access as part of the £200m investment scheme announced by the Mayor of London last December. The Group acknowledges the contribution of Mike Armstrong and the Amersham Action Group in identifying the Merseyrail scheme at Birkenhead North that was designed and built by a Chesham firm of Civil and Structural Engineers at a much lower cost than that envisaged by TfL. The other five stations are Buckhurst Hill, Cockfosters, Mill Hill East, Osterley and South Woodford.

### **Windsor Lines Passengers Association**

Jane Lee (First Group Stakeholders Lead) briefed the WLPA on the benefits of its new franchise. All trains will have toilets and air conditioning, free Wi-Fi, charging points at every seat, and real-time information, and carry a second crew member in addition to the driver. Ticketing will be improved, Delay Replay introduced, and there will be more station improvements and more car parking spaces.

The new timetable from December 2018 will see reduced journey times on its lines, and a new Guildford-Farnham shuttle service, so the present Ascot-Guildford service will become an Ascot-Aldershot shuttle. Sunday afternoon services will match Saturday services. Specific changes for the Windsor lines include:

- 750 new carriages (90 new trains) to replace the 707s, 455s, 458/5s
- 46% increase in peak capacity
- Four Windsor and four Reading trains per hour
- Faster services from Hounslow, provided by the additional Windsor trains.

After the meeting WLPAs submitted a list of 26 aspirations, including some timetable issues.

### Tonbridge Line Commuters

The draft Kent Area Route Study published by NR in March claims that there is no connectivity gap between Kent and Gatwick Airport. However, as Chairman John Reynolds puts it: "Anyone who travels from our part of Kent knows that you either endure the hellish congestion on the A21 and the M25/M23, or you catch a train to London and back, so to say there is no connectivity gap is laughable."

However, Kent County Council found that demand to reinstate the service to Gatwick Airport via Tonbridge was low, whilst changing at Redhill is still quicker and cheaper than going into London. From May 2018, GTR proposes to run the Tonbridge - Redhill service as a shuttle, and has worked with stakeholders in the area to ensure that this would suffice for the majority of passengers, although the frequency is still "TBC".

### West Sussex Rail Users Association

The ban on overtime working by ASLEF drivers on Southern should not have such a serious effect as it did last December. Every service between Southampton/Portsmouth to Brighton or to Chichester and London, or between Crawley and Horsham is running. RMT conductors also went on strike on 10 July, even though drivers, conductors and on board supervisors (OBS) have been working their new roles since January with a marked improvement in performance. There have been no losses of staff, and Southern has confirmed that every train that had a conductor will have either a conductor as before or an OBS.

In the proposed timetable from May 2018, Thameslink trains to Peterborough will replace Southern trains from Horsham to London Bridge. Two Arun Valley services will run to and from London Bridge, and at least one will have a portion for Chichester and Portsmouth. No significant change is expected to any of the Portsmouth/Southampton services mentioned above, except that the 16.36 from Victoria will divide at Horsham rather than Three Bridges.

### RAILFUTURE

*Railfuture welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more effective our campaigns. Join Railfuture [here](#). From the "Membership Types" menu top right, select either the appropriate category of individual or, to affiliate, select "RUG or similar". Read the latest from Railfuture and its Campaign updates by clicking on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Railfuture submissions](#).*



Early bird booking for members to Railfuture's sixth Rail User Group Annual Awards in Leicester on Saturday, 4 November is open until 31 August. Awards will be presented in the following categories:

- 1 & 2 - Best newsletter - Gold and Silver awards [not available to last year's winners]
- 3 & 4 - Best website - Gold and Silver awards [not available to last year's winners]
- 5 - Best social media promotion
- 6 - Best campaign
- 7 - Best individual RUG campaigner [for Railfuture members only]
- 8 - Best new group
- 9 - Judges' Special Award

There are no application forms; details about how to make a nomination/submission are on the [website](#). The closing date is Saturday 2 September 2017. Just one nomination in any category will suffice. The same person or group can nominate in more than one category. RUGs and individuals can nominate their own in any category - except for self-nominations in Category 7! The awards will be decided on merit by a panel of independent judges, which should include our Vice-Presidents. The Judges' Special Award is at the sole discretion of the judging panel.

Any award would be newsworthy and attract wider attention and local publicity. It certainly did for Brian Dunsby, who was presented with the Clara Zilahi Award for Best Campaigner in 2015 by Railfuture President Christian Wolmar (see photo), and also collected the Award for Best Campaign on behalf of the Harrogate Line Supporters' Group. In the 2017 Queen's Birthday Honours list, Brian was awarded an OBE "For services to Business and the community in Harrogate." So let the oxygen of publicity breathe fresh life into your campaign for a bigger better railway!



My predecessor Tony Smale has updated Railfuture's National List of Rail User Groups, and the associated list sorted by UK region. You can access the latest versions on Railfuture's website [here](#). Please take a moment to inspect them and report any possible errors. In particular, some doubtful Groups are marked "May be extinct" - if the report of your Group's demise has been exaggerated, do let [Tony](#) know!!

The DfT, Railfuture and the Campaign for Better Transport have jointly published "Expanding the Railways: How to develop and deliver a proposal". Drawing on statements of policy, and with examples brought to fruition, it shows how to take a rail infrastructure project such as a new station or section of track from the gleam of an idea right through to opening. It provides English local authorities, Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs), train operators, developers and others in with information and guidance to help establish an idea, develop a business case, assemble partners and supporters, and work through financing and delivery. Devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and London have their own approaches. A copy is available on [the Railfuture website](#).

## RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE

At a branch meeting, Northern's Paul Barnfield outlined the changes since their new franchise began: an extra service at 16:59 from Leeds to Castleford, a Grand Central Train from Halifax, and later Sheffield - Leeds services on Fridays and Saturdays. A lack of rolling stock has put back some developments to May 2018, but doubling the frequency of its Harrogate Line service will go ahead in December 2017.

The Hope Valley Railway Users Group (HVRUG) wants improved services at intermediate stations between Sheffield and Manchester, most of which lie within the Peak District National Park. On weekdays, through services and freight flows mean that the line can accommodate only a two-hourly stopping service. Doubling it would mean skip stopping, which may not suit walkers using intermediate stations, although some of the skips are unnecessary. Although more people visit the Park on Sundays than on Saturdays, over 3.5 times as many passengers use the hourly Saturday service than the sparse Sunday one, which should therefore be greatly improved.

Meanwhile, the Hope Valley Capacity Improvement Scheme seeks to accommodate three fast and one stopping service per hour, and three freight trains every two hours by reinstating the double track through Dore & Totley station, extending the Dore south curve to allow longer freight trains to move between the Hope Valley and Midland Main Lines, and creating an eastbound passing loop between Bamford and Hathersage. However, the DfT has yet to approve the Transport and Works Act Order, although it received the report from the public inquiry as long ago as last November.

Two services in the Leeds area cannot support a Sunday service because each is too restricted in scope, and offers few journey opportunities. But whilst the Knottingley - Wakefield service is being extended to Leeds, the new Northern franchise proposes to extend the Huddersfield – Wakefield service only as far as Castleford when, for the sake of three extra miles, it could also serve important tourist destinations at Glasshoughton and Pontefract, greatly improving the viability of the service at marginal extra cost.

Branch Chair and Railfuture Director Nina Smith hopes that electrification of the Huddersfield Line will complete in the Control Period to 2024, followed by the Calder Valley and Harrogate lines. Any suggestion that the Northern Powerhouse should prioritise connections between the northern regions and London, rather than within and between them (Yorkshire Post, 3 June) must be strongly opposed.

### ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

The DfT's Designated Community Rail Development Fund for 2017-18, administered by ACoRP, is open for applications; £330,000 is available to English CRPs with designated routes. For full criteria and an application form email [dawn@acorp.uk.com](mailto:dawn@acorp.uk.com). Details of other bodies with funding available for projects relevant to community rail, including heritage, community inclusion and business development, are on its '[funding resources](#)' page. ACoRP updates the list whenever new funding becomes available, so please advise them if you are aware of any other external source that may be appropriate to community rail.

To raise awareness of dementia and promote the fact that the Leeds-Morecambe CRP is running a project to make the Bentham Line dementia friendly, the CRP marked Cupcake Day on 15 June with an information stall at Lancaster station, a major destination on the Bentham Line. Catherine Huddleston, the CRP Officer, had persuaded people from places as far away as Bentham and Blackburn to make the cakes, which were eagerly taken up by the waiting passengers and raised £91 for the Alzheimer's Society.

ACoRP judges have shortlisted eight entries that capture what community rail is all about. [Take a look](#), then head over to the SurveyMonkey page to cast your vote. The winning entry will be announced at the 2017 Community Rail Awards ceremony in The Roundhouse in Derby on the 3 October.

### TRAVELWATCH NORTHWEST

TWNW has set out its concerns and aspirations to the newly elected Mayor of Liverpool City Region, and requested a meeting. Merseyrail should be extended beyond Bidston on the Wirral, from Ormskirk to Preston, and from Kirby to Wigan, whilst rail access to Skelmersdale should be a high priority. It looks forward to a Wrexham/North Wales/Liverpool service via the Halton Curve, and would like a rail link into Liverpool Airport. With some journeys now taking over an hour, toilets on trains would be welcome.

Services from Southport to the south side of Manchester should be safeguarded, as many passengers prefer Piccadilly to Victoria, although the provision of services to the north side via a curve at Burscough should also be explored. Although not in their remit, the Combined Authority (CA) and Merseytravel will also have a significant influence on TransPennine services. TWNW welcomes the through train services from Liverpool to Glasgow, and would like to see stronger links north of Preston.

All forms of public transport within the CA area must be accessible, safe and affordable, and fully integrated, particularly when services are disrupted. A simple fares structure is needed, with multi-modal, on-demand ticketing based on zonal travel using smartcard/contactless payment. Information should be available and easy to understand in many forms, and not rely solely on web-based systems: a sizeable section of the community still relies on paper timetable leaflets and displays at stations. Rail and bus stations must have information about each other's services.

At its Conference in June, Chris Dale referred to the impact of engineering work on the leisure market in areas such as the Lake District. However, the case for realising the potential of diversionary routes such as Settle – Carlisle continues to fall on deaf ears.

Shane Fitzpatrick for Merseyrail said that a fleet of 52 new trains would enter service by 2021, which Merseyrail would own rather than leasing them from a rolling stock company. Its 30-year Rail Strategy from 2014 was reviewed every 3-years, and dovetailed into the £340 million investment in the City Region, which included a major upgrade to Lime Street station. During a 3-week blockade from 30 September to 22 October, most trains will start and terminate at Liverpool South Parkway, as the best option for integration and connections, but Virgin is open to ideas on how to minimise disruption. Meanwhile, they have re-introduced direct trains to Blackpool and Shrewsbury.

## TRANSPORTFOCUS

The new Wales and Borders franchise needs to deliver more seats and more space, a more punctual and reliable service, and new trains. The facilities and stations are also outdated and inadequate. The current 'zero growth' franchise lacked the investment needed to satisfy the surge in demand. Transport for Wales, the Welsh Government, NR and the incoming operator need a clear plan to address these issues. Passengers do however rate their local staff highly and see them as friendly, helpful and approachable.

Mrs B asked the clerk at the Wivenhoe ticket office what the cheapest way to Leicester and back would be, and was issued with two Anytime Return tickets costing £210 each. However, she later discovered that a Peak ticket to London St Pancras and an Off-Peak return ticket from there to Leicester would have been much cheaper. When Greater Anglia declined her claim for compensation, as Mrs B was travelling outbound at Peak time and the ticket office staff had offered the most appropriate fare for a through journey with immediate travel, which is their role, she contacted Transport Focus. As a one off gesture of goodwill, Greater Anglia then agreed to send her £179 in Rail Travel Vouchers, the difference between an Anytime return and an Off-Peak return. This was extremely generous, and demonstrated excellent customer service (*and the value of complaining to Transportfocus, even if you don't have a case! – Ed.*)

### *...and now the rest of the news ...*

The [Gibb Report](#) offers a critical analysis of the whole GTR franchise, the Brighton Main Line (BML) and the proposed Thameslink service from 2018. Dated 30 December 2016, it should have been released in April, but was held back until after the general election. Among its 38 recommendations are:

- Review the GTR franchise. However, terminating the contract would delay all of the major change programs that are currently underway, a hiatus that may be further prolonged by legal action.
- Transfer the East Croydon – Milton Keynes service and the Great Northern services into Moorgate from GTR to TfL, and the Ashford – Hastings service into the new South Eastern franchise.
- Electrify the 25 miles of single line between Hurst Green and Uckfield to 25kV overhead, but accept the conclusion in the Parsons Brinkerhoff "London & South Coast Rail Corridor Study" that no case currently exists to reopen the 25-mile line between Uckfield and Lewes to create "BML2".
- Rationalise the off-peak service, and reduce it at little used stations. Include a firebreak in the timetable between 1200 and 1400 to enable the system to recover from any delays in time for the evening peak, even if this disrupts the clock-face timetable.
- Rationalise and reduce the overnight service by providing only a limited Thameslink service, to create a stable and regular base for access to maintain the network.
- Rationalise ticketing south of the Thames, and abolish the Premium fare on Gatwick Express: "during disruption any tickets become valid on any service. Disruption is so common at present that I don't believe there is much enforcement of brand specific tickets, which work most ticket gates regardless of the service used"!
- Align NR and GTR objectives and performance metrics, and give greater weight to the peak service.
- Provide train controllers with more support and be wary of losing expertise through rationalisation.
- Review the driver depot and headcount strategy. Close the Blackfriars driver depot as planned, and relocate them to a network of medium sized depots close to the stabling locations at the ends of each route, but also consider further measures.

- Develop stations to meet growing demand, in particular Victoria, Gatwick Airport, East Croydon and Clapham Junction. NR should sell Gatwick to the Airport, to raise funds for its redevelopment.
- Review the train fleet strategy: withdraw Class 442 completely; transfer third rail Class 377/1s to South Eastern for use on the Kent Main Line, cascading Class 465s to Metro routes, and reduce the number of classes in GTR to just five: 171, 377, 387, 455 and 700.
- Review the depot strategy. Neither Bedford nor Cambridge can currently accommodate the 12-car fixed formation Class 700s in or about to enter Thameslink service! Thameslink also needs new facilities at Hoo junction near Gravesend, and a site near Ashford awaiting development. Then, further sites to service additional rolling stock from 2028 should also be identified and safeguarded.
- Accelerate NR's level crossing closure plans, and change the law to oblige local authorities to work with NR to minimise risk: "Some of these crossings simply have no place in today's safe and modern railway. They are the rail equivalent of crossing the M25 as a pedestrian"!

Appendix 2 charts the status of Gibb's plan as at 20 December 2016. It would be useful if this could be republished at intervals to record ongoing progress. Lord Callanan (Parliamentary Under-Secretary (DfT) responded to a question by Lord Rosser (Shadow Spokesperson for Transport) on 27 June regarding the transfer of more rail lines to TfL as follows: "We decided to proceed with 34 of Chris Gibb's 38 recommendations, but the transfer of additional lines to TfL was not one that we proceeded with."

Transportfocus welcomes the ongoing action on the Gibb report, as well as improvements to funding and compensation. However, the ASLEF drivers' overtime ban threatens the recovery seen on Southern in the last few months. All parties must get services back to normal as soon as possible. Government reassurance is needed that the lessons from this episode will be acted upon in future planning, projects and franchises.

The DfT has published its [Transport Strategy](#). Investment decisions will focus on four main objectives:

- Create a more reliable, less congested, and better connected transport network
- Build a stronger, more balanced economy by enhancing productivity and responding to local growth priorities
- Enhance our global competitiveness by making Britain a more attractive place to trade and invest
- Support the creation of new housing.

The DfT has also published a report by Arup and the Institute for Transport Studies (ITS) at Leeds University entitled "[Research Into The Appraisal Of Long Term Benefits Of Transport Schemes](#)", though at 141 pages, it is hardly light reading.

The [Risk Management Maturity Model \(RM3\)](#) developed by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has a checklist of 26 themes to help companies to achieve excellence in health and safety management. Widely adopted by industry, it has recently been updated in conjunction with The Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL), and is now more accessible to a range of health and safety professionals and managers.

A second round of consultation on Phase 2 of East West Rail Western Section, to upgrade and reconstruct existing and mothballed sections of line from Bedford-Bicester and Milton Keynes-Princes Risborough ends on 11 August. The project team will attend a number of [public exhibitions](#) to answer any queries and take feedback on the latest plans. A 'line-on-the-map' for the Central section is still awaited. Meanwhile Central Beds Council, an EWR Consortium member, has commissioned a report extolling the development potential of a line running south of Bedford, with a parkway station in the Wixams area, and an interchange with the East Coast main line at a new station between Sandy and St Neots.

Great Northern and Thameslink passengers who use a Key smartcard are now offered delay/repay automatically. The system records when and where a passenger taps in and out, and calculates whether the journey was delayed by 15 minutes or more; if so, it sends an online claim to the customer, who has only to review it for accuracy and confirm the preferred method of payment.

Testing of the overhead wires around Reading on the weekend of 16/17 September for GWR electrification will impact both local and main line services. Services to and from Penzance and Plymouth will operate hourly, with journey times extended by up to 70 minutes. Full details are on a dedicated [web page](#).

Commuters using London's Waterloo station are being asked to work from home or take holiday during engineering work from 5 to 28 August. The disruption will be more severe than expected, with 10 of its 22 platforms closing rather than the 9 previously announced. However, First/MTR have confirmed that they will take over the South West Trains franchise on 20 August as planned.

A fully automated and driverless Mass Passenger Transit (MPT) system between Luton Airport and its Parkway station has received planning permission, and should open in 2021. The 2.2km elevated route will cross the A1081 (Airport Way) via a new 'Gateway Bridge' and enter the airport in a cutting. There will be a station in the mid-term car park, and then a tunnel into the terminal station. Transfers should take around five minutes.

The Mayor of London's Transport Plan has again omitted the Metropolitan line extension from Croxley to Watford Junction. As the project is outside London, TfL believes that ultimately it is for the government to deliver. However, the [Watford Observer](#) reports that design work is continuing, and that plans outlining amendments to the design and layout of the proposed Vicarage Road station were recently submitted.

GTR has launched Phase 2 of the consultation on its [May 2018 Timetable](#). The redevelopment of London Bridge station and the opening to passenger service of the Canal Tunnel linking its Great Northern and Thameslink branches will together radically alter the pattern of service in SE England. Semi-fast trains from Cambridge and Peterborough will run through London to Gatwick Airport and on to Brighton and Horsham respectively. Stopping trains from Cambridge will serve Maidstone East, and peak semi-fast Welwyn Garden City trains Sevenoaks. From December 2018, Thameslink services will connect at Farringdon to the Elizabeth Line, aka Crossrail.

## CONSULTATIONS

- [GTR, May 2018 Timetable for Thameslink, Great Northern, Southern and Gatwick Express](#), closes 27 July.
- [East West Rail, Western Section Phase 2 project](#), closes 11 August.
- [Mayor of London's draft Transport Strategy 2017](#), closes 2 October.

Please advise [Roger Blake](#) of any other consultation, eg that of a County Council or Unitary Authority.

### *...and finally*

A report in January claimed that British rail passengers spend six times more on train fares than their European counterparts, so it's no surprise that people look for more creative ways of getting from A to B. 21 year-old Joe Furness found that it would be cheaper to fly from Newcastle to London via Spain than to go by train. The rail fare was £78.50, even after using his 18-25 railcard, but a flight to London Gatwick with a stopover in Menorca in the Balearic Islands set him back only £26! So that's exactly what he did.

The Telegraph reports that David Hill, a passenger on a Darlington - London train, photographed a woman who had turned her First Class seat into an office by installing a large iMac. He wonders why anyone would carry a desktop computer around, when a laptop would give her the same options, with more portability.



## EVENTS

Do please keep your events coming in, both to me and to [Roger Blake \(Railfuture\)](#), who maintains the [List of Events](#) on the Railfuture website. A Calendar of Events embedded in a pdf document can get lost, and this is a problem if the location changes from month to month, as I don't normally include that in future events. A copy of your Calendar as a separate document in Word format would therefore be much appreciated.

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

- National & regional rail events.
- Railfuture events (rail user group representatives are cordially invited).
- Local Group events.

### July

- Wednesday 19. Friends of the Barton Line AGM, Sloop, **Barton**, 2000. (Also 20 Sep (No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes, 1900) and 15 Nov (Sloop)).
- Saturday 22. Railfuture Yorkshire Branch Meeting, St. Giles's Church, Market Place, **Pontefract**, WF8 1AT, 1300
- Saturday 29. Railfuture Herts and Beds, St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, **St Albans**, 1045 (Also 25 Nov).

### August

- Tuesday 8. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group, **Chesham** Town Hall, 1930 (Also 19 September, 31 October and 12 December.)
- Saturday 12. Copeland Rail Users Group, **Seascale** Methodist Church Hall, 1350 (also 16 September)
- Wednesday 16. East Norfolk Transport Users Association AGM and Public Meeting, Christchurch, Deneside, **Great Yarmouth**, 1400
- Monday 21. Campaign for Better Transport West and North Yorkshire Rail Group. 43-47 Great George Street, **Leeds** LS1 3BB, 1900
- Tuesday 29. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Levenmouth Academy, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also the final Tuesday of every month to November 2017).

### Further Ahead

- 4 September. English Rail Transport Association, The Tavistock, 117 Tavistock Street, Bedford, MK40 2SB, 1830 (Also 2 October, 6 November, 4 December).
- 16 September. Copeland Rail User Group, venue TBN.
- 25 September. Campaign for Better Transport West and North Yorkshire Rail Group, Grove Pub next to Bridgewater Place Tower, **Leeds**, LS11 5PL, 1930
- 30 September. Railfuture East Anglia, Norwich (Also 2 December, Cambridge).
- 5 October. ACoRP Community Rail Awards 2017, Roundhouse, **Derby**, [click here for details](#)
- 14 October. ESTA Autumn Meeting, Gannon Rooms, Station Approach, **Saxmundham**, 14:00.
- 16 October. Avocet Line Rail Users Group AGM, Malthoude, **Topsham**, 1900.
- 17 October. Felixstowe Travel Watch, Salvation Army Church, Cobbold Rd, **Felixstowe**, IP11 7EL, 1430
- 21 October. Railfuture Branches and Groups Day, **Birmingham**, 1030-1600, venue TBC.
- 4 November. Railfuture Annual RUG Awards, the Curve, 60 Rutland St, Leicester, LE1 1SB, 1000 for 1045.

This bulletin has been sent by Roger Smith, e-mail: [ruglink@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:ruglink@railfuture.org.uk), phone: 01462 815992

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