

### **Welcome to this edition of Rail User Express.**

As always, feel free to forward RUEX to a colleague, or to reproduce items in your own newsletter (quoting sources). If you want further details of any of the stories mentioned, look on the relevant website or, failing that, get back to me so I can send you the full text.

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**We begin with the usual roundup of news from rail user groups around the UK. I'm grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins.**

#### **Friends of the Far North Line**

[website](#)

A photo on the front cover of the latest newsletter from FoFNL shows the long-awaited new station at Conon Bridge, due to open in a ceremony on 8 Feb, and the group's convenor pays tribute to those that have worked hard to make it happen. Also it was announced in December that two new stations would open on the Aberdeen-Inverness line in the period 2014 to 2019: Dalcross (for Inverness Airport) and Kintore (between Dyce and Inverurie).

To cope with the long distances and harsh conditions, a dedicated fleet of Class 158 units were especially fitted out (with input from FoFNL) for use on the line – there's now disappointment as the trains are being used elsewhere while less suitable 158s are now working north of Inverness. The lack of catering on Far North services has also been a source of concern to FoFNL for some time and has been flagged up to First ScotRail.

A former convenor of the group has been involved with the trials of a new type of level crossing on the Far North Line and is therefore able to share his in-depth knowledge with readers of FoFNL's newsletter. He concludes his article saying that the combination of high-profile fatalities, political pressure and campaigning has delivered safer crossings, adding: "We know the railway is safe; it's now able to reduce the risk to passengers arising from foolish or incompetent road users."

The group is aware that, using modern equipment, many things could be done to speed up services on their line. "Are the rural lines of Britain not entitled to their piece of the cake? The passengers pay their fares just the same as other so they surely deserve to be treated equally."

#### **Dornoch Rail Link Action Group**

[website](#)

DORLAG also wants to see more investment on the Far North Line to shorten journey times, comparing the small costs involved with the hundreds of millions that would be necessary to create a high speed link between Edinburgh and Glasgow, an idea being mooted by the Scottish Deputy First Minister. The group complains that the Far North Line has "once again been left out of the planned 2014-2019 control period 5 investment programme for the Scottish rail network ... we intend to pursue a lobbying campaign with both the MSPs and our councillors to get ourselves a better railway."

There's one piece of good news to report: the Caithness Transport Forum (CTF) has been reconvened (DORLAG remains a member) and will hopefully be progressing transport issues for Caithness, including rail.

#### **St Andrews Rail Link Campaign**

[website](#)

The Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council and also Fife Council (via SESTRAN) have proposed the St Andrews railway link as a project for incorporation in the Scottish Government's National Planning Framework.

StARLink thinks that the interest taken by Fife Council is an illustration of the growing realisation that a rail connection to St Andrews is a project of strategic as well as local importance, because the town is a national contributor to the Scottish economy, and is recognised as such by Visitscotland and Scottish Enterprise. The group awaits with interest a response from the Scottish Government.

### **Stranraer to Ayr Line Support Association** [website](#)

From a service point of view 2012 was quite good, says SAYLSA, while pointing out that the revised timetable has resulted in a lack passengers south of Girvan. The withdrawal of Stena's Irish ferry service from Stranraer port was partly to blame for the lower passenger numbers – SAYLSA argues that bussing ferry passengers to Stranraer would have many benefits over the current arrangement of taking them to Ayr for the rail connection. A fares promotion on the line was introduced but it seemed to be aimed solely at bringing tourists into Stranraer; it would not have been promoted locally at all had it not been for the efforts of SAYLSA members. The group wants to see a residents' railcard introduced, similar to the Highlands Rail Card. Other possibilities for the future include more charter trains and the reintroduction of freight.

The postponed Stranraer Harbour Station "150th anniversary" ceremony took place on 20 Nov 2012, exactly a year after Stena left Stranraer for good. John Dalrymple (14th Earl of Stair) and Alex Fergusson MSP jointly unveiled a blue plaque listing the names of the railway companies providing a service to the station, from the original Portpatrick Railway Company through to First ScotRail; SAYLSA's name appears across the top of the plaque.

Ongoing activities include (i) the Girvan shop, which opens every Saturday morning and is the group's most visible presence with the public at the line's busiest station – it also makes a modest profit for SAYLSA funds (ii) the SAYLSA minibus service which has enjoyed an exceptional year running from Stranraer Station to Portpatrick and the popular botanical gardens (with financial support from Dumfries & Galloway Council and ScotRail).

### **South East Northumberland Rail User Group** [website](#)

In the Christmas issue of its newsletter, SENRUG lists the activities and achievements of the group during the 10 years of its existence. Service enhancements and infrastructure improvements over the period, coupled with the impressive figures for passenger growth in the region, certainly suggest that the group has campaigned with considerable effect. With over 250,000 passengers now using Morpeth annually, SENRUG suggests that the station has moved up to "Category D" status and is therefore out of danger from the point of view of the McNulty report and its cutbacks.

SENRUG's chairman has been looking at Advance fares to Aberdeen, where buying tickets for each leg of the journey seems to be cheaper than buying one through ticket. Although it's difficult to be certain whether some of the book-ahead fares quoted on websites are actually available, it's clear that many people are paying more than they need. He suggests a "double the difference" refund for anyone discovering a split-ticket fare which saves money: "that would focus the minds of those responsible for such fare anomalies!" *[You can download the new TicketySplit iPhone app or bookmark the TicketySplit mobile site from the MoneySavingExpert website [here](#) – Ed]*

In response to the Dept. for Transport's consultation on the new East Coast Franchise, SENRUG's main comment was that the additional calls at Morpeth introduced in 2011 should be safeguarded in the new franchise. Anticipating that their local trains could form part of East Coast, the group included some "local service" aspirations such as doubling the frequency on the Newcastle-Cramlington-Morpeth service to half-hourly and reopening the Ashington, Blyth & Tyne Line. At the end of the newsletter, there's some late news about the AB&T reopening: SENRUG has just successfully persuaded the County planners to redefine a scheme for a supermarket at Seaton Delaval to allow continued access to a site earmarked for a future station. The group has reason to hope that the AB&T will be operational by 2015.

### **Keswick to Penrith Railway Project**

[website](#)

CKP Railways Plc reports that there are signs that some doors are beginning to open, with the MP for Penrith now actively encouraging other decision-makers to back the reopening project. The Company points out that local authorities have a duty to identify and protect railway trackbeds for potential reopening and says that the Keswick-Penrith route is 90% intact overall, with minimal intrusion by developments.

There has been a proposal to infill one of the existing bridges on the trackbed with earth and concrete which would add to the cost of reinstating the line. CKP suggests that repairs and strengthening would be a better plan of action, and is encouraging supporters to add their voice by sending comments to the planning authority.

### **Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership**

[website](#)

The Coalition Government's recent announcement that they would speed up construction plans and that legislation would be announced allowing it to underwrite infrastructure projects has been welcomed by SELRAP, the group campaigning for reopening the line linking Skipton (North Yorkshire) with Colne (Lancashire). All parties now agree that the next step in progressing the reopening has to be an in-depth study to GRIP 3 level. With support and guidance from Network Rail, SELRAP has prepared a remit for the make-or-break study. – *from Railfuture North West's newsletter*

### **Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester Line**

[website](#)

Now that Metrolink is operating from Manchester to stops beyond Oldham, STORM members are asked to submit journey reports, noting such things as timings, loadings and fare checks. The group has drawn the attention of Transport for Greater Manchester, Metrolink and Northern Rail to the need for some interavailability of return and season tickets between Metrolink and conventional rail services. For example, passenger from Milnrow or New Hey may wish to take the tram directly to Manchester; alternatively, they could travel the other way to Rochdale and change onto a Northern Rail service. STORM thinks TfGM officers will be unreceptive to the idea, although the group is aware that rail tickets are accepted by Metrolink between Altrincham and Manchester on Sundays or when the rail service is disrupted.

Following representations from STORM and the Friends of Littleborough Station group, a significant gap in the morning peak service on the Calder Valley Line has been plugged (as from the December timetable change) by adding a stop at Littleborough on a morning train from Leeds.

### **Penistone Line Partnership**

[website](#)

The annual Santa Train from Huddersfield station (16 Dec) was full of happy people. The train was in aid of local charities and featured Hade Edge Band and other performers. It was met at Todmorden by members of the station partnership and a local choir before continuing to Manchester for the Christmas market. "Well done Penistone Line Partnership volunteers for all their hard work and Northern Rail staff who were willing to work the day for nothing, and to Northern Rail itself for making it happen and providing train and crew."

### **Don Valley Railway**

[website](#)

Chris Bell of the DVR campaign has written to ask rail users to sign the petition on the **change.org** website [here](#). The petition calls for the introduction of passenger services on the railway line between Stocksbridge and Sheffield. Over 1500 signatures were recorded by the end of 2012, and the DVR is hoping for many more.

### **Shrewsbury-Chester Rail Users' Association**

[contact](#)

Competition for paths on the West Coast Main line resulted in a situation where Virgin now run a direct daily service between Wrexham and Euston on Mon-Fri excluding Bank Holidays. The resulting gap in the timetable on the affected Bank Holidays has been a cause for concern, and the Wrexham representative for SCRUA took up the cudgels, lobbying local Welsh Assembly members. His efforts have paid off and, from the Dec 2012 timetable change, there is now an additional departure from Chester to compensate. The group has made it clear that no further reductions in service, Bank Holidays or otherwise, would be acceptable – certainly not without consultation.

SCRUA says that Virgin's bid for the West Coast franchise makes fascinating (if possibly fictional) reading. It includes the intention to start running through services to London from the Shrewsbury-Chester line following the re-doubling of the section between Wrexham and Saltney in 2015.

### **Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users' Group**

[website](#)

Engineering works in December led to a good deal of inconvenience for passengers and PENRUG says the incomplete and inaccurate publicity did not help. The group argues that more use should be made of the available diversionary routes.

On one of the numerous autumn days when all facilities at Thetford station were locked out of use, a PENRUG member noted that few passengers seemed bothered by the closure of the booking office but they were annoyed - some very annoyed - by the absence, on such a cold morning, of any toilets or a waiting room. A little note blaming "staff shortages" contrasted with a poster claiming that 100 extra security staff had been recruited!

Noting the forthcoming anniversary of the Beeching Report, PENRUG salutes all those that have worked hard in the intervening 50 years to change political attitudes and revitalise our railways. The group is thankful that the Hope Valley section of the current Liverpool-Norwich route narrowly escaped the Beeching axe.

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

[website](#)

ESTA's Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary were among invited guests that travelled on the first train to cross another on the new passing loop at Beccles, which has enable an hourly service to be introduced on the Ipswich-Lowestoft line. "Small loop for station; giant leap for rail travellers" is how the local paper chose to headline its coverage of the development. ESTA's publicity display about the new rail service has been doing a tour of local libraries, and members have been helping the Community Rail Partnership to distribute leaflets and memorabilia. However, Westerfield station has seen its rail service cut and ESTA has been supporting local rail users to get more stops included in the timetable from May.

Four members from ESTA attended a Rail Conference organised by Suffolk County Council in October – the keynote speaker at the conference was Railfuture's president, Christian Wolmar. During workshop sessions, the ESTA reps made the case for better bus/rail interchange and urged that the new franchisee for Greater Anglia should be required to work more closely with bus operators. The group also looked across the border into Norfolk, commenting on development proposals for services to their area from Norwich, as set out in Norfolk County Council's draft Rail Prospectus.

The midsummer birthday of the Ipswich-Lowestoft line is now an excuse for an annual celebratory outing; this year, ESTA members will be enjoying lunch followed by a 2-hour boat trip. Further outings are promised for later in the summer and a questionnaire included with the group's winter newsletter ask members for their preferences; it also asks whether they would like to take part in other activities such as a sponsored cycle ride.

### **Felixstowe Travel Watch**

[website](#)

After nearly a year of operation by Abellio, FTW concludes that rail passengers in the region will have noticed very little change ... and much of that is not for the better! On the plus side, there's the new hourly service between Ipswich and Lowestoft giving much improved connections for people travelling up from Felixstowe. However, an unwelcome surprise change from December is that hitherto good connections at Ipswich into Peterborough-bound trains have largely been broken, and the group will be pressing for these important connections to be restored. Other disappointments include poor waiting facilities at Ipswich, the use of remote call centres and no more free drinks for delayed passengers – penny pinching in the extreme!

The group has had confirmation from Greater Anglia that “easements” still exist which enable passengers from Derby Road, Trimley and Felixstowe to return home from London on certain late afternoon trains using off-peak return tickets – a facility that is not widely publicised.

The February edition of FTW's newsletter comes with the group's summer tours programme; this includes tear-off slips for members to make their bookings.

### **Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group**

[website](#)

Network Rail reported to the group that its feasibility study into solving safety problems at Foxton Level Crossing has entered a detailed phase, and they will also be considering the future of some of the more rural level crossings in the area. The pedestrian gate upgrade at Foxton is now complete after an electrical problem had been identified; the upgrade included new magnetic locks for the wicket gates to improve their reliability.

### **Barking-Gospel Oak Line Users' Group**

[website](#)

BGOLUG has noted London Overground's increasing use of making rail tickets available on local buses instead of providing a proper replacement bus service, and the group has now successfully negotiated the acceptance of Barking-Gospel Oak line tickets on any reasonable Overground or Underground route during current engineering works.

Within hours of the publication of Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan, BGOLUG put out a bulletin to its supporters highlighting all references in the document to their line and pointing out some aspects that needed clarification.

Two weeks later, BGOLUG compiled a press release stating “The NR Strategic Business Plans launched with a great fanfare on Tues 8 Jan, had a lot to say about the Barking – Gospel Oak line, including electrification and platform lengthening to allow longer trains with more coaches to relieve chronic peak time overcrowding. However, when rail users started to comb through the small print, they discovered that the Government had failed to fund the electrification of the line so diesel trains were set to stay!” BGOLUG's Secretary added, “We were amazed, but not totally surprised by the Dept. for Transport's intransigence and continuing resistance to approving a scheme supported by whole rail industry.” They point out that platform lengthening cannot go ahead until Network Rail know which type of train – 3-car diesel or 4-car electric – to plan for.

BGOLUG will be making representations during the Office of Rail Regulation consultation period, insisting that this essential electrification is started as soon as possible.

### **Windsor Lines Passengers' Association**

[website](#)

WLPA notes that redevelopment of Twickenham Station, involving the building of tower blocks over the station, has been held up by a Judicial Review of the planning decision and hopes that the result will be a station that is more fit for purpose – although the group thinks there's a risk the developer may now pull out. Meanwhile there's news that Teddington Station has been listed Grade II ahead of its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and WLPA is looking forward to the celebration events later this year.

WLPA has written to all the local authorities down the line to ascertain their views on “Airtrack Lite”, the current scheme to connect Heathrow with lines to the south west of London - so far five have replied. The exercise has enabled the group to understand and perhaps address some of the concerns about the project.

A meeting with South West Trains in January gave WLPA the opportunity to raise a number of issues, including ongoing problems with toilets on trains, incorrect signage at some stations, the need for an additional ticket machine at Addlestone and the merits of reintroducing route codes. The group’s representative at the Railfuture Surrey meeting in Redhill (*more about this below*) was able to report back on the latest rail developments and campaigns.

### **Bexhill Rail Action Group**

[website](#)

BRAG’s warning as to the viability of some evening rush-hour timings in the new Dec 2012 timetable has proven to be well founded – two departures from London within five minutes of each other have resulted in a regular “train jam” once the trains reach the coast. Another by-product of the new timetable is that the area is now visited regularly by ‘Class 313’ units designed for inner-suburban routes; BRAG questions their use on long-distance routes.

In the group’s winter newsletter, the chairman singles out BRAG member Yolanda Laybourne for special praise. Yolanda has been tracking the growing number of days when Bexhill ticket office closes significantly earlier than the advertised hours. BRAG has confronted Southern with this evidence and is continuing to watch the situation.

Over the Christmas period, Southern operated a Saturday service on certain weekdays, but locals were quick to discover that they weren’t offering “Saturday” fares! – off-peak and weekend fares were not available as one might expect. Even car park charges were at the higher weekday rates. [*A case of having your Christmas cake and eating it! – Ed*]

### **Trans Wilts Community Rail Partnership**

[website](#)

The Partnership held a useful meeting in December about the Wiltshire Transport Link project involving key decision makers; there will be a follow up meeting on 2 Feb 2013 in Westbury looking primarily at train services under the next franchise.

The representative from the County Council had some positive news about improving bus and cycle access to stations, a new bus service to link Warminster Station with Longleat, and developing station travel plans. Delegates were warned that there’s a risk that long-distance rail services could bypass Westbury in a future Great Western franchise in an attempt to speed up journeys between London and the Westcountry; also they were reminded of the need to press for electrification from Newbury to Westbury and beyond.

All agreed that the conference had been useful in bringing together a number of transport-interest groups and highlighting the need for better rail services in the County. Convenor, Graham Ellis, was thanked for his hard work.

### **Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group**

[website](#)

Standards appear to be slipping at First Great Western, and BTPG is asking its members to send their complaints to the Company’s customer services team. Issues in recent weeks include: overrunning engineering works, missed connections at Newbury, short-notice cancellations, late running and poor information in times of disruption.

*Late news:* Hungerford Town Council has set up an e-petition stating “We the undersigned petition the DfT to retain all the current direct services between Bedwyn, Hungerford, Kintbury to Reading and London Paddington.” If you wish to sign it it’s at: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/45021>

### **South Hampshire Rail Users' Group**

[website](#)

SHRUG's evidence-based document "A History of South West Trains", available on their website, was submitted to the Brown Review of rail franchising, and an acknowledgement was received. Copies also went to rail ministers.

After the national timetable book was published for the Dec-May period, SHRUG noted that there is now an email contact for submitting comments, so the group took the opportunity to suggest improvements to Table 123, the service between Brighton/Portsmouth and destinations beyond Bristol.

SHRUG welcomes the Network Rail announcement of infrastructure improvements in South Hampshire, which include a signalling upgrade on the Waterloo-Portsmouth line, and hopes that the projects will not incur the enormous delays experienced last time there were major resignalling works in the South.

### **Friends of Crewkerne Station**

[website](#)

The "Friends" now have access to the disused Platform 2, they've received the necessary safety briefing from Network Rail and they've started work to smarten up the area prior to installing flower tubs. The group also is working with South West Trains to put back some of the poster frames that were taken away during a network-wide "purge" so that additional information can be displayed for passengers.

A housing development adjoining the station is causing headaches: temporary signs and fencing have blown down or disappeared, the road access to the station gets blocked up with lorries and the station entrance has become an unsightly mess – FoCS is urging members to complain to the relevant authorities until something is done.

A second "open day" at the station was a great success, with a raffle (drawn by the Deputy Mayoress) and a model train layout – similar events are planned for 2013.

### **Tarka Rail Association**

[website](#)

Such has been the effect of the adverse weather on rail services in Devon that the editor of the TRA magazine decided to bring out a "Special Bad Weather Edition" to convey details of events occurring from late November onwards. The front-cover photo shows a handwritten notice posted up at Plymouth Station which says it all: "DO NOT TRAVEL" followed by a list floods, landslides and closures not only on the railways but also on the trunk roads. It was unfortunate that a major track renewal programme had begun on the Exeter-Barnstaple line in the week before the heavens opened, which led to a cessation of work and severe damage to sections already completed. The junction with the main line is, of course, at Cowley Bridge – the spectacularly flooded part of the railway which has appeared on numerous TV news bulletins.

Photographs of flooded track, twisted rails and washed-out ballast accompany the blow-by-blow account of events in the TRA magazine – and there's even an engraving of Cowley Bridge Junction in 1866 (plus photos in 1960 and 2000) to show that it has all happened before. The final page carries an acknowledgement to "all the teams from both Network Rail and their subcontractors who worked so hard during two separate flooding occurrences, and especially over the Christmas holidays, to bring our local railway back into operation."

### **Avocet Line Rail Users' Group**

[website](#)

During a visit to Exeter in January, Rail Minister Norman Baker presented a formal letter confirming the award of Community Rail status to the Avocet Line; in discussions afterwards, the minister commended ALRUG for all their constructive efforts on behalf of the line's passengers.

The editor of ALRUG's winter newsletter expressed a "hearty thank you" to all the railway staff who coped with a quite exceptional assault by the elements over the Christmas period. There was trouble too on the roads, but at least the extreme weather has provoked an awareness in the regional press of the need to ensure that the region's transport infrastructure is sufficiently resilient to cope with such a crisis. Recent figures from the Dept. for Transport show that investment in all forms of transport in the South West has plummeted to only £212 per head compared with £774 for London and £536 for Scotland, and the editor is concerned that rural authorities will have trouble arguing for their fair share against the big battalions of the large urban transport authorities.

After the successful trial of a half-hourly Sunday service in the run up to Christmas 2012, ALRUG will be using its passenger counts to argue for the enhanced service to be adopted on a permanent basis. And following combined pressure from ALRUG and a local councillor, there's now an extra stop at St James' Park Station on Saturdays to cater for Exeter City fans on their way to home matches.

ALRUG was given an early opportunity to discuss plans for a single-platform station at Newcourt on the southern edge of Exeter costing £2m; the County Council has indicated an opening date of Dec 2014. ALRUG sees this is the first tangible signs of a "Devon Metro".

*...news from Railfuture follows...*

### **RAILFUTURE NORTH WEST**

With visible signs of electrification work progressing in their region, Railfuture's North West Branch wonders whether there will be any electric trains to run on the services when the infrastructure is complete – their Winter newsletter gives a comprehensive summary of where the new trains will be needed, and by when. In view of the lack of progress in releasing ex-Thameslink Class 319s, the Branch thinks the simple answer is to increase the order for Class 350s, being built for Manchester-Scotland services. Meanwhile it's reported that there's a campaign to add the Windermere branch to the electrified network so that through services can be retained.

The branch's AGM on 2 Feb will this year be held at the Savoy Hotel in Blackpool. The committee have decided to revert to the previous format: a morning session followed by lunch (booked and paid for in advance) and then an afternoon session with a guest speaker (Kathryn O'Brien, Head of Franchise Development from First Trans-Pennine).

### **RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE**

27 Mar 2013, sees the 50th anniversary, of the publication of the report, *The Reshaping of British Railways*. "2013 gives Railfuture the opportunity to celebrate the success of our rail network over the last 50 years and in particular the last 30 years," says Yorkshire Branch chairman, Chris Hyomes. "Plans to mark 50 years of pro rail development are beginning to take shape. Our AGM will be held in Skipton on March 23rd. Skipton was chosen for a number of reasons. It has the most modern rolling stock, the most go-ahead reopening campaign (Skipton – Colne) and may soon have a direct rail link to one of Yorkshire's most popular tourist destinations, Bolton Abbey.

"We are putting together an exhibition of the developments that have taken place in Yorkshire over the last 50 years, and planning to produce a special supplement to the next issue of our newsletter" Rail users in the region are invited to submit their stories and photos as soon as possible.

"Opportunities to promote rail development like this do not come along very often," says Chris, "and I would urge branches, and the general membership to exploit this to its full potential."

### **RAILFUTURE HELPS KICKSTARTS HAXBY STATION CAMPAIGN**

Railfuture is to chair a public meeting at Wigginton Hall, Haxby on 20 Feb aimed at forming a locally-run action group to campaign for the reopening of Haxby station on the York-Scarborough line. The main speaker will be Julian Sturdy MP. Representatives from York City Council and Network Rail are

expected to attend. The reopening plan was approved by York City Council in 1997 and it was on the city council's wishlist of transport schemes published in Sept 2012. A bid for funding failed in 2009/10, when the Coalition Government abandoned the Regional Funding Allocation process – construction had been expected to start in 2013.

## RAILFUTURE SURREY CONFERENCE

On 1 Dec 2012, delegates at a conference in Redhill, organised by Railfuture's London & SE Branch, were asked to rank a list of rail projects they would like to see for Surrey. The number one choice was electrification of the North Downs line, with Airtrack (connecting Surrey to Heathrow) and the rebuilding of Redhill Station close behind. Those present also thought that there should be action to enlarge car parks and build more cycle parking, solve specific rail bottlenecks, encourage off-peak and contra-peak flows, avoid engineering possessions during the busy Sunday afternoon peak, and ensure a staff presence at stations.

A senior officer representing Surrey County Council at the conference promised delegates that there would be an opportunity to participate in the forthcoming rail study for the County, being conducted by consultants Arup.

## RAILFUTURE COMPILES LIST OF RAIL TICKET AGENTS – *keep those suggestions coming!*

Railfuture Board Member, Trevor Garrod, has been compiling an up-to-date list of agents selling rail tickets, and thanks those who have submitted suggestions. He says that the list will be a useful source of information for rail users, and Railfuture may be able to work with such agencies in promoting rail and seamless travel.

Trevor goes on to say: "We are sharing this information with the Association of European Rail Agents who specialise in selling train tickets to and on the Continent. We in Railfuture believe there is an important role for personal service and that can sometimes be provided by a travel agent or other business selling tickets. I welcome any further information and/or corrections."

Please email any comments or suggestions to [trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk) by **16 Feb 2013**.

*Outlets so far identified are as follows:*

**AGENCIES** Chester-le-track at Chester-le-Street and Eaglescliffe stations; Agencies at Gobowen, Ledbury, Ludlow and Llandrindod Wells stations; St Ives Travel Agency, Cornwall

**OTHER PRIVATELY OPERATED TICKET OFFICES** at Bargoed and Pembrey & Burry Port

**TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES** The office in the station building at Woodbridge sold longer-distance rail tickets at a £2 surcharge - but may now have stopped selling them.

**COUNTY COUNCILS** Lancashire County Council staff sell rail tickets in the station ticket office at Carnforth and Clitheroe, and in the bus station ticket office at Nelson.

**HERITAGE RAILWAYS** North York Moors Railway personnel staff the office at Whitby station and sell national rail tickets - but is this only when steam trains are running? Ffestiniog Travel and the Tallylyn Railway are also thought to sell national rail tickets.

**SHIPPING COMPANIES** Wight Link - Yarmouth IOW; Red Funnel - West Cowes IOW. Also Stena Line at Harwich International Port has a station booking office staffed by Greater Anglia (but at the other end of the crossing, Hoek van Holland Haven only has ticket machines, although the purser's office on the ship sells Dutch Railways tickets).

## RAILFUTURE PASSENGER COMMITTEE

At a meeting with Angel Trains, representatives of the committee had the opportunity to comment on plans for refurbishing the Class 317 fleet; similar meetings are being arranged to review and hopefully influence the planned refurbishment of Mk4 InterCity coaches. Other issues tackled by the committee in recent months include: timetable padding, toilet facilities at stations and the inconvenience to some passengers resulting from the Overground extension in South London.

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

## **BROWN REVIEW OF THE RAIL FRANCHISING PROCESS**

Richard Brown's review of the government's rail franchising strategy, following the cancellation of the InterCity West Coast competition, has backed the overall policy while delivering advice for improvements. Mr Brown concludes that franchising is a fundamentally sound approach for securing the passenger railway services. He has identified a number of detailed recommendations for improving the way that franchises are specified and franchise competitions are run. Details [here](#).

The government is planning to set out a programme for future franchise competitions in the spring alongside a further statement of franchising policy in light of the Brown Review. – *gov.uk*

## **GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR NEW STATIONS**

The New Stations Fund for England and Wales, which was announced last year by the Department for Transport, opened for bids on 24 Jan. It is designed to provide vital additional funding for 'shovel ready' projects which can be brought quickly into use for the benefit of passengers and the economy. Organisations such as local authorities, passenger transport executives and train operating companies keen to boost economic and connectivity by providing new stations are all being encouraged to submit bids.

Proposals must be at an advanced stage of development and be supported by the relevant local authority, train operating companies and Network Rail. Successful applicants will also be required to provide a percentage of funding themselves. Applications will be assessed by a cross-industry panel, including representatives from Network Rail and the Department for Transport, with an announcement on successful bids made in the summer. – *from DfT and Network Rail press releases*.

- *Campaigners for station openings need to check with their local transport authority to see that their scheme is being pursued – Ed.*

## **DEVOLVED FUNDING FOR LOCAL MAJOR TRANSPORT SCHEMES**

In September 2012, following a period of consultation, the Department for Transport set out firm proposals for the devolution of funding for local major transport schemes from 2015. Indicative funding figures for local transport bodies have now been published. The actual allocations will be determined following further spending rounds within government. LTB boundaries were mostly agreed by consensus between the local partners, although there were three areas where local partners could not reach such an agreement. Details [here](#). – *gov.uk*

*It's worth taking a look at the list of funding allocations, if only to acquaint yourself with the new LTB boundaries in your region. I've discovered that Dorset isn't in the "Heart of the South West"! - Ed*

## **ORR's ASSESSMENT OF NETWORK RAIL's STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN**

Don't forget that you have until 19 Feb 2013 to send your comments to the Office of Rail Regulation as part of its consultation on NR's Strategic Business Plan for Control Period 5 (2014 to 2019). See [here](#).

## **PASSENGER FOCUS RESEARCH & COMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOPS**

The first of these workshops has now taken place (London, 25 Jan), and Railfuture Board Member Trevor Garrod reports that 33 people attended. Trevor is an old hand at rail campaigning, but says he picked up some useful tips on research and dealing with the media. He adds that presentations from Passenger Focus on their current and future work programme were interesting, and there were opportunities to suggest other issues that PF should be looking at.

The next workshops are in Bristol (7 Feb), Manchester (21 Feb), Newcastle (12 Mar) and Perth (21 Mar), so register now via [usergroups@passengerfocus.org.uk](mailto:usergroups@passengerfocus.org.uk) if you want to take part.

### **CBT MARKS BEECHING ANNIVERSARY WITH SPECIAL EVENTS**

The Campaign for Better Transport is planning a number of events to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beeching report.

On **Mon 11 Mar**, there will be an evening of panel discussion preceded by film clips and introduced by Michael Palin at the Science Museum in **London**. On the panel are Lord Faulkner, Lord Adonis, David Higgins (Network Rail) and Lindsey Durham (Freightliner). The focus will be on national rail policy, celebrating the growth in passengers & freight and projecting a vision for future developments.

On **Mon 27 Mar**, there will be another evening session, this time at the National Railway Museum in **York**. The panel discussion will feature Paul Salvesson, Nicola Sturgeon (invited) and a senior manager from Northern Rail (to be confirmed). The theme will be the impacts of rail on local communities, especially the story of reopening of the Borders line in Scotland.

There will also be "Walk the Line" and "Ride the Line" events from Easter onwards.

### **EUROPEAN PASSENGERS' FEDERATION AGM AND CONFERENCE**

The 11th Conference and Annual General Meeting of the European Passengers' Federation will be held in Basel, Switzerland, on Saturday March 16th 2013. The conference will be preceded on Friday afternoon by a seminar on public transport in and around Basel and the welcome dinner will take place on Friday evening. On Saturday morning the conference will hear speakers on challenges to urban transport and the experiences of rail liberalisation. In the afternoon, speakers will deal with long-distance rail travel at European level and the work of EPF. Sunday will give an opportunity to visit the successful tram-train network of Mulhouse in France with a guided tour.

The EPF conference is an excellent opportunity for public transport users throughout Europe to network, learn from each others' experiences and have dialogue with important figures in the public transport sphere. Details [here](#). Railfuture is a founder member of the EPF.

### **COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS SPREAD TO SCOTLAND**

The Scottish Government has been working with the Association of Community Rail Partnerships to bring Community Rail benefits to Scotland; the Government says that the establishment of Scottish CRPs highlights their commitment to encouraging and facilitating greater community engagement in the railways. They've provided financial support which will enable ACoRP to employ staff to assist with the process and establish a projects fund.

**An inaugural Scottish Community Rail Partnership Conference will be held between 11:00 and 15:00 on Tuesday 19 February 2013, in Conference Room 1, Victoria Quay Edinburgh EH6 6QQ and will be addressed by Keith Brown MSP, Minister for Transport and Veterans.**

Interested parties have been invited to submit applications for creating a CRP. Completed forms should be returned to Transport Scotland for consideration. Successful applicants will be informed of their entitlement to bid for Scottish Government funding, managed by ACoRP. Details [here](#).

*-from the Transport Scotland website (thanks to SAYLSA for alerting us to this item)*

- SAYLSA welcomes the move: "After a wait of nearly 20 years, Scotland is finally to sign up to the idea of Community Rail. For a variety of reasons Scotland never adopted the concept that has been so successful in England and Wales." – *comment in SAYLSA's newsletter*

### **FAMILY & FRIENDS RAILCARD – special offer**

If you apply online before 3 Mar 2013, you can get an annual Family & Friends Railcard for a special price of £20 (normally £28) - see <http://www.familyandfriends-railcard.co.uk/saving/>.

If you have a Tesco Clubcard, you can get a 16-25, Family & Friends or Senior railcard for only £14 worth of points instead of the usual £28. The cards get you up to a third off rail fares.

- [www.moneysavingexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com)

### **CHARTER TRAINS UNDER THREAT**

“The regulation of insurance payouts for charter trains in the UK is set to change. Currently the rail operators pay a max fine of £5000 if a train is delayed to the point that it badly delays other services, and if the fine amount is more than £5k, Network Rail pick up the excess. The ORR is looking to lift that cap, meaning charter trains would be a potential money grave for operators, and the heritage image of our railways would be left severely damaged.” - *e-petition on Government website*

*STORM's weekly bulletin* says: “Please take a few minutes to look at this important [e-petition](#), consider signing it, forwarding and giving it maximum publicity. If 100,000 signatures can be reached it will be considered for a debate in the Houses of Parliament.” The closing date 14 Apr.

### **BOOKING OFFICE EXTENDS OPENING HOURS – SHOCK**

Following a customer survey, Severn Dee Travel, the not-for-dividend rail agency operating the booking office and waiting room at Gobowen Station, is extending its opening hours. For a trial period of 6 months, the facility will be open from 07:15 to 17:00 Mon-Fri (weekends unchanged).

– *newsletter of the Chester-Shrewsbury Rail Partnership*

### **WIMBLEDON LOOP SAVED AFTER RAIL USERS HAVE THEIR SAY**

The government has safeguarded the future of a popular south London rail service ahead of a major overhaul of the network, Rail Minister Simon Burns announced in January. Passengers travelling to central London on the Wimbledon Loop had faced the prospect of having to change trains at Blackfriars Station from 2018 under proposals put forward under the Thameslink Programme. However, after extensive consultation with stakeholders and local rail users, the Department for Transport has worked closely with Network Rail to make sure the route continues to operate as part of Thameslink's core services. – *gov.uk*

### **TRAM-TRAIN PILOT GETS A MAJOR FUNDING INJECTION**

A tram-train pilot project linking Parkgate to Sheffield has moved a step closer with cash set aside by Network Rail to move the project forward. NR has committed £13 million to the South Yorkshire Tram-Train scheme, as it outlines future investments to the regional rail network. The scheme, that attracted £58 million in Government backing last year, will be a trailblazing project. Three trams an hour are expected to run from Sheffield city centre through the redeveloped Rotherham Central station and on to Parkgate's retail park. The pilot will run for two years from 2015 and if successful, it may then be taken up by other cities such as Manchester. – *from the Doncaster Free Press, spotted by STORM*

### **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

Andy Long of the Bedford Commuters Association has alerted us to a planning consultation from the Central Bedfordshire Council. Chapter 9 of the Council's Development Strategy has specific references to transport infrastructure and services, so rail users in the area may wish to comment on these by the due date, 25 Feb 2013. The consultation document and comment form are available to view and download by visiting the Strategic Planning pages on the Council's website [here](#).

After an initial read of the document, Andy says that it has not really taken on-board the key rail schemes such as the East West Rail Link, Midland Main Line electrification and the intermodal freight terminal proposed for Sundon. Parking pressures in town centres and around schools are mentioned but there is **no** specific mention of the pressure at railway stations.

## NOT SO SMART

*If you thought it isn't necessary to take your smart card (Oyster or whatever) out of your wallet to swipe it over the reader, think again! Here's a warning from the Windsor Lines Passengers' Association ...*

"As mentioned in a recent BBC report there is some problem over which card a ticket barrier reader will accept if presented with more than one (eg Oyster/ Freedom Pass/ Credit card). Our advice is to keep cards SEPARATE from one another and "show" the reader only the actual card you want it to read."

## ERRATUM

In the mini-edition of Rail User Express earlier this month, I mentioned that the annual National Passenger Survey is due out on 29 Jan 2013. Chris Bates, chairman of the Cherwell Rail Users' Group, wrote back to point out that the NPS is published twice a year, not annually. Thanks, Chris, for putting that right!

## EVENTS

*National & regional rail events are highlighted in yellow. Community & environmental events are in purple. Railfuture events are in green – rail user group representatives are welcome to attend!*

**Thu 31 Jan** DVR drop-in meeting at the Rugby Club, Manchester Rd, Stocksbridge from 19:45.

**Sat 2 Feb** [Trans Wilts Rail Partnership](#) meet in Westbury.

**Sat 2 Feb** Railfuture [North West Branch](#) AGM, Savoy Hotel, Blackpool from 11:00; lunch at 13:00.

**Sat 2 Feb** [Railfuture London & SE](#) members' meeting at Friends Meeting Ho, Chelmsford from 10:30.

**Sat 2 Feb** Railfuture [East Mids](#) members' meeting at Loughborough library, Granby St. from 13:00.

**Sat 2 Feb** Free training session on Public Transport Campaigning from [Together for Transport](#) at Walkden House, 10 Melton St, London from 11:00.

**Mon 4 Feb** London Overground Rail Operations (LOROL) stakeholder event at the Holiday Inn Stratford from 14.30.

**Tue 5 Feb** [SARPA](#) meet at The Sportsman, Newtown from 18:30.

**Wed 6 Feb** [Friends of Crewkerne Station](#) planning meeting at the Old Stage Coach Inn from 19:30.

**Thu 7 Feb** [Passenger Focus](#) "Research & Communication Guidance" workshop at Brunel's Old Station, Clock Tower Yard, Temple Meads, Bristol from 11:00.

**Thu 7 Feb** [TravelWatch North West](#) conference at TfGM office, 2 Piccadilly Place, Manchester from 10:15. Speakers from TfGM & Metrolink. After lunch: a visit to the Metrolink depot at Old Trafford.

**Fri 8 Feb** Conon Bridge Station opening ceremony, Far North Line.

**Mon 11 Feb** [Bexhill Rail Action Gp](#) meet at Sackville Hotel on Bexhill sea front from 19:00.

**Sat 16 Feb** Railfuture London & SE ([Kent Division](#)) meet at The Elephant, Faversham from 14:00.

**Sat 16 Feb** [Railfuture North East Branch](#) AGM in Room 21, Newcastle Central Station from 14:00. The Director General of Nexus will give an update on metro reinvigoration plans.

**Tue 19 Feb** Chesham Transport User's Group meet at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

**Tue 19 Feb** [Felixstowe Travel Watch](#) meet at St Andrew's Hall from 14:30 with guest speakers.

**Tue 19 Feb** Scottish Community Rail Partnership Conference at Conference Room 1, Victoria Quay Edinburgh from 11:00.

**Wed 20 Feb** Meeting of the [Haxby Station Reopening Campaign](#) at Wigginton Hall, Haxby.

**Thu 21 Feb** [Passenger Focus](#) "Research & Communication Guidance" workshop at Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester from 11:00.

**Thu 21 Feb** Go South Coast stakeholder conference in Southampton.

**Thu 21 Feb** Landor Stations Conference in London. Details from [www.landor.co.uk](http://www.landor.co.uk)

**Sat 23 Feb** [Railfuture East Anglia](#) AGM at Friends Meeting Ho, Bury St Edmunds.

**Sat 23 Feb** [ESTA](#) spring meeting at St Johns Church Hall, Saxmundham from 14:15

**Mon 25 Feb** [ALRUG](#) meet at the Globe, Topsham from 19:00.

**Sat 2 Mar** Free training session on Public Transport Campaigning from [Together for Transport](#) at 51-53 Nunnery Lane, York from 11:00.

**Wed 6 Mar** SCRUA meet at the Catholic Hall, Wrexham; guest speaker from ATW (tbc)

**Thu 7 Mar** London & SE ([Sx & Coastway Division](#)) meet at The Station, Uckfield from 18:00.

**Thu 7 Mar** Don Valley Railway drop-in meeting at the Harlequin, Stocksbridge from 19:00

**Fri 8 Mar** [Ashchurch, Tewkesbury & District Rail Promotion Group](#) meet in Tewkesbury Library, High Street from 19:30. Guest speaker is Railfuture's president Christian Wolmar.

**Sat 9 Mar** [SARPA](#) meet at the White Lion, Machynlleth from 11:00.

**Mon 11 Mar** [Bexhill Rail Action Gp](#) meet at Sackville Hotel, Bexhill from 19:00.

**Mon 11 Mar** [CBT](#) "Beeching 50" panel discussion at the Science Museum, London

**11-12 Mar** [ACoRP](#)'s annual Designated Community Rail Lines seminar, Southampton

**Tue 12 Mar** [Passenger Focus](#) "Research & Communication Guidance" workshop at Royal Station Hotel, Neville Street, Newcastle-u-Tyne from 11:00.

**Wed 13 Mar** [Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxtton RUG](#) AGM at Meldreth Manor School from 19:30.

**Wed 13 Mar** [Friends of the Barton Line](#) meet at the Sloop Inn, Barton from 20:00.

**Mar 15-16** [European Passengers' Federation](#) AGM and Conference in Basel.

**Sat 16 Mar** [Railfuture Lincolnshire](#) AGM from 11:00 followed by a conference (all welcome) from 13:00 to 17:00, at Cleethorpes Town Hall.

**Thu 21 Mar** [Passenger Focus](#) "Research & Communication Guidance" workshop at Best Western Queen's Hotel, Leonard Street, Perth from 11:00.

**Mon 27 Mar** [CBT](#) "Beeching 50" panel discussion at the National Railway Museum, York

**Fri 22 Mar** [Marlow-Maidenhead Passengers' Assn](#) meet at Bourne End Community Centre, Bucks from 19:30

**Sat 23 Mar** [Yorkshire Branch](#) AGM at the Herriot's Hotel, Skipton.

**Wed 27 Mar** 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the publication of the Beeching Report. Mark the event with your own "reshaping" report!

**Sat 6 Apr** [Railfuture Scotland](#) AGM and spring meeting at the Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh from 14:00. Speaker: leading transport strategist, Dr George Hazel.

**Sat 6 Apr** Sesquicentenary event to mark the opening of the line to Cleethorpes at the No 1 pub; [Friends of the Barton Line](#) will have a stall at the event.

**Tue 9 Apr** [BGOLUG](#) open meeting from 19:00 (speakers from LOROL and others) followed by AGM.

**Sat 13 Apr** [SARPA](#) meet at The Cambria, Aberystwyth from 11:00.

**Mon 15 Apr** [ALRUG](#) meet at the Manor Hotel, Exmouth from 19:00.

**Sat 20 Apr** Railfuture [North West Branch](#) meet at the Golden Pheasant, Plumley from 13:00.

**Sat 20 Apr** Railfuture [East Mids](#) AGM at Great Central Rly's Lovatt House, Loughborough from 13:00. Spkr: Nicky Morgan MP on the Westminster campaign to electrify the Midland Main Line.

**Sat 20 Apr** [Railfuture London & SE Branch](#) AGM.

**Sat 27 Apr** [Bus Users UK](#) AGM in Oxford

**Sat 27 Apr** Railfuture W Mids AGM at Carrs Lane Church Centre (opp Moor St Station) from 11:00.

**30 Apr-2 May** [Railtex 2013](#) at Earls Court, London. Showcase of railway products and services.

**Sat 4 May** [ESTA](#) AGM. Venue to be decided.

**Tue 7 May** [SARPA](#) meet at Railway Station, Shrewsbury from 17:45.

**Wed 8 May** [Friends of the Barton Line](#) meet at the Sloop Inn, Barton from 20:00.

**Thu 9 May** [ACoRP](#) conference "Realising the Potential of Small Stations" at Carrs Lane, Birmingham.

**Sat 11 May** [Railfuture](#) AGM at the Town Hall, Durham city centre.

**Sat 18 May** [Cotswold Line Promotion Group](#) AGM at the WI Hall, Moreton-in-Marsh from 10:30.

**Sat 18 May** [PENRUG](#) AGM in Thetford.

**Sun 19 May** National rail timetable change

**Tue 21 May** [Felixstowe Travel Watch](#) AGM – details to follow.

**Thu 23 May** [Edenbridge & District Rail Travellers' Association](#) open AGM at the WI Hall, Edenbridge from 19:00.

**Mon 3 Jun** [Friends of the Far North Line](#) AGM and conference, Pentland Hotel, Thurso from 11:30.

**Wed 5 Jun** [World Environment Day](#) a global day for positive environmental action.

**mid Jun** [Green Transport Week](#) *details to be announced*

**Sat 22 Jun** [Railfuture](#) summer conference at the Albemarle Centre, Taunton.

**Wed 10 Jul** [Friends of the Barton Line](#) meeting & AGM at the Sloop Inn, Barton from 20:00.

**Sun 22 Sep** [Car Free Day](#). Highlight the positive effects of car free travel.

**Fri 27 Sep** [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Awards 2012, Llandudno

**Tue 1 Oct** Railway Development Society (aka Railfuture) 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**Sat 2 Nov** [Railfuture](#) conference, Oxford.

**Sun 8 Dec** National rail timetable change

**More events on the Railfuture and ACoRP websites.**

Please say if you no longer want to receive Rail User Express, or if someone else in your organisation wishes to be included on the circulation list.

*This bulletin has been sent by*

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