

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.

For details about group affiliation to Railfuture, please contact the [Membership Secretary](#)

GUEST RAIL USER GROUP OF THE MONTH - Chingford Line Users' Association

Affiliated to Railfuture, CLUA exists to help improve train services from Chingford through Walthamstow to London Liverpool Street, and between the Lea Valley line and Stratford. The group's web pages are hosted on Railfuture's website [here](#).

CLUA has a long-term campaign to provide a direct Chingford-Walthamstow-Stratford rail link by reopening the Hall Farm Curve; they recently had an "encouraging" meeting on the subject with local MP Iain Duncan Smith.

In March 2012, CLUA commissioned a consultant to look at 3 significant rail projects in the Lea Valley – the cost of the report was met from Railfuture's Fighting Fund. One of the three projects looked at in the report was the reopening of the station at Lea Bridge, and CLUA were extremely pleased when the Transport Secretary confirmed earlier this year that Lea Bridge would be one of just three stations in the country to benefit from the £20m New Stations Fund. The group looks forward to the station opening in December 2014 ... and the laying of an additional track in the area brings the promise of a service of four trains an hour.

With the news that Transport for London is to take responsibility for some of Greater Anglia's inner suburban routes, CLUA comments that there are many unanswered questions regarding rolling stock, ticketing arrangements, ownership of stations etc. The group hopes there will be an opportunity to take part in any consultations that will be held.

We continue 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.

Rail Action Group East of Scotland – well-respected committee member elected to Railfuture Board

RAGES has received support from Railfuture Scotland over a number of years during which time the group has been pleased to affiliate to Railfuture. Now, RAGES members learn from the July edition of *The Rages Rag* that their secretary, Allison Cosgrove, has been elected to the board of Railfuture, having received the greatest number of votes in a ballot. We read that Allison is particularly interested in passenger issues, and that she's suggested "Women in Rail" as a theme for Railfuture's Autumn 2014 conference.

While a rail link to Haddington continues to be a campaign goal for RAGES, they're now working with the town's Development Trust on an interim solution: a rail-link bus for the town. Wallyford station appears to be the most practical rail head for the service and funding sources for the link are being investigated with East Lothian Council and a local coach company.

RAGES has been kept in the loop about planned improvements to Berwick station, which are due to be completed in October 2013. The group had hoped to report on the outcome of the MVA Consultancy study into local rail services between Edinburgh and Berwick but, following comments on its content from Transport Scotland, publication has been delayed and it is now expected to be out some time in September.

Furness Line Action Group – contemplating life in the relegation zone

FLAG draws parallels with Barrow AFC's relegation from the Conference Premier league to warn that their line is being relegated to a forgotten league of railway backwaters with little chance of new rolling stock or services: "No amount of enthusiasm by Northern Rail staff or by Community Rail Partnerships can overcome the basic lack of resources ... the best we can hope for is hand-me-downs from other routes as electrification proceeds elsewhere ... We need [our MP] to urgently press for a Furness Line study to ensure we keep in the higher league." The group notes that a solid case for electrification has been made for the *Windermere branch by Tim Farron MP, and they think the Furness Line warrants similar consideration. They also make the point that electrification of their line could be achieved for much less than the cost of the 3-mile link road planned for Heysham.

There's been a "quite appalling rise" in the number of train cancellations by Northern, and FLAG is carefully compiling a list for publication. They point out that the impact of cancellations is heightened by the lack of passenger information on many of the stations.

FLAG has discovered that Millom station is the busiest station per capita in the UK (!), due in part to Sellafield traffic. They've also calculated that annual station usage for Furness Line stations is still firmly upwards after taking into account the 16-week closure for engineering works in the period 2011/12. Meanwhile the group, along with others in the area, continues to press for a Sunday service on the line between Barrow and Whitehaven in view of the area's high tourist potential.

As the Official Anniversary Supporter of the Carnforth Station Heritage Trust, FLAG is helping to promote the Trust's 10th anniversary celebrations this autumn. Elsewhere, we read that FLAG is planning its "move into the 21st century" by consulting experts with a view to setting up a website.

***Latest news** (9 Aug): Electric trains could soon be serving destinations in the heart of the Lake District as Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin unveiled his plans to electrify the Windermere branch line in Cumbria. Subject to the business case confirming the project provides good value for money, Network Rail will be asked to undertake the work in conjunction with other North West rail electrification projects. – *from a Dept. for Transport press release*

Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield Rail Users Association – a dumping ground for diesels!

Officials at West Yorkshire Metro are examining ways to prepare the local rail network for High Speed 2, and HPSRUA wrote to Metro's chairman to underline the significance of the Penistone Line as a feeder route for the south Pennines: "By the time HS2 is in service, rail users would like to see all the local services electrified and on at least a half-hourly timetable." The reply from the chairman was sympathetic, but seemed to imply that the demand would need to be proven before these aspirations could be met.

In a feature article in HPSRUA's newsletter *Track Record*, the writer reminds us that Sheffield and South Yorkshire together form the most populated area of the UK without an electrified local rail network – the area risks being a dumping ground for ageing diesel units: "Given its geographical point on the national rail network Sheffield should be a place where a number of electrified routes converge, something that you would expect in terms of both size and importance of the city." He adds that, once electrified, the route through Sheffield would become an important diversionary route for the East Coast Main Line.

First TransPennine Express and Kirklees Council want to develop a Visitor Information Point at Huddersfield station, and are looking to recruit volunteer "ambassadors" – HPSRUA members were invited to the inaugural meeting to hear more about the project.

Golcar Longwood and Milnsbridge Transport Campaign – a thousand signatures for petition

By the end of July, GLAM TRaC managed to get over 800 signatures for its campaign for a station to serve Golcar/Milnsbridge. Members of the committee agreed to push for the magic thousand and were out with their petition at the Colne Valley Green Fair on August 3rd. The petition is to be presented Kirklees Council and the Metro transport authority. - *Salvo*

Shakespeare Line Promotion Group – new report addresses local concerns about rail scheme

Reopening the railway line between Stratford and Honeybourne will have absolutely no disadvantages for locals, according to a [report](#) just published. Renewing their efforts to get rid of the railway dead-end in Stratford, the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group say they have got the cost of building a new railway down 30% to an estimated £53 million.

They believe a six-mile track to a new station at Long Marston will have huge benefits for tourists, businesses, and residents in Stratford, providing a direct line to both Worcester via Evesham, and Oxford via Moreton-in-Marsh. Around 60 local councillors and business group members were sent a copy of their report.

The report states: “Train services along a reopened rail route could beneficially offer easy and faster travel for residents in the Long Marston and Quinton areas where some 2,000 households will reside within 3km of a proposed station.” The SLPG also reckons the rail link would reduce road traffic in Long Marston, Welford and Binton.

Residents have previously protested against these plans, arguing the noise would be unbearable for residents, and the railway line would damage green spaces and footpaths. There is a *No Avon Line* protest group and Warwickshire County Council noted the “local concerns” after a business case study was produced last year. SLPG pointed out that a survey in Stratford last year found 70% of those who responded supported re-opening the line, which in any case would be in a shallow cutting with trains confined to 30mph in sensitive areas. – *from a story in Stratford Herald*

Cotswold Line Promotion Group – the CPLG helps to set up a new rail-link bus service

CLPG representatives were present at the VIP launch of new Sunday RailLink bus service 381 at Pershore station; the group is among the sponsors of the service. As well as providing a regular link into the town centre (over a mile from the station), the new service offers a number of journey possibilities, including visits to Croome Court house and gardens.

Committee members of CLPG met with officers from Gloucestershire County Council at the three Cotswold Line stations in the County to discuss station facilities and planned developments; there was an opportunity to press for CLPG campaign aims and to point out that two other stations on the line serve Gloucestershire communities even though they are not in the County – a fact not appreciated by the GCC officers. The CLPG has heard that GCC is considering reinstating the rail link between Cheltenham and Kingham via Bourton-on-the-Water; however, the group feels that a restored rail link between Oxford and Witney would have a better business case.

The group is concerned that trains crews seem to be physically unable to carry out ticket checks on board HSTs due to the number of stops and the need to supervise the closing of the doors: “if passengers are travelling without tickets and do not show up in the official passenger figures, this weakens our case for an hourly service.”

Members and friends are looking forward to their outing to Swanage on 28th September; all tickets for their HST charter train sold out more than 3 months in advance!

Oxon & Bucks Rail Action Committee – new line revitalises Buckinghamshire town

OBRAC's secretary has attended meetings in Winslow which were held to discuss the details of a new station for the market town as part of the East-West Rail Link scheme. Land has been reserved for the station and environmental survey work has commenced. The size of the car park has been increased to 370 spaces on 2 decks with provision for extra decks if needed. There are now fears in the community that the new station will lead to house prices becoming unaffordable and to more housing being proposed by developers!

OBRAC attended a talk given by a Dept. for Transport official about EWRL; it emerged that a number of local factors played a key part in the scheme gaining approval, in particular the commitment of local councils and MPs. Public support, encouraged by groups such as OBRAC, was also an important factor.

In other news, we read that OBRAC has been helping an Oxford University undergraduate with his dissertation on the Oxford-Cambridge "Varsity Line" from the perspective of former users and railway workers.

Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users' Association – extended blockade may be last straw for some users

BBRUA had hardly got over the great news about the go-ahead for the East West Rail Link, when they heard the announcement that the Oxford-Bletchley-Bedford line was to be electrified by 2019 – this came as a big surprise. The group is hoping that firm suggestions for a suitable route east of Bedford will soon be forthcoming.

BBRUA has been pressing for the Marston Vale service to be extended so that trains run to/from Milton Keynes, at least on a trial basis. They've since learnt that this is unlikely to happen due to a number of operational difficulties. The operator has agreed to see if improved running times could solve some of the problems, and BBRUA is determined to continue pressing for the extended service.

There's concern that 2012 had witnessed a deterioration of reliability on the Marston Vale Line, and the fear that many passengers may be lost to rail altogether after the extended blockade for engineering works over the Christmas period.

A colourful "Welcome to Woburn Sands" mural has been unveiled at Woburn Sands station. The artwork was produced by children from a nearby school - one of the teachers at the school (who is also a member of BBRUA and a regular train user) oversaw the project. Elsewhere we read that a new station adoption group has been established at Apsley Guise station with a £500 start-up grant from the Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership.

Earlier in the summer, over 100 BBRUA members and friends enjoyed a Great Value Day Out by Train to East Grinstead for a trip on the Bluebell Line. They were surprised to see the BBRUA secretary on the footplate of one of the engines – it transpires that he's a regular volunteer on the line!

Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users' Group – journey reports are a regular feature of newsletter

PENRUG hopes for quick results at Wymondham now that the District Council has outlined its plans for step-free access to the westbound platform at the station. The group also wants to see a safe walking and cycling route between the station and the town centre. The main access to Attleborough station closed in November 2012, and local rail users there are complaining at the length of time it's taking to provide the replacement access ramp.

A civic group at Thetford called "Moving Thetford Forwards" has been busy making the station more inviting for visitors – they've planted up a couple of flower beds and covered several redundant windows with colourful local scenes. PENRUG's chairman is convinced of Thetford's tourist potential and suggests that there could be a train-naming ceremony in honour of the town.

A regular feature of PENRUG's newsletters is a roundup of journey reports from members. Sometimes there's praise for the way front-line staff handle difficult situations when the service is disrupted; sometimes there are brickbats when poor service is encountered. One member reports that the train guard was "brilliant" during a delay of over two hours caused by a person attempting suicide. Another provides a harrowing account of journey on a rail replacement bus ("the worst of the fleet in service") which was driven at breakneck speed on the winding and undulating Fenland roads.

East Suffolk Travellers' Association – hourly service boosts passenger numbers

ESTA is pleased to announce that, in the 6 months since the introduction of an hourly service on the line between Ipswich and Lowestoft, passenger numbers have increased by a whopping 12%: "we look forward to further encouraging figures at the end of the year when the impact of the more frequent service on the summer leisure market should be felt." The group was also pleased that some extra stops had been added for Westerfield station ... while recognising that not every train on the East Suffolk Line should call there at the moment, they say that additional stops should be considered for the future after a nearby housing development has been completed.

In May, committee members took part in a photocall at Halesworth station to launch through ticketing between trains and buses. If this proves a success, Greater Anglia say they might look at similar schemes elsewhere. Two other items about Halesworth: (i) ESTA is planning a second footfall count at the station in October, and (ii) the "welcome" poster at the station now tells passengers about connecting buses instead of bizarrely saying that there aren't any!

One of the committee members visited every station between Westerfield and Lowestoft to conduct an audit of station facilities, and a 20-page report has been sent to the train operator, the County Council, local MPs and other interested bodies. There are 8 key recommendations concerning the lack of seating and car park spaces, better real-time information, improvements to maps and posters, and the provision of bus stop flags for rail-replacement buses.

In a ceremony on 12 July, the Chairman of the Friends of Saxmundham Station was handed the keys to the long-closed waiting room. They plan to open the room daily as a coffee shop with an information point and community meetings facility.

Southwark Rail Users' Group – a magnificent station emerging from decades of neglect

SRUG's committee has been dealing with "mountains of paperwork for Peckham Vision", a local regeneration project which involves restoring parts of Peckham Rye station and its environs. The Peckham Society had the idea to get the station buildings listed over ten years ago. In 2004, Rye Lane & Station Action Group was formed with the aim of taking forwards the restoration of the station buildings and recreating the original Victorian square in front of the station which had become obscured by later developments.

Work on restoration is now well under way. The pigeons have been evicted from the stunning "Old Billiard Room" above the ticket hall and Peckham Vision is looking into a future use for this facility. A magnificent building is emerging from decades of neglect - do take a look at their website to see photos of what is being achieved: http://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Peckham_Rye_Station.

...news from Railfuture follows...

RAILFUTURE RAIL USER CONFERENCE AND RUG AWARDS CEREMONY – Oxford, 2 Nov

Last call for bookings if you want to take advantage of the early bird discount!

Details of Railfuture's Rail User Conference at the Town Hall, Oxford on Sat 2 Nov 2013 can be found at oxford2013@railfuture.org.uk.

Railfuture's second Rail User Group Awards competition remains open for receiving your entries until **30 Sept 2013**. The competition aims to recognise and reward the various achievements of rail user groups over the past year. You can download full details about the competition from the Rail User Group page on Railfuture's website [here](#). Prizes will be presented at the Oxford conference.

POLICY GROUP RESPONDS TO ORR CONSULTATION

Railfuture's Policy Group reviewed the Office of Rail Regulations' [consultation document](#) setting out how the ORR intends to cooperate with local authorities on planning proposals. The comments submitted by the Policy Group (after consulting other groups and Railfuture branches) included these points:

- Under guidance from the ORR, every county, unitary authority and Local Enterprise Partnership should have its own rail strategy and action plan.
- ORR should provide guidance to planning authorities on the protection of closed and dismantled railway routes which may have the potential of reopening; likewise, sites for new passenger stations and rail freight facilities.

The Policy Group points out that the linear continuity of railway routes is a valuable asset and suggests that, where development is permitted on a disused railway route or site, the developer should be required to identify an alternative potential route to maintain linear continuity.

RAILFUTURE PASSENGER GROUP – help needed with a couple of issues

Among the many topics discussed at the Passenger Group meeting earlier in the summer were a couple of items where some feedback from others around Britain would be appreciated...

1. It's recognised that overcrowding is particularly acute on Cross Country services and that the Dept. for Transport is reluctant to fund additional rolling stock. Trains that pass through large conurbations such as Bristol during peak hours are recognised as being particularly busy, and the alternative local services may be slower and therefore less attractive to commuters. Possibly too, commuters are having to travel longer distances to find work. Evidence of overcrowding on Cross Country trains and comments about the causes would be very welcome.
2. There's a campaign in Gloucestershire to ensure that passenger information for "Ashchurch for Tewkesbury" station mentions "Tewkesbury", so that passengers unfamiliar with the area know that there is a station close to the town. At present, some passenger information, including pocket timetable leaflets, omits "for Tewkesbury" from the station name. Is anyone aware of other examples of this type of problem elsewhere in the UK?

As always, please reply to ruglnk@railfuture.org.uk and I pass your comments to the relevant person.

RAILFUTURE THAMES VALLEY – tram-train proposed for Witney

The Thames Valley branch has set out proposals for a tram-train service between Oxford, Carterton and Witney, and has called on the county council to carry out a feasibility study. The branch now reports that Witney Chamber of Commerce is supporting these proposals.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA – positive response after presenting the Wisbech branch reopening petition

After presenting their petition supporting the reopening of the 7-mile line between March and Wisbech to Cambridgeshire County Council (see July issue of Rail User Express), the East Anglia branch received this encouraging reply from the Leader of the Council:

“Thank you for presenting your 2907-signature petition at Council on 16 July 2013, supporting the re-opening of the Wisbech to March railway line and provision of a through train service to Cambridge. We welcome this petition and all the work you and the Campaign have put into promoting better transport links for Wisbech. This is an important part of demonstrating the strength of feeling locally and in time, of improving provision.

“The Council supports the goal of better transport links to and from Wisbech, and rail if possible, and has already commissioned work to understand the feasibility of different options to achieve that goal. We are now carrying out detailed works into the proposals so that we can understand the scale of costs involved and how they may be addressed and, subject to the outcome, we would hope then to be in a position to identify potential solutions. I appreciate that this process may appear to be very lengthy, but it is necessary to ensure we develop the right solution.

“As we move this work forward, I will ensure that my officers keep the campaign and Railfuture informed of progress, and hope that a positive outcome for Wisbech can be achieved as soon as possible.”

The petition is still open at www.wisbechrail.org.uk.

RAILFUTURE SURREY

Railfuture Surrey and rail user groups in the county have responded to the draft Surrey County Council Rail Strategy. While very much welcoming the initiative of the County to produce the strategy, the response document makes a number of important points, for example:

- Rail users appear not to have been consulted in the preparation of the draft. Also, key stakeholders should meet annually to review progress of the strategy.
- Some of the data used appears to be out of date, and some aspirations seem unduly timid.
- Certain aspects of rail services were not considered in sufficient detail, eg future destinations for Thameslink. The Sutton and Mole Valley lines to Dorking were missed out altogether.
- The strategy rightly calls for additional car parking but neglects integration with other modes such as bus services.

The response submitted by Railfuture addresses options for service enhancements, and explores the ways in which additional infrastructure could transform both journey opportunities and service reliability. You can read the Strategy document and Railfuture’s response [here](#).

FERRY SURVEY – update

In addition to reminding UK passenger groups about the Ferry Survey, Trevor Garrod from Railfuture’s International Group sent out this message to his European contacts:

BATEAUX POUR LA GRANDE BRETAGNE ET L'IRLANDE.

Nous avons reçu jusqu'à présent plus que 80 réponses à notre questionnaire. Merci à tout le monde. Nous vous prions de continuer à remplir le questionnaire sur www.railfuture.org.uk pour chaque voyage en bateau que vous effectuez du premier octobre 2012 au 30 septembre 2013.

FAEHREN VON UND NACH GROSSBRITANNIEN UND IRLAND.

Wir haben bis jetzt mehr als 80 Antworten an unsere Fragebogen. Wir danken allen. Bitte besuchen Sie weiter unsere Webseite www.railfuture.org.uk jedesmal, wenn Sie zwischen dem ersten Oktober 2012 und dem 30. September 2013 eine Reise mit der Fähre machen.

So keep those completed questionnaires coming in!

Thank you / Merci / Danke

Please note that there's a slight error on the paper version of the questionnaire. After "Date of outward journey" it says "Date of inward operator". This should, of course, read "Date of inward journey". The version on Railfuture's website is correct.

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

INQUIRY INTO PASSENGER TRANSPORT FOR ISOLATED COMMUNITIES – have your say

The House of Commons Transport Committee is calling for evidence on passenger transport in isolated communities. The Chair of the Committee, Louise Ellman MP, said: "People from different communities across the UK should have access to adequate transport services. We will be looking at how best to meet the needs of passengers in isolated communities, including rural areas, island communities, and suburban or urban areas with poor transport connections. We are particularly interested in the provision of bus and rail services, as well as the role of Community Transport services."

The Committee intends to hear oral evidence in the Autumn. Ahead of this, it would like to receive written evidence by 2 Sept 2013 on a number of specific points; see [here](#).

REGULATED RAIL FARES SET TO RISE BY AVERAGE OF 4.1% - the CBT responds

Reacting to the recent news about the effect of inflation on rail fares in England for 2014, the Campaign for Better Transport chief executive Stephen Joseph said: "The Coalition pledged to make fares fairer. Instead, they've continued to ramp up the cost of train travel, far out-stripping incomes. This isn't just bad for commuters, it's bad for the economy too. If the Government is serious about growth it needs to stop pricing people out of jobs."

"Getting to work is now the biggest single monthly outgoing for many commuters - more than food, more than housing. One of the surest ways of stamping on any green shoots of recovery is to price people off the trains and out of the jobs market. For the sake of the economy we should end above inflation fares increases now and start planning for fare reductions."

INVESTMENT IN RAIL BRINGS £3.2bn OF WORK FOR BRITISH BUSINESS

Investment in the rail network generated more than £3.2 billion of work for businesses across Britain over the last year, according to new figures from Network Rail. More than a third – around £1.2 billion – of the money spent in 2012/13 went to small and medium-sized businesses, helping support economic growth and jobs across a range of industries from telecoms suppliers and glazers to solar energy engineers and security providers.

This investment has sustained more than 90,000 full-time jobs nationwide in addition to the 34,000 people directly employed by NR, generating significant financial returns to central government through tax revenue and savings on benefits as well as boosting local economies. – *Rail Professional*

TWNW REPORT ON WEST COAST ENGINEERING BLOCKADE

Members of TravelWatch NorthWest travelled on and observed rail and coach services during the engineering blockade between Warrington and Wigan in mid July – their 5-page report was published shortly afterwards. Perhaps the overriding issue during the blockade was the frequent, very-heavy overcrowding of First TransPennine Express Anglo-Scottish services, exacerbated by the beginning of the Scottish school holiday period: "When it became clear early in the week what was happening on TPE trains, there should have been a joint effort to re guide passengers onto the lightly loaded Virgin services."

The report criticises certain aspects of the advance publicity and gives examples of misleading information over the station and on-train public address systems. However, there was mostly praise

for the rail-replacement coach services and the helpful staff, although ticket checks could have been better.

The report concludes: “For many the experience of rail travel on the Glasgow-Preston-Manchester corridor exhibited the railway in a very poor light with avoidable pressure being put on trains that were incapable of coping with the demand ... better planning and coordination could have avoided this. It really did demonstrate a fragmented system and a lack of appreciation that passengers recognise a single railway system.”

The report author notes that Passenger Focus research said that passengers were unhappy at paying a train fare and getting a bus journey; he commends East Midlands Trains for offering a 15% discount on tickets that involve travel by replacement bus during the recent blockade at Nottingham Station.

RIDGMONT STATION RECOMMENDED AS COUNCIL PLEDGES £5.18m

On 13 Aug, Executive Councillors at Central Bedfordshire Council recommended that the Council pledge £5.18m in support of the East West Rail Link scheme. The Western Section of EWRL, which would run from Bedford to Oxford and Reading, would have one stop in Central Bedfordshire – and councillors recommended that this should be at Ridgmont.

Draft plans for the new line list Lidlington as the single stop in Central Bedfordshire. However, councillors put forward their support for a Ridgmont stop instead, on the grounds that this station has greater potential to develop as a transport interchange. It would also encourage rail travel to the nearby Marston Gate Business Park and the planned new Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre. – *from a Central Beds Council press release*

❖ *Andy Long tells us that the Council had concerns about the impact of a station at Lidlington on the village environs, and that parking at the site would be very difficult to provide. He also says that the Council has secured a reduction in its contribution to the Western Section of EWRL in order to focus more resources on the section east of Bedford.*

FIRST STEP IN PROGRESS TOWARDS HARROGATE LINE MODERNISATION

North Yorkshire County Council has taken the first step in what is anticipated to be a multi-million pound modernisation and improvement of services on the York-Harrogate-Leeds rail line. At a recent meeting, the NY Local Transport Body supported a proposal to invest £12.5m in the line. It was recommended that a contribution of £9.6m be made available from the North Yorkshire Local Transport Body; this funding is provided by the Dept. for Transport and is ring-fenced for major transport schemes.

The county council, Metro, City of York Council and Harrogate Borough Council, together with key stakeholders Network Rail, Northern and Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce, have been working with consultants looking into the modernisation of the route via Harrogate. This transformational project would see the electrification of the line, providing a boost to the local economy and bringing massive benefits for businesses, visitors and locals along the route. The initiative would secure:

- doubling of service frequency together with additional early morning and evening trains;
- end to end journey time reduction of 15 minutes;
- the introduction of higher quality, lower cost electric trains;
- improving connectivity and economic productivity within the region;
- enhanced connections to national and international destinations and markets;
- improved reliability and punctuality

The scheme represents extremely good value for money given the very high benefit to cost ratio, and promises lower operating costs in the future. – *NYCC press release*

❖ *Brian Dunsby of the Harrogate Line Supporters' Group tells us that Harrogate Chamber of Commerce is pressing for extra car parking at most of the existing stations plus at least two new stations along the line with rail-based park and ride for residents from a larger catchment area. These are not part of the bid to the DfT, but they should be fundable from local Council sources together with developer contributions.*

NORTH EAST WALES INTEGRATED TRANSPORT TASK FORCE REPORT

The Welsh Assembly Minister for Economy, Science and Transport commissioned a Task Force to develop recommendations for the transport system in north east Wales. The resulting *North East Wales Integrated Transport Task Force Report* is now available on the Taith website [here](#).

The *Draft Taith Network Strategy Consultation Report 2013* is also now available for consultation on the same website with a closing date of 4 Oct 2013. – taith.gov.uk

❖ *George Jones of the Llangollen Railway Trust alerted us to the publication of the Task Force Report and comments that it's depressing to see that most of the recommended developments are for the medium term, ie 10 years hence.*

SEWTA CONSULT ON RAIL STRATEGY FOR THE VALLEYS AND SOUTH GWENT

A multi-million-pound [rail strategy](#) that proposes new stations and lines including a link between Ebbw Vale and Newport has been put out to consultation. The regional transport consortium SEWTA, the South East Wales Transport Alliance, has launched a consultation on how it thinks services should be improved in the region up to 2030. The closing date for comments is 30 Sept.

It includes new services on the Ebbw Valley line and new stations in the south of Gwent including Caerleon, St Mellons, Coedkernew and Llanwern, as well as other services across the region. The proposals form a base of evidence to support the concept of a South East Wales Metro.

Under the strategy the Cardiff to Bristol line would see additional calls at Severn Tunnel Junction. SEWTA is also proposing new services on the Abergavenny and Chepstow line, and services between Caerphilly, Machen and Newport. Meanwhile it also proposes electrifying the Abergavenny to Shrewsbury and Chepstow to Gloucester lines.

The cost of building the schemes listed in the strategy would average £19.5 million a year and would cost between £13 million and £15 million a year to run. However it says increasing revenues would offset additional operating costs, adding that the planned electrification of the Valleys lines would produce a substantial reduction in operating costs. – *South Wales Argus*

For more information visit www.sewta.gov.uk.

GLOSSOP AND BUXTON LINES JOIN LIST OF COMMUNITY RAIL SERVICES.

Passengers in the north west will have more say on how local rail services are run after the designation of the Glossop line and the Buxton line each as a community rail service, Rail Minister Norman Baker announced in July. Designation of the line between Glossop and Hadfield to Manchester and Buxton to Manchester will enable train companies to work more closely with the community rail partnership to better design services to meet local needs.

Rail Minister Norman Baker said: "I want to encourage communities to become more closely involved with their railways to help create the services and stations passengers deserve. That's why I am delighted to announce these two latest community rail service designations. Today's designations are a major step towards helping the High Peak and Hope Valley Community Rail Partnership work closely with local groups to provide innovative and more cost effective rail services for their community."

To date, 19 lines with their services have been designated as community rail lines. Additionally, 15 services have been designated as community rail services whilst not designating the lines on which they run. – from a Dept. for Transport press release

PERTH LIGHT RAIL PROJECT NAMED IN LATEST BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENT

Oh, don't get so excited you folk up in Scotland. This one's about Perth in Western Australia.

ACCOMMODATION DIRECTORY NOW UP AND RUNNING

In the last issue of Rail User Express, I passed on a request from Martin Hill for recommendations of places to stay near railway stations. Martin has contacted me again to say that his accommodation website is now up and running; see <http://station-stays.co.uk>. He says it's very much an ongoing project, so all suggestions and amendments are welcome.

FIND VOLUNTEERS IN YOUR AREA

If you need to recruit volunteers for a project, or if you need some specific help (eg setting up a website), you can advertise your vacancies with your local Volunteer Centre. To find the nearest Volunteer Centre, go to the do-it.org website and use the [Volunteer Centre search tool](#).

Also take a look at the <http://vinspired.com/> website which is designed to connect young people to volunteering opportunities. There are plenty of youngsters out there looking to enhance their CVs with proof of engagement in community projects, so it's a win-win situation!

EVENTS

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

Wed 28 Aug [East Norfolk Transport Users Association](#) AGM and public meeting at St Paul's Church Hall, corner of Salisbury Rd/ Caister Road in Great Yarmouth from 19:30.

Mon 2 Sep [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meeting at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.

Mon 2 Sep [Watford Rail Users' Group](#) open meeting at Watford Town Hall from 18:45; representatives from local train operators will attend.

Thu 5 Sep [Railfuture Sussex & Coastway](#) meeting at Hampden Park from 18:00.

Fri 6 Sep Ashchurch, Tewkesbury & District Rail Promotion Group meet at Tewkesbury Library from 19:30. Guest speaker: Mike Curran from Gloucester LEP.

Mon 9 Sep [SELRAP](#) open meeting at St Bartholomew's Church, Colne from 19:00.

Mon 9 Sep [BRAG](#) meet at The Sackville, Bexhill from 19:00.

Tue 10 Sep Aylesbury Vale TUG meet at Buckingham Town Council Chamber, Buck'm from 14:00.

Wed 11 Sep Passenger Focus conference at the City Arts Centre, Edinburgh from 13:00, with reception & drinks from 18:00. Details and registration via anne.dawson@passengerfocus.org.uk

Wed 11 Sep [Friends of the Barton Line](#) meet at the Sloop Inn, Barton from 20:00.

Wed 11 Sep Railfuture London & SE (Eastern division) meet at Stratford from 18:30.

Wed 11 Sep MCRUA's scenic [railtour](#) via Settle & Carlisle and Cumbrian Coast. Book now!

Mon 16 Sep [GLAM TRaC](#) AGM. Venue tba.

Sat 21 Sep [Railfuture Yorkshire](#) meet at Halifax central library.

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

Fri 27 Sep [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Awards 2013, Llandudno.

Sat 28 Sep [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Festival, Llandudno and Blaenau Ffestiniog.

Mon 30 Sep Closing date for [Railfuture's RUG Awards competition](#).

Tue 1 Oct Railway Development Society (aka Railfuture) 35th anniversary.

Thu 3 Oct [Railfuture Sussex & Coastway](#) meeting from 18:00.

Mon 7 Oct [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meeting at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30

Thu 10 Oct [TravelWatch NorthWest](#) 10th anniversary conference at Merseytravel offices, One Mann Island, Liverpool from 11:00. Speakers include Chief Executive of Merseytravel.

Sat 12 Oct [ESTA](#) meet at St Marks Church Hall, Oulton Broad South.

Mon 14 Oct [BRAG](#) meet at The Sackville, Bexhill from 19:00.

Sat 19 Oct Trans Wilts Rail Partnership meeting at The Laverton, Westbury.

Mon 21 Oct [ALRUG](#) AGM at Topsham (tbc) from 19:00.

Sat 2 Nov [Railfuture](#) conference, at the Town Hall, Oxford. Fee only £30.

Mon 4 Nov [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meeting at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.

Thu 7 Nov [Railfuture Sussex & Coastway](#) meeting from 18:00.

Sat 9 Nov [HPSRUA](#) meet at Stocksmoor Village Hall from 10:00. Guest speakers will be the Interim Franchise Director for the new Rail North organisation and a representative from W Yorks Metro.

Mon 11 Nov [BRAG](#) meet at The Sackville, Bexhill from 19:00.

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

Wed 13 Nov Railfuture London & SE (Eastern division) meet at Stratford from 18:30.

Sat 16 Nov Railfuture London & SE (Kent division) meeting from 14:00.

Sun 8 Dec National rail timetable change.

Mon 9 Dec [BRAG](#) meeting with Christmas meal at The Sackville, Bexhill from 19:00.

Mon 16 Dec [ALRUG](#) Christmas Social at The Globe, Lymstone (tbc) from 19:00.

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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