

**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, see website [here](#) (from the "Membership Type" menu, select "RUG").*

*We continue with the usual roundup of news items from rail user groups around the UK (a bumper collection this month!). As always, I'm very grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins.*

**Friends of the Far North Line – verdict on new train operators**

After sampling services provided by the three new franchisees in Scotland, Mike Lunan (FoFNL's Convenor) has some comments to make. He's used Virgin Trains East Coast several times and was greatly impressed by the small but noticeable improvements from Day 1. Serco's Sleeper service also showed an immediate improvement, most noticeably in the catering.

The verdict on Abellio ScotRail is rather different: ambitious plans, but a spectacular own goal from the outset in the form of replacement of the well-liked Club 55 ticket offer with their own Club 50 scheme, hedged around with inconvenient terms and conditions. Mike predicts that the large numbers who were used to making impulse-buy journeys with Club 55 won't come back. Meanwhile, cancellations and partial journeys continue to plague Far North Line services: "...part of FoFNL's work is to encourage people to use the line but we can only promote something that's working properly..."

One of Abellio's plans is to develop the Far North Line as a scenic railway, so with this in mind the Friends have produced a sample Window Gazers' Guide which they've included in their newsletter as a centre pull-out. The guide begins by explaining FoFNL's involvement back in 2007 with the specification for the refurbished Class 158 trains to create more bike and luggage space and to have seats aligned with windows.

The detailed planning work for Network Rail's next control period, CP6, starts this autumn, and FoFNL hopes that the undertaking to include their group as a consultee has not been forgotten. Their "convincing case" for reinstating a long loop through Lentrán, just north of Inverness, is set out in the group's September newsletter – they intend this to be the centrepiece of their submission to any CP6 consultations.

Noting that several letters about the Far North Line appeared in the July edition of Railfuture's magazine *Railwatch*, the FoFNL's magazine editor has reproduced one of them. The letter in question gives an interesting angle on the issue of request stops by suggesting Britain adopts the Swiss model of passenger-operated flashing lights to alert the driver that passengers are waiting.

October 2015 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FoFNL's seminal conference in Inverness which led to the creation of the Highland Rail Partnership. Although much has been achieved over those 20 years, some of the fundamental problems remain and feature prominently in FoFNL's current campaigns.

**Friends of the West Highland Lines – campaigning for the return of Club 55**

FoWHL's 2016 Calendar, featuring photographs by eminent railway photographers of diesel and steam-hauled trains at various spectacular locations, can be purchased by post from the Glenfinnan Station Museum's gift shop via [glenfinnanstn@btconnect.com](mailto:glenfinnanstn@btconnect.com). A new DVD of the West Highland Lines is also available from the Museum priced at £9.95 incl p&p.

At the Friends of the West Highland Lines AGM in May, the abolition of Club 55 by Abellio was the most contentious issue raised by members. The guest speaker from the Company defended the decision but not to the satisfaction of members present – he promised to take their concerns back to senior management (as yet, there has been no official reply). FoWHL point out that Abellio made a franchise commitment to retain Club 55 and so they're continuing to campaign on the issue.

In September, ScotRail unveiled the first of 40 new-look Class 158 units which are being upgraded with seats aligned with windows to offer panoramic views on Scotland's scenic railways. However, FoWHL say they will have to wait until late 2017 before the units will be generally in use on their lines.

The first full meeting of the West Highland Community Rail Partnership was held in Crianlarich on 7 Sept. The CRP presented their aspirations for the coming year, and FoWHL comment that it's clear that their £20k funding is going to be put to good use. Project ideas range from travel incentives and station information upgrades to an extensive survey of the local population's rail needs and perceived obstacles to travel. The CRP will launch its membership campaign at a community event in Fort William this autumn.

### **Capital Rail Action Group (Edinburgh) – *passenger service needed for Longannet Line***

CRAG has called on the Scottish Government to release funding for passenger rail platforms at Crossford, Cairneyhill, Torryburn, Valleyfield, Culross and Kincardine, linking Stirling to the Fife Circle. The group states that the closure of Longannet power station next March opens possibilities for improved public transport in Fife. The group argues that the existing line could be transformed into a critical link from Dunfermline to Kincardine serving Fife villages at nominal expense.

*– from an article in FoWHL's West Highland News*

### **Rail Action Group East of Scotland – *proposed airport trains present a threat to local service***

The chairman of RAGES has written to the Director of Economic Regulation at the Office of Rail and Road regarding protection of paths on the East Coast Main Line. There is a threat that local service paths in S.E. Scotland will be taken up with a proposed airport service under an open access agreement. When the group raised the matter with the Minister for Transport, he said that he was powerless to influence the ORR's decision.

After explaining the history and benefits of the local service, the chairman concluded his letter thus: "On behalf of our members and the wider public of East Lothian and Berwickshire, I appeal to you not to put our local service, with East Linton and Reston stations, under threat by allocating paths to these proposed Airport Trains."

The Chair of Railfuture Scotland, Allison Cosgrove, has written to ORR's Director in a similar vein.

### **Copeland Rail Users' Group – *a mixed reaction to the new loco-hauled trains***

Loco-hauled trains on the Cumbrian Coast this summer have had a mixed reaction. The Class 37 locomotives, while being objects of veneration for railway fans, have been a source of annoyance to lineside dwellers - especially the noise and fumes produced when starting off from the closely-spaced stations on the line. Also there have been numerous problems leading to delays and cancellations. Fortunately, the noise problem has been reduced now that one of the 'top and tail' Class 37s has been replaced with a driving trailer coach. CRUG says that it's a dreadful shame that this enterprising scheme, designed to increase capacity and which has promoted tourism in the area, should have been beset by so many problems.

The comedian Paul Merton is making a documentary series about Britain's 'secret' railway stations, many of which are 'request stops'. CRAG tells us that, in the course of making the programmes to be shown on the More 4 channel, Paul visited Braystones and Nethertown stations just north of Sellafield.

CRUG's newsletter editor says that the group's secretary circulates *Rail User Express* to members that have email, and he quotes a few recent snippets as good ideas for future CRUG activities. One of the stories he quoted was about the Avocet Line RUG working with schoolchildren to produce a colourful poster encouraging people to take the train – the editor wonders if CRUG members could liaise with their village primary schools to do something similar.

The group has decided to engage professional help to set up and maintain their website. They've drawn up a specification and chosen a company from the four they approached – the company will charge £757 for setting up and £99 a year thereafter.

### **Skipton – East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership – *output definition nearing completion***

The Outputs Definition Group held another meeting at the end of September and once again the re-openings campaign group, SELRAP, was represented. The ODG's objective is to gather together all available information on rail connectivity in the north and commission further studies if needed. They will produce a report that specifies what the various local authorities want Network Rail to do (the outputs) in its next 5 year plan (Control Period 6). This report must be ready for the end of 2015 as Network Rail starts to study the requirements for CP6 in January next year.

New rail franchises are in process for the area and SELRAP has met those companies involved to make the case for re-opening the Skipton to Colne Line. The Dept. for Transport has specified four objectives for the new franchises which are: 1) Economic growth 2) Better capacity and connectivity 3) Quality improvements 4) Efficiency and value for money. SELRAP believes their project would achieve all these objectives.

SELRAP representatives have recently held meetings with local MPs and councillors. The next Open Meeting organised by the group will be at Earby on Mon 9 Nov 2015, starting at 7pm.

### **Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group – *line deserves a much better timetable***

Pete Myers, the new Client and Stakeholder Manager for Northern Rail, was the guest speaker at LASRUG's AGM. He was invited to write an introductory piece for the group's newsletter, which included this: "Community Rail is a massive part of what I do, I have six CRPs to look after and they are all great in their own way, but the Bentham Line stands out for me, not just because it spans one of the most beautiful parts of our country, nor for the fact that it takes people to some pretty important destinations; for me it is the passion of the local population (not least the CRP's Chairman himself) that makes it special, and so deserving of a much better timetable."

LASRUG is fairly certain that a more frequent service will form part of the new Northern franchise specification, something for which the group has campaigned since its inception in 1989.

Early July saw the beginning of the promotion of the new 'Rail to Trail' collection of walks between neighbouring stations on the line, and LASRUG members have been out sampling the walks. The individual walks leaflets are available from branded dispensers at stations, or they can be downloaded from the Community Rail Partnership website. A local newspaper is also publishing the series of walks.

After years of campaigning, the group is hopeful that a waiting shelter will, at long last, be installed on the westbound platform at Giggleswick. LASRUG is considering a suggestion to hold its meetings at different venues along the line in the hope of attracting a wider membership – they are also consulting on the best time of day and best day of the week to hold their meetings.

### **Friends of Bentham Station – *community rooms officially opened***

In a press release, we read that new community rooms at Bentham station were official opened on 11 Sept 2015, which coincided with the fourth anniversary of FoBS. The station buildings will be used as the offices for two complementary organisations: FoBS and the Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership. In addition, the building will provide a base for North Yorkshire County Council minibus services, and a venue for local community and rail-based groups to meet. A useful addition is classroom facilities for school groups.

The Friends had been looking for a way to create two large art panels for the station footbridge on the theme 'A Postcard from Bentham'. This quickly developed into the 'A Day in the Life of Bentham' photographic competition, supported by local businesses with match funding from ACoRP's Small Grants Fund. 240 entries were received, so FoBS now has a splendid photographic record of Bentham in 2015.

### **Ormskirk, Preston & Southport Travellers' Association – *two cars better than one!***

It's ironic that OPSTA should be celebrating the allocation of much-criticised 2-car Pacer units to the Ormskirk-Preston Line, but they say this does restore much-needed seating capacity - the group has long argued that the single-car Class 153 units are inadequate and effectively suppress demand. With new housing nearby, the numbers using Burscough Junction are growing and OPSTA is continuing to carry out passenger counts. Results from the Burscough Demand Study, commissioned by Merseytravel, are eagerly awaited, but in the meantime OPSTA has been invited to a meeting to go through the findings. The group is confident that the campaign to retain booking office facilities at Burscough Bridge will prove to have been a success.

OPSTA is working with the Southport Rail Transport Forum to secure the best possible deal for the Southport-Manchester rail service in the new Northern franchise. The two groups are planning another platform survey at selected stations along the route in the autumn – an impressive 75% sample rate was achieved in last year's survey. Campaigners are pleased that new customer-information screens have been fitted at various stations on the route. OPSTA's committee has been invited to participate in a service-development exercise to be hosted by Transport for Greater Manchester.

Northern Rail is taking the issue of fare collection very seriously and has recruited additional revenue-protection staff. However, the company's claim that ticketless travel is at 6% and falling is disputed by OPSTA and other groups who fear this is a gross under-estimation. The group has set up a dedicated email address for members to report instances of poor revenue protection. Another issue for concern has been lineside litter, scrap metal and rampant vegetation – the group acknowledges that Network Rail has made some effort this year to tackle the situation.

Four OPSTA members attended Vivarail's presentation of their refurbished "D" train at Long Marston and found the experience thought-provoking: "nothing indicates this cannot work and a solid engineering approach means Vivarail deserves to succeed, but a lot of work is still required to prove it can." The question as to whether the units will be suited to rail services for Ormskirk, Preston and Southport remains to be answered.

Some provocative articles in the previous issue of OPSTA's magazine "Connections" have stirred up correspondence from members – the Editor is very pleased to have received a number of "impassioned responses"!

### **North Cheshire Rail Users' Group – *blue sky thinking leads to promotional video***

NCRUG's special train around the Halton Curve in July has been captured on video, with views from both within the cab and from the lineside. The finished product is to be presented at NCRUG's AGM this autumn and the group hopes it will prove a useful tool for future campaigning.

NCRUG's autumn newsletter has an interesting account of a fortuitous meeting in the skies over Europe between the group's self-confessed "Halton Curve bore" and a lady who was looking to establish her credentials as a "videographer" after completing a Media Studies course. The idea for a promotional video took hold and the project eventually "gained legs" after seeking advice from ACoRP (who were able to offer match funding). The video includes an interview with a local MP.

A team at Merseytravel is busy working up the Full Business Case for reopening the Curve to regular passenger traffic, and NCRUG remains hopeful of a 2018 completion date. NCRUG members have spotted a delivery of fresh ballast and contractors working on site behind a notice saying "Busy rebuilding your railway" – the official explanation is "site investigation to firm up on cost estimates" but it would appear that infrastructure work has already begun!

A major advantage of passenger services over the Curve would be greater connectivity between the Cheshire/North Wales area and Liverpool South Parkway, which is just over a mile from John Lennon Airport. Unfortunately, there is now no dedicated bus link between station and airport, only a local service bus which can take around 20 mins. NCRUG thinks the time has come for a dedicated "people mover" such as the Pod system at Heathrow T5, and they intend making a formal submission on the matter to the Transport Select Committee's "Ground Access to Airports" report.

A representative from NCRUG attended Vivarail's demonstration of their "D" train and had this to say: "I was impressed with the interior ambience of the vehicle and the low noise levels during acceleration. The ride on the test circuit, which includes some difficult twists, curves and points, was very good ..." however... "the ride quality on the main line at 100 kph (62mph) remains to be sampled!" He concluded: "I think we will all be pleasantly surprised and these vehicles may well see the Pacers off which we will all be glad to see go!"

Elsewhere, we read that NCRUG members are working with British Transport Police and Cheshire Police regarding sporadic outbreaks of unacceptable behaviour at local stations (curry sauce is, apparently, very difficult to clean off!). Despite this, volunteers at the various stations continue to tend the gardens and keep the planters looking colourful.

### **Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association – *seeking improvements from the new operator***

MCRUA is looking forward to hearing which bidder has won the new Northern franchise, and then to having meetings with them to discuss the development of services on the Mid Cheshire Line. These discussions will particularly focus on the new semi-fast service and the doubling of the Sunday service, both from Dec 2017 if not before; also how to alleviate overcrowding on certain trains.

The redevelopment of Altrincham Interchange was due to be completed by 2015 but is still dragging on and MCRUA has pointed out some shoddy workmanship. Transport for Greater Manchester is the project manager for the work, and MCRUA wonders if they're up to the job of taking over responsibility for all stations in Greater Manchester, as has been proposed.

In view of the complexities uncovered in the planning for the TransPennine Electrification, MCRUA wonders if Network Rail could divert its attention to lines which would be simpler to electrify, suggesting the Mid Cheshire Line as a suitable candidate (the line being fourth in the list of follow-on routes for electrification).

Many users of the line were caught out by the pre-planned replacement of the train service between Stockport and Greenbank by buses on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August due to engineering work - a one-off in the middle of the summer. MCRUA thinks Northern could do so much more to pro-actively inform

passengers in advance about such occasions, eg: issue a press release; also use the public address and displays on trains and at stations to inform passengers in the week leading up to the work.

Manchester Airport have proposed to no longer safeguard the land required for the Manchester Airport Western Link line from Mobberley to the Airport. The Western Link would revolutionise the train service on the Mid Cheshire line by providing a much faster route into Manchester. MCRUA has made representations to the Airport that the land for the line should continue to be safeguarded.

MCRUA's *Take the Train* leaflet has been updated for October and is available on the group's website. Funding is being sought for a long print run of the next edition due out in January 2016 (featuring revised fares as well as new timetables) which they hope to place in tourist offices, shops, etc., plus some for delivery by hand to households near stations.

The group was delighted to hear that the Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership won top prize at the National Community Rail Awards, held in Torquay on 1 Oct 2015. MCRUA themselves had a successful season of Music Trains, starting in April and finishing with one from Chester to Plumley on Weds 7 Oct – thirteen trains in all, plus additional trains for parties. The group would like to recruit some more "hosts" who coordinate the event on the night.

### **Shrewsbury to Chester Rail Users' Association – now on Facebook**

In an email to supporters SCRUA announced that, in order to further improve communications with members and interested parties, they've set up a social media Facebook page. This can be found within Facebook and is entitled 'Shrewsbury to Chester Rail Users Association'.

The page will be kept up to date with media stories relevant to the line, its stations and destinations as well as news of meetings, other events and campaigns from SCRUA itself. Anyone on Facebook who would like to be kept informed of stories via this method, is invited to search for the page within Facebook and click 'Like'.

### **Stourbridge Line User Group – enjoying a lie-in on Sundays!**

According to SLUG, Stourbridge Line users can enjoy an extra hour or two in bed on a Sunday morning because it's nearly 10am before the first train heads towards Birmingham, too late for a number of onward connections. The group has raised the issue of poor Sunday services in the past and is hoping that the next franchise period beginning March 2016 will bring an improvement. Failing that, the group is looking towards June 2017, the date when greater responsibility for passenger rail services falls to the new West Midlands Rail partnership.

In September, SLUG had a useful meeting attended by representatives from train operators and local authorities. A number of issues were raised including: early morning connections, plans for station improvements and whether the additional capacity provided on the line recently is proving adequate.

One of the SLUG committee members admits to being a vociferous complainer when it comes to poor ticket checking – he's been recording details of every rail journey undertaken since 2002 and now has database of about 5,000 journeys! The figures show that tickets were checked on less than half the journeys made, and the situation has been getting worse in recent years. The highest percentage of on-board checks was on the Stourbridge Town shuttle (nearly 75%) while the lowest was on Chiltern services (under 25%). His conclusion is that more needs to be done to combat fare evasion in the West Midlands.

The group has been analysing Chiltern Railway's empty-stock workings to and from Stourbridge depot. They argue that at least one of the workings on a Saturday evening could usefully be operated in service. The group also believes that through services between Stourbridge Junction and London Marylebone on Sundays would be both practicable and commercially successful.

A 16-page supplement to SLUG's newsletter looks at proposals, past and present, for reintroducing passenger rail services along the Stourbridge to Walsall line. There have been plans for heavy rail, light rail and people movers ... and there is now the Dudley Ultra Light Rail scheme which could utilise part of the route. SLUG say they need to be proactive in ensuring that any rail-based solution along the Stourbridge to Walsall line is the best possible for passengers in the area: "We will be working to achieve this aim."

### **East Norfolk Transport Users' Association – *Great Yarmouth gets a facelift***

In a brief update, ENTUA tell us that a team of Abellio Greater Anglia staff carried out a complete makeover of Great Yarmouth station. Over a 2-day period they carried out minor repairs, cleaned and painted woodwork, installed anti-pigeon netting, deep cleaned floors, cleared weeds and planted up flower tubs: "The team has made a real difference, significantly improving the overall appearance of the station and creating a better impression to customers and visitors to the town."

### **Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users' Group – *dismay as new access route is closed off***

In a previous edition of RUG, I passed on some news from PENRUG that a cheap and innovative solution had been found to the problem of level access to the westbound platform at Wymondham - this involved installing a walkway across an out-of-use loop line. It now transpires that the rail industry has back-pedalled on the scheme, and the walkway itself has been locked out of use pending removal! PENRUG finds this risk-averse attitude indefensible and has had to apologise to members and readers of their newsletter for giving the impression that a permanent solution had been found.

The good news from the announcement of a direct award for the East Midlands franchise is that the hourly expresses from Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield to Norwich will continue for 30 more months with an optional 1-year extension. The threat to divert trains to Cambridge, thus isolating Norwich from Nottingham, has been withdrawn, and improvements are promised to train cleaning and on-board catering.

The group was among the consultees on the proposal to designate the Hereward Line between Peterborough and Ely as a community railway. The group supports the idea and thinks formal designation may help secure funding for station improvements. In their response, they made the point that the local train service (calling at Whittlesea, March and Manea) could benefit from enhancement: earlier and later trains are needed, and capacity may become an issue.

PENRUG reports that the Friends of March Railway Station held a successful heritage open morning on 12 September, attracting between 300 & 400 visitors. Those attending were able to see what the Friends have already achieved in formerly redundant rooms on Platform 2 and learn of future plans, should they gain charity status.

PENRUG has been looking at patronage of Attleborough station which is declining despite a growing population. They highlight the fact that fares into Norwich are quite expensive compared to bus or the city's Park and Ride. To make matters worse, they've heard that the train operator is about to introduce a £2 parking charge at the station and is busy increasing the number of parking places. They seem to be pricing Norwich travellers off the trains, no doubt in anticipation of making even more money from people who park at Attleborough and commute to Cambridge.

### **East Suffolk Travellers' Association – named train to commemorate 50 years of campaigning**

As part of the group's 50th anniversary celebrations, a train is due to be named "ESTA 1965-2015" at Lowestoft station on 6 Nov. The lunchtime reception to mark the actual anniversary will take place on 13 Nov in the Market Hall, Saxmundham – booking essential. After being shown at the reception, the ESTA exhibition displays will tour local libraries, culminating at Woodbridge library in the latter part of January 2016. *[In a previous edition of RUEx I asked if any user group could claim to have been going for more than 50 years and nobody did, so I guess ESTA holds the record! – Ed].*

In the Autumn newsletter, the secretary thanks the 80 or so people who completed ESTA's questionnaire on local train and bus journeys made during August. Once analysed, the responses will be published in the form of a report (and press release). Bus and train users in the area are invited to continue providing feedback about their journeys via the special page on the group's website.

ESTA, the Ramblers' Association and the East Anglian Branch of Railfuture jointly published the first *East Suffolk Line Walks* booklet in June 2004. The East Suffolk Lines CRP has produced updated versions ever since, and the go-ahead has just been given to publish a new, expanded edition in the spring of 2016. Elsewhere in the newsletter, we read that ESTA now has enough money in their memorial seat fund to pay for two seats which will be placed at local stations – thanks are due to all who contributed to the fund.

During the summer, ESTA representatives had informal meetings with the three companies shortlisted to run the East Anglia rail franchise from October 2016: First Group, National Express and Abellio. The representatives answered questions on local public transport issues and stressed points made in the group's own submission to the Dept. for Transport last winter.

### **Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users' Association – East-West link needs to serve Bedford station**

The Association's committee cautiously welcomed the announcement of preferred options for the central section of the East West Rail Link. The two shortlisted options would both appear to be good for Bedford, but the committee is not happy about the ambiguous promise to serve "Bedford or a point to the south of Bedford". While recognising that there are no easy options due mainly to highway and housing developments on the east side of the town, they insist that the new line needs to serve the town's main station with its valuable connectional facilities.

It wasn't just the weather that was awful in August. BBRUA says that there was a marked drop in the reliability of train services on the Marston Vale Line between Bedford and Bletchley. For the first time in several years, the Association felt it necessary to make representations to local MPs and Transport Focus on the matter. The main cause seems to be shortage of train crews on London Midland, and the BBRUA notes that sister company, Govia Thameslink Railway, is suffering similar problems. Elsewhere, we read that the Association has complained to London Midland about their plans to halve rail services on the MVL between Christmas and the New Year – they say this happened last Christmas, resulting in several complaints.

Passengers arriving off MVL services at Bedford sometimes face an embarrassing situation at the Thameslink-manned ticket barriers because they have been unable to buy a ticket through no fault of their own. The Association has suggested that, when a train guard is unable to issue tickets for any reason, he or she should inform barrier staff on arrival at Bedford to avoid confrontations.

On 26 Aug, fifty members and friends of the BBRUA enjoyed a river trip from Bedford town quay. The Association's annual ramble on 12 Sept was a great success, an unexpected bonus being the sight of miniature steam trains in operation as the party arrived at Caldecotte Lake. Members will be manning a stall at the Kempston Model Railway Exhibition on 7 Nov, then in December the group welcomes Railfuture's Heritage and Community Rail Officer, Chris Austin, who will be giving a presentation based on his new book "Disconnected" about rail routes that should never have closed.



### **Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail Users' Group – *new gates eagerly awaited***

New pedestrian gates were due to be installed by Network Rail at Foxton Level Crossing by the end of September. MS&FRUG have now been assured that they will be fitted by the end of October, but they remain to be convinced. The group is also uncertain as to whether advantageous parking rates at Shepreth and Meldreth stations, originally negotiated with First Capital Connect, will be honoured indefinitely by the new operator, Govia Thameslink Railway.

Volunteers at the three stations continue to work throughout the year to keep the station platforms looking nice. The group expresses thanks to the Foxton Garden Association and a number of local businesses for their kind donations.

### **Hitchin Rail Users' Group – *calling for a more coherent approach***

The Hertfordshire Railway Strategy consultations gave HRUG an opportunity to put forward their aspirations, and the group intends to display a copy of their submission on the notice board at Hitchin station. They feel that the County Council needs a more coherent approach to rail services with a view to ensuring that communities in the county are better connected.

The group also had the opportunity to put forward their ideas on the County's scheme to redevelop Hitchin station forecourt, but the project seems to have gone quiet. And, by way of demonstrating the value of local knowledge, the group has raised some problems about some local bus connections advertised by Govia Thameslink Railway – they're aware that some services no longer exist!

HRUG remains uncertain about the pattern of Thameslink services post 2018 and continues to seek clarification from the relevant Timetable unit. Meanwhile, there are concerns that the recent reopening of a freight branch for landfill containers may cause delays to passenger services during shunt moves.

### **Chesham & District Transport Users' Group – *adverse effects of ticket office closures***

CDTUG reports that, following the closure of all local ticket offices, the general public had now begun to realise the adverse impact it was having on the elderly, the disabled, visitors to London and others unfamiliar with both London Underground's fare structure and the operation of the machines. LU had belatedly acknowledged that its machines were unable to offer the full range of tickets offered prior to these closures - certain shortcomings had been addressed and LU has undertaken to implement further upgrades to remedy the situation.

CDTUG's secretary was contacted by the local press and asked to submit information on what was happening – the papers then gave full coverage to the matter of ticket office closures.

### **West London Line Group – *debate on the best arrangements for HS2 interchange***

On 9 Oct 2015, the West London Line Group held its first debate at Olympia London, Kensington on "Improving HS2 – Stations, Interchanges and Connections", at which it put forward its proposals which it believes will result in the best arrangements for interchange and connections, particularly at Old Oak Common. If implemented, these would properly allow rail developments, including both the Domestic and International High Speed Rail networks, to serve both the WLL corridor and other parts of the UK. WLLG believe that, for High Speed Rail to gain the optimum level of support and practical usefulness, the Government should ensure that as many rail stations as possible in the south of the country are only one change away from both HS2 and HS1; other groups in the north would presumably expect the same.

The themes within WLLG's proposals are:-

- Four extra 'way-stations' between Birmingham and London;
- Old Oak Common HS2/Crossrail/GWML station to be large enough to include direct interchange with all West London Line services and cope with new links (e.g., to the Midland Main Line via Dudding Hill) and passenger demand growth until 2080 at least;
- Linking HS2 to HS1 via the West London Line and various routes through south London possibly serving hubs such as Waterloo International and Peckham Rye;
- Linking HS2 to HS1 via a "Crossrail 3" with tube/rail interchanges at Baker Street, Euston Cross, Liverpool Street and Silvertown to Ebbsfleet and the putative Thameside Airport.

The event was chaired by Andrew Slaughter, MP for Hammersmith, with presentations of the WLLG proposals by Mark Balaam, Chairman of the West London Line Group. Other contributors were Nick Comfort (an established journalist and regular contributor to the monthly magazine, 'Today's Railways') and Simon Norton (a Cambridge academic specialising in transport).

About 20 people attended the event and provided useful feedback; many others unable to attend have expressed an interest to be kept abreast of outcomes. While turnout was low, the event was claimed a success in the level of interest and engagement by those who came. The Group was particularly grateful for the support and the large (free) space provided by Olympia London.

The Group is continuing to work with relevant parties in trying to secure acceptance and implementation of its proposals for HS2, particularly for those at Old Oak Common. Key among these are the strengthening of the WLL service, the restoration of the direct link to Gatwick and the creation of a new WLL station under Westway Circus (to the north of Shepherd's Bush).

**WLLG hopes to hold the debate again in the near future and invites members of Railfuture and rail user groups to attend and/or to send in comments.** If you have any comments or wish to be informed about the next debate, please email [comments@westlondonlinegroup.org.uk](mailto:comments@westlondonlinegroup.org.uk)

### **Windsor Lines Passengers' Association – uncertain future as Alliance ends (and SWT may go too).**

The WLPA regrets that the deep alliance between South West Trains and Network Rail has been dissolved while ScotRail seems to be persevering with an equivalent scheme north of the border - they feel that the advantages in terms of speed of action and elimination of artificial barriers will now be lost.

Also it was announced that the anticipated extension of the SWT franchise to 2019 has fallen through. The WLPA is worried about the impact of this on the impending major infrastructure works at Waterloo and the promise of new rolling stock for the Windsor Lines: "Whatever your views of SWT as a good or poor operator, there are all sorts of positives with the way they have implemented the franchise compared to other operators." The specification for the replacement franchise will be available early in 2016 for consultation and the WLPA makes it clear they want to see no incursion by Transport for London into their region, at least until Crossrail 2 appears.

The committee has been looking through NR's final Wessex Route Study report and a summary of points affecting the Windsor Lines is given in their newsletter. They feel that overcrowding has been underestimated and that a more thoughtful way of coping with extra capacity needs to be found. Also there is no mention of speeding up services from Bracknell or Camberley.

### **West Sussex Rail Users' Association – little prospect of immediate service improvements**

Following the merger of Southern services into the Govia Thameslink Railway franchise, WSRUA has looked closely at the performance targets specified by the Dept. for Transport – they conclude that there is little prospect of any radical change to the timetable before 2018 (the group has been exerting pressure for an improvement to the "dismal" Sunday service). Furthermore, there are no

plans to replace the unloved Class 313 units used on Coastway services before 2020, and only one of the various classes of electric multiple units employed by Southern will offer WiFi.

Although there are still problems with short formations, cancellations and shortage of drivers, WSRUA is able to report that performance on Southern has improved markedly in recent weeks. The group reminds members that they can claim compensation if they are delayed 30 minutes or more.

The annual subscription rate for becoming a member of WSRUA remains at just £2. Representatives are in place for most stations from Bognor Regis to Crawley, but volunteers are sought to represent the group at Horsham, Ifield and Littlehampton.

### **South Hampshire Rail Users' Group – opportunity to influence the next franchise**

Members of SHRUG had a very friendly and positive meeting at Totton with Arriva's Stakeholder Manager in September about the Company's plan for the next South West franchise.

BBC TV South reported during July that Surrey County Council sees economic advantages in extending Crossrail 2 services to Guildford and Woking. SHRUG sent SCC a copy of their own response to Network Rail's Wessex Route Study, in which they proposed the same thing for strategic passenger-flow reasons. The group was delighted to learn that SCC then forwarded the document to their consultants.

SHRUG is pleased to see that a local councillor continues to press the case for reopening of the branch line along Southampton's "Waterside" to Hythe for passenger services. The introduction of regular diesel trains is viewed with suspicion by residents along the route, but SHRUG wonders if the ideal solution might be electric units which can run on either mains or battery power, noting that a hybrid unit of this type is currently on trial in East Anglia. The group would like to see services from Hythe extend across Southampton to either Portsmouth or Basingstoke to provide regional connectivity.

The group has concerns about misleading station announcements at times of service disruption, adding that repeated hectoring over the public address system to "carry a bottle of water during hot weather" only serves to irritate rail users even further. There have also been instances of unhelpful on-board announcements, such as the advice to travel in the correct part of the train being given only *after* the train had departed from a station with a short platform!

### **Totnes Rail Users' Group – your help and advice needed, please**

TRUG is looking into the possibility of doing a survey amongst users of the railway station in Totnes to determine things like: where they travel from to get to the station, how they get to the station, where they travel to, why they travel there, etc.

Frances Northrop, a member of TRUG, wrote to me for advice. I've already sent her my own thoughts, stressing the need to ask the permission of the Station Manager to carry out the survey. I added that the group would be wise to consult Devon County Council as well - officers from the Council may be able to help and would be interested in the outcome.

**I'm sure that other user groups out there in RUGland have done passenger surveys of this nature. If any of you are prepared to share your questionnaires (and any tips) with members of TRUG, please contact Frances direct via [frances@francesnorthrop.co.uk](mailto:frances@francesnorthrop.co.uk).**

<p>Railfuture's <i>Guidance on How to Conduct a Passenger Count</i> is available on our main website here: <a href="http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Railfuture+volunteer+activities">http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Railfuture+volunteer+activities</a></p>
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### **Avocet Line Rail Users' Group – new “GWR” franchise ... and a new 5-year plan**

ALRUG will be presenting its Campaign Manifesto for the next five years at the group's AGM this month. The Manifesto deals with three questions: (i) what sort of railway do we want to see in the next ten years? (ii) from what has been promised, what do we still have to achieve? and (iii) how do we go about it?

The announcement of the new Great Western franchise addresses two of the group's main concerns: capacity and reliability. However, there remain many issues where further campaigning will be needed, such as a Sunday service to match the weekday frequency. ALRUG fears there will be setbacks and disappointments along the way due to both financial constraints and problems elsewhere leading to rolling stock shortages.

Improvements to station facilities could be progressed piecemeal fashion, but the group is coming round to the view that upgrades to both services and infrastructure would have a better chance of gaining traction if they were to be regarded by those in authority as one package for funding purposes: “This is understood at officer level and we will now need to press to have this taken forward.” The County Council is committed to improvements as part of the Devon Metro scheme, but ALRUG recognises the need to get the project into the Strategic Enterprise Plan of the Local Enterprise Partnership in order to secure finance from the Government's Local Growth Fund.

ALRUG's autumn newsletter contains many joyous photos of the official opening of Newcourt Station and of the community “Fun Day” that followed. ALRUG's gazebo took centre stage at the community event and the group gained some new members as a result.

Elsewhere in the newsletter there are two further pictures taken at Newcourt, one looking each way along the new platform. These illustrate the astonishing forest of poles ranged along the back edge - some for lighting, some for CCTV, some for signage etc. In all, there are 36 posts on a platform just over 100m long! Clearly the contractors responsible for the various station facilities don't talk to each other. The station ticks all the boxes in terms of customer facilities, but the overall appearance is rather inelegant. “Did it need to be so brutally functional?” asks ALRUG's newsletter editor.

One Newcourt resident remarked that the new station has literally changed his life, enabling him to sell one car and make less use of the other. ALRUG's editor comments that it is a pity therefore that the new station wasn't implemented when the new housing development was built – most households have already become reliant on their cars and modal shift will be hard to achieve.

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

### **RAILFUTURE PASSENGER GROUP**

The illustrious Chris Fribbens, Head of Railfuture's Passenger Group, gave a presentation at a Westminster Forum on policy priorities for the rail passenger. Chris is also lined up to give a presentation on rail disruption from a passenger perspective at a \*Waterfront Conference in London on 12 November (details [here](#)).

Chris has responded on behalf of the Passenger Group to the Competition and Markets Commission consultation on competition in the passenger services. Although it was recognised that there were some examples of passenger benefit in having greater competition, in the wider perspective this adds complexity and cost to the national network.

*\*If you want to attend the 12 Nov conference, you should get a discount if you mention “Railfuture”.*

## RAILFUTURE EUROSTAR REPORT - *tatty trains and poor connections!*

New research by Railfuture has highlighted two major areas of concern for passengers travelling on Eurostar - outdated trains with shabby interiors, and the lack of integration for onward travel. "The good news is that the new Velaro trains will enter service later this year, so that first problem is already being addressed" said Bruce Williamson from Railfuture. "However, there is a real lack of joined-up thinking when it comes to through ticketing and connections for passengers who want to travel beyond London, Brussels or Paris"

For 12 months up to June 30th this year, Railfuture asked its members and website visitors to complete a 10-part questionnaire whenever they travelled by Eurostar. [*A special "thank you" to RUEX readers who took part in the survey! – Ed*]

Many passengers cited poor connections and the lack of direct services as problems when travelling to destinations beyond Paris, Lille or Brussels. "One of the things we asked about in our survey is onward travel, which is a weakness as Eurostar seems to be only interested in its own routes, despite the fact that it is part-owned by SNCF. We're trying to get people to take the train all the way to their destination. Simpler through ticketing for destinations beyond Paris in Brussels is definitely needed"

More than half of the people responding to the Railfuture survey (52%) described the rolling stock as "tired and tatty". Passenger expectations have risen in the 20 years since Eurostar launched. The old trains need to be revamped to meet today's customer standards, including things such as wi-fi, power points and information screens."

A total of 225 journeys were surveyed, of which 76% were for leisure, and more were using Eurostar as the first stage of a longer journey to Continental Europe than in 2011, when Railfuture last conducted such a survey. Only 19% had Paris as their final destination and 7% Brussels; while 27% were heading to other destinations in France and 22% to Germany.

"We undertook this research because we want more people to use Eurostar and we want to help improve the service to passengers. It will help us with our ongoing dialogue with Eurostar and we can use it as a campaigning tool to improve international rail travel between the UK and the continent. We're looking at it from the passengers' perspective rather than Eurostar's commercial perspective."

A significant minority (31%) saw the time taken to clear security and passport checks as a disincentive to travel. Some negative comments were also made about facilities at Paris Gare du Nord, but work has now begun on improvements there, due to be completed in summer 2016.

- The report can be downloaded at <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/DL1088>.

## RAILFUTURE THAMES VALLEY BRANCH

Sunday 25 Oct was an exciting day for the Branch, this being the start of rail services from the new Oxford Parkway station – the group hopes they can build on its success. The branch is campaigning for a link across Oxford on to the Cowley branch. They say that a heavy-rail solution to congestion on the Witney-Oxford corridor should be a no-brainer for the longer term, but in the meantime, better use could be made of Hanborough station.

A group of Railfuture Thames Valley branch members were invited by Adrian Shooter, Chairman of Vivarail and a Railfuture Vice-President, to join a party for an inspection of their D-Train prototype on 9 Sept. The Branch's newsletter editor confesses that any doubts he had harboured about the suitability of D78 stock for main line use were blown away on this visit. Others in the party were equally impressed. A full review of the D-Train has been published on Railfuture's website [here](#).

## RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

After mounting a high-profile campaign to get the reopening of the March-Wisbech line onto the political agenda, the Branch is delighted that Cambridgeshire County Council's "GRIP 2" study concluded that the scheme represents high value-for-money. The Council will now embark on the next stage: a "GRIP 3" study and Full Business Case appraisal.

The Branch also reports that the campaign for rebuilding a railway back to Haverhill continues well - by mid-August the petition had reached 1800 signatures. They want anyone who lives in Suffolk, Essex or Cambridgeshire to visit the [Rail Haverhill website](#) and sign the online petition.

East Anglia Branch members were among the invited guests to Vivarail's D-Train presentation [*how did they all fit inside the carriage? – Ed*]. Their overall impression was favourable, and included this observation: "The interiors include attention to detail in seating comfort and storage which is sadly lacking in many new train designs."

## RAILFUTURE LONDON & SOUTH EAST BRANCH

In addition to pressing ahead with various reopening campaigns (esp. Lewes-Uckfield) the Branch has responded to numerous consultations such as the one on Hertfordshire County Council's draft Rail Strategy and another for Transport for London's proposal to extend the Gospel Oak-Barking line to a new station at Barking Riverside. Members continue their engagement with the many rail partnerships in the South East, including: Brighton Transport Partnership, Wealden Strategic Partnership, Tunbridge Wells Transport Forum, Uckfield Transport Hub Working Group and several Community Rail Partnerships – *phew!!*

## RAILFUTURE'S AUTUMN CONFERENCE – 7 Nov 2015

Railfuture autumn conference and RUG awards ceremony takes place at the Mercure Bristol Holland House Hotel, Redcliff Hill, **Bristol BS1 6SQ**, on **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November** from 10:45 to 17:00.

If you haven't booked for the conference yet, you may still be able to bag a place! For full details of the event see: [www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences)

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

## NEW INDUSTRY GUIDANCE ON HANDLING PASSENGER COMPLAINTS

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has just issued new guidance on complaints handling procedures (CHPs) for the rail industry. The guidance is aimed at ensuring that train and station operators use the insight from passenger complaints to tackle root causes of dissatisfaction and continuously improve the passenger experience. The new document is available on the ORR website [here](#).

The new CHP guidance updates previous guidance from 2005, and focuses on the way the industry manages staff and culture in responding effectively to complaints. ORR has developed the new complaints handling guidance after close consultation with the rail industry, incorporating views from across the sector. The main updates to the guidance include:

- Having a clear process in place to distinguish between complaints and feedback, particularly in use of social media platforms such as Twitter.
- A requirement for train or station operators to coordinate responses to complaints about third parties (such as car park providers or catering staff) – this will ensure that the passenger is not disadvantaged by, for example, having to address a complaint to several different bodies.
- A new obligation to establish an appeals handling process with the passenger bodies (Transport Focus and London Travel Watch), where the passenger bodies think this would be appropriate.

- How ORR is also working with the industry on monitoring compliance with the guidance, including publication of key performance data demonstrating how train operating companies are complying with their obligations to disabled passengers and managing passenger dissatisfaction.

The regulator will publish a new report from April 2016 showing industry performance against key obligations it has towards the consumers. This will cover assistance to disabled passengers, management of complaints handling processes, provision of information to passengers particularly during travel disruption and better information to help passengers choose the best ticket for their needs. – *ORR announcement*

## **BOW GROUP CALLS FOR LINE REOPENINGS**

The Bow Group, a Conservative think tank, calls on the Government to focus transport funding on re-establishing closed rail links in order to increase rail capacity, provide greater links around the country, and regenerate rural communities.

Their new report, *Reviving Britain's Railways*, sets out the potential benefits of these less expensive schemes, against major projects such as High Speed 2. Recommendations include evaluation of closed routes, and match-funding when private sector investment could help to revive lines which have been closed for years – reconnecting towns and villages across the country with the rail network.

The Borders Railway was opened by HM the Queen recently, and is just one example of where existing tracks [*eh?*] can be used to bring a boost to an area. This line has been so successful, that ScotRail is already looking at increasing carriage capacity on peak services.

From Bolton to Bury, or Stratford-upon-Avon to Bedford, the country is criss-crossed by miles of idle railway track [*or just track-bed - Ed*] waiting to be brought back into use. At a time when our trains are packed to capacity, and often delayed due to congestion, and with funding being targeted to only the most major projects, is it not worth considering investment in smaller, high-impact schemes which could transform transport for people across the country?

Elizabeth Anderson, the report's author, said: "Tracks and tunnels closed in the Dr Beeching era could be vital now in improving transport links across the country – and the social benefits that this can bring by allowing people the freedom and ability to access employment or education in nearby towns, as well as increasing tourism."

Ben Harris-Quinney, Bow Group Chairman, says "Now is an ideal time for the government to take positive action that can transform transport, making use of existing infrastructure and therefore cutting capital costs. Reviving existing railway lines has the ability to improve lives for people across the whole country, and rather than connecting major cities that already have links, bring effective public transport to areas that have been cut off from the transport grid for decades."

*- from a Bow Group press release spotted by Andy Long*

You can read the full report online [here](#) [*It only amounts to 12 pages, so don't expect too much detail – but, hey, it does represent a wake-up call for rail development from the Conservatives!! – Ed*]

A petition calling on the Government to "**Provide protection for closed railway track-beds to aid rural regeneration**" has been posted on the official petitions website [here](#). The promoters explain that groups would like to reopen lines such as the Somerset & Dorset, Deeside line and Lynton & Barnstable – they say that local authorities should be required to aid projects and reject planning for developments which would encroach on track-beds.

*-Parliamentary petition spotted by David Henshaw*

## **TWO LEGACY SCHEMES FROM “CITIZENS’ RAIL”**

Citizens’ Rail is an EU project which began in 2012 to develop local and regional railways by involving the community. Their projects span the UK, France, Germany and the Netherlands as part of the EU Interreg IVB programme. The lines chosen in the UK are the Riviera Line in south Devon and lines centred on Burnley in Lancashire.

The project is coming to the end of its term, but there are a couple of legacy schemes which will be of great benefit to rail user groups...

### **1) Toolkit**

Each local area chosen for the programme has its own rail and community engagement expertise, and Citizens’ Rail is keen to share the approaches that are being developed. To that end, they’ve assembled a number of tips and case studies into a comprehensive “Toolkit” on their website which you can access here: <http://www.citizensrail.org/toolkit/>

The CR website includes an invitation for other groups to submit their own projects for inclusion on the “Toolkit” pages, so there’s an opportunity for you to blow your own trumpet about what you’ve been doing locally.

### **2) Internet Café**

An internet chat room called the Community Rail Cafe has been set up for everyone interested in community rail, including volunteers, Community Rail Partnerships, train operating companies, local and national government and other agencies. The community is administered by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships. It’s open to all and is free and very simple to join. Simply go to [www.communityrail.com](http://www.communityrail.com).

## **IT ALL STARTED WITH SCHOOLGIRLS SELLING RAIL TICKETS!!**

At a luncheon occasion in Gobowen on Friday 16 October, invited guests, community leaders, reps of the rail industry and supporters celebrated the past 20 years since Severn Dee Travel was set up in the booking office at Gobowen.

Reviewing the origins, chairman Malcolm Kimber recalled the early work of the late David Lloyd when, as a geography teacher at Moreton Hall school in 1986, he had the girls selling train tickets. The operation moved into the station in 1992 when BR pulled out of staffing Gobowen and it went on to be formalised as Severn Dee Travel. Today it is a not for profit company and agency for Arriva Trains Wales. The company is administered by volunteer directors and specialises in arranging group travel for schools and colleges in Great Britain.

A stalwart among the directors is Sheila Dee who is also community rail officer for the line, very active in promoting services and seeking improvements.

Neil Buxton, general manager of ACoRP (Association of Community Rail Partnerships), said the facility at Gobowen was something that many towns and villages yearned for and something the Dept. for Transport was keen to promote. A display of photos recorded past occasions at Gobowen. Lunch was served by the staff and pupils of Derwen College, who also made a special cake for the occasion. A 20th anniversary plaque was presented to Mr Kimber, sponsored by the Oswestry based British Ironwork Centre.

Today the station sees an hourly train service on the Shrewsbury to Chester line, much improved over what was on offer in 1986. The bay platform awaits the resumption of a connecting service to Oswestry by the Cambrian Railways Trust, whilst the former coal yard has been given over in part to a housing development. – thanks to George Jones of Wrexham for sending us this



## BACKLASH AGAINST ROAD EXPENDITURE IN SCOTLAND

*Colin Howden, the Director of Transform Scotland, wrote a letter to the Inverness Courier which included this: "The Scottish Government is planning a range of modest improvements to rail services to and from Aberdeen and Inverness, but the timescale for implementation stretches as far away as 2030. Yet road expenditure of no less than £3bn on A9 dualling by 2025 and another £3bn on A96 dualling by 2030 is proposed. These massive public investments will of course generate increased car and lorry traffic and undermine rail's ability to compete unless train journey times are dramatically improved ... We hope that delegates to the SNP's annual conference used their slow train to Aberdeen to contemplate what must be done to transform rail travel between Scotland's cities."*

*The Courier carried an editorial echoing these sentiments, which concluded: "Money is scarce, we acknowledge that. But bringing a rail line up to 21st century standards is cheaper than building a dual carriageway and equally important. We would urge the Scottish Govt. to look again at the Inverness-Aberdeen line and devise a scheme to enable fast, inter-city trains to run alongside regular commuter services and incorporating a proper link to Inverness Airport. If necessary, ministers should re-examine the need to dual the entire A96, or at least the time-scale for doing so, in order to find the cash."*

*- thanks to Richard Ardern of FoFNL for spotting this*

## LONDON AND SOUTH COAST RAIL CORRIDOR STUDY

The Dept. for Transport has hired consultants to examine the possibility of a second direct link between Brighton and the capital after George Osborne pledged £100,000 towards the study. It could mean the reopening of the old line between Lewes and Uckfield in East Sussex.

Frustration has been growing over congestion on the existing line, which is so busy that one service — the 7.29am from Brighton to Victoria — arrived late every time it ran last year.

Patrick McLoughlin, the transport secretary, announced that WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff will examine proposals for a new line. The DfT said in a statement that the study would cover "recommendations for investment in both the existing Brighton main line and for consideration of the 'BML2' concept, which would create a new rail link by reopening the Lewes-Uckfield line, along with other measures."

*- from an article in The Times spotted by Andy Long*

Railfuture has campaigned long and hard for the reopening of the Lewes-Uckfield line, and there are dedicated pages on the Railfuture website describing successes to date (see [here](#)).

Chris Page and Roger Blake have examined the study brief and tell us that it represents a radical shift of focus from the Lewes-Uckfield study announced in March, which aimed to identify the opportunities for local journeys and the diversionary capability that reinstating between Uckfield and Lewes would create.

They say the study must consider Brighton as a major destination in its own right, not just a dormitory for commuters. It must also address the demand for access from the Weald to Brighton for education and job opportunities - this rail travel demand is not satisfied at all at the moment.

You can read Chris and Roger's full appraisal on Railfuture's website [here](#).

The full Terms of Reference for the DfT study are available on the Government's website [here](#).

## COMMUNITY RAIL AWARDS ...and RAIL USER GROUP AWARDS

The list of winners in ACoRP's 2015 Community Rail Awards can be downloaded from their website [here](#). You can learn a lot by reading through the well-illustrated Awards brochure – it may give you some ideas for award-winning projects of your own!

In the meantime, we eagerly await the results of Railfuture's own Rail User Group Awards competition. Results are to be announced at our Bristol conference on 7 November. *See you there!*

## SCOTTISH COMMUNITY FUND

ScotRail and Transport Scotland have launched a new £1.5m community fund to breathe new life into old and disused station premises. The Stations Community Regeneration Fund will enable business and community groups to transform redundant station rooms into facilities to benefit local people during the 10 yr Abellio ScotRail franchise - further details [here](#). More than 250 stations have already benefitted from ScotRail's Adopt a Station scheme.

*– from an article in FoWHL's West Highland News*

## CHANGES TO TRAVELINE

From 1st October calls to the **0871 200 22 33** number from anywhere in England are now answered in a single national call centre in Exeter. The opening hours have been extended to 07.00 to 22.00. Wales and Scotland retain their own call centres. There is a national public transport Journey Planner at [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info).

## NEW PHONE NUMBER FOR NATIONAL RAIL ENQUIRIES

The phone number for National Rail Enquiries was changed to **03457 48 49 50** in May. The change was not well publicised. 03 numbers are charged at the same national rate as 01 and 02 numbers.

*– both of the above items are from MCRUA's newsletter "Mid Cheshire Rail Report"*

## NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER OPERATORS' MAP

A revised, edition of Barry Doe's rail franchise map has just been produced. Copies may be downloaded from Barry's website [www.barrydoe.co.uk](http://www.barrydoe.co.uk) where links to this and previous editions appear (go to the 'Rail Operators in the British Isles' section). Anyone may download the map for private or commercial use, including printing any size, without further permission.

## NEW TRAIN PUNCTUALITY APP LAUNCHED

A new mobile app has been created, allowing passengers to find out how punctual their trains are.

The 'It's My Journey' app enables passengers to search for a specific train over a selected period of time to determine how reliable the service is. The results show percentage figures for how often a train is on time, delayed or cancelled over a period of several months.

Glow Media has developed the app to help passengers choose the best train services and routes for their journeys. The app will be available from April 2016 *- railmagazine.com*

## SENIOR DISCOUNTS ON OYSTER – you can get it at any LT ticket machine!

In the previous edition of Rail User Express, the Hitchin Rail Users' Group told us that "It is now possible to 'link' a Senior Railcard to an Oyster Card to secure discounts for tube travel although a visit to one of the few remaining LT Ticket Offices (eg Piccadilly Circus) was required."

Andrew McCallum, the Secretary of Railfuture Thames Valley, wrote in to say "I decided to take up on this and the other day I went to Blackfriars tube station where a London Transport employee did it for me at a ticket machine. He told me that any LT employee should be able to do it on any LT ticket machine, so it is not necessary to go to an actual ticket office."

## EVENTS

Events lifted from newsletters and emails received in recent weeks, are listed below.

Further events are shown in the [Events listing on Railfuture's website](#)

Coloured blobs differentiate between types of events...

- National & regional rail events.
- Railfuture events (rail user group representatives are welcome to attend).
- Local Rail User Group events.

- 2 November 2015. Monday. Abbey Flyer Users' Group open meeting with guest speakers at The Parish Centre, Station Rd, **Bricket Wood**, AL2 3PJ from 19:30. <http://www.abfly.org.uk/>
- 2 November 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, **Clitheroe** from 19:30. [www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk](http://www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk)
- 3 November 2015. Tuesday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association meet at the Sportsman, Severn Street, **Newtown** from 18:45. [sarpa@sarpa.info](mailto:sarpa@sarpa.info)
- 4 November 2015. Wednesday. West Sussex Rail Users' Association AGM in the Studio of Capitol Theatre, North Road, **Horsham** RH12 1RG from 19:00. Guest speaker from the train operator. [www.wsrua.org.uk](http://www.wsrua.org.uk)
- 5 November 2015. Thursday. Railfuture London & SE, Sussex & Coastway Division meet from 18:00.

■ 7 November 2015. Saturday. Railfuture's Rail User Conference at The Mercure Bristol Holland House Hotel, Redcliff Hill, **Bristol**, just a short walk from Temple Meads station. Details [here](#).

- 9 November 2015. Monday. Lichfield Rail Promotion Group meet at the Kings Head, Bird Street, **Lichfield** from 20:00. [secretary@lichfieldrailusers.org.uk](mailto:secretary@lichfieldrailusers.org.uk). Representatives of train operators usually attend.
- 9 November 2015. Monday. Skipton & East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership open meeting at New Road Community Centre, **Earby**, BB18 6XA. 19.00. More info: <http://www.selrap.org.uk/>
- 10 November 2015. Tuesday. ACoRP Members' Seminar North in **Manchester**. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>
- 11 November 2015. Wednesday. Railfuture London & SE, Eastern Division meet in **Stratford** from 18:30.
- 12 November 2015. Thursday. UK Rail Resilience conference in **London**. Railfuture's Chris Fribbins will speak about the Passenger Group's research on "disruption". <http://www.waterfrontconferencecompany.com/>
- 13 November 2015. Friday. East Suffolk Travellers' Assn 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary reception and exhibition at the Market Hall, **Saxmundham**. Booking essential. [www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk](http://www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk)
- 14 November 2015. Saturday. HPSRUA open meeting at Stockmoor Village Hall from 10:00. Guest speaker to be announced. [hpsrua@btinternet.com](mailto:hpsrua@btinternet.com)
- 14 November 2015. Saturday. Railfuture North West branch meet at The Moor Club, Heaton Moor Road, Heaton Moor, **Stockport** (provisional venue). [northwest@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:northwest@railfuture.org.uk)
- 14 November 2015. Saturday. Railfuture Lincolnshire Branch meet at **Saxilby** Methodist Church, LN1 2HA from 13:30. Guest speaker from EMT. Details from [david.harby@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:david.harby@railfuture.org.uk)
- 17 November 2015. Tuesday. ACoRP Members' Seminar South at the Dept. for Transport offices, Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Road, **London** SW1P 4DR. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>
- 18 November 2015. Wednesday. Railfuture Thames Valley Branch members' meeting at the New Hope Centre, 95 York Road, **Reading** RG1 8DU from 19:00. Guest speaker: Tom Pierpoint of Great Western Railway.
- 18 November 2015. Wednesday. Friends of the Barton Line AGM at the Sloop Inn, **Barton-on-Humber** from 20:00 (food and ale from 18:00). [enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk)
- 21 November 2015. Saturday. Railfuture London & SE, Kent Division meet in **Canterbury** (tbc) from 14:00.
- 28 November 2015. Saturday. Railfuture London & SE, Herts & Beds Division meet at St Paul's Church, corner of Hatfield Road/Blandford Road, **St Albans** AL1 4JP from 10:30 for 10:45 start. <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Herts+and+Beds>

- 2 December 2015. Wednesday. Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxton group meet at the Elin Way Community Room, **Meldreth** at 19:00 for 19:30. Tea and biscuits provided! <http://melbourn.org.uk/railusergroup/>
- 3 December 2015. Thursday. Railfuture London & SE, Sussex & Coastway Division meet at 18:00.
- 5 December 2015. Saturday. Railfuture East Anglia branch meeting in **Cambridge** from 14.00. [www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia)
- 12 December 2015. Saturday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association meet at the Cambrian Hotel, **Aberystwyth** from 11:45. [sarpa@sarpa.info](mailto:sarpa@sarpa.info)
- 12 December 2015. Saturday. Open day at Settle station. <http://www.foscl.org.uk/>

<p>■ 13 December 2015. Sunday. National rail timetable change.</p>
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- 14 December 2015. Monday. Lichfield Rail Promotion Group meet at the Kings Head, Bird Street, **Lichfield** from 20:00. [secretary@lichfieldrailusers.org.uk](mailto:secretary@lichfieldrailusers.org.uk). Representatives of train operators usually attend.
- 14 December 2015. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meeting at Hastings Direct, **Collington**, East Sussex from 19.00. <http://www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk/>
- 13 January 2016. Wednesday. Harrow Public Transport Users Association rail meeting at Harrow Baptist Church Hall, College Road, **Harrow** from 14:00

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.

<p><i>This bulletin has been sent from Dorset by...</i></p>
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<p>Tony Smale, Railfuture Rail User Group Liaison Officer  e-mail: <a href="mailto:ruglink@railfuture.org.uk">ruglink@railfuture.org.uk</a> phone: 01929 462116</p>
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