

**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 source material.

*For details of group affiliation to Railfuture, see website [here](#) (from the "Membership Type" menu, select "RUG or similar").*

Unfortunately, a glitch in the distribution for the April edition affected readers with a btinternet account. Hopefully, they all got their copy once we'd identified the problem and devised a workaround. I apologise for any delay. Your attention is drawn to two Railfuture events: one imminent, the AGM on 21 May in Milton Keynes, and then the Rail User Group Annual Awards Ceremony in Birmingham on 12 November. See below for how to get your nominations in!

*Roger Smith*

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

**Capital Rail Action Group and North Rail Line Action Group – sleeping on the possibility!**

CRAG reports that the Highland and Islands Strategic Transport Partnership (HITRANS) has opened discussions with Caledonian Sleeper regarding the possibility of establishing a rail sleeper/freight combination service between Wick/Thurso and Edinburgh. However, Managing director Peter Strachan stressed that it would need the backing of the Scottish Government to become a reality. The North Rail Line Action Group is running a survey to ascertain what would encourage more people to use the line, and to gauge usage patterns of a sleeper service. The survey will be presented to the Caithness Transport Forum, and to its own Group at the AGM in June. <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FQP9KGG>

**Friends of the Settle – Carlisle Line – the best bit is still running!**

The 2016 FoSCL AGM marked the end of two eras in its history. After five years as Chairman, Richard Morris handed over the baton to Douglas Hodgins, whilst Peter Davies retired after eighteen years as Membership Secretary. Both have long been part of the FoSCL story. Richard was previously Secretary, and his extensive FoSCL activity has included being an on-train guide - in many ways the 'frontline' of the volunteering team. Peter, Membership Secretary and walk leader, is a living link with the builders of the S&C, being a great nephew of Sir Abraham Woodiwiss - contractor for the section between Dent Head and Kirkby Stephen. Prior to becoming Membership Secretary, Peter had already served on the committee for several years, and was also at one time an on-train guide and a member of the Settle shop staff.

Much of the May Journal is devoted to the landslide at Eden Brows, 20 miles north of Appleby and 8 miles south of Carlisle, which has closed the line between those two stations. Unfortunately, this has led to a downturn in traffic, to which Northern Rail have responded by offering a discount ticket between Leeds and Appleby for £15 return, or £10 with a railcard discount. One of the last trains to run was a highly publicised trial of the refurbished Flying Scotsman, with a full load of paying passengers. The S&C being the best test route by far, it was all set to tackle the Long Drag on Saturday 6 February, but the decision to go ahead using the down line was taken only that morning. A speed restriction of 5mph was strictly enforced.

Since the line closed on 9 February, a team of 80 engineers and geotechnical experts – half in an office, half on site – have been assessing the magnitude of the problem, and the design of a permanent solution. Repairs to the 500,000-tonne landslip will involve building a supporting structure underneath the affected section of railway, as well as major earthworks to stabilise the embankment. It is still unclear how long this work will take due to the scale of the slip, the fact that the earth is still moving, and the inaccessibility of the location, but it may extend into 2017. Meanwhile, the most scenic section of the S&C remains open.

### **Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield Rail Users Association – a new transpennine route?**

As well as welcoming the new franchises, the Spring edition of Track Record notes that the Chancellor has set aside funds for a feasibility study into new road and rail tunnels in the Woodhead area; a business case for the scheme will be developed by the end of the year. This could be done in conjunction with a brand new rail link from Manchester to Leeds and Sheffield joining the planned HS2 line near Barnsley.

On the Penistone line, the requirement for six extra trains on Sundays in the Train Service Requirement issued in February is the first step in achieving the HPSRUA goal of an hourly service. However, other requests such as earlier and later trains for people working in Sheffield have not been included in the new franchise, so any additional services would be a business decision for Arriva Rail North.

### **Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester Lines (STORM) – shorter journeys short-changed**

STORM invites RUGs in the Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), Ribble Valley, Calder Valley and other areas to come together to influence their future services. Expressions of interest in a representative group should be sent to [storm@rochdaleonline.myzen.co.uk](mailto:storm@rochdaleonline.myzen.co.uk). STORM would administer the group until a formal agreement on its aims etc can be arrived at. The first major timetable change will be in December 2017, with another in December 2019. Timetabling fast and slow trains and freight trains will be a challenge, and more passing loops may be needed before the full Northern Hub proposals can be achieved.

STORM is lobbying to improve the peak service at Littleborough, Smithy Bridge, Castleton, Mills Hill and Moston. Mills Hill in particular is a nightmare for commuters in the morning peak as all their trains arrive full and standing, being through trains from Leeds or Blackburn. Once the new bay platform at Rochdale opens in December, the aim should be for four trains per hour between 0700 and 0900. Starting two tph from there would give intermediate passengers a better chance of getting aboard, or even getting a seat. Services in the evening peak should similarly benefit.

Video footage released by TfGM shows an alarming number of near misses with Metrolink trams. A total of 640 vehicles entered a yellow box in London Road when the exit was not clear in just six hours, and 114 of them went on to block tram tracks. Since 1 November 2014, 15 motorists have been stranded and their car stuck after driving onto the tram tracks close to Merrill Street / Ashton New Road, although the signage and road markings are based on industry-standard best practice, meet all legislative guidelines and followed a thorough process of hazard and risk assessment. Every car driven onto tracks adversely affects services and passengers.

### **Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association**

The Mid Cheshire Rail Link Campaign is calling for the return of passenger trains to the Sandbach to Northwich line, the reinstatement of a station in Middlewich, and a new station at Gadbrook Park, a site alongside the line that has extensive traffic congestion issues. Services on the line would provide Mid Cheshire with direct connections to Crewe (and thus London) now, and to Manchester Airport once the Western Rail Link's connection at Mobberley is operational, and provide a connection to Metrolink at Altrincham. Both Middlewich and Knutsford have populations over 13,000, and there is clear evidence of demand for increased train services; usage on the Mid Cheshire line has increased by 168% over the period of the previous Northern Rail franchise. The recently launched Northern Powerhouse project has changed the transport landscape. New funding streams are available allowing councils to use the new resources now available.

As project lead, Cheshire East will have responsibility for delivering this project which has no political opposition, a cost benefit ratio of 5:1 (2009 study), and which analysis in the last edition of 'RAIL' magazine described in November as 'surely one of the easiest on anyone's list of rail re-openings.' The business plan stresses the economic advantages to the sub-regional economy including its importance to Gadbrook Park, Northwich and Knutsford; first drafts have been circulated for comment. Things are now moving along in a much more businesslike manner and, with the level of support being provided to the aims of the campaign, MCRUA is more hopeful of success.

### **East Norfolk Transport Users Association – extra summer services**

ENTUA are pleased to report seasonal additions to the Abellio Greater Anglian May timetable. Four services each way between Norwich and Great Yarmouth will run non-stop via Reedham on Saturdays from 21 May to 10 September, and on Mondays and Fridays only from 22 July to 9 September. The extra Saturday services will be provided by the Class 37 “short set”, and those on Mondays and Fridays by a Class 156 unit.

### **Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail User Group – safety first, then a glimpse into the future**

A Norwich to Cambridge train hitting a tractor and trailer on a level crossing at Roudham, east of Thetford, prompted PENRUG to consider the safety of level crossings in general. Many on tracks and minor roads are now unstaffed, whilst safety at farm crossings relies on the ears and eyes of the farm worker. Telephones from which permission to cross the line can be obtained are all very well, but many of those working on farms now do not have English as their first language. There is a programme on the East Coast Main Line to remove all level crossings. However, perhaps the rail industry is too keen to close pedestrian level crossings at stations, notably at Spalding, where Platform 2 now has no step-free access. For information on a campaign to keep the foot crossing at Halesworth station, please visit [www.esta.org.uk](http://www.esta.org.uk).

Network Rail has updated its Anglia and East Midlands route studies. Providing five freight train paths an hour in each direction between Nuneaton and Ipswich could cost up to £1,000 million to increase capacity in the Leicester area, and another £250million on full quadrupling between Melton Mowbray and Oakham. A south to east curve at Manton would allow trains to run between Oxford, Corby and Peterborough. Further east, the priority is to replace two level crossings in Ely, though whether the present route should be widened or a new route for freight provided is still being studied. Investment may also be needed in the area to make the railway more resilient to flooding, and to high and low temperatures.

By 2023, significant overcrowding is forecast on many trains between Birmingham and Stansted Airport, both in the business peaks and east of Leicester. If trains still ran from Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield to Peterborough and Norwich, more seats will be required at the western end of the route. An Ipswich portion could be added by 2043, together with an additional hourly service from Derby to Cambridge and Norwich, dividing at Ely. An hourly service from Birmingham to Norwich is also proposed, as well as a second hourly train between Norwich and Cambridge, running through to London Kings Cross.

### **Felixstowe Travel Watch – can't wait for a new franchisee**

FTW reports a small improvement in reliability, but miserable journeys into London at weekends. However, cancellations are still rife for various reasons, including an unusually high incidence of staff sickness. Publicity of timetable changes over Easter was totally inadequate. In the event, a vague statement that a modified Sunday service would operate proved unduly pessimistic. But with further bank holidays imminent, even this information appears to be lacking.

Bids for the new franchise from Abellio, First Group and National Express are currently being evaluated. An announcement of the winner is expected in mid-June, but whoever that is will need to hit the ground running in order to meet the objectives that the DfT has set.

### **Barking – Gospel Oak Rail User Group – spreading the word on alternative routes**

Ahead of the line closure for electrification from June to February 2017, BGORUG produced 5,000 leaflets and additional copies of its press releases to redress the woeful lack of communication from Network Rail, London Overground and TfL regarding the rail replacement bus timetable, and the fares applicable on alternative routes, in particular those via Zone 1. Replacement services at weekends and on bank holidays were brought forward to 1 May, some 5 weeks before the line closure, at very short notice.

### **Chesham Transport Users Group – long-term early closures**

From 16 May until late 2018 the Metropolitan line will close early between Aldgate and Wembley Park for track and drainage work between Baker Street and Finchley Road. A revised service will operate north of Wembley Park. Use the Jubilee line for travel between there and Baker Street, and the Circle or Hammersmith & City line for onward travel to Aldgate. Chiltern Railways services between Amersham and Marylebone are unaffected.

### **East Hampshire Community Rail Partnership – anyone fancy running a bookcase?**

A second-hand bookcase, the fourth in the Partnership's area, is now available to passengers and visitors in the booking hall at Petersfield station. Mark Miller on 07900 103296 would like to hear from anyone who has a more modern example to replace it, has books or DVDs to donate, or who would be interested in maintaining either this bookcase or the one at Rowlands Castle.

### **Association of Community Rail Partnerships – the awards season Part 1**

The ACoRP Community Rail Awards 2016 are now open for entries. The emphasis of the awards is on rewarding excellence and promoting best practice in community rail development, recognising ordinary people doing extraordinary things on behalf of the railway and the community. The 2016 Awards will be made in the Floral Hall, Southport on Thursday 29 September. The full brochure and related forms are on its [website](#). The closing date for entries is Friday 17 June 2016.

### **RAIL USER GROUP**



Railfuture's fifth annual Rail User Group Awards will be presented at its annual conference in Birmingham on 12 November in the following categories:

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

The awards will again aim to recognise and reward the various achievements over the past year among the country's 300 RUGs in fulfilling Railfuture's mission: to be the number one advocate for the railway and rail users. The closing date for nominations/submissions is Saturday 3 September 2016. For details about how to make a nomination, see the website at: [www.railfuture.org.uk/RUG+Awards](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/RUG+Awards)

## PASSENGER GROUP

The government has announced a Parliamentary (Transport Committee) Inquiry on Improving the Rail Passenger Experience. The Committee invites written evidence on, and recommendations to improve:

- Information provided to passengers before, during and after rail journeys, whether at stations, on trains, or via National Rail Enquiries, operators' websites and online apps (but excluding the process for claiming compensation for a delay/cancellation)
- Ticketing, including overcoming obstacles to the more widespread delivery of "smart-ticketing" and part-time season tickets
- In-train facilities, including Wi-Fi and power
- Performance measures in relation to passenger experience, including passenger survey methodologies
- Mechanisms to hold operators to account for poor performance, and to spread best practice across the industry

Chris Fribbins ([chris.fribbens@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:chris.fribbens@railfuture.org.uk)) is coordinating the draft of a written submission on behalf of the Group. However, he has had little response to date, and the deadline of 25 May is approaching fast. Guidance on written submissions is at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/improving-the-rail-passenger-experience/>

## NORTH WEST BRANCH

The AGM of the North West branch will be held in Blackpool on 7 June (see Events below). The event is free to attend, but voluntary donations to defray the cost of the event would be very welcome. Among the presentations will be one from on electrification and investment given by Hannah Lomas, Senior Sponsor, North West Electrification, Network Rail.

## WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH

At the West Midlands branch AGM, Railfuture Director Jerry Alderson gave a photo presentation on the Passenger Experience, as seen from his own personal experience. He took as his remit the Transport Committee's parliamentary inquiry terms of reference based on his experience at stations and on trains. Jerry would be delighted to receive examples of your own experience as a passenger, good or bad. Both the story and the presentation are available on the Railfuture Go Compare website:

<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Go+compare>; <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/display1254>

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

DfT has set out: its aims of rail franchising and what it expects from its delivery partners; the 2016 franchise and service level agreements for London Midland; the 2016 franchise agreement for East Midlands Trains; a summary of all UK rail franchises, and a consultation on the InterCity West Coast franchise:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rail-franchising-aims-and-expectations/aims-of-rail-franchising-and-what-we-expect-from-our-delivery-partners>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/london-midland-2016-rail-franchise-agreement>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/east-midlands-trains-2016-rail-franchise-agreement>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rail-franchises-summary/rail-franchises-summary>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-intercity-west-coast-rail-franchise>

There is also a Parliamentary inquiry on Rail Franchising, with a deadline of 3 June:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/rail-franchising-15-16/>

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR), the rail regulator, has published its 2016/17 Business Plan, setting out what it hopes to achieve in the coming 12 months. It focuses on six areas: a safer railway, better customer service, value for money, better highways, a dynamic and commercially sustainable sector, and high performing regulation: <http://orr.gov.uk/news-and-media/orr-blog/orrs-business-plan-for-2016-17>.

ORR has approved an application from Virgin Trains East Coast (but not that from GNER) for new services on the East Coast Main Line (ECML). Middlesbrough, York, Lincoln, Leeds, Bradford and Harrogate passengers will benefit from 2019, in some cases once Network Rail has completed work to increase track capacity. ORR has also granted ten-year track access to FirstGroup from 2021 to deliver a budget rail service between Edinburgh and London via Stevenage, Newcastle and Morpeth.

GWR is introducing free bicycle reservations on its long distance High Speed Trains, effective 16 May. Reservations can be made online, at a station when booking a ticket or subsequently, or by phone (0345 7000 125). This should be done by 18:00 the day before travel, although bookings on some services can be taken up to 2 hours before departure. If booking has not been possible, but space is available on board, station staff have been briefed to allow bikes on board.

### *and finally...*

Citing Network Rail figures from last September, theladbible.com reports that, over the last three financial years, London Victoria raked in a massive £2,300,511 from the use of its public toilets. London Euston, King's Cross, Paddington, Manchester Piccadilly and London Liverpool St brought in £1,828,110, £1,394,795, £1,172,740, £1,115,677 and £1,007,414 respectively, whilst Edinburgh Waverley fell short of the million mark, pocketing £752,194, with Birmingham New Street not far behind with £702,533. London Charing Cross made £653,721 and Glasgow Central £601,478; Leeds, £544,976 and Liverpool Lime Street £402,680.

Network Rail pointed out that its toilet facilities at these stations are open to everyone, not just rail users. The charge for using them helps to maintain them, ensures they are fully staffed and prevents misuse such as vandalism and other anti-social behaviour. Any profit is reinvested in railway and passenger facilities.

## **EVENTS** (See also the [Events listing on the Railfuture website](#))

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

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

### **May**

- 16. Monday. Avocet Line, Special Meeting with Neil Harris and Christian Wolmar, **Exeter**.  
Also 17 Oct (AGM - **Topsham**); 3 Jul (Outing – Barnstaple); and 12 Dec (Christmas Social, **Lympstone**, TBC).
- 17. Tuesday. Chesham and District Transport Users' Association, **Chesham** Town Hall, 1930.
- 18. Wednesday. Friends of the Barton line, No 1 Inn, **Cleethorpes** Station, 1900. [enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bartonrail.org.uk).  
(Also 21 September, and 20 Jul (AGM) and 16 Nov at the *Sloop* inn, **Barton**, 2000.)
- 19. Thursday. Edenbridge & District Rail Travellers' Association AGM, WI Hall, **Edenbridge**, 1900 for 1930.
- 19. Thursday. Association of Community Rail Partnerships Conference: "New franchising – Delivering a sustainable railway for the future", Addleshaw Goddard in Leeds, 0900 for 1000. [hazel@acorp.uk.com](mailto:hazel@acorp.uk.com)
- 20. Friday. Scottish Association for Public Transport AGM, Teachers Building, St Enoch Square, **Glasgow**, 1045, [sapt@btinternet.com](mailto:sapt@btinternet.com).
- 21. Saturday. Railfuture AGM, **Milton Keynes**, 1000 for 1045. <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/>.

## June

- 1. Wednesday. Association of Community Rail Partnerships, Station Adoption Seminar, venue TBC. Also, 13 Jul, Members' Seminars North; 20 Jul, Members' Seminars South; 29 Sep, Community Rail Awards, **Southport**. <http://www.acorp.uk.com/events.html>
- 6. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail, New Inn, **Clitheroe**. Also 4 July and 8 August.
- 2. Thursday. London and South East Branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting. 1800.
- 7. Tuesday. TravelWatch NorthWest Conference, Town Hall, Talbot Square, **Blackpool**, 1000 for 1030.
- 7. Tuesday. Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association, **Newtown**, 1850. (Also, 1 November; 9 July, 1145 and 8 October (AGM), 1100, Machynlleth; 13 August, Borth, 1215; 10 September, Welshpool, 1130; 10 December, Aberystwyth, 1145.)
- 13. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group, Hastings Direct, **Collington**. 1900-2100. Also 11 Jul, 8 Aug, 12 Sep, 10 Oct, 12 Nov. December in a local hostelry. <http://www.bexhillrailaction.org.uk/>.
- 15. Wednesday. Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton RUG, Village Hall, **Foxton**, 1930-2100.
- 18. Saturday. Summer Conference at the Scottish Mining Museum, **Newtongrange**, 1000 for 1045-1700. <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/>
- 25. Saturday. East Anglia Branch, St Mary at Stoke Church Hall, Stoke Street, **Ipswich**, 1400.
- 25. Saturday. Passenger Group Meeting, International Hall, Lansdowne Terrace, **London**, 13:00. Also 24 September (Birmingham) and 10 December.
- 27. Monday. Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association AGM, Golden Pheasant, **Plumley**, 1930.

## July

- 18. Monday. Harrow Public Transport Users' Association, Baptist Church, College Road, **Harrow**, 1930. Also 26 Sep (AGM).

## Further Ahead

- 29 September. ACoRP Community Rail Awards 2016, Floral Hall, **Southport**.
- 6 October. Capital Rail Action Group, Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, **Edinburgh**, EH1 2JL, 1930. (Also 3 November, and a special meeting on 24 November with Christian Wolmar and Neil Harris).
- 15 October. East Suffolk Transport Association Autumn Meeting, St Johns Church Hall, **Woodbridge**, 14:00.
- 12 November. Saturday. Rail User Conference at the Quaker Meeting House, 40 Bull Street, **Birmingham**, 1000 for 1045. <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/>

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*This bulletin has been sent by...*

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