

**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").

**Guest Rail User Group of the Month – A New Campaign Group for Bolton?**

from a story on the [Bolton News website](#)

Railway campaigners are steaming ahead with plans for a new community action group for passengers after being inspired by The Bolton News 'Let's Get Back on Track' campaign. Preva Crossley and Derek Bullock will join the fight for better public transport links throughout Bolton by setting up a new community rail user group.

Mr Crossley, who is the development officer for the Friends of Hindley Station and a committee member for the Friends of Westhoughton Station, said he wanted to set up the Bolton-wide group after reading about plans for railway services in The Bolton News. "It made my blood boil to read how the government said that train problems are a local issue. Everyone is passing the buck, and we feel that we are not being listened to as passengers. We want to see more improvements on the line between Bolton and Manchester, and plan to campaign on a number of issues. If we can get everybody involved it's going to take off. I'm very enthusiastic."

The community rail user group will look at issues regarding overcrowding on trains and delays to services, and also take in problems with the buses. A public meeting will take place on **Weds 15 Jan** at the Hope Community Centre in Central Drive, Westhoughton, BL5 3DS at 7.30pm for people to get involved. Representatives from existing rail groups, Northern Rail, Network Rail and TfGM have been invited to come and hear the views of local passengers. Further information can be obtained by contacting [prevacrossley@talktalk.net](mailto:prevacrossley@talktalk.net)

*We continue with the usual roundup of news items from rail user groups around the UK – a bumper crop, so I've had to hold over a few to the next issue. As always, I'm grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins.*

**Rail Action Group East of Scotland - local rail study shows positive case**

In December the local rail study for a service between Edinburgh and Berwick, with re-opened stations at East Linton and Reston, was unveiled at the Scottish Parliament. RAGES had contributed evidence, as it had done with the preceding studies, and is delighted that the study recommends that the scheme for a local rail service with the re-opened stations should be taken forward to the next stage. The findings make it clear that there is a strong socio-economic case and a good benefit:cost ratio to support the development proposals. The full study can be found [here](#).

A key element of the business case for the new service is its relationship to ScotRail's other services and in particular how this relates to the requirement for rolling stock. As the Edinburgh to Berwick train journey time would be around one hour, three train sets would theoretically be required to provide the service; however, if the scheme were part of a wider reorganisation of services centred on Edinburgh, the incremental costs would fall and the business case would improve. The local service between Edinburgh and Berwick has been included as a priced option in the recently-published *Invitation to Tender* document for the next ScotRail franchise due to start in April 2015.

Elsewhere, it's reported that RAGES committee member Allison Cosgrove (who is also a Board member of Railfuture) attended the first meeting of the Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Rail on 5 Nov 2013, which was chaired by the MSP whose initiative led to the formation of the group, John Mason. Allison set out the aims and objectives of RAGES, particularly mentioning car parking and accessibility. Roddy McDougall had already spoken on behalf of Railfuture.

### **Ribble Valley Rail – continuing the “success story”**

The new Ribble Valley Rambler service, introduced by Community Rail Lancashire in partnership with Northern Rail that started in September, has been actively supported by RVR members. They've travelled on the trains to Hellifield handing out information packs to passengers, answering questions about the line and promoting things to do along the route. A former District Operations Manager for Regional Railways has written to the RVR newsletter editor saying he's more than pleased to have read about the new service to Hellifield on Sundays, adding: “it seems a long time ago when you were about to start the new service to/from Clitheroe ... but what a success story it has been; you and your committee must be so proud of your achievements.”

During engineering works last autumn, members were kept busy putting up notices and visiting stations to keep passengers informed and direct them to the replacement buses. RVR members have also been helping with the distribution of publicity, produced by the Samaritans in partnership with Network Rail, aimed at reducing suicide attempts on the railway. This is not a new problem, as RVR's newsletter editor informs us by reproducing a newspaper article about an old man found lying on the tracks ... in 1900! *RVR News* also contains a number of pictures illustrating children's art projects carried out by local schools in conjunction with RVR members.

The group is pressing for higher line speeds with the aim of reducing the journey time from Clitheroe to Manchester to about one hour. They also want additional diesel units to cope with the growing passenger numbers.

### **Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group – committee finalises its Wish List**

An “Aspirations” document has been put together by the Committee and the intention is to use this as a basis for discussions with rail bodies and local authorities as rail in the North grows over the coming years. The document seeks an incremental improvement in services (esp. a regular-interval service throughout the day), improved facilities at stations, better rolling stock (at least “Class 158” standard for longer-distance services) and more innovative ticketing, while promising continued support for the line's Community Rail Partnership and station adopters.

The adoption team at Bentham were joint winners of the “Station of the Year 2013 Competition” run by Community Rail Lancashire. Meanwhile the Secretary of LASRUG, Gerald Townson, won first prize in the “Outstanding Volunteer” category at the ACoRP Community Rail Awards in Llandudno. Gerald is also chairman of the Friends of Bentham Station and has re-energised LASRUG over the past two years.

One member describes his day out by rail to York in a train that was clearly inadequate for the numbers wishing to travel. Had Northern Rail not realised that it was Race Day in York? – not a bit of it! Every station from Skipton onward displayed posters advertising the event.

Elsewhere we read that LASRUG members have been busy cutting back an overgrown hedge at Gargrave station, and that membership of the group has increased to over 120.

### **Minsters Rail Campaign – local paper reports ceremonial burning of the petition**

Campaigners calling for council bosses in East Yorkshire to leave open the possibility of a rail line between York and Hull being reopened plan to burn a 10,000-name petition at a protest. The petition was compiled in 2005 by supporters of the reopening of the route, closed in the mid-1960s. East Riding of Yorkshire Council has said the scheme would not be possible during the timespan of the authority's Local Plan, which runs to 2029, due to its expected cost and the land needed for the project may now be earmarked for housing instead.

Minsters' Rail Campaign chairman George McManus said the burning of the petition at a demonstration before the council's full meeting would highlight "a total lack of vision and absence of ambition".

The authority said including schemes which were not certain to be delivered by 2029 could lead to the Local Plan being thrown out by a Government planning inspector. – *yorkpress.co.uk*

### **Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester line (STORM) – operators frightened to run trains?**

STORM is looking forward to seeing the Metrolink loop into Oldham town centre open at the end of January, earlier than expected, but wondered why it's necessary to close the whole of the Manchester-Oldham-Rochdale line for a week to allow junctions to be connected, instead of operating shuttles over part of the route (they've since received an explanation about this from Transport for Greater Manchester).

Judging from correspondence on STORM's messageboard, there's exasperation that, these days, severe weather causes the shutdown of an entire network, forcing people onto the roads – an inherently less safe form of transport. In the past, staff did their best to keep the services running whatever the weather ... but that was before the "blame culture" set in, with operators now frightened to run services in case something goes wrong and prosecutions ensue.

### **Don Valley Railway – petition reaches 2500 signatures**

The DVR's petition for the reintroduction of passenger services on the Don Valley line (as mentioned in the Jan 2013 edition of Rail User Express) achieved 2500 signatures, and was presented to Stocksbridge Town Council on 12 Dec.

*A novel source of funding:* The Sheffield Collaboration Network has been asking community groups to submit radical schemes that could win up to €5m funding from a European Innovation competition, which is open to cities in the EU. The DVR campaign group has taken advantage of the invitation to put forward its proposals for a rail service between Sheffield and Stocksbridge using light rail vehicles. You can see the "ideas so far" (including details of DVR's bid) on the [SCN website](#).

There's been quite a lot of positive news for the group in recent weeks:

- (i) Local authorities in South Yorkshire have included a scheme to run tram-train vehicles on the line in their "long list" of rail projects.
- (ii) There's a proposal from Kingston-upon-Hull for a fast Hull-Liverpool rail service, possibly making use of the closed Woodhead route - the DVR thinks this would provide scope for a semi-fast service along the Don Valley.
- (iii) Fortunately, a major housing and retail development under way at the "Fox Valley" site includes provision for a reopened station at Stocksbridge.
- (iv) A passenger train recently traversed the line as part of a tour run by UK Railtours.

The campaign group has been collaborating in a project funded by Durham and Sheffield Universities aimed at securing a low-carbon economy for the Upper Don Valley. They're also exploring the possibility of chartering a train to Deepcar in the near future.

### **Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association – dire shortage of rolling stock**

Normally, the most heavily loaded service on the Mid Cheshire Line is formed of Class 150 or Class 156 units, but there have been days when a 2-car Class 142 has been provided, resulting in passengers being left behind with an hour's wait until the next train – MCRUA has formally complained to Northern and hopes that the problem is being addressed. The group is very concerned about the dire shortage of diesel multiple units, and wonders whether the promised *Rolling Stock Strategy* will ever be published by the Dept. for Transport. A Mid Cheshire line study, commissioned by relevant local authorities, was promised for the spring of 2013 but that also has yet to appear, and MCRUA is looking into the delay.

Around 16 members volunteered for Northern Rail's *Station Support Team* initiative, and a planned engineering possession in October provided the opportunity for a dress rehearsal (although the main aim is to deploy volunteers during unforeseen service disruptions). As far as possible, one team member was allocated to each station with the job of advising passengers about replacement buses and ensuring nobody was left behind before buses departed ... one volunteer even give a lift to a stranded passenger!

Members are asked to continue supporting the gardening effort at adopted stations, and to help with the World War I commemorations along the line - the Community Rail Partnership is planning a butterfly garden at Lostock Gralam and wants to hear from anyone with WWI stories or memorabilia. MCRUA's special train for spring 2014, jointly organised with Compass Railtours, is journeying to Dumfries, Kilmarnock and Ayr.

### **East Suffolk Travellers' Association – patronage soars after service improvements**

With assistance from Railfuture, ESTA conducted a footfall survey at Halesworth station and found that there had been an increase of 43% using the station as a result of the new hourly train service and improvements to connecting buses. Passengers transferring between train and bus had doubled compared to the previous survey.

In response to Greater Anglia's Draft Cycling Strategy, ESTA argued for flexible space (with tip-up seats) on trains, which could be used for bicycles, luggage, wheelchairs and buggies. The group's own station surveys had shown that accommodation for cycles at most local stations was "adequate". GA has advised that most of ESTA's survey findings have been included in their ongoing stations investment programme.

ESTA welcomes various developments in their area: the station shop is to reopen at Lowestoft selling newspapers, snacks etc; real-time information screens have been installed at Oulton Broad South (although one member reported that the screens were bizarrely showing departures from Great Chesterford); additional car parking is promised for Darsham; and a handrail, which ESTA had asked for, has been fitted to the station wall at Halesworth.

The ESTA 100 Club is drawn four times a year and provides a useful input to group funds. However, I was surprised to see a list of "sinners" following the November draw – I guess this was a typo!

### **Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxton Rail Users' Group – drop-in session highlights poor accessibility**

A project board is being established by Network Rail to take account of local views about the design of the new level crossing at Foxton, and the rail users' group has been invited to join.

Concerned about the lack of level access at Meldreth station, the group organised a drop-in session at the station on 8 Jan, sending an invitation in particular to people who have difficulties with the footbridge and steps – the event received good coverage in the local paper.

Meanwhile at Shepreth, a local wildlife park has received a Best Sustainable Zoo award for encouraging visitors to arrive by train in a scheme developed jointly with First Capital Connect.

*(I must remember to quote this when I'm next trying to persuade Dorset County Council to resurrect a scheme for providing a safe footpath to Monkey World, just 20 mins walk from Wool Station – Ed).*

### **Association of Public Transport Users ... and a mention of the Bedford Commuters' Association**

After the Government's announcements about fares and ticketing, APTU summarised the various initiatives in the form of a table with their own observations in the right-hand column. The Hertfordshire-based group supports a review of the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> class seating ratio, commenting that first class could be reduced or even eliminated on their route into London. They also support a more flexible fare structure to benefit regular travellers who are unable to make good use of a conventional season ticket.

APTU joined forces with the neighbouring Bedford Commuters' Association to meet all five bidders for the new Thameslink, Southern & Gt Northern franchise, then they sent a joint letter to each bidder enclosing a 5-page list of suggestions entitled "The view from Rail Users on Thameslink North" – you can read this document on their [website](#).

From Dec 2014, there will be a reduction in the service through to Brighton from 4/hr to 2/hr as part of the Thameslink programme; APTU and the BCA argue in a joint press release that, instead of terminating the two trains each hour at Elephant & Castle, they should run on to Gatwick Airport in view of the high demand on this corridor. The two groups, along with other stakeholders, have been consulted over the design of the new Class 700 units, but they are constrained from commenting publicly due to a Non-Disclosure Agreement. Meanwhile, APTU welcomes the move by First Capital Connect to indicate in their timetable which services are diagrammed for the newer Class 377 units, which have air conditioning and accessible toilets, as this may be important for some travellers. The group is still trying to get to the bottom of stock allocations after delays to ordering the Siemens Class 700s led to an interim order for Class 377s.

APTU's newsletter includes a report from one of their members about a recent filming session and interview he had done for a Korean television company. He sensed their slant is that privatisation has not worked in the UK and that Koreans should be concerned about what their government is planning. "Overall my contribution was probably fairly superficial and I was perhaps not as 'angry' about fare increases as they would have liked."

### **Chesham & District Transport Users' Group – outlying stations need their ticket offices**

Commenting on London Underground's plan to close all ticket offices by 2015, CDTUG feels that this would not be appropriate for outlying areas where there are no alternative ticket outlets, and in any case, ticket machines would need to be upgraded to offer a greater range of tickets than at present and to deal with electronic refunds. The group notes that staff are being issued with i-phones to enable them to keep up to date with travel information; they hope staff members won't now be targeted by muggers!

### **Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail Users Group – London Fields tops 1 million!**

In spite of some recent service disruptions, passenger numbers continue to rise – up 7% over the year according to CHFLUG's own figures. The group reckons that London Fields now has more than a million passengers a year. Cleanliness of stations has been unsatisfactory for years despite individual cleaners doing their best – there's anger over plans by the train operator to cut even more station cleaner posts. Rail users can only hope that things improve when the line becomes part of the Overground network in 2015.

### **Barking-Gospel Oak Line Users' Group – fleet now stretched to the limit**

A spokesman for the group expressed delight that London Overground has managed to introduce an earlier extra relief train between Barking and South Tottenham on weekdays from December. However, this means that the 2-car diesel fleet is now fully utilised and there can be no further increase in passenger capacity until 4-coach electric trains arrive in 2017. Meanwhile, the group is opposing LO's plans to remove guards and make the trains driver-only from mid 2014.

### **Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group – poor information when things go wrong**

Representatives from the group met with First Great Western and Network Rail managers to discuss the poor performance of late. The managers acknowledged that performance had been unacceptable, but were able to point to a small improvement in recent weeks. What had particularly upset rail users was that information given by staff and the platform information systems was inaccurate or totally absent when things went wrong. There is a facility to override the info-system software manually, but this is rarely done. FGW said they were close to installing new software that would make the tracking of trains more accurate, but were unable to give a delivery date.

Problems with connections at Newbury were also discussed, and the issue of through trains from Bedwyn after electrification between Paddington and Newbury was raised. It seems, however, that electrification issues are currently “off the table” because of franchise uncertainties; BTPG has the distinct impression that no-one knows what to expect.

### **Windsor Lines Passengers’ Association – commuters will still have to stand**

While welcoming the lengthening of the Class 458 units on the line from 8- to 10-car formations, the WLPA points out that there will actually be fewer seats (although more than in the 8-car Class 450 units used on the line) but much more standing room. The WLPA fears that the order for new trains, currently in the pipeline, will specify lateral seats (which the WLPA puts down to London Overground practice), and the group thinks that to stand or sit sideways for over half an hour is wrong. They also point out that passengers do not like the 3+2 seating arrangements in the Class 450s, often preferring to stand rather than occupy the centre of the 3-seat unit. Elsewhere we read that short formations at weekends are often inadequate, although guards are required to report instances of overcrowding.

The WLPA had previously reported the unsatisfactory positioning of the 8-car stop sign on the up platform at Whitton, and is pleased to say that it has now been repositioned so that the last carriages are still under the platform canopy. Ongoing issues are: poor information at times of service disruption, the inadequate platform height at Kew Bridge and incorrect signage at Putney. Now that Brentford Football Club is to move to a new stadium adjacent to Kew Bridge station, the WLPA wonders if this may be a trigger for station improvements. Meanwhile the proposals for Crossrail 2 still leave questions unanswered, such as “what happens to the commuter service between Waterloo and Wimbledon?”

### **Bexhill Rail Action Group – train operator acts when confronted with evidence**

An important exercise for members during 2013 has been monitoring the occasions when the ticket office at Bexhill is closed when it should be open. Southern seemed to take little notice of complaints and actually introduced further staff reductions, so BRAG took the matter to Passenger Focus. Following a 3-way meeting in October, and subsequent discussions between PF and Southern managers, the group has been informed that the company intends to recruit a “roving” member of staff based at Bexhill to solve the problem. BRAG argues that a properly staffed booking office is essential to deal with enquiries about tickets to London (via three possible routes), Gatwick Airport, the Continent and other destinations.

BRAG has taken every opportunity to be involved in the Thameslink, Southern and Gt Northern refranchising process, and is pleased that the Dept. for Transport has obviously listened to comments from stakeholders before finalising the Invitation to Tender document. Also to be commended is East Sussex County Council’s new Rail Strategy – local rail action groups were consulted during its formulation, and consider the result to be a “very positive and forward-thinking document”. There’s even hope that a strategic “South Coast Main Line” from Exeter to Ashford will emerge as a practicable project; there’s currently a study being carried out by University College London looking at developing fast, reliable services in the region. In the meantime, the patchy performance of trains in the evening peak continues to be a concern for BRAG members.



### **West Sussex Rail Users' Association – views about franchise hopefuls sent to DfT**

WSRUA has now met all five bidders for the Thameslink, Southern & Gt Northern franchise: “some impressed us, others did not.” They’ve given their views on each to the Dept. for Transport in confidence. One of WSRUA’s aspirations for the new franchise is an hourly service between Southampton Airport Parkway and stations on the West Coastway route; they’re pleased that Southern has increased the number of calls from the December timetable change, saying it’s a step in the right direction.

### **Friends of Templecombe Station – station rejuvenation, 30 years after reopening**

It was nice to get an update from Templecombe in Somerset. It’s about a year since the single-line station was reconfigured, with a new platform on the south side adjoining the entrance and car park - thereby rendering the footbridge obsolete. The “Friends” still have access across the footbridge to tend the gardens and gain access the waiting room on the redundant platform.

The station was reopened in 1983 following pressure from the village community, and 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations were held in October 2013. In a novel arrangement, tickets have been sold over the 30-year period from a window at the foot of the signal box, which is at the country end of the old platform. Now a steel and glass structure housing the new ticket office and waiting room is nearing completion on the south side to replace the facilities on the “wrong” side of the line.

The current “Friends” group has only been going a couple of years (the original support group folded). They’ve recently been allocated a “dedicated contact” within the South West Trains / Network Rail Alliance, which they hope will enable them to grow as a group and possibly hold special events on the redundant platform.

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

### **UPDATED GUIDE TO RAIL TRAVEL – take a look and let us know what you think!**

Railfuture’s guide to travelling by train in the UK and abroad has been completely rewritten and brought up to date. The new guidance document entitled *Rail User Help* is available on the Railfuture website [here](#) - alternatively, follow the “Rail user help” link from the website’s left-hand menu. You will see that there are separate sections for: planning your journey, choosing a ticket and getting best value, accessing the station, ensuring the journey is stress free and enjoyable, and what to do when things go wrong. There are also sections about rail tours and foreign travel.

[Chris Page](#), Head of Media, Marketing and Communications at Railfuture, masterminded the revised edition and several Railfuture members carried out a comprehensive review to check that the details were accurate. Chris would be very pleased to have feedback from rail user groups around Britain, particularly about methods of getting the best-value ticket; he would also appreciate photographs to illustrate the text.

*Rail User Help* is not “copyright” information, so RUGs are welcome to pass on details to their own members, but it would be appreciated if the source could be acknowledged – thanks.

### **RAILFUTURE PASSENGER GROUP**

Members of the Passenger Group have been working hard on our behalf: improving links with train operating companies, attending stakeholder forums, contributing to the design briefs for new rolling stock and analysing overcrowding on CrossCountry services. The Group plans to improve communication links with other rail campaigners through use of the Railfuture website and by circulating a regular bulletin.

## GOOD NEWS FOR LEWES-UCKFIELD RAIL LINK

Railfuture is giving a cautious welcome to the latest news regarding the Lewes-Uckfield campaign. In December, the government published its infrastructure plan in which Network Rail was asked to accelerate a study into the Brighton mainline. This was followed by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander describing the Lewes-Uckfield line as "important".

"The government seems to be making the right noises here" said Chris Page "We are looking for a commitment to electrify the Uckfield line as a way of providing additional capacity during the new TSGN franchise, followed by a firm proposal to reopen the Uckfield-Lewes line as part of the accelerated study into the Brighton Main Line. We've shown our commitment to this campaign by investing in research to prove the case. This rail scheme is sound, and it's up to the government to make the next move."

## RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE BRANCH

Railfuture Yorkshire branch led on the submission of Railfuture's response to the consultation draft of Rail North's *Long Term Rail Strategy*. The response was based on Railfuture's own strategy for the north of England.

Railfuture praises Rail North for producing the first public sector document that is really ambitious about the future of the North's rail system, but feels that the proposals do not go far enough. In particular, it was felt that the draft strategy lacked any strong commitment to re-opening railway lines or stations, many of which should never have been closed; it also lacks aspirations to open brand new routes. Included in the response is a call for improved Sunday services and a minimum of two trains per hour in peak periods on commuter routes.

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

## WHERE NEXT FOR ELECTRIFICATION IN THE NORTH?

The Government has announced that a joint taskforce will explore where next for electrification in the North. The new taskforce will be made up of experts from Network Rail and the DfT and will involve train operators, local authorities including the Rail North consortium, the supply chain and local Members of Parliament. This group will provide the Transport Secretary with an interim report within 12 months setting out how schemes can be brought forward and their development accelerated.

As part of Network Rail's ongoing work to identify the next generation of schemes that will be electrified as part of the government's continued rail investment, the routes to be examined will include: Leeds-Harrogate-York, Selby-Hull, Sheffield-Leeds, Sheffield-Doncaster, East Coast Main Line-Middlesbrough, Sheffield-Manchester, Warrington-Chester and Crewe-Chester. – *gov.uk*

00000

The **Harrogate Line Supporters'** group announced their delight that Leeds-Harrogate-York was shortlisted. However, rail campaign groups along the Calder Valley Line are outraged that their line has been omitted from the study. They've heard that this may be due to the large number of bridges, tunnels and viaducts on the route which could put the cost beyond reach. Nevertheless, they're urging MPs and local authority representatives to make representations to the Secretary of State for Transport. **Halifax & District Rail Action Group** has already written to Patrick McLoughlin expressing dismay that electrification of the Calder Valley Line is not even being considered. Others supporting the cause include the **Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Sustainable Transport Group**, **Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester** group (STORM) and community transport guru, **Paul Salveson**.



*STORM's latest newsletter quotes this Parliamentary reply from Transport Minister Stephen Hammond MP: Currently no time scale exists for electrification of the Caldervale line. However, earlier this month the Government announced a joint taskforce to explore future electrification in the north. This group will provide the Secretary of State for Transport with an interim report within 12 months setting out how schemes can be brought forward and their development accelerated. The taskforce has been asked to ensure eight named routes are considered. This did not include the Caldervale line but the taskforce is free to consider the case for any route in the north. We plan to announce the structure and terms of reference of the taskforce shortly. - Hansard*

### **EAST COAST REFRANCHISING - have your say**

Passenger Focus is currently asking East Coast passengers for feedback of their experiences in advance of the bidding process for the next East Coast franchise, beginning Feb 2015. You can find out more about the process and complete PF's questionnaire online [here](#) - the closing date is **27 Jan 2014**. The questionnaire is open to individuals only (not user groups).

### **IVANHOE REVISITED**

Fresh calls have been made to reopen a historic railway line to passengers in Burton and South Derbyshire. Two MPs in the region have written to the Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin encouraging him to conduct a feasibility study into reopening the former Ivanhoe Line, which runs from Burton to Leicester and has not served passengers for half a century. Heather Wheeler and Andrew Bridgen, who represent South Derbyshire and North West Leicestershire, say more services are needed in the region and believe reviving the line, which is now known as the National Forest Line, would also boost the economy.

It is not the first time calls have been made to resurrect the former Ivanhoe Line, which serves freight trains but has not carried passengers since the 1960s. In 2009, the Association of Train Companies recommended reopening the line and building new stations in Castle Gresley, Ashby and Moira. – *Burton Mail*

### **KENILWORTH CONFIRMED**

Plans for a new £11.3 million station in Kenilworth were given final approval in December under the government's multi-million pound New Stations Fund. The Department for Transport has approved the allocation of £5 million from the fund following confirmation that the station can be built without adversely impacting other network improvements. The station will significantly improve connectivity for passengers and businesses across the West Midlands, and pave the way for new local services to start running between Coventry, Kenilworth and Leamington Spa in December 2016. – *DfT press release*

### **“BIKE & GO” SPREADS TO MORECAMBE**

In a press release, the Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership welcomes the new Bike & Go cycle hire point at Morecambe station, saying: “Morecambe is an excellent place for leisure cycling being largely flat and with 5 miles of promenade open to cyclists. From the station it is easy to cycle to attractions from Happy Mount Park to Heysham Village.”

### **“STATION STAYS” SPREAD TO IRELAND**

Martin Hill writes to say: “You might like to note that the *Station Stays* accommodation directory now includes Ireland (North and South), and the total number of listings has reached 1,000. Barry Doe recently reviewed the directory in RAIL magazine, and Michael Portillo and Simon Calder have both praised the [website](#).”

## **PORTISHEAD PROJECT MOVES INTO UNCHARTED TERRITORY**

Promoters of the Portishead rail reopening scheme have been told that the initiative is now likely to be considered as a nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP). An update on the MetroWest scheme presented to the West of England Local Transport Body on 2 December 2013 notes that a Development Consent Order will be required in order to reopen the 4.5km section of the Portishead line to passenger trains. The Portishead project forms part of MetroWest phase one.

**Applications for DCOs are considered by the Planning Inspectorate's national infrastructure planning unit with the final decision on schemes made by the appropriate Secretary of State. With no rail reopening schemes having been completed in England since the Planning Act 2008 came into force - and with it the new process for managing nationally significant infrastructure projects and subsequently DCOs - project promoters now have to navigate a path for which there is no direct precedent.**

**It had been thought that the Portishead line could be reopened using a Transport & Works Act Order but the December meeting was told a DCO is required for new/reopened railway lines over 1.5km in length. Members of the local transport body have been advised that, as a DCO requires more detailed up-front work and is more prescriptive in relation to public consultation activities, the budget for MetroWest phase one has had to be reprofiled.**

Despite the potential extra work involved in taking the scheme through the national infrastructure planning process, MetroWest phase one services remain scheduled to start in May 2019 with phase two due to be operational in May 2021. The estimated outturn cost of phase one is £55m and £43m for phase two. Central government is expected to provide most of this money as part of a 10 year City Deal. – *from Transport Briefing, spotted by Andy Long*

## **BID TO FUND NEW DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY RAILWAY STATIONS**

A bid is to be made to secure funding to build new railway stations across Dumfries and Galloway. The local authority said it wanted to tap into a £30m fund set up by the Scottish government. The council's Labour-SNP administration has unveiled plans to seek government funding to establish up to four new local train stops. In order of priority, they could be at Thornhill, Eastriggs, Dunragit/Glenluce and Beattock. The first two on the list have both been subject to studies which showed that new rail stations would bring major benefits to the wider community.

The council, which plans to draw up the cash bid in conjunction with local transport partnership SWESTRANS, would also like to see the development of a rail passenger facility serving Dunragit and Glenluce. A [campaign](#) is already under way in Beattock to reopen the former station in the village. The proposed funding application will also include proposals to refurbish the train station at Stranraer. – *bbc.co.uk*

## **WAVE THE FLAG FOR COMMUNITY RAIL!**

ACoRP fear that local authority funding for Community Rail Partnerships is likely to be very hard to come by in 2014/15, so they've suggested that rail users wave the Community Rail flag even more in the coming year and make sure everyone is aware what good value it represents.

## **RAISE FUNDS THROUGH SOCIAL INVESTMENT BONDS** – *there's never been a better time*

A number of rail reopening projects around Britain are being promoted by Community Interest Companies, and many of these not-for-profit organisations are able to raise serious amounts of money by selling bond certificates. Well, now there's an extra incentive which will encourage investors to buy bonds.

It was announced by Chancellor George Osborne in his Autumn Statement on 5 Dec 2013 that bonds issued by CICs will be eligible for tax relief from April 2014. The Chancellor said "The government recognises the vital role which social organisations play in solving social problems, building communities and contributing to economic growth. From April 2014, the government will introduce a new and innovative Social Investment Tax Relief to encourage individuals to invest in social organisations."

A statement from the Big Society Capital institution tells us: "Social Investment Tax Relief could be transformative for the UK, potentially unlocking nearly half a billion pounds in finance for charities and social enterprises over a period of five years. Until now, social investment has been dominated by charitable foundations, the Government and Big Society Capital, but these plans could open it up to thousands of individual investors.

"The Chancellor's announcement that the Relief will include a range of debt and equity products as well as Social Impact Bonds is positive, as this should provide what many organisations crucially need, as well as accelerate the development of innovative social outcomes-based products."

There's more information on the Big Society Capital website [here](#).

## **DISINTEGRATED TRANSPORT**

Let's suppose you've never been to Portland in Dorset and decide to pay a visit by train and bus. You arrive at Weymouth station and are greeted by a helpful electronic indicator on the outside wall of the station showing the times of the next buses to Portland and other places. So far, so good (we have the 2012 Olympics to thank for our real time bus info screens here in South Dorset).

The problem comes when you try to find the buses. There's no bus stop in the station forecourt, and buses don't stop in the road alongside the station either (although many pass by in order to negotiate the town's 1-way system). The electronic display directs you to stop locations such as "D3" and "K2", but there's no sign telling you where these stops are. Locals know that D=Debenhams and K=King's Statue ... both hidden round the corner and a 5 minute walk away. The Onward Travel map might have helped but someone's moved it; maybe it's in the booking hall which was locked when I was last there.

We have Dorchester resident, David Henshaw, to thank for drawing our attention to the silly situation in Weymouth. Many of you will know David from the time when he was a member of Railfuture's National Executive; he now publishes the excellent *AtoB* cycling and public transport magazine. After his frustrating trip to Portland, he resolved to draw attention to Britain's "disintegrated transport system" by dedicating an area on his website to examples of poor interconnection between transport modes; see <http://www.atob.org.uk/>.

So if you've found yourself reduced to tears by our "nearly-but-not-quite" integrated transport, please send details of your disjointed journey to David at [atob@atob.org.uk](mailto:atob@atob.org.uk). Thanks!

## CHRISTMAS QUIZ - answers

The December edition of Rail User Express included a 5-question quiz. Here are the answers...

- 1) Routes where campaigners are pressing for passenger services. Where are they?  
**Minsters Line:** this would link Beverley to York via Market Weighton.  
**The South Sub:** skirts the south of Edinburgh from Newcraighall to Haymarket via Morningside.  
**Waterside Line:** runs alongside Southampton Water from Totton to Fawley via Hythe.  
**Wealden Line:** bridges the gap between Lewes and Uckfield.
- 2) These lines are very much open for business, but can you say where they are?  
**Abbey Line:** connects St Alban's Abbey station (Herts) with Watford Junction.  
**Atlantic Coast Line:** the Newquay Branch line, connecting Par with Newquay.  
**Heart of Wessex Line:** Bristol to Weymouth via Bath, Westbury and Yeovil.  
**Wherry Line:** actually two lines, linking Norwich with both Lowestoft and Yarmouth.
- 3) These curves feature in reopening projects. Where are they?  
**Bacon Factory curve:** enables freights from Felixstowe to run towards Ely without reversing.  
**Burscough curves:** would link the Southport-Wigan and Ormskirk-Preston lines in Lancashire.  
**Hall Farm curve:** would enable trains to run from Chingford to Stratford via Walthamstow.  
**Halton curve:** would connect North Wales with Liverpool via Helsby in Cheshire.
- 4) There are station reopening campaigns at these sites. Where they are?  
**Blackford:** this station site in Perthshire lies between Stirling and Perth.  
**Carno:** in Powys, lies on the Cambrian Line which connects Shrewsbury with Aberystwyth.  
**\*Flaxby Moor:** lies adjacent to the Flaxby Green Park development site in Harrogate.  
**Magor:** in Monmouthshire, lies on the main line between Newport and the Severn Tunnel.  
*\*actually a new station, not a "reopening" – well done all you pedants!*
- 5) Most campaign groups include a geographical reference in their name, but some retain an air of mystery. Where do these groups operate?  
**Association of Public Transport Users:** represents Thameslink commuters in Hertfordshire.  
**Coastliners:** represents users on the Sunderland-Hartlepool-Stockton-Middlesbrough line.  
**Into the West:** wants to see services linking Derry (NI) with Donegal and Sligo (Irish Republic).  
**RailQwest:** is the name for the new West of Scotland rail campaign.

Links to reopening campaign groups and groups representing rail users can be found here:

<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Key+rail+user+groups>

## EVENTS

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

**Mon 13 Jan** [BRAG](#) meeting at Conquest House, Bexhill from 19:00.

**Mon 13 Jan** [SELRAP](#) hosts an open meeting at Herriots Hotel, Skipton from 19:00.

**Wed 15 Jan** [Don Valley Railway](#) AGM at Harlequin pub, Nursery St, Sheffield from 19:00.

**Wed 15 Jan** Inaugural meeting of the Bolton "Let's Get Back On Track" campaign group at the Community Centre, Westhoughton from 17:30. Contact: [prevacrossley@talktalk.net](mailto:prevacrossley@talktalk.net)

**Sat 18 Jan** [Railfuture Yorkshire](#) branch meeting at Priory Place Methodist Ch, Doncaster from 14:00.

**Mon 3 Feb** [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meeting at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.

**Wed 5 Feb** [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Workshop & Seminar, Terraces Hotel, Stirling.

**Thu 6 Feb** [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Sussex & Coastway) meet at 18:00.

**Mon 10 Feb** Friends of Lymington-Brockenhurst AGM at Community Centre, Lym'n from 19:30

**Thu 13 Feb** [TravelWatch NorthWest](#) conference at Winmarleigh House, Warrington, 10:30 to 15:30. Speakers from the local council, First TPE, ORR and Passenger Focus.

**Mon 17 Feb** [Avocet Line Users](#) meeting with guest speaker: Chairman of Heritage Rlwy Assn, 19:00

**Sat 1 Mar** [ESTA](#) public meeting in St Mary's Church Hall, Woodbridge from 14:00.

**14/15 Mar** [European Passenger Federation](#) 2014 Conference at the Palazzo Lombardia, Milan.

**Sat 15 Feb** [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Kent Division) meet at 14:00.

**19/20 Mar** [ACoRP](#) Designated Lines seminar, Blackpool

**Wed 26 Mar** [ACoRP](#) Station Adoption seminar, Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham

**Mon 14 Apr** [Avocet Line Users](#) meeting with guest speaker: ret'd rail manager Chris Green, 19:00.

**Mon 21 Apr** 25th anniversary of the saving of the Settle-Carlisle Line.

**Sat 10 May** [Railway Development Society \(Railfuture\) AGM](#) in Sheffield.

**Tue 13 May** [ACoRP](#) members' spring seminar for the North of England, held in York.

**Fri 16 May** [Edenbridge & District Rail Travellers' Assn.](#) open AGM at the WI Hall, Edenbridge, 19:00.

**Sat 17 May** [ESTA](#) AGM at St Mary's Church Hall, Halesworth.

**Sun 18 May** National rail timetable change.

**Tue 20 May** [ACoRP](#) members' spring seminar for the South of England, held in London

**Wed 21 May** [ACoRP](#) conference "Community Rail in the City"

**Thu 22 May** UK Local and European Community elections

**Sat 31 May** [Friends of the Far North Line](#) AGM and conference at the Conon Bridge Hotel, 10 mins from Conon Bridge station, from 11:30.

**Sun 16 Jun** [Avocet Line Users](#) outing to the Dartmoor Railway.

**Sat 21 Jun** [Railfuture summer conference](#) at the University Centre, Cambridge from 10:45. As always, an impressive line-up of speakers is promised.

**Sat 21 Jun** (Belated) D-Day commemorations on the Lymington-Brockenhurst Line

**Thu 2 Oct** [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Awards ceremony in Scarborough.

**Wed 5 Nov** [ACoRP](#) Station Adoption seminar, ScotRail offices, Waterloo Street, Glasgow

**Tue 11 Nov** [ACoRP](#) members' autumn seminar for the North of England, held in York

**Tue 18 Nov** [ACoRP](#) members' autumn seminar for the South of England, held in London

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

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

*This bulletin has been sent by*

Tony Smale, Railfuture Rail User Group Liaison Officer  
 e-mail: [ruglink@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:ruglink@railfuture.org.uk) phone: 01929 462116

*Follow us on Twitter @Railfuture*

***The Railway Development Society Limited is a (not for profit) Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No. 5011634.***

***Registered Office:- 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND***