

**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 Organisation of the Month – Windsor Link Railway**

Our "Guest Rail User Group" spot is given over this month to the Windsor Link Railway company, which claims to be the first wholly privately promoted and funded railway for over 100 years. The not-for-profit company is working on forming a joint venture involving shareholdings from both the public and private sectors. Their initial aim is to link the two rail lines into Windsor with a cut-and-cover tunnel, and replace the existing stations with a new one, centrally-placed.

As well as improving rail services to the town, the £100m link would open up new journey opportunities for the entire region west of London. It would also enable a railway line from the West into Heathrow Airport to be constructed at a later date. A unique selling point is that the operating costs of rail services to Windsor would actually fall if the link were to be built.

The benefit:cost ratio for both the Windsor tunnel and the subsequent link into the airport are said to be "very high", and the [WLR website](#) gives a detailed analysis to justify this claim – very instructive for those wishing to promote rail schemes elsewhere in Britain. In fact, the company invites other rail promotion groups to submit details and share web space on their site; one has done so already.

*A full list of rail re-opening campaign groups (RoCs) appears on Railfuture's website [here](#).*

*There's more news about social investment towards the end of this bulletin.*

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

**Friends of the Far North Line – receiving sympathy, but no promise of new investment**

In the latest newsletter, we read that the Far North Line is still suffering from "too many perturbations". It's not uncommon for a late-running train to miss out Thurso, and bus substitution is most unsatisfactory given the difficult nature of serving intermediate stations. A train 10 mins late southbound can miss its path on the single-line track, leading to a 1-hour late arrival at Inverness and missed connections. FoFNL has made representations to the operator and has, at least, received sympathetic replies.

The group responded in detail to the recent consultation on the proposed Development Plan for the Inner Moray Firth, repeating its aspiration for an hourly service over the line between Inverness and Tain with some trains extended to Wick. The group also highlighted opportunities for increasing freight flows on the line. FoFNL will be contacting all bidders for the ScotRail franchise to tell them of their train frequency and journey time aspirations. After reading Network Rail's Draft Delivery Plan for Control Period 5, the group commented: "as we have now come to expect, there is nothing north of Inverness."

A feature article in FoFNL's newsletter examines the impact of long, single-line railways in the Highland region and wonders if anybody knows the true costs to the Highland economy. Does the benefit-cost ratio of any improvement take into consideration robustness of the timetable, passenger inconvenience arising from delays, the line's inability to compete with other modes and the knock-on effects to communities along the line? The conclusion is that the economic, social and environmental consequences are little understood and we're all living with the consequences of out-dated and inadequate infrastructure.

Major restoration work is now complete at Helmsdale Station House and the accommodation will be ready to receive guests from spring 2014. Full details will be published on the dedicated website, [www.helmsdalestation.co.uk](http://www.helmsdalestation.co.uk)

### **Friends of the West Highland Lines – scenic line to feature in continental film production**

Commenting on the draft Invitation to Tender for the next ScotRail franchise, FoWHL say that much of it is in line with their own aspirations, particularly welcoming the “Scenic Train” initiative which is especially relevant to the West Highland lines. They do, however, want to see a timetable more suited to passenger needs, improved station facilities and a more innovative approach to fares and ticketing.

There’s an update on the Society’s project to clear vegetation from strategic parts of the line to open up more iconic views. The need to continue this important work has now been recognised in the draft ITT for the ScotRail franchise - bidders are invited to take over financial responsibility for the project. Tree clearance has just been completed on the approaches to the famous Glenfinnan Viaduct, with funding from various bodies ... including a German film company! Filming for a TV programme to be shown across Germany and France entitled *The Harry Potter Line* took place last year and FoWHL members were on hand to point out the best vantage points. The Friends have been promised a copy of the final production – they may even spot one of their members appearing in the film as the “elderly eccentric taking photographs of the train”.

As always, the Society’s magazine *West Highland News* is illustrated with stunning photographs taken at a variety of locations along the line, as well as some historic pictures. A contributor to the News Briefing column clearly had an unpleasant experience on the railway jetty at Oban, complaining that passengers have to walk in all weathers from the pier to the station without any cover, and are then made to wait in the wind and rain for the platform gate to open: “when will the council and rail industry get together and find a solution to this ridiculous situation?”

### **Harrogate Line Supporters’ Group – electrification moves up the agenda**

After the three shortlisted bidders for the East Coast franchise were announced in January, the HLSG said it would be seeking meetings with each of them (they have since had meetings with two of them and made contact with the third). The HLSG had compiled a paper listing its campaign objectives in 2012 and the group now invites its supporters to suggest any amendments to these proposals, which would then form the basis of their approach to the bidders. In particular, they want specific evidence on why more Harrogate-London direct trains might be needed.

A feature article in the Ripon Gazette, centred around HLSG’s campaign for electrification of the Harrogate Line, begins thus: “Decisions to be made in 2014 could make it feasible that, by 2020, commuters will be greeted by modern, electric trains at all points on the rail line between Leeds and York.” The story continues: “A full business case has been submitted to the Department of Transport, and a Government taskforce is in the process of examining how to accelerate rail electrification across the north, an examination which will include a close look at the Harrogate bid.”

### **Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester Line - STORM get the drains cleared!**

Engineering works necessitated closure of the level crossing at Smithy Bridge and pedestrians had to make use of the station subway. A STORM member complained to the Council that the subway was in a filthy condition. The next day, contractors working on the site not only deep-cleaned the pathway but also used specialist equipment to clear the drains. The group made sure that all concerned were thanked for their swift and impressive clean-up.

A story in a local newspaper says: “Members of the rail group STORM are frustrated by claims made by Northern Rail that states Rochdale is a fare dodging hotspot. The group say they have campaigned over the years to help resolve the problem of fare evasion but, despite their work, members have noticed that guards on the trains are often reluctant to check for tickets or they are prevented from checking tickets. In news last week, Northern Rail revealed that out of 10,046 train journeys made without a ticket, 867 of those started in Rochdale.

The newspaper story concludes with a quote from Frank Salt, a member of STORM: “As a group, we rarely criticise the train staff because we understand that they have a hard job but we don’t think it is inaccurate that Northern Rail are suggesting that it is always the passengers fault.” Frank added: “I don’t know how people are supposed to get a ticket when [at some stations] there is nowhere to buy one from. People won’t go out of their way to walk down a train to find the conductor and the conductor usually won’t do it on a busy train anyway.”

And finally, the group wishes it to be known that this headline from a national newspaper is definitely not true:

“STORM CAUSES TRAIN CANCELLATIONS BETWEEN EXETER ST DAVIDS AND PENZANCE.”

### **Don Valley Railway – campaign for a passenger service gains support**

DVR, campaigning for the reopening of the rail line between Sheffield and Stocksbridge, presented a petition to Sheffield City Council Cabinet on 15th Jan to demonstrate the widespread local support for the project. The petition has gained 2500 signatures, with supporters claiming that connecting the town of more than 18,000 people would cut traffic on roads and make life easier for commuters, help regenerate the Upper Don Valley, and provide a sustainable link to the North East Peak District and other local visitor attractions.

The group says: “A study undertaken by SYPTe’s appointed rail consultant in 2006 shows that a link to Stocksbridge is just as viable as existing rail services supported by SYPTe, and a link would improve travel choice. Currently the line is used by TATA Steel who transport products between their sites at Stocksbridge and Park Gate, Rotherham. Though vital for TATA, there is generally only one train a day in each direction. It would be good to maximize the line’s potential.”

### **Friends of the Barton Line – no point in promoting their abysmal train service**

There’s been much discussion of late over the unreliability of Barton Line trains, poor connections at Habrough and the hazards of manually operating crossing gates in strong winds – a gatekeeper had been seriously injured. Approaching Northern Rail’s management about unreliability had no effect, so FoBL’s chairman has felt inclined to publicise the issue through the railway press: “the reputation of the line was already so bad that negative publicity could hardly make it worse.” The group sees no point in trying to promote the Barton Line while the service remains “abysmal”.

A representative of FoBL recently met First TransPennine Express managers in an effort to persuade them to stop more trains at Habrough: “the company’s representatives did not appear to be aware that the station is a rail head for Killingholme and Immingham, and has good parking provision.”

Twelve members of FoBL enjoyed a convivial new-year meal at a local hostelry in January. The committee has been in contact with a newly-formed, neighbouring group: Friends of the Brigg and Lincoln Lines – they hope to share ideas and possibly hold joint meetings with trains operators and Network Rail.

### **North Cheshire Rail Users' Group – Cinderella station takes centre stage, 30 years after opening**

NCRUG members were involved in the planning and execution of the various activities centred around 30<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations at Runcorn East. The main project was the creation of a wildlife-friendly garden with a World War I theme, involving a Community Payback workforce. A celebratory event was held on 18<sup>th</sup> October attended by the British Legion and civic dignitaries; the garden was duly dedicated, a bugler sounded the Last Post, poppy seeds were scattered and a birthday cake supplied by Asda was enjoyed by the 40 or so attendees. The day also saw the launch of a 5-year Community Engagement programme in which local youth groups will be involved in projects at the station and elsewhere. Arriva Trains Wales helped out by tidying the station and cooperating with the anniversary event; Halton Borough Council played a key role, and will be committing resources to improving the station and its environs.

Merseytravel is working on a Demand Study for the Halton Curve and the Wrexham-Bidston Line, and is looking to fund a refresh of the 4-year-old GRIP3 study for reinstatement of the Halton Curve. NCRUG is confident that a much-improved benefit:cost ratio for the Curve will emerge for a number of reasons: a better appreciation of the economic benefits arising from improved links between North Wales and Merseyside; additional rail capacity resulting from the line redoubling scheme between Wrexham North Junction and Saltney Junction; and a major new industrial zone, retail park and university campus that all stand to benefit. To underline the case for reinstatement, NCRUG's newsletter gives an impressive list of the trains that ran over the busy Halton Curve on a typical summer's day in the 1950s.

Following the successful installation of 10 metres of replica fencing at Frodsham Station last spring, NCRUG is actively trying to sort out a funding package for another length of fencing. The group will also be supporting artwork projects at Ellesmere Port and neighbouring stations as part of a local Art Festival in March and April 2014.

### **Nuneaton, Bedworth & Hinckley Rail Users' Group – NUCKLE scheme in doubt**

*This item is taken from a story on the BBC News website:*

The Nuneaton, Bedworth and Hinckley Rail Users' Group said it was concerned proposals to build two new railway stations and increase train services may not happen. The £18.8m so-called NUCKLE project was due to be completed in 2014. Coventry City Council, which is helping to lead the scheme, said the stations would now open in May 2015. The scheme, which will see new railway stations at the Ricoh Arena in Coventry and the Bermuda business park in Nuneaton, as well as more frequent trains and increased capacity, has been planned for 10 years.

Mark Whitelegg, from the rail users group, said: "It will be 2017 at the earliest that the whole scheme is delivered. Phase one, which they say will be completed in 2015, will involve the building of the two stations but that will be it. It will still mean the existing single-coach train will trundle every hour between Nuneaton and Coventry until 2017, when the line is electrified."

Mr Whitelegg said the project leaders, which include Coventry and Warwickshire councils, as well as Centro, the West Midlands transport group, blamed the failure to increase capacity on a lack of rolling stock. "The service is already overcrowded," he said. "After all this time, you would have thought they could find an extra coach for this line. I have my doubts as to whether this scheme is actually going to happen."

A Coventry City Council representative said: "The first phase is going ahead as planned with work starting on the stations later this year and opening planned for May 2015."

### **Ashchurch, Tewkesbury & District Rail Promotion Group – news of meetings in 2014**

On 4 Feb, the group held its second Round Table meeting at Gloucester with Railfuture members and various rail industry managers in attendance. The group's next public meeting will be on 7 March at Tewkesbury Library from 19:30; the guest speaker will be Railfuture President, Christian Wolmar.

### **Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users' Group – keeping an eye on station facilities**

The group has discovered that a major housing development at Brandon could lead to the elimination of a level crossing which forms the only means of step-free access to both platforms at the station. PENRUG has made sure that both the County Council and station operator are aware that an alternative means of step-free access would have to be provided if the level crossing were to close.

PENRUG acknowledges that the new track layout at Peterborough Station will reduce delays but, from what they have seen of the station remodelling works so far, the group is less than impressed by the lack of shops, toilets or continuous canopies on new platforms 2, 3, 6 and 7; furthermore it's not yet clear whether proper waiting rooms will be constructed for these platforms.

The group has asked for action to solve flooding on the pathway leading to March station, and has suggested that it might be useful if the station clock actually told the time!

### **Felixstowe Travel Watch – finding patchy performance and poor customer care**

In a review of 2013, FTW's verdict on the performance of Greater Anglia (Abellio), as the Company approaches the start of another short rail franchise, is decidedly mixed. Many recent delays and cancellations were beyond GA's control, but there have been so many occasions when the passengers could have been better treated. Platform staff seem to disappear when most needed whereas the presence on some trains of the "heavy mob" of security men appears to fulfil no useful purpose. The group thinks that GA should fight its corner when Network Rail control repeatedly decides that freights should have priority.

FTW is pleased that major civil engineering works at Ipswich over the Christmas period were completed on time, but notes that any improvements to passenger services are unlikely before December 2014.

### **Oxford-Bicester Rail Action Committee – continuing to campaign as construction work proceeds**

In November, OBRAC was delighted to attend an East West Rail Consortium event in London to celebrate the finalisation of contributions from local councils to the East West Rail Link project - the Dept for Transport had required the EWRC provide a local funding contribution of up to £50m towards the costs. 2014 will see significant progress on EWRL, and OBRAC is due to meet the Consortium during the year to review progress. OBRAC's secretary has attended meetings in Winslow at which the impact of the EWRL project on the village were discussed – the group is hoping that a large housing development in the area will help pay for the new station.

### **Association of Public Transport Users – representing Thameslink passengers in Hertfordshire**

APTU's January newsletter gives details of First Capital Connect's new "Nominate a Star" staff awards scheme; members are encouraged to put forward names of staff that give excellent service. The group's chairman has been analysing train-operator performance figures from the Office of Rail Regulation, and finds it surprising that FCC is so little affected by delays attributable to other rail traffic on their lines, given that their routes are shared with so many other operators.

At the end of January, APTU attended the official launch of the new Siemens Class 700 trains destined for Thameslink services. The group is continuing its efforts to ensure that cross-London journeys are adequately catered for during the 3-year period of rebuilding works at London Bridge station, which begins in Dec 2014. They're arguing that the 2 trains/hour that are to terminate at Elephant & Castle continue southwards at least to Gatwick Airport, and they want members to write to their MPs about the matter.

### **Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group – MP takes up the cause**

Having appraised their local MP, Claire Perry, of the importance of extending Great Western electrification beyond Newbury at least as far as Bedwyn, BTPG was pleased to see a report in the local paper that she had particularly mentioned the importance of this as part of her discussions with Chancellor, George Osborne, in January.

### **TransWilts Community Rail Partnership – new service puts Melksham on the map**

Sun 8 Dec 2013 saw the start of the new, regular train service between Swindon and Westbury via Melksham. The Partnership is aiming for 20 passengers per service travelling to/through Melksham – that's around 108,000 passenger-journeys per year on the Class 153 single-car unit. Initial reports are encouraging, with most trains well loaded and the car park at Melksham overflowing. This is due in no small part to the band of volunteers who've been publicising the service and making sure the station is tidy and has up-to-date information.

Transport Minister Baroness Kramer was due to attend the official launch ceremony on 7 Feb. Looking beyond that date, there are plans to market the service more widely, improve passenger facilities at Melksham and develop a line brochure with suggested walking trails. The Partnership recognises the importance of ensuring that the new TransWilts service is enshrined in the specification for the next Great Western rail franchise.

### **Tonbridge Line Commuters – uncertainties surrounding interim franchise and London Bridge works**

In the run up to the interim South Eastern franchise award, TLC had sought assurance from the Dept for Transport that the operator would not remain in "revenue support" (an arrangement that seems to ensure the company is not incentivised to introduce improvements above the base-level service); thankfully, the DfT assured them that this perverse incentive would be removed. The group also sought assurance that their comments submitted during the original rail refranchising process would be kept on record for future reference; the DfT said that they still had their response to hand.

The proposal that London Overground should take over responsibility for suburban services on the South Eastern, including the stopping service to Sevenoaks, has now been abandoned. At first sight, the prospect seemed inviting in view of the high levels of investment that might be expected, but TLC eventually concluded that splitting the services into Charing Cross between two operators would cause many problems and was altogether a bad idea. In any case, there will be considerable uncertainty over service patterns on the network until 2018 at the earliest due to major infrastructure works, especially at London Bridge. In advance of these works, TLC will be meeting with Network Rail to iron out difficulties that they feel may arise from the proposed temporary service pattern.

TLC's current newsletter tells us that subscription to the group costs £4 per year, which includes UK-wide rail travel insurance.

### **South Hampshire Rail Users' Group – concerns about rolling stock, fares and performance**

Noting that additional Class 458 units are being introduced on the Windsor Lines, SHRUG fears that some of the Class 450 outer-suburban stock (with cramped 3+2 seating) from the Windsor Lines may be redeployed on the Waterloo-Weymouth route.

When media interest in the cost of rail travel was at its height at the beginning of January, SHRUG's Co-ordinator took part in a 3-minute interview with a reporter on Radio Solent, and drew attention to the train operator's soaring dividends and profits.

In the January newsletter, SHRUG reminds us of a number of strategic investment promises on the South West Trains network that seem to have been abandoned. They are also concerned at the continued high level of service delays and cancellations despite the much-trumpeted deep alliance between South West Trains and Network Rail.

## **Avocet Line Rail Users' Group – “stuff” keeps on happening!**

The Avocet Line's deteriorating performance has been near the top of ALRUG's concerns since mid-summer, triggered by a spate of Exmouth services being terminated at Topsham. No sooner did rolling stock reliability improve than problems from leaf fall and winter storms took their toll. "It's not just that 'stuff happens', it's that it keeps on happening and for a number of different reasons... The surprise is that it works as well as it does, but it will always be difficult to recover from delays or incidents without drastic interventions - such as part cancellation - until the problems of rolling stock availability and line capacity have been resolved."

The group was initially disappointed that the two-year franchise recently awarded to First Great Western contains no commitments to improve local rail services, but has since heard that FGW is nevertheless examining various options: the Company is in talks with the County Council about additional Sunday trains on the line to Exmouth, and it's also looking at a short term fix to address the shortage of diesel units.

After Network Rail had replaced 50-year old bullhead rail with continuously welded track on the Avocet Line, ALRUG was presented with a piece of the old rail as a memento - they plan to slice it up into souvenir paper weights!

ALRUG has long campaigned on the issue of low platforms and is pleased that Exton station is soon to benefit from a Harrington Hump. Exton is one of the many unstaffed stations on the line that has no ticket machine, and ALRUG wants to see all stations equipped with ticket vending facilities to cut down fare evasion and avoid long queues forming at the barriers in Exeter. Elsewhere in ALRUG's \*award-winning newsletter, we see that members are being urged to pay their subscriptions by Standing Order to make the lives of the Treasurer and Membership Secretary a little easier.

*\*Now here's a challenge to RUG newsletter editors across Britain: enter the Railfuture RUG Awards in 2014 and see if you can beat ALRUG! Details on how to enter will be given later in the year.*

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

### **RAILFUTURE/SHOP**

Railfuture's online shop allows you to buy selected books and publications on rail development and related topics, many at discount prices.

The flagship publication is Railfuture's guide to rail reopenings "Britain's Growing Railway" priced at £9.95. Also on sale are books by renowned authors dealing with the Beeching Report and its aftermath. Other books, such as "The Inter-City Story", chart the recent history of the railways. In addition, there are lavishly-illustrated books such as "Waverley Route – The Life, Death and Rebirth of the Borders Railway" to inspire all those involved in rail campaigns. Some of the modestly-priced Leaflets and Reports on offer may have just the bit of information you need to kickstart your project.

Please take a moment to look at the range of goods for sale at [railfuture.org.uk/books](http://railfuture.org.uk/books). Proceeds of sales go towards the work of Railfuture.

### **RAILFUTURE WALES – New edition of Development Plan launched**

On 4 Feb, Railfuture launched the third edition of the "Development Plan for the Railways of Wales and The Borders: On Track for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". The 140-page illustrated document can be downloaded by visiting <http://www.railfuturewales.org.uk/> (click the link in the left-hand menu).

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

## **PASSENGER INFORMATION DURING SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS**

Passenger Focus has been monitoring the quality of information given to rail passengers during the high winds and heavy rain of recent weeks. They conclude that train companies are getting better at telling passengers early that bad weather is forecast and train times will change, and there are far fewer discrepancies between information on National Rail Enquiries and train company websites. However, they say an awful lot of ragged edges remain ... for example:

- normal and amended timetables showing in journey planners at the same time
- two train companies encouraging passengers to use each other's services when neither was running trains
- warnings about significantly altered timetables not 'jumping out' at passengers from some train company websites.

PF is currently carrying out new research into passenger experiences of information at times of disruption; they hope to publish this in the spring. – *from PF newsletter*

## **BUS AND TRAIN VANDALS MADE TO CLEAN UP THEIR MESS.**

Bus and train vandals in Birmingham will be made to clean up their own mess; they will also come face to face with people they abuse or attack as part of a six-month scheme to tackle antisocial behaviour on public transport in Birmingham.

The £22,000 Restorative Justice scheme, which will target young people aged from 10 to 18, was launched on 5<sup>th</sup> Feb by Birmingham Youth Offending Service and the Safer Travel Partnership. The Birmingham project will work with 32 offenders over a 24 week period and if successful will be developed in other parts of the West Midlands. It is being funded by Centro through the government's Transport Regeneration Fund, with match funding by Birmingham Youth Offending Service. The scheme appears cost effective – for every £1 spent on restorative justice the criminal justice system is estimated to save £9. – *Birmingham Mail*

## **OSBORNE LAUNCHES THE START OF NORTHERN HUB WORKS**

On 7 Feb, Chancellor George Osborne launched the start of the Northern Hub rail upgrades, a £600m rail investment programme set to create up to 20,000 jobs and boost the northern economy by billions of pounds. The Northern Hub is one of the government's top priorities as set out in the National Infrastructure Plan.

The Chancellor visited the start of construction at Manchester Airport station, marking the first phase of a project which spans the north of England. The project is a key part of the government's long-term plan to rebalance the economy and boost growth across the country. Network Rail estimate the wider economic benefit to the region will be worth £4 billion, as well as providing significant long-term benefits to passengers by increasing capacity and cutting journey times.

The improvements will transform the rail network in the North of England by electrifying existing lines as well as providing major upgrades to the network in and around Manchester. When completed in 2019 the upgrades will allow up to 700 more trains to run each day, providing space for 44 million passengers to the area a year. – *HM Treasury press release*

## **MEETING TO DISCUSS HULL ELECTRIFICATION**

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin will meet a delegation of MPs, city councillors and business leaders at the Department for Transport on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb to discuss proposals to electrify the railway lines in and out of Hull. The meeting will be attended by a cross-party group of East Yorkshire MPs, councillors, Lord Haskins, chairman of the Humber Local Enterprise Partnership, and Ian Kelly, chief executive of Hull and Humber Chamber of Commerce.

Welcoming the meeting, Hull West and Hessle MP Alan Johnson told the Mail: "I am very pleased the Transport Secretary has agreed to meet such a wide group of representatives, which crosses local authority, as well as political, boundaries. We are unanimous in backing the imaginative proposals put forward by Hull Trains to electrify the line from Selby to Hull. I suspect he's agreed to hold the meeting because he has something positive to tell us. Let's hope so."

Will Dunnett, First Hull Trains managing director, has also welcomed the meeting. First Hull Trains has submitted a business plan to Network Rail and the DfT. Under its private finance deal, about £94m would be spent to install 70 miles of electrified Overhead Line Equipment to cover tracks both ways from Hull to Temple Hirst Junction, five miles to the west of Selby. The funding would also include the procurement of new electric trains. – *from a story in the Hull Daily Mail spotted by Tony Ross of the Hull & East Riding Rail Users' Association*

## **CELEBRATING 175 YEARS OF DERBY'S RAILWAYS**

The Derby and Derbyshire Rail Forum has created a programme of events throughout 2014 to celebrate 175 years since the railway arrived in the city. The fifth annual "iRail" seminar and exhibition takes place in Derby's historic roundhouse on 20 March, and the Forum's annual conference will be on 10 April, preceded by a formal dinner on 9 April.

Derby Model Railway Exhibition will take place over the weekend of 11/12 May at Moorways Sports Centre, Derby. Then on 14 May, the Women in Rail conference comes to town. A special event will be held at Derby station on 30 May to celebrate the anniversary of the first train to depart in 1839.

Events later in the year include a Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) fair for young people and a recording of BBC One's ever-popular Antiques Roadshow. For full details of all these events, visit the special "derby175.co.uk" website.

## **SURVEY REVEALS EXTENT OF FREE TRAVEL ON NORTHERN RAIL**

TravelWatch NorthWest, the independent passenger champion in North West England, launched a report in January analysing 120 journeys made on Northern Rail's services over the previous few months. This was a similar exercise to that carried out a year before.

The chief finding highlighted by the survey was that, on 27% of journeys, the train conductor did not check passengers' tickets and was not seen at all in the carriage travelled in. A survey carried out the previous year revealed that this happened on 26% of journeys, so it is worrying that the situation is no better. Whilst it is acknowledged that conductors have to carry out a multitude of sometimes conflicting duties, ticket inspection and passenger care are clearly still lacking.

The Northern fleet of trains is largely unchanged from 12 months ago but it was apparent that real efforts have been made to improve the appearance and performance of the existing trains. However, whilst reports of overcrowding (especially at commuter peaks) continue to be received this survey noted that just 10% of journeys sampled exhibited overcrowding. – *TWNW news release*

Contact [admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](mailto:admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk) for a copy of the report.

## **NEW COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP FOR HAMPSHIRE**

The new South Downs National Park Authority is keen to encourage visits by train, and had suggested a community rail partnership for Hampshire stations within the park, namely: Liphook, Liss, Petersfield and Rowlands Castle. Meanwhile, Hampshire County Council was developing a new, long-distance footpath paralleling the Portsmouth line called Shipwrights Way – a name that commemorates the transport of oak from Alice Holt Forest to Portsmouth dockyard for shipbuilding. Thus it seemed appropriate to name the new rail partnership the "Shipwrights Way CRP".

Mark Miller has been appointed to establish and run the new CRP. Mark is already well known in the area as Partnership Officer for the Three Rivers CRP, which was originally conceived to promote the

“figure of six” rail service from Salisbury to Romsey via Southampton, Eastleigh and Chandlers Ford. The Three Rivers CRP area has since been extended to take in stations between St Denys and Bursledon on the line towards Fareham.

### REOPEN THE ROUTE VIA OKEHAMPTON!

The devastation caused by the storms which swept away the line along the seawall at Dawlish this month has left Plymouth and Cornwall devoid of any rail connection to Exeter and London. Prior to the Beeching cuts in 1968, there had been an alternative in the form of the old Southern Railway route via Okehampton and Tavistock. An online petition has been set up calling on the Secretary of State for Transport to reinstate the line from Exeter to Plymouth via Okehampton. You can sign up [here](#). – thanks to Tim Collins from Dorchester for alerting us to this

IKB should have consulted the OED which (probably) says...

**D.A.W.L.** *acr.* definitely at wrong location. Hence **Dawlish** *adj.* poorly placed.

**O.K. hampton** *n.* build it here, dumb

### SOCIAL INVESTMENT ROADMAP

The government has just published its [Social Investment Roadmap](#), setting out plans to extend support in the tax system for the ways that people can invest in social enterprise. The roadmap builds on a formal consultation on social investment tax relief, published in summer 2013 and draft legislation published in December 2013.

Research from the Big Society Capital has found that the relief, which will from April give an income tax deduction to investors, could unleash up to £500 million of extra investment over the next five years. The government has already announced that the social investment tax relief will be available for private investment in charities, community interest companies and community benefit societies, and in social impact bonds where the special purpose vehicle is a company limited by shares. The government will announce the rate and the maximum amount of investment eligible per organisation at Budget. So far, it has already been announced that organisations with 500 or fewer employees will be eligible for the relief. – *Government press release*

### DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS NOT BEING SPENT

Research has found that councils across England are sitting on a £1.5 billion pot of Section 106 payments from developers. The S106 money is intended to be used for social and community projects, including transport infrastructure schemes, but nearly a third of the S106 payment pot has still not been allocated and many councils are having to return cash to developers after failing to use contributions within the required time frame. – *from ACoRP's "Train On Line" bulletin*

### STUDENT VOLUNTEERING WEEK - 24 Feb to 2 Mar 2014

Now in its 13<sup>th</sup> year, this annual event gives you an opportunity to showcase your projects at a local college or university and talk to students about ways they could get involved. Student Volunteering Week is delivered through a partnership between the National Union of Students and Student Hubs with the support of Barclays (Student Hubs were created to get students involved in social and environmental issues). So if you're looking for young volunteers, get in touch with the SVW organisers and, if they think it's something students may be interested in, they will push it out through the SVW website and social media channels.

More information on the [SVW website](#). Also look out for [Volunteers' Week](#) at the start of June.

[Please share your experiences of recruiting volunteers via [ruglink@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:ruglink@railfuture.org.uk) – Ed]

## PORK PIE

After 'Bacon Factory curve reopening' appeared as one of the answers in my Christmas Quiz, Councillor Phil Smart wrote from Ipswich to say: "At the risk of joining the 'pedant' sub species, the 'Bacon Factory Chord' in Ipswich is NOT a reopening! It is a brand new double track embankment (and four bridges) being built on the site of the former 'Harris' bacon factory at a construction cost of £60m. A certain Ipswich councillor (and Railfuture member) persuaded the planners to reserve the route when the factory closed in the late 1990's. Ten years later, Network Rail were persuaded that it was a practical project!

## THAMESLINK ROADSHOW

The Thameslink Programme team will be taking a model of the new Siemens Class 700 train to a station near you on these dates, all from 3.30pm-8pm:

10 Feb: City Thameslink. 11 Feb: Bedford. 12 Feb: St Albans. 13 Feb: W Hampstead.  
24 Feb: Peterborough. 25 Feb: Cambridge. 26 Feb: Stevenage. 27 Feb: Hitchin.  
3 Mar: Brighton. 4 Mar: W Croydon. 5 Mar: Wimbledon. 6 Mar: Luton.  
10 Mar: Kings Cross. 11 Mar: City Thameslink. 12 Mar: Gatwick Airport.

## EVENTS

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

**Mon 10 Feb** [BRAG](#) meet at Conquest House, Bexhill from 19:00.

**Mon 10 Feb** [Friends of Lym'n-Brockenhurst Line](#) AGM at Community Centre, Lymington 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.

**Thu 13 Feb** [Don Valley Railway](#) meet at Harlequin Pub, Sheffield from 19:00.

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

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

**Tue 18 Feb** [Felixstowe Travel Watch](#) members' meeting, Salvation Army, Cobbold Rd from 14:30

**Tue 18 Feb** [NCRUG](#) meet at Frodsham Community Centre from 19:30, with ATW representative

**Sat 22 Feb** [Railfuture East Anglia](#) branch AGM at Bury St Edmunds. Spkr from Passenger Focus.

**24 Feb – 2 Mar** [Student Volunteering Week](#) - a nationwide celebration of student volunteering.

**Sat 1 Mar** [Railfuture NE Branch](#) AGM at Newcastle Art Centre, Westgate Rd, from 14:00. Guest speaker from Borders Rail will give progress update. All welcome.

**Sat 1 Mar** [TravelWatch SouthWest](#) general meeting, College of Arts & Tech, Taunton from 10:30. Are there any problems in the South West that you might wish to float past the panel?

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

**3-9 Mar** [Climate Change Week](#) spotlights the steps being taken to combat climate change in workplaces and communities across the UK. What's the impact of climate change on your line?

**Tue 4 Mar** [Saltburn Line User Group](#) open meeting at the Conservative Club, Saltburn from 19:10

**Thu 6 Mar** [Don Valley Railway](#) meet at Harlequin Pub, Sheffield from 19:00.

**Thu 6 Mar** [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Sx & Coastway) meet from 18:00.

**Fri 7 Mar** [ATDRPG](#) public meeting at Tewkesbury Library from 19:30; guest spkr Christian Wolmar

**Sat 8 Mar** [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Herts & Beds Division) meet at St Pauls Church, Hatfield Rd, St Albans from 10:45. Agenda includes: Abbey Line, Marston Vale Line, EWRL & Thameslink issues.

**Mon 10 Mar** [BRAG](#) meet at Conquest House, Bexhill from 19:00.

**Wed 12 Mar** [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Eastern division) meeting in Stratford from 18:30.

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

**Sat 15 Mar** [Railfuture Lincs](#) AGM at Market Rasen.

**Wed 19 Mar** [FoBL](#) will be at the Sloop, Barton-on-Humber from 18:00 for 20:00 meeting start.

**Wed 19 Mar** [Marshlink Action Group](#) AGM at Rye Town Hall from 19:15.

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

**Sat 22 Mar** “[TransWilts](#) Link” joint meeting of transport groups, The Laverton, Westbury from 10:00

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

**Thu 27 Mar** West Wilts Rail Users’ Group AGM at Bradford-on-Avon.

**Sat 29 Mar** [Railfuture E Mids](#) AGM at Loughborough.

**Mon 31 Mar** E Sussex Rail Alliance/SHRIMP Rail Summit in Hastings with Transport Minister & MP

**Tue 1 Apr** The start of Network Rail’s Control Period 5 (2014-2019)

**Tue 1 Apr** [Saltburn Line User Group](#) AGM at the Conservative Club, Saltburn from 19:10

**Sat 5 Apr** [Railfuture Wessex Branch](#) AGM in Southampton – to be confirmed

**Sat 12 Apr** [Railfuture North West](#) committee meeting at Littleborough Station from 13:00

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

**Mon 14 Apr** [BRAG](#) meet at Conquest House, Bexhill from 19:00.

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

**Sat 26 Apr** [Friends of the Settle-Carlisle](#) AGM at Hallmark Hotel, Carlisle from 11:45.

**Sat 26 Apr** [Railfuture London & SE](#) open meeting from 10:30 with AGM after lunch, Univ of London. Guest speakers: Chris Austin and representatives from the Spa Valley and Kent & E Sx Railways.

**Sat 10 May** [Railway Development Society \(Railfuture\) AGM](#) at the Quaker Meeting House, Sheffield from 11:00. Guest speaker: Shadow Transport Sec, Mary Creagh MP. Also speakers from RUGs.

**Sat 10 May** Provisional date for [PENRUG](#)’s AGM in Thetford.

**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.

**Sat 17 May** [FoWHL](#) lunch and AGM at the Moorings Hotel, Banavie from 12:30.

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

**Sun 18 May** [FoBL](#) “Start of Summer Service” lunch at the No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes from 12:00.

**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”

**Wed 21 May** [FoBL](#) will be at the No 1, Cleethorpes for 19:00 meeting start.

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

**Tue 27 May** [Felixstowe Travel Watch](#) AGM, Salvation Army, Cobbold Rd, Felixstowe from 19:30.

**Fri 30 May** 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations at Derby station

**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.

**1-7 Jun** [Volunteers’ Week](#) - an annual event which celebrates the fantastic contribution millions of volunteers make across the UK. At the very least, an excuse for a press release about your group!

**Thu 5 Jun** [World Environment Day](#) - a global day for environmental action and to encourage support for sustainable development.

**Fri 6 Jun** [Edenbridge & Dist. Rail Travellers' Assn](#) open AGM at the Eden Centre, Four Elms Rd Edenbridge from 19:00

**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** [Railfuture North West](#) committee meeting at the Station Hotel, Preston from 13:00

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

**Wed 16 Jul** FoBL AGM at the Sloop, Barton-on-Humber from 18:00 for 20:00 meeting start.

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

**Sat 4 Oct** [TravelWatch SouthWest](#) general meeting, College of Arts & Tech, Taunton from 10:30.

**Sat 1 Nov** [Railfuture autumn conference](#) and RUG Awards, Univ of Westminster, London

**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*

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