



October 2017

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

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At his party conference, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said that plans to replace paper ticketing would be speeded up: “people want smart ticketing, and we will deliver it”. Maybe, but not everyone, so I hope that “replace” really means supplement. And would smart ticketing always deliver the cheapest option? Many ticket machines don’t. Similarly with timetables: the trend is for flimsy paper ones for specific routes, but how many of those would be needed to plan a journey, say, from Great Yarmouth to Hertford East? And that’s just one operator. The new Thameslink timetable from May 2018 will be a real challenge.

Roger Smith

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

Friends of the Far North Line

FoFNL sees itself as a “critical friend”, working with other stakeholders to get results such as an additional train each way, re-opening Beaulieu and Conon Bridge, and controlled-emission toilets on the Class 158s. And at a meeting of the Review Group in May, Scotrail outlined a much improved and more robust timetable for the line. The High Level Output Statement (HLOS) for Control Period 6 (April 2019 – March 2024) was published in July, but the Statement of Funds Available (SOFA) listing specific projects was deferred until October. FoFNL is optimistic regarding the Lentrans Loop, and supports Transform Scotland’s proposal to rebuild the direct route between Perth and the Forth Bridge that was closed in 1970 to accommodate the M90. It would cut at least half an hour off the Edinburgh-Inverness journey time. However, it is philosophical about the late delivery of projects in CP5: “a project completed late is a project completed; a project cancelled or de-scoped (like Borders Rail) is a project left incomplete”.

One rather esoteric requirement in the Scottish HLOS, “the Scottish Gauge Requirement”, could have a profound impact: “by the end of CP6, all Scottish routes are...to be capable of accommodating the gauge of all locomotives and passenger rolling stock, including cross-border services and charter operators’ vehicles, which have run in Scotland in CP4 or CP5 or are known to be planned to run in Scotland in CP6.” Vegetation must also be controlled, to open up views from the line and prevent damage to trains.

Friends of the West Highland Lines

The arrival of Alex Hynes as ScotRail MD has seen much improved punctuality, and positive customer feedback. However, when train crew are unavailable, services are cancelled and replaced by buses. There is also a need for additional units in July and August, to cope with the tourist traffic. All 36 Scottish Class 156s are being refurbished again, with new seats, flooring and livery, power points, accessible toilets and dedicated wheelchair spaces. They will start to appear on the WHL later next year, but will then be replaced by refurbished Class 158s in December 2018 when the Scenic Trains package is launched.

For 14 weeks in the summer, Caledonian Sleeper trialled a non-stop bus connection in both directions between Crianlarich and Oban, funded by Transport Scotland. It gave passengers more time in the area, as they did not have to wait for connecting train services. And as previously reported, CS are discussing with HiTrans the possibility of running a sleeper service between the Central Belt and Wick and/or Thurso via Inverness. It could also carry freight in a Driving Van Trailer or converted Mk 3 sleeper coaches. In August, the first five of 75 Mk 5 coaches being built by CAF at Beasain in Spain were moved to Velim in the Czech Republic for testing. There will be four sets of 16 coaches with 11 spare vehicles. The full fleet is due in service by autumn 2018. Finally, CS passengers can now buy Advance tickets up to 10 mins before their departure rather than midnight the day before.

On environmental grounds, FoFWL is urging the Scottish government to subsidise rail freight. Currently, a timber lorry travels every 20 minutes from south of Oban to the sawmill at Corpach, near Fort William. There is a perfectly good loading point at Taynuilt, and just two trains a week could replace the lorry traffic over much of this long and twisty route. Similarly, the Colas Rail oil trains, that ran for three months in the summer from Grangemouth to Fort William and Lairg, but only on a temporary basis.

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

A new 32-page booklet, [A Railway to Regenerate Levenmouth](#), by David Shirres and other rail experts shows how reconnecting Levenmouth to the national rail network would transform the local community. On 27 September, there was cross-party support for a motion in the Scottish Parliament that noted the strong support the Campaign has achieved, and welcomed the *Levenmouth Sustainable Transport Study – Final STAG Report*, published by Fife Council in January 2017. At Fife Council level, LMRC was represented on the cross-party Working Group that met for the first time in September. It will begin by co-ordinating actions arising from a meeting of Council Transport officials with Transport Scotland.

Copeland Rail User Group

Representatives from the Community Rail Partnership and Northern met the Group to discuss raising its profile through the use of Facebook, and with recruitment posters in Whitehaven and Workington. The idea of Shackles Off adopting Seascale was warmly received. Work was done on the Class 37 locos over the strike period to improve their reliability; their brakes have to be changed every few days. A two to three year station improvement programme started with Barrow and Millom, with Workington, Harrington and Parton to follow later this year, although the installation of ticket machines is a separate exercise. Did any stations still need Harrington humps? A new timetable format is likely to bring together the Cumbrian Coast, Furness and Lakes Line services.

The Group mooted the idea of a walk through Whitehaven tunnel before the start of Sunday services, and was asked if it cared to contribute to the cost of a memorial at Bootle to Harold Goodhall. In March 1944, he was the driver of a train when one of the wagons loaded with depth charges caught fire. With the aid of his fireman, he managed to isolate the wagon concerned before it blew up and killed him. The fireman had gone down the track to place detonators, and had a miraculous escape. Their heroic action averted a much more powerful explosion and saved the village.

Keswick and Penrith Railway Project

Cedric Martindale briefed Cumbria County Councillors on the Keswick and Penrith Railway Project: its background, and the work so far by CKP Railways plc in feasibility, design, commercial and legal areas. The Project is achievable, but only if endorsed by the County Council. It won't have to fund or manage the Project – the railway can be built and operated independently – but for CKP to obtain the necessary legal powers, the Council must include it in its Local Transport Plan and related policies, demonstrating the need for seamless inter-regional train services from the rest of the UK mainland into the North Lakes. The line would also take passenger and freight traffic off the A66. As long ago as 2008, a LDNPA report observed that: "the sheer volume of traffic can undermine the special qualities of National Parks". CKP hopes that this will soon be discussed at Cabinet level; meanwhile, supporters are urged to keep up the pressure.

Lakes Line Rail User Group

Announcements from both DfT and Northern were true - but not the whole truth. The Lakes line will indeed see four return services between Windermere and Manchester Airport on weekdays, but this was a franchise commitment that did not depend on electrification. Similarly, the announcement of plans for brand new trains from December 2019 is also true – but these were to have been electric trains.

From May 2018, the Manchester Airport service will be provided by 'Flex trains': redundant Class 319 EMUs fitted with a diesel engine, and re-designated Class 769. From December 2019, Northern will introduce the brand new trains currently under construction by CAF, with air conditioning, free wifi, and plug sockets throughout. However, its order for these trains was for just enough units (43 electric and 55 diesel) to cover the services planned. So if the Lakes line is to get some of them, will some other line have to go without, or will Northern be able to buy a few extra?

The DfT's also announced that "the train operator in the Lake District [is] beginning work to trial an alternative-fuelled train in this World Heritage Site." However it is not the franchisee's job to undertake basic research into new technologies. In our franchise system, the train operators do not own the trains, so they do not have design or research departments, and Northern is already doing more than it contracted to by helping Porterbrook develop the Class 769. Moreover, alternative technologies are some way from large-scale production. Alstom is promoting its 'Coradia Lint' as "an advanced fully emission-free solution for passenger rail transportation, using fuel cells to produce electricity by combining hydrogen and oxygen to water." [*Emission free? Water vapour is a more potent greenhouse gas than CO2 - and how is the hydrogen produced other than by electrolysis!* – Ed.]

Lancaster & Skipton Rail User Group

At the LASRUG AGM in Bentham, Richard Isaac, Community & Sustainability Manager for Northern's East Area, set out major improvements to the Leeds-Morecambe line in the next few years. From next May, the number of trains would increase from five to eight each way on weekdays, and from four to five on Sundays. Later, more modern trains would replace the uncomfortable Pacers. Mr Isaac praised the work of LASRUG and the CRP in promoting the train service and seeking improvements. He hoped many more stations could be "adopted" by their local communities; the Friends of Bentham Station were a fine example. In the subsequent discussion, members warmly supported a proposal to hold special events next May to celebrate and to publicise the new, more frequent timetable.

In his report, Joint-Chairman Hugh Turner welcomed the additional trains, for which LASRUG had long campaigned. Both the CRP and LASRUG had helped to plan the new timetable. Other initiatives had been the "Rail to Trail" leaflets describing walking routes between the various stations, new children's activity packs, the project to make the line "Dementia Friendly", and the designation of four stations as Gateways to the Forest of Bowland AONB. Mr Turner gave special mention to Catherine Huddleston, the Community Rail Officer, and to Gerald Townson for their tireless support. He thanked the LASRUG officers and committee members for producing the excellent quarterly Newsletter, and representing LASRUG at meetings with the rail industry and with local and national transport groups.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester Lines (STORM)

There seems to be a "ghost train" from Blackburn from Todmorden at 2243. Real Time Trains shows it departing Clitheroe at 2142, all stations to Blackburn (reverse) then Todmorden ONLY, i.e. not Rochdale, arriving Manchester Victoria 2316. It's not shown in Northern leaflets 36 or 44 but No 12 shows a 2142 from Clitheroe to Blackburn, dep. 2208, then Victoria 2316 with no mention of a call at Todmorden (although it appears on the screens there). On Fridays and Saturdays it runs to Victoria via Bolton; maybe it's diverted Mon-Thu because of engineering works. One Monday night the train was indeed seen to run through Rochdale non-stop.

From 10 December 2017, the start of the winter timetable, the hourly service from Leeds between 0718 and 1418 is extended to Manchester Oxford Road arriving at H+56. From Rochdale the trains depart from 0824 to 1524. Returns depart Oxford Road from 0938 to 1638; Rochdale times 1002 to 1702. These are fast trains, so local Rochdale area stations miss out, apart from the first up train from Rochdale, which will also call at Littleborough, Castleton and Mills Hill. None of the others will stop so the local stations will not have the advantage of this new service

Northern has become the first operating company to sign up to the national Living Wage Foundation, following a pay increase for almost 200 rail workers. The Living Wage is an hourly rate set independently and updated every year. The commitment sees all employees of a company, both direct employees or third-party contracted staff; receive a minimum hourly wage of £8.45 in the UK or £9.75 in London, significantly higher than the statutory minimum for over 25s of £7.50 per hour.

SP commends the information data screens on the platforms at Dawlish and Totnes, which are visible to both staff and public. They show a signal diagram, and real time details of every service between Exeter and Plymouth (with Headcodes!), so you can see exactly how each train is running and accurately predict arrivals and delays etc. Will Northern invest in something similar?

Harrogate Line Supporters Group

Delays in cascading and refurbishing the necessary rolling stock may well scupper the Northern timetable changes proposed for December 2017. From next May, Leeds-Harrogate-Knaresborough-York is maintained as an all-stations service, whilst semi-fast trains between Harrogate and Leeds will call at Horsforth and Hornbeam Park, to create a "turn up and go" service every 15 minutes. Class 170 Turbostars are expected to operate the all-stations service, and refurbished Class 158 Sprinters the semi-fast service. There are later services between Harrogate, Leeds and York, and the Sunday services are also much better. The Group considers this to be a great improvement on the earlier drafts. It has submitted 20 detailed comments, and suggests adjusting the timings of a few weekday services to make them more uniform and reduce some long gaps. It wants all trains to stop at Hornbeam Park, and if possible also at Pannal, in view of the business park redevelopment and major housing developments on the south side of Harrogate.

From 2019, the Harrogate-Kings Cross services will dramatically improve in frequency and speed. Currently: 1 service per day each way; Northbound: 2hrs 52mins; Southbound: 3hrs 01mins. Access Rights from May 2019 for: 7 services per day each way; Northbound: 2hrs 37 mins; Southbound: 2 hrs 48 mins.

In the National Rail Awards, Harrogate Station was named medium station of the year. Paul Barnfield, Regional Director – East at Northern Rail said this was "A fantastic and well deserved accolade for the station." The judges commented particularly on the part that the Group had played in the improvements.

North Cheshire Rail Users' Group

NCRUG has met all four of the preferred bidders for the Wales and Borders franchise. Its wish list includes improved facilities for passengers, timetable improvements, increased provision for cyclists, and refurbishment of the rolling stock. A degree of localised control is also desirable; the passenger information relevant to the user might not always be the same as that in south Wales.

NCRUG also wants improved services between Helsby and Ellesmere Port, and ultimately Hooton, to link new development around Ince and Elton with places of employment and education. Improvements in hand include new services from Ellesmere Port to Leeds, and more appropriate timetabling, but the frequency of the service remains an issue.

The main work on the Halton curve officially started on 14th July and was a memorable occasion. A trackside photo shoot was followed by a reception in the Holiday Inn and press interviews. It was a proud moment for NCRUG, whose efforts over many years were applauded. What could be the last annual Parliamentary train over the Curve ran on 29th July, and was well attended. NCRUG have had preliminary talks with Merseytravel about publicising the Curve nearer opening time. Suggestions include unveiling a statue to Thomas Brassey at the entrance to Chester station, with the Chester Town Crier, Michael Portillo and Paul Atterbury, followed by a steam hauled service as for the Settle/Carlisle re-opening, together with leaflets, posters, (all regional stations), editorials, media, websites and local Radio and TV. Discussions are ongoing, and ideas are welcome.

Friends of the Brigg Line

On 23 September, two coal trains and the 1114 Cleethorpes to Sheffield service passed through Brigg within 10 minutes of each other, so the Brigg level crossing was closed for quite a while. Another bargain ticket anomaly: the £11.70 Adult Return fare from Brigg to Penistone, west of Barnsley, is valid for travel via Leeds, and you may break your journey both outward and return, so people in Brigg can have a day in Leeds on a Saturday for £11.70, when Brigg to Leeds return would be £27.70! Conversely, £9.10p return between Brigg and Gainsborough Central is putting many off making this journey by rail.

The consultation paper for the East Midlands franchise starting in 2019 proposes to transfer the Barton line from Northern, but why stop there? Surely it would make sense for a single franchise to rationalise all services south of the Humber, apart from the Transpennine service from Manchester? It could restore a weekday service to the Brigg line, and also subsume Northern's Scunthorpe to Lincoln service – Ed.

East Suffolk Travellers' Association

At the Bombardier works in Derby on 30 August, ESTA viewed a mock-up of the new electric trains that East Suffolk travellers will change into or out of at Ipswich or Norwich from 2019/20. There will be three trains an hour on the main line between Norwich and London, of which two are likely to be Stadler Inter-City (such as ESTA saw in a mock-up at Norwich in June) and the other a Bombardier, which will call at more stations in Essex. This train does not have refreshments, but can accommodate up to six bicycles.

Following the closure of Tourist Information Offices in Waveney District, Visitor Information Points (VIPs) were set up in Beccles, Halesworth and Southwold and, at the initiative of the Community Rail Partnership, in one of the vacant rooms on Lowestoft station. It is well stocked with leaflets, timetables, maps and other items of interest to visitors, and has a few items for sale, which help to cover its running costs. It opens in time for the 1043 arrival from Ipswich and 1052 from Norwich, and usually closes at 15.00, which caters for most day-trippers and holidaymakers. When the VIP is closed customers are directed to the town's library, which is open seven days a week.

East Hampshire Community Rail Partnership

The group raised the following points regarding the new South Western Railway franchise awarded to First Group/MTR:

- Is the Class 442 rolling stock proposed for the Portsmouth line DDA compliant?
- Will the additional trains on the Portsmouth line create problems with Liss level crossing being down for a longer period?
- Will digital signalling become standard in the new franchise?
- What is the new company's commitment to Community Rail Partnerships?
- Will Driver Operated Doors become an issue?
- Will dynamic seating information be available?

Avocet Line Rail User Group

RUEx congratulates ALRUG on reaching its 10th anniversary. Chairman Mike Reddaway is rightly proud of its being instrumental in a broad range of improvements on the Exeter-Exmouth line, both large and small. He thanks all the organisations and individuals with whom the Group has established relationships, and who are pleased to discuss suggestions and answer questions.

This summer has seen many more crowded or cancelled trains than in previous years - and many more comments and complaints from passengers. Most of the problems are caused by breakdowns of trains, signals or track due to equipment being old, in spite of the excellent work done by maintenance staff. The main concern is with GWR's problem management. ALRUG has discussed a number of failures to provide passengers with timely information; GWR are looking at possible improvements.

ALRUG is seeking improvements at Polsloe Bridge station in Exeter. Its inaccessibility, high elevation and potentially dangerously narrow platform make it the most inadequate on the Avocet Line, and probably one of the worst on GWR's network. The station lacks so many basics: the means to purchase a ticket, park a bicycle, find out when the next train is coming or sit in comfort, sheltered from the rain. Even so, the irregular service still attracts more than 120,000 passengers a year (and many more unable to buy a ticket). Surrounded by residential areas, and offering journey opportunities that cannot be matched by local bus services, the station has the potential for much greater growth – even with the present level of service; if all trains stopped, this could be expected to rise further still. Desirable improvements include CCTV, a customer information system, and a ticket vending machine. GWR is seeking to resolve potentially costly power and network supply issues, so ALRUG and Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership will bid to its Customer Community Improvement Fund for a screen so that passengers can at least know when the next train is coming. ALRUG is also working with GWR to identify possible third party funding for a ticket vending machine.

RAILFUTURE

Railfuture welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more effective our campaigns. Join Railfuture [here](#). From the "Membership Types" menu top right, select either the appropriate category of individual or, to affiliate, select "RUG or similar". Read the latest from Railfuture and its Campaign updates by clicking on [News and views](#), , [Press releases](#), [Raifuture in the news](#), and [Railfuture submissions](#).



In Railfuture's sixth consecutive year of Rail User Group Awards, its Judging Panel of Vice-Presidents will adjudicate on the 18 nominations received from 11 Rail User Groups drawn from 8 of its 14 branches. Bookings for the Conference in Leicester on Saturday 4 November can be accepted up to 2 November.

As a Vice-President of Railfuture, Roger Ford, the editor of Informed Sources, was sent a copy of the latest edition of 'Britain's Growing Railway', which lists stations and lines opened or re-opened since 1960, and looks ahead to lines opening soon, including metros, light rail and tramways. "It's gone straight onto my reference bookshelf – much faster than Google." The book costs £9.95 for 192 pages; for further details see books@railfuture.org.uk or the web-site www.railfuture.org.uk.

Railfuture Honorary President Christian Wolmar's article in Issue 835 of Rail magazine also mentions the book. However, his main thrust is the hassle in expanding the rail network, even those projects with a demonstrably high Benefit:Cost Ratio (BCR). NR has no incentive to adopt any additional track: its sloth-like process aptly named GRIP (Governance for Railway Industry Projects) seems designed to kill projects off or double their cost. Go-ahead local authorities or Local Enterprise Boards need the support of a national agency to champion their cause. Christian's plea is therefore for a new version of the Strategic Rail Authority, this time having both the vision and the clout to promote and lead the industry.

In an [article](#) on the Railfuture website, director Jerry Alderson recounts his experience of the one Sunday a year in Brussels when cars are banned and public transport is free. He wonders whether the Transport Authorities in London or Manchester might care to give it a try.

The Welsh Government is seeking visionary proposals for a [South Wales Metro](#) from bidders for the Wales and Borders rail franchise. The new operator is expected to also take responsibility for the infrastructure on the core Valley Lines, on which services may no longer use pure diesel traction.

"The Coffee Station" at Hebden Bridge station has beaten cafés from across the country to be the first ever winner of Railfuture's prestigious national award for the favourite independent station café. Presenting the award, Honorary National Communications Director and Board Member Christopher Hyomes congratulated Lisa Crebbin and Antoinette Hunt, who have run the café since 2005. He said that Railfuture had set up the award as passengers, especially regular commuters, greatly appreciated good quality station cafés. The ceremony was attended by the Mayor of Hebden Royd, Councillor Pat Fraser; Pete Myers, Arriva Trains North's Stakeholder Manager, and Richard Isaac, its Communities and Sustainability Manager.

RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE

At a branch meeting in Pontefract, Jonathan Brown, Senior Rail Strategy Officer for Transport for the North (TfN), set out its 4 aims:

- Be a single voice for the North and strategic partner with the Government
- Co-manage two rail franchises and identify rail priorities
- Deliver a strategic plan for road and rail investment
- Deliver smart travel across the North.

TfN plans to publish its strategy in 2018 for consultation. New lines will be needed to give Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Hull and Newcastle 6 trains an hour and journey times of 30mins, but not all of TfN's strategic development corridors link large cities. The local RUG observed that Pontefract has the lines and the stations, but few services constrained to county boundaries, something TfN could address.

Railfuture endorses the draft statement made at the Northern Transport Summit in Leeds that called on the Government to:

- Honour in full, its commitments to deliver improvements to rail services across the North, including full electrification, track and signalling improvements on key commuter routes and the upgrade of hub stations, and to remove uncertainty about this at the earliest opportunity
- Prioritise its manifesto commitment to deliver new west-east rail infrastructure across the North, work with TfN to set out a clear timetable for its delivery in the Autumn Budget, and provide evidence that this timetable will not be adversely affected by decisions to fund other large infrastructure projects elsewhere in the country
- Distribute transport funding (revenue and capital) more fairly across all regions of the country.

The difference in land values was distorting investment decisions. Prioritising the amount of GVA (Gross Value Added) of a proposed investment in the BCR funding formula gives London and the Home Counties an unfair advantage. The formula needed social weighting to level the playing field.

The double track to the south of Sheffield could be quadrupled, but that to the north is in deep cutting. A scheme to relieve the severe capacity problem at Dore & Totley park-and-ride station by doubling the Manchester line should have completed by December 2018, but is still with the Minister. There should also be platforms on the London line. Freight trains off the Hope Valley line run through Sheffield station, even at the height of the rush hour. There is no depot, so main line services work out of Leeds or Derby. Finally, even if there were capacity at Sheffield, the flat junction at Doncaster would preclude any increase in the frequency of services to Hull or Scunthorpe.

RAILFUTURE WEST MIDLANDS

After walking likely routes at the rebuilt Birmingham New Street station, and noting the signage and ease of access or otherwise, RFWM discussed its findings with the Station Manager. He has obtained funding to improve the passenger information screens (including pictograms), with more screens at the Stephenson Street entrance. And after RFWM had expressed its concern on the working environment for the staff on the platforms, he commissioned research by Birmingham University on ways to reduce particulate emissions at the station. There will now be regular quarterly meetings to provide the passengers viewpoint.

From 10 December, West Midlands Trains, a consortium of Abellio, Mitsui and East Japan Railway Company, will operate local trains in the West Midlands, and to London Euston. WMT is not to be confused with West Midlands Rail, a collaboration of local authorities and DfT, which will monitor WMT's performance. West Coast main line and local West Midland services will be run as separate businesses, and eventually as separate franchises. By 2021, WMT will have 400 new rail vehicles in service including 100 metro-style carriages for the cross-city line, and a further 80 for the Snow Hill line. Service changes include:

- Two services per hour both from Birmingham to Shrewsbury, and to Rugeley via the Chase Line
- Three trains per hour on the Cross-City line, extended to Bromsgrove
- A new direct hourly service between Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent
- Double the number of local Sunday services by 2021.

Other commitments include:

- Improved compensation for late arrivals, with a 25% refund for trains delayed by 15 minutes
- Free Wi-fi on all main line trains by Jan 2020
- £60 million for station improvements, including new car parking spaces.

The new East Midlands franchise will now start in August 2019. The bidders are Stagecoach, Arriva and a First/Trenitalia consortium. RFWM would transfer the Birmingham-Leicester-Nottingham services from Cross Country Trains, improve their frequency, and add a new Derby-Nottingham service via Sutton Coldfield and Lichfield. In the May 2017 timetable, Sunday services on the Midland Main Line are generally improved, but at the expense of connections from Corby into northbound services at Kettering. Nottingham-Grantham and Nottingham-Lincoln gain earlier Sunday services.

RAILFUTURE EAST MIDLANDS

East Midlands Airport has offered to contribute a £2.5million “rail enhancement package” to improve services at East Midlands Parkway station. Currently its three services per hour all arrive within 15 minutes of each other, leaving the station without trains for the remaining 45 minutes. The airport operator also wants direct rail links to cities such as Coventry, Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent. In return, its package will improve links from Parkway to the airport for customers and employees.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

RFEA has long campaigned for improved network capacity to allow faster and more frequent services from Cambridge to Norwich and Ipswich; one train/hour calling at all stations does not take traffic off the road. An Atkins Consultancy report for East West Rail sets out the economic benefit of adding two semi-fast services/hour to each location, cutting the journey time by about 20 mins. It would also triple the hourly service from Norwich to Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft, and double the Ipswich-Felixstowe service. However, delivering on these proposals would require a much-improved infrastructure.

RFEA is also working with Cambridge Connect to develop plans for a light rail network around the city, from Haverhill in the east to Cambourne and St Neots in the west. James Palmer, the new mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has pledged his support.

RUEx extends a warm welcome to SAWRUG, the new rail user group for Shelford and Whittlesford Parkway stations. The Group is seeking a way to provide a bus link from Whittlesford to the Imperial War Museum at nearby Duxford Airfield, a tourist attraction of international importance, but lacking any public transport.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

Railfuture is also pleased to welcome the Cooksbridge Station Partnership, that campaigns for a train service that fully meets the needs of Hamsey, north of Lewes, and neighbouring parishes. Also to maintain and improve the environment of the station so that it is a pleasurable experience for travellers, and enhances the community.

ACoRP has announced a number of new publications that offer guidance and practical advice to its community rail stakeholders. They may be equally of interest to rail user groups.

- **Communicating Community Rail:** This research report examines how community rail partnerships and groups can communicate effectively to engage communities as widely as possible, promote rail as a key part of sustainable and healthy travel, and ensure communities have a voice in the ongoing development of our railways. Download your copy [here](#).
- **Marketing & communications / tourism guidance (advice for community rail partnerships):** In partnership with Northern, ACoRP has produced a number of guidance sheets to assist planning in the areas of Marketing & Communications, and Tourism. Download your copies [here](#).
- **What's been achieved through community rail?** An informative report into the successes and influence of the community rail movement. Download your copy [here](#).

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton CRP wants its stations to be more accessible. Thameslink will quadruple capacity from 2018, so every means of reaching them needs upgrading. The Greater Cambridge Partnership would support a travel planning exercise to inform the development of station interchanges. It needs to make it happen! Bus links from surrounding villages are vital, eg from Bassingbourn to Meldreth following withdrawal of the last commercial services, so that students can still reach Cambridge. With cuts to council bus subsidies, the CRP looked at community transport – but new DfT guidance on licensing this type of service may inhibit it. Making best use of expanding rail services requires innovative multi-modal solutions.

Correction advised by the Abbey Line CRP: the safety video of children playing on a level crossing was a Network Rail production, not as stated that of Oakland College. Their initiative was to involve the students in the local community and railway heritage by creating a presentation to promote the Abbey Line, and rejuvenate passenger growth, particularly off-peak. They came up with a number of ideas ranging from cycling events and treasure hunts to complete rebranding of the line. The students made their presentations to a panel at London Midland, who operate the line.

CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

Rimrose Valley Country Park in the built-up area of Sefton, Merseyside includes a wetland nature reserve with orchids, water voles and an abundance of birdlife. Local people cherish its fresh air and tranquility. However, Highways England wants to build a dual carriageway through the Park to serve the expanding Port of Liverpool. But upgrading the port's rail infrastructure, much of which dates back to Victorian times, would allow more rail freight services, each of which would take 77 lorries off the roads. CBT supports the [petition](#) urging the Transport Secretary not to allow this hugely destructive road.

FELIXSTOWE TRAVEL WATCH

FTW reports that its membership has grown to almost 400, which should give it some real clout. Unfortunately, that may be needed, as nearly a year into the new franchise there has been little perceptible change in the local rail scene, with delays and cancellations on the Felixstowe line and into London all too common. The service is currently in limbo, as there is little Abellio can do to ameliorate the dire state of its rolling stock until the new fleets arrive in 2019. At FTW's upcoming meeting on 17 October, NR's Alex Kirk will set out its plans for the branch, including double-tracking, new crossovers and signalling, and the diversion or closure of all six foot-crossings. However, following a number of objections, the plans have to go to a public enquiry.

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

In the first public evidence session for the new Transport Select Committee, MPs will unpick the thinking behind DfT policy changes, including the cancellation of electrification of railway lines in Wales, the Midlands and the North of England. Members will want to know how and why the DfT came to its decision.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR), the rail regulator, reports on how the industry has met its obligations to passengers on key areas, such as complaints handling and compensation; where the industry has done well this year, and where it needs to improve. This year's [report](#) also sets out some case studies of good and bad practice in customer service across the network. Safety remains ORR's top priority. [Ian Prosser](#), HM Chief Inspector of Railways, believes that the industry is putting health and safety at the heart of its operations, supporting ORR's vision of zero industry-caused fatalities. However, [Justin McCracken](#), Chair of ORR's Health and Safety Committee, warns against complacency and sets out the dangers in taking current levels of safety for granted.

CrossCountry introduced Advance tickets purchased on the day of travel in 2015, following an extensive trial backed by the DfT and rail watchdog Transport Focus. By taking control of the reservation service, subject to availability, it was able to offer discounted APOD tickets together with a free seat reservation up to fifteen minutes before the train's departure at any point on its journey. On 5 April, Dr Clare O'Donnell completed the one-millionth journey on CrossCountry trains with an APOD ticket. In recognition of this milestone, she was given a First Class ticket offering unlimited free leisure travel for herself and three friends or family members to go anywhere on CrossCountry trains for the next twelve months.

With almost every Cardiff-Nottingham, Plymouth-Edinburgh and Reading-Newcastle train passing through Derby station, together with East Midlands Trains and freight services, its track and signalling have long been a bottleneck, so a major update started in July to deliver faster journeys, more capacity, a new platform and a layout offering increased reliability and punctuality. Improvements at Reading and Norton Bridge, have already cut journey times from the South Coast to Manchester, and CrossCountry anticipates further benefit from works at Oxford, Bristol Parkway and along Filton Bank.

Informed Sources reports that the introduction of quality factors into franchise bid assessment, coupled with the low cost of new trains and of borrowing, has made their provision a potential franchise winner. In 1990, a state-of-the-art Class 323 cost £1.26 million per vehicle at today's prices. Recent EMU orders have been averaging £1.2 million for vehicles with a much higher specification. The result has been a series of 'mass extinctions', as winning franchise bids have been based on replacing existing rolling stock with cheap new trains. On South Western, new, new trains were even cheaper than the Class 707s just being delivered! As a result, almost 3000 ex-BR vehicles could potentially come off lease by 2020. Add in the Southeastern Networkers, which are likely to be replaced when the franchise is re-let at the end of next year, and the number is nearer 3,500.

East West Rail Alliance has appointed Danny Miller as its Social Value Manager, to oversee employment, education and volunteering initiatives. The role includes visiting schools, colleges, universities and prisons to: teach rail safety and science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills; inspire young people to choose a career in the industry, and advise on local job opportunities and apprenticeships. He will also promote supply chain opportunities to local businesses.

The Hendon and Finchley Times [reports](#) that the freight-only Dudding Hill line could return to passenger use as the West London Orbital Railway after a feasibility study showed its potential. The preferred route would see four trains per hour connecting West Hampstead to Hounslow via Cricklewood, Neasden, Acton and Brentford; the other option would be to start at Hendon and continue through Brent Cross or Staples Corner, Neasden and Acton before terminating at Kew Bridge. Either route would serve Old Oak Common.

At 0542 on 15 August a train leaving Platform 11 at Waterloo had reached 11 mph when a set of double slip points diverted it into a rake of hopper wagons that were protecting Adjacent Line Operation on Platform 10. There were no injuries. Stills from the EMU's CCTV camera show that it left on a green signal, and then that the set of points had stopped in mid-swing, with neither switch blade in contact with its stock rail. The Rail Accident Investigation Branch found that the misalignment 'was a consequence of a temporary modification to the points control system, which also caused the train driver and signaller to receive indications that the points were correctly aligned'. Such an interlocking fault should have been identified by Level 1 (Principles) testing before being put into use, but this is complex, draws on a small pool of suitably licensed engineers and technicians – which makes it expensive – and is also time-consuming.

RUEx does not normally cover heritage lines, but a milestone was reached on the [Great Central Line](#) when the main beams of a bridge over the Midland Main Line at Loughborough were lowered into place. The project will create 18 miles of mainline railway from Leicester North to Ruddington (Nottingham South), opening up significant commercial and tourism opportunities and increasing visitor numbers by 60,000 per year.

CONSULTATIONS

- DfT: [East Midlands franchise](#), closes 11 October, comments to David Harby.
- DfT: [Accessibility Action Plan Consultation](#), closes 15 November.

Please advise [Roger Blake](#) of any other consultation, eg that of a County Council or Unitary Authority.

...and finally

In his Northern Salvo, Paul Salveson reports that TMB Publishing, secretly affiliated to the Tripe Marketing Board, is on the verge of publishing a new book of interest to historians and tripe-lovers everywhere. His good friend, Sir Norman Wrassle, TMB chairman, gave a brief preview: "We're very pleased with *Forgotten Yorkshire*. It's the first time we have strayed out of Lancashire, but I'm happy to say that we've worked with colleagues at the Yorkshire Rhubarb Council to ensure the project's success.

In a letter to Railfuture, [Sara Furnas](#) asks if there is an active group interested reopening the line from Guildford south east to Cranleigh, that closed in 1965. It would be a boon to the many elderly residents living in the area. According to [Wikipedia](#), feasibility reports were completed in 1994, 1997 and 2009. The 1994 report concluded that reinstatement would not be justified, but nevertheless Waverley Borough Council protected the line from development. It now forms the Wey – South Path, part of Downs Way. The report in 2009 by ATOC assessed its BCR to be a positive 1.7:1, including capital costs.

To deter loitering following a wave of assaults, fires and drug taking at Hamilton Central station, ScotRail has installed Mosquito, a sonic device that emits a piercing high-frequency sound that only under-25s can hear. Needless to say, youth leaders are up in arms.

The new Bank of Scotland £10 note features a train hauled by a Black 5 crossing the Glenfinnan viaduct. They could become collectors' items!

EVENTS

Do please keep your events coming in, both to me and to [Roger Blake \(Railfuture\)](#), who maintains the [List of Events](#) on the Railfuture website. A Calendar of Events embedded in a pdf document can get discarded, and this is a problem if the venue changes from month to month. A copy of your Calendar as a separate document in Word format would therefore be much appreciated.

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

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

October

- Saturday 7. TravelWatch SouthWest General Meeting, Albermarle Centre, **Taunton**, TA1 1BA, arrive from 10:00.
- Thursday 12. TravelWatch NorthWest Conference, Old Fire Station, University of Salford, The Crescent, **Salford**, M5 4WT, 1015 for 1045.
- Saturday 14. ESTA Autumn Meeting, Gannon Rooms, Station Approach, **Saxmundham**, 14:00.
- Saturday 14. Copeland Rail Users Group, Ravenglass & Eskdale (aka Ratty) museum, 1400.
- Saturday 14. English Regional Transport Association Forum, The Tavistock, 117 Tavistock Street, **Bedford**, 1400
- Monday 16. Avocet Line Rail Users Group AGM, Malthouse, Globe Hotel, **Topsham**, EX3 0HR, 1900.
- Tuesday 17. Felixstowe Travel Watch, Salvation Army Church, Cobbold Rd, **Felixstowe**, IP11 7EL, 1430
- Wednesday 18. Tarka Rail Association, **Umberleigh**; (Also 15 November, Eggesford.)
- Wednesday 18. North Cheshire Rail Users' Group AGM, Frosham Community Centre, Fluin Lane, **Frodsham**, 1900
- Saturday 21. Railfuture Branches and Groups Day, **Birmingham**, 1030-1600, venue TBC.
- Saturday 21. Campaign for Borders Rail AGM, **Hawick**.
- Saturday 28. Railfuture Yorkshire, York Library, Library Square, Museum Street, York, YO1 7DS, 1300
- Tuesday 31. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Levenmouth Academy, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also 28 November).
- Tuesday 31. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group AGM, **Chesham** Town Hall, 1930 (Also 12 December.)

November

- Thursday 2. Lakes Line RUG AGM and Public Meeting, Kendal Town Hall, Highgate, **Kendal**, 1915
- Saturday 4. Railfuture Annual RUG Awards, the Curve, 60 Rutland St, **Leicester**, LE1 1SB, 1000 for 1045.
- Monday 6. English Regional Transport Association, The Tavistock, 117 Tavistock Street, **Bedford**, MK40 2SB, 1830 (Also 4 December).
- Monday 6. Bedford Commuters Association AGM, RAFA Club, Ashburnham Road, **Bedford**, 1930
- Saturday 11. West Sussex Rail Users Association AGM, Studio of the Capitol (the **Horsham** Arts Centre), 1000.
- Monday 13. South-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership, Herriot's Hotel, Broughton Road, **Skipton**, 1900.
- Wednesday 15. Friends of the Barton Line Sloop, **Barton**, 2000, 1900
- Saturday 25. Railfuture Herts and Beds, St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, **St Albans**, 1045.

Further Ahead

- 2 December. Railfuture East Anglia, Tamburlaine Hotel, close to **Cambridge** station, 1400.

This bulletin has been sent by Roger Smith, e-mail: ruglink@railfuture.org.uk, phone: 01462 815992

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