

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, please contact the [Membership Secretary](#)

I've just updated the National List of Rail User Groups on the [Railfuture website](#); from the Home page, click on Links then Rail User Groups. There are several new entries and some revisions. Please take a look and let me know of any errors or omissions – thanks.

GUEST RAIL USER GROUP OF THE MONTH – 1

*Coastliners' Liaison Officer, Peter Walker, sent us the following text prefaced by the declaration: "At last, a **Coastliners** item for Rail User Express!"...*

Coastliners (Sunderland-Hartlepool-Middlesbrough)

[website](#)

"Our territory is, basically, Sunderland-Hartlepool-Stockton-Middlesbrough-Nunthorpe (on the Whitby line). Between Thornaby and Middlesbrough, we overlap with the Saltburn Line Users' Group (Darlington-Middlesbrough-Redcar-Saltburn), and from the start have worked alongside them where appropriate. The pattern of services on our line still, however, suffers from its severance from the Northallerton-Ripon-Harrogate line, closed in 1966; to this day our line's mileposts give the mileage from Leeds along what was known as the "Leeds Northern" line.

"The group came into existence some 13 years ago, prompted by the need for later trains from Sunderland southwards. At the time, unbelievably, the latest one left at 20.20 for Middlesbrough, a good hour too soon many of the students and lecturers at Sunderland University. After 10 years' negotiations, we have, with Northern Rail's co-operation, gained a last train at 21.18 from Newcastle (21.38 from Sunderland), but there is clearly a continuing need to lobby for further improvements.

"The pride of our line, however, has been, since late 2007, Grand Central's enterprising and increasingly-popular Inter-City train services to and from London. Hartlepool's 90,000 inhabitants in particular have flocked to them in gratifyingly-large numbers, and the original 3 trains each way daily have increased to 5 on Mondays to Saturdays and 4 on Sundays - despite a vexing challenge to their existence mounted by GNER, the company that had steadfastly refused to run anything of the kind itself. Under the guidance of the late Tom Clift, Grand Central services soon gained an enviable reputation for good customer service, and his successor as General Manager, Sean English, is also keen to press for service improvements. And of course these trains do go some way to restore the earlier "Inter-City" status that the line had before the severance in 1966 mentioned above.

"Our future activities include backing for new stations proposed at James Cook (the hospital south of Middlesbrough) and at Peterlee/Horden (between Seaham and Hartlepool). Funding for the first is assured, but for the second depends on the current round of bids for financial help that the DfT is asking for. These apart, there is the continuing problem of disabled access for Billingham station, whose island platform may at present only be reached by a set of steps and a footbridge. Not surprisingly, this puts many people off using it - yet the official DfT line, when we ask for consideration for DDA compliant access, is, in effect, that not enough people use it to justify even a straightforward ramp from its nearby road bridge!

"We are keeping a wary eye on the details of First Transpennine's new timetable, designed to start in May 2014, to ensure that the present pattern of good connections at Thornaby to and from the Coast route remains. We also consider that serious thought needs to be given to restoring through semi-fast direct services from York to Eaglescliffe, Stockton, and intermediate stations to Hartlepool and Sunderland, to complement the Grand Central expresses and to provide, for the first time ever, trains calling at Yarm, Eaglescliffe (2 miles) and Stockton (5 miles), which - farcically - are never connected at present."

GUEST RAIL USER GROUP OF THE MONTH – 2

Friends of the Kyle Line member, Amy Campbell, wrote to me asking if it would be possible to feature her group in my next bulletin in view of the imminent completion of their Signal Box project...

Friends of the Kyle Line

[website](#)

Opened in 1897, the Kyle Line was the final section of railway linking the South to the Isle of Skye and the Outer Hebrides. The line was earmarked for closure in 1963 as part of the Beeching cuts, reprieved, then threatened with closure again in 1970 ... then reprieved once more in 1974. Nowadays there is no ferry, but the bridge can be crossed on foot or by bus and is only a short distance from the station.

FoKL was set up in 1995 with the initial aim of saving the line from further threats of closure; its primary objective today is to protect and ensure a future for what the group claims to be “Scotland’s most scenic railway”. The group runs a shop, craft gallery and museum on the platform of Kyle of Lochalsh station. Profits from these help fund the group’s activities, which include helping to promote the line through posters, leaflets, books and video material (you can watch a short steam train video on their website).

The group’s resources at the moment are focussed on restoring the historic signal box at Kyle, which had been stripped of its original equipment and was ravaged by fire. They plan to have the building open to the public by May 2013. On the ground floor will be a 2-person flat available for holiday rental, and above will be an exhibition featuring a model of the local railway, as featured in the Feb 2012 edition of *Railway Modeller* magazine. *Well worth a trip north!*

GUEST RAIL USER GROUP OF THE MONTH – 3

John Gulliver from NDPTU also wrote to me asking for the following paragraphs to be included in a forthcoming edition of Rail User Express:

North Devon Public Transport Users

[website](#)

“North Devon Public Transport Users is an organisation with two purposes. One is to promote informed public debate about public transport provision. The other is to press for the development of a system for northern Devon as a whole which caters fairly and efficiently for the needs of the widest possible range of its inhabitants and visitors.

“This means using each mode - rail, bus, fare car and so on - to the best effect: rail for swift and potentially heavy interurban traffic; buses for places beyond rail’s reach or where low population densities make it inordinately expensive; fare cars and supported community transport in places where even bus services are unsustainable. It also means deploying subsidies equitably, with no one group favoured by disproportionate support while others have little or none. In brief, we seek, not just a better rail future, but a better, fairer public transport future for all.

“We hold that, with the different modes properly integrated, such a system would be more effective and reach more people than the uneven and poorly coordinated provision currently available, with usage of all modes rising substantially. The arguments we are developing are available on our website for all to see.”

[Readers with long memories will recall that, in the 30 Apr 2012 edition of Rail User Express, I had summarised a story from the Tarka Rail Association’s magazine by saying that a new Barnstaple based group (the NDPTU) had “set the cat amongst the pigeons by suggesting that all but three of the intermediate stations between Barnstaple and Exeter should close to save 15 minutes on the overall journey time.” The TRA did not support this proposal and the ensuing row sparked a lively debate in the local media. Railfuture’s Devon & Cornwall Branch contributed to this debate with a reasoned argument that modest infrastructure improvements could bring about faster journey times without undue disadvantage to intermediate station communities. – Ed]

Right, that's enough Guest User Groups! We continue with the usual roundup of news from some of our regular contributors. I'm grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins.

Some recently-published newsletters have been held over to the April edition of Rail User Express.

Penistone Line Partnership

[website](#)

A group of textile craft students from Huddersfield University, working in conjunction with local craft groups, showcased their talents at stations along the Penistone Line recently. The totally unique 'Stitch the Line' project was sponsored by Penistone Line Partnership and Northern Rail. Themes differed at each of the stations, reflecting local history and the rural nature of the line. Students travelled on the 10.13 Northern Rail service from Huddersfield to Barnsley; they discussed their work with passengers and handed out copies of a free arts and crafts directory. There was a fabulous array of work on show - from wall hangings to hats, scarves and gloves, as well as bunting and patchwork blocks that will be made into quilts. The work was cleaned after the event and sent to various charities. – *from an item in Paul Salveson's Salvo*

Harrogate Line Supporters' Group

Consultants WSP are currently working on a study which looks into the costs and benefits of various options to upgrade the Harrogate Line. The Supporters' Group called a meeting in March to hear the results of WSP's initial research, and to help provide some further evidence such as: examples of occasions when the service is overcrowded, and what demand might be expected from new developments within a 3-mile radius of the line. The group was also able to provide details of major events in the area that affect passenger numbers.

Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester Line

[website](#)

As part of an exercise to highlight the comparative high level of Metrolink fares locally, STORM made a "Freedom of Information" request to Transport for Greater Manchester for a complete fares schedule for the network. TfGM refused to give the information citing "Commercial Interest"; in their reply, they say:

"Having considered the balance of the public interest test, TfGM has concluded that the likely prejudice to TfGM is greater than the public interest in disclosure, in that we believe this information is already available to the public, albeit, not in a complete format, and we believe its complete format would enable competitors in the public transport sector to analyse TfGM's fares schedule/strategy and give other operators an unfair competitive advantage."

STORM members were not surprised by the response but considered it to be unwarranted, especially in view of the fact that competing bus operators publish their fares. The group will raise the issue with Passenger Focus.

North Cheshire Rail Users' Group

[website](#)

NCRUG's chairman says it's obvious from observations on stations and trains in the north Cheshire area that the number of passengers travelling continues to increase. Peak hour trains are especially full and conductors have trouble collecting fares, consequently the official station footfall statistics understate the numbers travelling. Recent revenue protection exercises conducted by Arriva Trains Wales confirm what NCRUG has been saying for years about the high level of ticketless travel. ATW has plans to install ticket vending machines at stations on the North Cheshire line and NCRUG's chairman hopes that conductors will take a firm but sympathetic approach to enforcement as it is very easy for travellers to make a mistake.

At the Cheshire Best Kept Stations awards in January, Helsby won the 'Best Kept Garden' award and Frodsham took the 'Cheshire West and Chester' award. NCRUG recently made a successful bid to

Cheshire West and Chester Council for £1000 to regenerate the gardens on platform 1 at Helsby station; a former head gardener from Arley Hall is helping with the design, and the first phase should be finished in time for the celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of the Ellesmere Port to Helsby line in July. The group's annual "parliamentary train" over the Halton Curve will coincide with the anniversary celebrations, and it's hoped to have commemorative mugs and other items on sale.

NCRUG's committee has been busy behind the scenes, helping a transport consultancy build the business case for a regular passenger service over the Halton Curve. Other rail developments in the region lead NCRUG to believe that it's "now or never" for the project.

In addition to wildlife-friendly gardening at Ellesmere Port, work has started on bringing the unused side of the station up to standard so that a local catering business can move in and a room can be made available for community meetings.

Cotswold Line Promotion Group

[website](#)

CLPG wrote to tell us they have a new website address www.clpg.org.uk. The old one will remain operational for a while but will not be updated.

East Norfolk Transport Users' Association

[website](#)

ENTUA was asked by Greater Anglia recently to add their support for service improvements on the main line to Norwich, which they were happy to do. The group argues that faster journey times could result from infrastructure improvements such as additional track capacity north of Colchester, and that a better rail service is needed to help revive the fortunes of Great Yarmouth. There's welcome news that the train operator has made progress with the installation of new customer information screens and the upgrading of help points at many of their stations – ENTUA thinks that the latter are essential at unstaffed stations to give waiting passengers some reassurance as to their personal safety.

At a meeting with Greater Anglia on 12 Feb, ENTUA members were able to air some of their concerns, including: overcrowding due to the use of single-car Class 153 units; a commitment to improve the run-down appearance of the station at Great Yarmouth; and more direct trains to destinations such as Peterborough and Cambridge to cut down on the number of times passengers have to change. The two parties also discussed having a noticeboard for ENTUA use at Great Yarmouth, and an ambitious art project which will see a total of 27 panels depicting the town's transport history being erected on the approach to the station.

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group

[website](#)

First Capital Connect has approached the group to explore the possibility of forming a local Community Rail Partnership, which could result in extra officer support to pursue some of the group's objectives, such as improving disabled access at Meldreth Station. During a cold morning in half-term week, Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteers helped the gardening team at Meldreth to tidy up the station gardens; the next tidy-up session will take place after Easter.

Association of Public Transport Users (Herts)

[website](#)

APTU has been looking at season ticket prices for various London train operators to see how they relate to the "total subsidy per mile" figures. They conclude that travellers on First Capital Connect have the dubious privilege of being net contributors to the Government ... to the tune of 2.2p/mile. The nearest "competitor" is East Coast, where passengers contribute 0.5p/mile. Season ticket holders on other services into the Capital enjoy a net subsidy.

The group has its ear to the ground, regularly passing updates about services and infrastructure to its members using the internet. Where necessary, questions are asked on behalf of an individual member. In answer to questions from a member at Leagrave, we are informed that 104 new cycle spaces are to be created at the station, a faulty drain is being investigated, and some barriers that mysteriously appeared on the platforms were, in fact, erected in error and have been removed!

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group

[website](#)

There's currently a letters debate in the local press reminiscent of the one that happened in Barnstaple (see above): some people are pressing for faster journeys into town while others point out the virtues of the all-stations train service. CDTUG is looking into whether the latter actually brings trade into Chesham from intermediate station by making a Freedom of Information request for passenger statistics.

A member of the group has reason to believe that London Underground is planning to close ticket offices on the northern section of the Met Line, and will be keeping a watch on the situation. The group has embarked on raising its profile, with a new website (see above) and space for info in a noticeboard at Chesham Station.

Barking-Gospel Oak Line Users Group

[website](#)

BGOLUG has issued two press releases in recent weeks. The first followed a news report from Transport for London in which it was claimed that all London Overground routes were to benefit from an increase in capacity to 5-car trains. BGOLUG's spokesman Glenn Wallis said: "In their eagerness to put out a 'good news story', it has slipped TfL's mind that the Barking-Gospel Oak Line, once known as the Forgotten Railway, will be the only London Overground line not to benefit from this investment. It will have to soldier on with its twin carriage diesel trains..." TfL refused to withdraw or amend their original story.

In their second press release, the group reported on the efforts of local MPs and the London Assembly Transport Committee to persuade the Government to stop blocking much needed investment in the line, and instead give the green light to electrification. BGOLUG feels that all the arguments against spending the money have all been extensively answered; they say that the Dept. for Transport's resistance was simply down to "pure dogma and obfuscation".

Windsor Lines Passengers Association

[website](#)

WLPA has been campaigning for a long time to reintroduce route numbers on the front of trains and on the station information systems ... well, "everyone gets used to bus numbers". They cite Clapham Junction departures as particularly confusing, especially as some trains loop back to Waterloo and change destination part way round. The group has also campaigned to get Mortlake Station accessible and are pleased to report that this has now been achieved.

While they support the recent proposals for a Crossrail 2 for London, the WLPA wants to know (among other things) if through trains from Strawberry Hill and beyond would be threatened if Twickenham were the southern terminus. Looking at the North Downs Line (Reading-Gatwick), WLPA takes the view that this should be part of the South West Trains franchise to allow better integration at the Reading end, and the line should be third-rail electrified throughout; overcrowding is common, so the frequency needs to increase to two semi-fast and one stopping train per hour. Turning to the South London Line, the WLPA notes that it is now easier to get to, say, Canary Wharf on the new Overground service, but the downside is that it's no longer possible to buy a conventional season ticket – it's necessary to use Oyster at far higher cost.

Avocet Line Rail Users' Group

[website](#)

Earlier in March, ALRUG issued a press release backing a report by local councils in the South West which calls on the Government to recognise the importance of railways to the economy of the region. The report entitled *The South West Spine: The Case for Greater Investment across the South West Peninsula Railway Network* complains of a lack of investment compared to other regions and constant under-forecasting of passenger demand by the rail industry. The result is too few trains, ageing rolling stock and overcrowding.

Before the report came out, ALRUG had written to Transport Secretary Norman Baker (who visited their line in January) to express concern that abandoning the new Great Western rail franchise will lead to delays in much needed improvements. The group was hopeful that that a new, longer, franchise would see investment in new trains and other improvements, including more trains to Exmouth on Sundays. They suggest that First Great Western should now be told to provide the extra services that local authorities have agreed are necessary.

PASSENGER FATALITY STATISTICS

The February issue of Rail User Express carried a story from **Aire Valley RUG's** magazine which referred to a "recent passenger fatality". Later in the same issue I reproduced a press release from Railfuture congratulating the rail industry on six years without a single passenger fatality. Richard Ardern from **Friends of the Far North Line** was the only person to write in asking how both statements can be true. A fair point!

The unfortunate, and rather inebriated, young lady referred to in AVRUG's article had just accidentally got off the train at the wrong station and was leaning against the carriage as the train moved off. Press reports of the ensuing court case referred to this as a "passenger fatality".

The "six-year accident-free record" that Railfuture's media officer was quoting relates to official "passenger fatality" statistics, which only count people killed while on board a train due to a railway incident. Whichever measure you take, the railways are certainly a lot safer now than they were just ten or fifteen years ago, so Railfuture cannot be accused of being selective with its use of statistics.

...news from Railfuture follows...

RAILFUTURE RUG AWARDS 2013 – what will you enter this year?

Prizes will be presented at Railfuture's November conference, in Oxford this year, as they were in Birmingham last year. The second Rail Users Group Awards will again aim to recognise and reward the various achievements over the past year among the country's 300 RUGs in fulfilling Railfuture's mission: to be the number one advocate for the railway and rail users.

For some general clues to what's involved you can do no better than draw on last year's experience by referring to the story of the 2012 RUG Awards on the Railfuture website [here](#).

The award categories for 2013 will be:

- 1 Best newsletter - Gold and Silver awards [not available to last year's winners]
- 2 Most improved newsletter - available exclusively to all 2012 entrants
- 3 Best website - Gold and Silver awards [not available to last year's winners]
- 4 Most improved website - available exclusively to all 2012 entrants
- 5 Most effective campaign in 2013
- 6 Most effective 2013 new group
- 7 Most outstanding individual RUG campaigner in 2013 [Railfuture members only]
- 8 Judges' Special Award

The closing date for your submissions will be 23.59 on **Monday 30th September 2013**. Let the oxygen of publicity breathe fresh life into your campaigning for railway development!

The intention is that these awards are open to Railfuture members and RUGs affiliated to Railfuture, with eligibility to entry being one of the benefits of membership. However, we recognise that many currently non-affiliated groups and their members do sterling work in a wide variety of ways which should not be allowed to pass unremarked. Such groups should nevertheless be able to identify at least one currently-subscribing Railfuture member, by membership number or postcode.

Full details of how to enter will be circulated with the April edition of Rail User Express.

And finally: book now at www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences to benefit from the Railfuture members' early-bird discounted Oxford conference fee of just £25. Be there to collect your RUG Award, have the occasion photographed for your own local publicity ... and earn yourself a prize for correctly guessing one of the Award winners!

RAILFUTURE ONLINE SHOP – special offers for the Beeching anniversary

A couple of the items in [Railfuture's Online Shop](#):

HOLDING THE LINE - How Britain's Railways Were Saved is a fascinating 128-page hardback written by two long-serving senior railway staff, Richard Faulkner (now Lord Faulkner) and Chris Austin OBE (who is secretary of Railfuture's Networks Group and also its Heritage Railway Liaison Officer). RRP is £19.99, but Railfuture is able to offer the book for **£16.00** (a £3.99 discount).

GREAT RAILWAY CONSPIRACY - 3rd Edition Published in March 2013 this seminal book on Dr Beeching and his aftermath has been fully rewritten by its original author, David Henshaw (a former member of the Railway Development Society's national executive), and includes details of the latest rail re-openings. Was there really a conspiracy? Read how dirty tricks were used to make branch lines seem less viable than they really were. RRP is £14.99, but Railfuture is able to offer the book for **£13.99** (a £1 discount). *I've had a chance to read the new chapters and it's gripping stuff!* – Ed.

- David Henshaw tells us that he can offer his *Great Railway Conspiracy* book at discount price to members of rail user groups, perhaps with some of the proceeds going to the user group (all the members have to do is quote a special discount code when ordering through David's website) – please contact him via atob@onetel.com if you're interested.

RAILFUTURE MARKS FIFTY YEARS OF RAIL SUCCESS

27 Mar 2013 marked 50 years since Dr Richard Beeching published his report 'The Reshaping of British Railways', which led to the axing of almost one third of Britain's rail network. To mark the anniversary, Railfuture issued a press release highlighting numerous successes in reopening lines and stations, and the fact that the railway is carrying more passengers than since the 1920s.

"Back then, everyone thought railways were history" said Railfuture's Norman Bradbury, "the car was king and all that was needed was to manage the decline. That seems ludicrous now, when you look at the popularity of rail travel. We need more trains to cope with demand."

The Railway Development Society (RDS) has its roots in the campaigns against rail closures in the 1950s and 1960s. Campaigners fighting for rail came together to form two pressure groups – the Railway Invigoration Society and the Railway Development Association. These groups saw the need for a stronger pro-rail lobby and on 1 October 1978 merged to form the Railway Development Society, which in 2001 chose Railfuture as its campaigning name. Other groups were formed to protect particular lines and now constitute a vibrant array of local Rail User Groups, many of which affiliate to Railfuture.

Today, Railfuture can list a string of successes. "There have been 370 stations and 500 miles of line reopened over the past 50 years, all of which we pushed for" said Norman. So many, in fact, that Railfuture has filled a book with them, 'Britain's Growing Railway'. "There are plenty more positive developments in the pipeline too, such as the Waverley line, East West rail, and main line electrification. Almost without exception, reopened lines and stations have hugely exceeded forecasts" added Norman. "Ebbw valley traffic was more than five times what was forecast, and Stirling – Alloa hugely exceeded predictions too"

Railfuture believes that some closed lines and stations would be viable now if they had remained open. "Sadly, too many of them have disappeared under housing estates, roads and supermarkets. That's why it's important to protect suitable remaining disused lines and stations in order to keep our options open for the future"

But Beeching actually got a few things right. "Although he got a lot wrong, he also laid the foundations for the modern rail freight and inter-city passenger networks."

RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE BRANCH

Carrying on with the Beeching theme, Yorkshire Branch held its AGM on Mar 23 in Skipton, not only to celebrate the saving of the Settle-Carlisle Line (due mainly to the efforts of the Branch's late President, James Towler) but also the magnificent reopening campaign being orchestrated by the Skipton-East Lancs Rail Action Partnership.

The Branch is pleased that the latest plans for HS2 show the station for Leeds in the city centre and not at a rumoured parkway to the east. There's criticism for the £8m rebuild of Wakefield Westgate station: the only real improvement will be the new lifts; the "new" travel centre is only restoring one that was deemed unnecessary a couple of years ago, and interchange with buses will worsen.

The branch Facebook page is open to everyone and now has 70 friends. We're invited to take a look at <http://www.facebook.com/RailfutureYorkshire>.

RAILFUTURE BACKS WELSH TRANSPORT REVOLUTION

Railfuture welcomed the findings of a Commons Welsh Affairs Committee report regarding railways in Wales by issuing a press release.

"We support the call for improved and more frequent cross border services, especially between South Wales and Bristol." said Rowland Pittard of Railfuture Wales. "But there are real concerns that Wales will lose out when HS2 is delivered and it's important that a 'Barnett' payment is made to Wales to help rectify this concern. This additional payment would enable improved links to be developed such as the electrification of the North Wales main line and enhanced links from Mid and South West Wales to the Midlands and north. We've already called for better links to airports and it's disappointing that North Wales does not have a direct links to Manchester and Liverpool airports. In fact, links to Manchester airport will worsen if services are diverted to Manchester Victoria in the future."

"We would also welcome greater devolution of transport powers to the Welsh government, as they have been in Scotland, which would allow greater improvements for Wales"

RAILFUTURE EAST MIDLANDS BRANCH

Top rate speakers have been lined up for the E Mids Branch AGM on Sat 20 April, commencing at 1pm. The first speaker is Nicky Morgan MP, who will be talking about the successful campaign in Westminster to get the major investment to electrify the Midland Main Line approved by the Department for Transport. After that, Nigel Harris (Managing Editor of Rail Magazine), in his role as Chairman of Great Central Railway Development Limited, will be speaking about the plans to join the two GCR lines by bridging the gap over the MML, and the exciting news on the Leicester Railway Museum project in partnership with the National Railway Museum. The venue is Lovatt House, 3 Wharnccliffe Road, Loughborough next to GCR's Loughborough Station.

RAILFUTURE HIGHLIGHTS RIP-OFF FARES

The latest news story on Railfuture's website has a stark image from BBC2's recent series "The Railway: Keeping Britain on Track"; click [here](#) to see the picture. It admirably illustrates the story about the high price of rail fares in Britain. Mr Osborne mentioned rail only once in his Budget speech. He said: "We are already supporting the largest programme of investment in our railways since Victorian times." He failed to mention that rail users are footing a large part of the bill.

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

The Office of Rail Regulation is due to publish station usage data [here](#) for 2011-12 any day now.
It wasn't there on 28 March but perhaps it will be by the time you read this.

RAIL FRANCHISING ANNOUNCEMENT

On 26 Mar, Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin unveiled long-term plans designed to drive improvements to rail services, deliver on major infrastructure projects, and put passengers at the heart of a revitalised rail franchising system. The full details are [here](#).

In addition to publishing for the first time ever a detailed transparent timetable for all rail franchises over the next 8 years, the Transport Secretary announced the immediate start of the competition for the **East Coast** franchise, currently directly operated, with the expectation the new franchisee will carry its first passengers by February 2015.

In order to oversee this ambitious programme the government is also establishing the **Franchise Advisory Panel**, headed by Richard Brown, which will provide independent advice to support the department's work on rail franchising. The new programme will provide long-term certainty to the market and support the delivery of the government's £9.4bn rail investment strategy for 2014-2019. The future competitions will also place passengers in the driving seat by ensuring that their views and satisfaction levels are taken into account when deciding which companies run our railway services. *A role here for RUGs! – Ed.*

The Department for Transport will work closely with the industry to negotiate further new services and more capacity in all franchising contracts while delivering the best deal for both passengers and tax payers.

Delivering on Brown Review recommendations, the new programme will provide a more sustainable schedule for rail franchising by delivering no more than three to four competitions per year, and staggering the two principal Intercity franchises, **West Coast** and **East Coast**, so they will not be let at the same point in the economic cycle. The Minister has served notice on **First Capital Connect** and **Southeastern** to call contractual 6-month extensions. The **Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern** would be a management style contract due to the level of investment and change on the route. For **Great Western**, the plan is to put to market a competed management contract in 2016.

– from DfT press releases

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO IMPROVING SMALL STATIONS

This is the title of a national conference organised by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships on 9 May 2013 in Birmingham. ACoRP promises "it will be a very practical 'How to' conference which will equip each delegate with a set of knowledge based skills relevant to improving small stations throughout the railway network and will demonstrate the extensive benefits of such improvements to the wider community." The full agenda and speakers will be confirmed in the very near future but bookings can be taken immediately via email to hazel@acorp.uk.com

NEW STATIONS FUND

The Dept. for Transport and industry representatives are currently working hard to assess 14 bids with an announcement expected to be made later this month. The £20m fund, which was launched in January, is targeted at 'shovel ready' projects which can be delivered quickly to provide long-term benefits to passengers and the economy. Bids include a parkway station near Worcester, a station at Kenilworth in Warwickshire and a scheme in Ilkeston, Derbyshire. Bids have also been received for stations in Low Moor, Bradford, the village of Haxby, near York, and Warrington West. *– from a DfT press release dated 11 Mar. More [here](#).*

The Transport Secretary is able to confirm the three stations most likely to be built with support from the government's New Stations Fund. These are Ilkeston in Erewash (Derbyshire), Pye Corner in Newport West (South Wales) and Lea Bridge in Walthamstow (East London). We will make a final announcement in May. – from a DfT press release dated 26 Mar. More [here](#).

- *The campaign to reopening Lea Bridge station had a £5,000 grant from Railfuture's Fighting Fund last year so this is a quick return on our investment! - Ed*

News just in from the Avocet Line Rail Users: "We learn that Devon County Council's bid for funding for Newcourt station is one of the 14 being considered by the DfT for their New Stations Fund, and that a team from the DfT and Network Rail will be visiting Exeter at the end of March to discuss further details. The Council is optimistic about the bid."

GREEN TRANSPORT WEEK

The aim of Green Transport Week 2013 (14th -23rd June) is to raise awareness of the impact travel has on the environment, to make people stop and think about the way they travel on every journey and to send a message to the government that the people of Great Britain care about green transportation issues.

Held annually in June, GTW is open to all individuals, groups, businesses, schools and local authorities. There are a number of ways that rail user groups could be involved, for example:

- Two commuters travel to town at the same time, one by car and one by train - which is faster, cheaper or more productive? Invite press coverage.
- Investigate ease of walking, cycling or taking the bus to the station. Great facilities? – question why they're not better used. Poor facilities? – call for improvements!

GTW is a good opportunity to publicise the work of your group. You need to register your event with the organisers at <http://www.etatrust.org.uk/campaign/green-transport-week/>

DOOR TO DOOR STRATEGY

Speaking on 14 Mar at the launch of the [Door to Door Strategy](#), the coalition government's vision for a flourishing, joined-up, sustainable transport system, Transport Minister Norman Baker said:

"Helping people use greener modes of transport will help create growth and cut carbon, easing congestion on our roads and encouraging people to opt for greener, healthier options. But to make that happen we need low carbon travel to become as easy as jumping into the car. This strategy pulls together, for the first time, a whole range of different areas of work aimed at making sustainable transport a viable option for everybody. The door to door strategy focuses on four core areas which need to be addressed so that people can be confident in choosing greener modes of transport:

- accurate, accessible and reliable information about different transport options for their journey
- convenient and affordable tickets, for an entire journey
- regular and straightforward connections at all stages of the journey and between different modes of transport
- safe and comfortable transport facilities

"It also sets out how the government is encouraging behaviour change by helping reduce or remove barriers to the use of sustainable transport, and working closely with operators, local authorities and industry experts to deliver a better-connected transport system." – from a DfT press release

I've had a quick read through the Strategy and the following sections look particularly interesting...

4 Improving Ticket Choice Through Smart Technology

“We will address long-standing complexity in the rail ticketing system. We want passengers to be able to confidently select the best fare when buying a ticket. Our Rail Fares and Ticketing Review, due to report in early summer 2013, is looking at how we can use ticketing, including smart ticketing, to attract more passengers to the railway, improve their experience of rail travel and reduce industry unit costs. The review follows our public consultation on rail fares and ticketing proposals in spring 2012. Subject to the outcome of our franchising review, we expect that we will ask bidders to set out their plans for how they intend to improve the passenger experience and reduce the cost of ticketing.” *We need to hold them to this! - Ed*

7 Next Steps

“We have established a cross-industry group, the Door to Door Roundtable, specifically to take forward actions within this strategy and ensure that best practice drives the way that industry delivers improvements.” *A chance for RUGs to get involved? - Ed*

REPORTS FROM PASSENGER FOCUS

Comparison of international rail fares and ticketing – published 27 Feb 2013. This report provides an understanding of the fares and ticketing structures in a number of rail markets: France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Japan, USA and Canada. Of these, the UK has the third-highest rail use per capita and the fourth-highest passenger kms travelled, with Japan having a very high rail use per capita, and the USA and Canada a very low rail use per capita.

National Station Improvement Programme: Phase Two report – published 11 Feb 2013. The objective of this research was to understand, by making a before-and-after comparison, whether or not the National Station Improvement Programme has had a measurable impact on passenger satisfaction with some of the stations included in the programme.

- To download these and other PF reports, go to www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research

CONTACTING THE BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

The British Transport Police has launched a non-emergency text number: **61016**. They advise the following:

“Text 61016 (or call 0800 40 50 40) when you want to contact us about an issue that doesn't require an emergency response. For example, you can text when you want to tell about an incident that has already happened, or about issues affecting your rail journey or local station (or any general police enquiry).

“If your enquiry concerns buses or roads, you can contact local police anywhere in the country by dialling **101**. Always dial **999** when you need an urgent police response such as: a crime is happening, someone suspected of a crime is nearby or someone is injured, being threatened or in danger.” *- from APTU's March newsletter*

More information about contacting the BTP [here](#).

ANOTHER HANDY ##APP

Why do I find this item very depressing? - “Jernhusen, owner of most railway properties in Sweden, has now removed the coin-operated locks from its station toilets. From now on those in need must send an SMS to the number given on each toilet door, and the toilet door is unlocked centrally. Buy a mobile phone or cross your legs!” *– from Today's Railways (Europe edition).*

fill in the missing letters and you have a possible name for the App!

EVENTS

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

- Tue 2 Apr** [Saltburn Line User Group](#) meet at Conservative Club, Balmoral Terrace, Saltburn.
- Thu 4 Apr** [Don Valley Railway](#) drop-in meeting at the Harlequin pub, Nursery St, Sheffield.
- Thu 4 Apr** [Bedford-Bletchley RUA](#) AGM at Lidlington with guest speaker.
- Thu 4 Apr** Railfuture L&SE Sx & [Coastway division](#) meet from 18:00
- Sat 6 Apr** [Railfuture Scotland](#) AGM and spring meeting at the Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh from 14:00. Speaker: leading transport strategist, Dr George Hazel.
- Sat 6 Apr** Sesquicentenary event to mark the opening of the line to Cleethorpes at the No 1 pub; [Friends of the Barton Line](#) will have a stall at the event.
- Tue 9 Apr** [BGOLUG](#) open meeting from 19:00 (speakers from LOROL and others) followed by AGM.
- Sat 13 Apr** [SARPA](#) (Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth group) meet at The Cambria, Aberystwyth from 11:00.
- Sat 13 Apr** [Furness Line Action Group](#) AGM at the Grange Hotel, Grange-over-Sands from 13:00.
- Mon 15 Apr** [ALRUG](#) meet at the Manor Hotel, Exmouth from 19:00.
- Sat 20 Apr** Railfuture [North West Branch](#) meet at the Golden Pheasant, Plumley from 13:00.
- Sat 20 Apr** Railfuture [East Mids](#) AGM at GCR's Lovatt House, Loughborough. Formal business at 13:00. Guest speakers from 14:00: Nigel Harris and Nicky Morgan MP.
- Sat 20 Apr** Railfuture [Wales](#) AGM at the Quaker Meeting House, Charles St. Cardiff from 13:15
- Sat 20 Apr** [Railfuture London & SE Branch](#) AGM.
- Sat 20 Apr** [Friends of Settle & Carlisle](#) AGM at Victoria Hall, Kirkgate, Settle from 12:00.
- Sat 20 Apr** [Saltburn Line User Group](#) AGM at Conservative Club, Balmoral Tce, Saltburn from 19:00.
- Sat 27 Apr** [Bus Users UK](#) AGM in Oxford
- Sat 27 Apr** Railfuture [W Mids](#) AGM at Carrs Lane Church Centre (opp Moor St Station) from 11:00.
- Tue 30 Apr** [Saltburn Line User Group](#) AGM at the Conservative Club, Saltburn from 19:00.
- 30 Apr-2 May** [Railtex 2013](#) at Earls Court, London. Showcase of railway products and services.
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- Sat 4 May** [ESTA](#) AGM. Venue to be decided.
- Tue 7 May** [SARPA](#) meet at Railway Station, Shrewsbury from 17:45.
- Tue 7 May** [Saltburn Line User Group](#) meet at Conservative Club, Balmoral Terrace, Saltburn.
- Wed 8 May** [Friends of the Barton Line](#) meet at the Sloop Inn, Barton from 20:00.
- Thu 9 May** [ACoRP](#) conference "A Practical Guide to Improving Small Stations" at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham.
- Sat 11 May** [Railfuture](#) AGM at the Town Hall, Durham city centre. Bookable lunch: £8.
- Sat 18 May** [Cotswold Line Promotion Group](#) AGM at the WI Hall, Moreton-in-Marsh from 10:30.
- Sat 18 May** [PENRUG](#) AGM in Thetford.
- Sat 18 May** [HPSRUA](#) AGM at the Village Hall, Stocksmoor from 14:00. Guest speaker from Northern.
- Sun 19 May** National rail timetable change.
- Tue 21 May** [Felixstowe Travel Watch](#) AGM – details to follow.
- Thu 23 May** [Edenbridge & District Rail Travellers' Association](#) open AGM at the WI Hall, Edenbridge from 19:00.
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- Mon 3 Jun** [Friends of the Far North Line](#) AGM/conference, Royal British Legion, Thurso from 11:30.

Tue 4 Jun Aylesbury Vale Transport Users Group meet at the Methodist Church Centre, Buckingham Street, Aylesbury from 14:00.

Wed 5 Jun [World Environment Day](#) a global day for positive environmental action.

Sat 8 Jun [Trans Wilts Community Rail Partnership](#) meet at The Laverton, Westbury from 10:45.

Mon 10 Jun [APTU](#) meeting with First Capital Connect and Network Rail (tbc) at the Friends Meeting House, 7 Upper Latimer Rd, St Albans from 19:30.

10-12 Jun [ACoRP](#) members' seminars, by invitation only. 10th York, 11th Wrexham, 12th London.

Tue 11 Jun [FoWHL](#) AGM with lunch at the Commodore Hotel, Helensburgh from 10:45. Guest speaker is Transport Minister Keith Brown.

14-23 Jun [Green Transport Week](#) -make people stop and think about the way they travel.

Sat 15 Jun [Railfuture Yorkshire Branch](#) meeting *details to be announced*

Thu 20 Jun [TravelWatch North West](#) conference, County Hall, Preston from 10:30.

Sat 22 Jun [Railfuture](#) summer conference on future aspects of railway operation at the Albemarle Centre, Taunton. Fee only £30 (£25 for members' bookings before 30 Apr) – includes lunch.

Sun 23 Jun [ALRUG](#) outing to Buckfastleigh with lunch and steam train ride.

Wed 10 Jul [Friends of the Barton Line](#) meeting & AGM at the Sloop Inn, Barton from 20:00.

Wed 17 Jul [ACoRP](#) station adoption seminar at Gt Minster House, London, by invitation only.

Wed 28 Aug [East Norfolk Transport Users Association](#) AGM and public meeting at St Paul's Church Hall, corner of Salisbury Rd/ Caister Road in Great Yarmouth from 19:30.

Tue 10 Sep Aylesbury Vale TUG meet at Buckingham Town Council Chamber, Buck'm from 14:00.

Sun 22 Sep [Car Free Day](#). Highlight the positive effects of car free travel.

Fri 27 Sep [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Awards 2013, Llandudno.

Mon 30 Sep Closing date for Railfuture's RUG Awards competition.

Tue 1 Oct Railway Development Society (aka Railfuture) 35th anniversary.

Mon 21 Oct [ALRUG](#) AGM at the Manor Hotel, Exmouth (tbc) from 19:00.

Sat 2 Nov [Railfuture](#) conference, Town Hall, Oxford. Fee only £30 (£25 for members booking before 31 Aug).

Sun 8 Dec National rail timetable change

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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