



July 2024

Welcome to the Rail User Express

RUX may be forwarded, or items reproduced (quoting sources). Anyone may request it as an email attachment, or opt to be notified when it is posted on the [Railfuture \(Rf\) website](#). There is no charge for either. Please advise [Railfuture Membership](#) if you no longer wish to receive RUX or the link, or if you know of anyone who would like to be added. **** NB Comments on the content should be addressed to [the editor](#), not to the email address used for distribution.****

Labour's plan for Great British Railways will be in the Kings Speech on 17 July. Although at arm's length from the Government, its terms of reference will be dictated from the centre. One glimmer of hope is the commitment to achieve net zero, so we should see the infrastructure improvements necessary for modal shift from road to rail. However, money will be tight.

Roger Smith

We start with news from groups around Great Britain. All contributions are gratefully received.

Friends of the West Highland Lines

LNER is to axe its direct Kings Cross to Glasgow service from December due to a lack of demand. However, LUMO plans to extend its open access service to Glasgow from next Summer. It will take an hour longer to London than Avanti's WCML service, but hopes to attract customers with lower fares and a Glasgow – Newcastle link.

A £3.4m programme of remedial work on the iconic Glenfinnan Viaduct that started in March is scheduled to take just under a year to complete. There will be no disruption to train services. And new signals and a crossover at Dunblane station saves Edinburgh and Glasgow trains from a 13min turnround via a crossover north of the station, increasing freight capacity on the line to Perth by almost 40%.

ScotRail is trialling a Smart Kiosk that allows two customers at a time to buy tickets, and to load their ticket onto a Smartcard. You can also plan a journey and choose a preferred seat. The kiosks will dispense paper tickets with a QR barcode in line with industry standards.

Rail Action Group East of Scotland

ScotRail has launched split ticketing on its booking website so, hopefully, passengers will always get the cheapest ticket for a journey without all the time-consuming effort spent trying to find the lowest cost for a journey. This is a soft launch to check that it works and is intuitive; a formal launch is planned for August or September.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines

As an alternative to the open access bids reported last month, London Northwestern Railway has proposed extending its semi-fast London Euston - Crewe service to Manchester Victoria via Warrington, and its Stafford - Crewe service to Manchester Airport using brand-new Class 730 electric trains. As well as bringing additional capacity to Manchester, the plans for May 2026 will create new direct links to the city centre from Rugeley, Lichfield, Tamworth and Atherstone in the West Midlands. LNWR would work with local operators and NR to determine the optimum solution, tying in with planned upgrades to Manchester Victoria station, the TransPennine route upgrade and other local improvements in the North West.

A traveller from Stalybridge To Wigan Wallgate noticed that the Class 769 didn't switch to electric mode until Salford Crescent. The power at Manchester Victoria had tripped out for three days, so trains had to run through on diesel power, adding to the pollution. How often does this happen?

A new housing development could facilitate extending the East Lancashire Railway from its current terminus at Heywood to a cross-platform interchange at Castleton on the Calder Valley Line.

RailFreight [reports](#) that the existing transport infrastructure could not support Manchester United's plan to replace Old Trafford with a new, 90,000-seat stadium. So one idea is to build a new passenger station on the site of the rail freight terminal operated by Maritime and DB Cargo, but together with Freightliner's Terminal, it is integral to the UK's freight infrastructure.

Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association

As the first half of the year ended, more trains than ever seemed to be cancelled. In April, the 0630 from Chester to Stockport was cancelled more often than it ran; in the opposite direction, the 1708 is on the same diagram, so if one is cancelled they both are. And the 2210 from Piccadilly also fails far too often.

The Northwich station rebuild appears to have stalled. The station remains open, but three years on from when the roof collapsed, passengers are still without a ticket office and a waiting room. NR will now fit it out to Northern's specification, but there is still no completion date.

The first public train to Altrincham ran from Manchester Oxford Road on 20 July 1849 operated by the Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway, so 20 July marks the 175th anniversary.

East Suffolk Travel Association

On 18 May, Alan Neville, Stakeholder, Customer & Community Engagement Manager for Greater Anglia told the AGM that passenger numbers were at 90-95% of pre-pandemic levels, but leisure travel on some lines had more than doubled. In its timetable review for the end of 2025, GA is considering through Lowestoft – London trains, although some constraints remained. NR's priorities in East Anglia were the new stations at Cambridge South and at Beaulieu Park near Chelmsford, and increased capacity at Ely North and Haughley Junctions. Attention would then turn to locations such as Westerfield to further boost freight traffic.

27 September 2025 will see the 200th anniversary of the opening of the world's first public passenger railway between Stockton and Darlington. As part of "Rail 200", an exhibition train will tour the country from June 2025 to June 2026. In a meeting with GA, ESTA's Chairman made the case for it to visit Lowestoft, the most easterly point on the network, and Great Yarmouth. Local events could encourage more rail travel, especially by young people, and also incorporate local anniversaries; ESTA will be 60 years old in November 2025.

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group

On 23 March, TfL attributed a delay to over-running engineering work. However, a Freedom of Information request revealed that it was in fact due to staff shortages. The significance is that, whereas TfL does not issue refunds for delays caused by events outside its control, it does for the latter, so the travelling public were being denied their rightful claim.

RAILFUTURE

Rf welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more weight to its campaigns. Join [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 Rf on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Consultation responses](#).



This year there are just seven nominations across four of the six RUG Award categories from four of the 14 Rf branches – North East, North West, Scotland, and West Midlands. Unfortunately, Christian Wolmar, Rf's Honorary President, is not able to present the Awards.

NEWS

Rf congratulates Louise Haigh MP on her appointment as Secretary of State for Transport. The electorate has voted for change. Rf has [set out](#) its hopes for the railway, and what it thinks needs to happen in the first 100 days and by the end of the year.

NR's [Delivery Plan](#) for CP7 (2024 – 2029) covers the operation, maintenance and renewal of the GB mainline railway, but its enhancement and the GBR transition team (GBRTT) are out of scope, as they are funded separately. Nevertheless, Rf will continue to lobby for a bigger and better railway, with more loops with faster turnouts, modern signals suitable for 75mph container trains and 60mph aggregate trains, and new rail freight interchanges. New and reopened lines and stations are also essential to reach more people.

RF YORKSHIRE

In 1985, three of the four platforms at Dore & Topley were removed, and the track to Dore West Junction singled. So with Woodhead gone, the two double-track Sheffield - Manchester routes were reduced to just one, dependent upon a single-track bottleneck. By 1995 this was seen as a mistake. The first redoubling plans were drawn up before 2000; Railtrack planned to complete it in CP5 (2003/4). But after 25 years, and costing a lot more than the £150m claimed, there are no extra trains between Sheffield and Manchester, fast or slow, as paths are blocked by other new services. All that time, effort and money with – so far – little effect!

Selby and District RUG was formed to protect services when the ECML was diverted away from a new coalfield. The town now has 94 Hull Trains services to London per week plus a daily LNER service; a Saturday service from Hull to Manchester; and local services including Hull to Leeds and Halifax, and from York to Bridlington via Hull, while the trains from York to Sheffield via Pontefract and the semi-fasts to Blackpool North call at Church Fenton in the area. Not a bad list!

The mayoral areas need additional funding to develop the region's rail system and train services. West Yorkshire has an excellent rail plan, but it has to be funded. David Skaith, the new Mayor of York and North Yorkshire, also has some long-neglected needs: an hourly service to principal towns north of Thirsk, a half hourly service on the Scarborough line with a new station at Haxby and a second platform at Malton, and ideally an hourly service on the direct Sheffield – York line via Pontefract and Sherburn.

RF NORTH WEST

A new Liverpool-Manchester Railway Board aims to maximise the economic and social benefits of a new railway between the Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester. The plans include transformational investment in city centre stations in Liverpool, and an underground station at Manchester Piccadilly. A new, high-speed rail line would run through new stations at Warrington Bank Quay and Manchester Airport, connecting the Investment Zones in Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester via prime development sites.

To make best use of the infrastructure and rolling stock once HS2 is complete as far as the West Midlands, Chris Gibbs, former manager of Virgin Trains suggests interleaving the HS2 trans with Class 390 Pendolinos. These are due a refurbishment around the time of the start of HS2 services, and its basic design is capable of higher speeds (155mph) than 125mph, so the class could be re-gearred to exploit the HS2 line speeds and make best use of the tilt capability on the northern section of the WCML. However, to enable the interleaving, the maximum speed of HS2 sets would need to be reduced from 225mph to 186mph.

Trains would run on the HS2 line and the existing WCML north of the Midlands and a new line from the West Midlands (probably following the broad alignment of the cancelled HS2 route) called the New Northern Line. An indicative timetable shows 11 tph in blocks of four, initially from Old Oak Common: three HS2s to Birmingham Curzon St, two to Liverpool Lime St and one to Blackpool North, and three Pendolinos to Manchester Piccadilly, a fast service to Glasgow and another to Edinburgh/Glasgow plus one vacant path to mitigate any delays.

RF EAST MIDLANDS

In its response to North West Leicestershire District Council's consultation on its draft local plan, RfEM emphasised the need to safeguard not just land at Coalville and Ashby-de-la-Zouch, but also on other Ivanhoe line sites at Moira, Swannington and the Bardon employment area. With no HS2, the fastest route between Nottingham and Birmingham would be via a new station at Castle Donington. During the Derby resignalling, the line was used as a diversionary route.

RF WESSEX

Rf Wessex Chair Mike Southgate has called for the reinstatement of three off-peak trains per hour to London from both Portsmouth and Southampton. Growth in rail patronage would most likely come from improved leisure travel. He said "it is frustrating to see perfectly usable rolling stock languishing in sidings when the South needs that additional capacity. Potential travellers would be dismayed by the cramped, two-coach rolling stock used on the Portsmouth to Cardiff service."

RF WALES

As Deputy Minister for Climate Change in the Welsh Government, Lee Waters told Rf that TfW was undertaking an initial feasibility study on the route between Bangor and Afon Wen, between Criccieth and Pwllheli. However, Rf emphasised to Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for North Wales and Transport, that the business case to reopen the Bangor – Caernarfon section was far stronger, and should be considered on its own merits.

COMMUNITY RAIL NETWORK

During Dementia Action Week and Community Rail Week, the Bentham Line attended a Leeds Older People's Forum event, and arranged visits to the Brief Encounter Bistro and Heritage Centre at Carnforth station by the Low Bentham Institute's Wednesday Lunch Club, and then by the Bentham and District Dementia-Friendly Community. CRP Vice Chair Rod Tickner said: "We are pleased to be able once again to assist so many people to have a good day out, and to evoke memories of past times. The Carnforth Heritage Centre has many artefacts and displays that help those living with dementia to reminisce about their youth."

The DfT's Community Rail Development Fund (CRDF) and Small Grants Fund (SGF) are now open. The deadline to complete a CRDF project has been extended to June 2025, but applications must be received by the end of March.

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

Urban&Civic is building up to 6,500 homes on the site of RAF Alconbury, north of Huntingdon, and has set aside land and "core funding" for a new station on the ECML. Along with the nuclear bunker, now a Grade II* listed building, some of the old airfield hangars will form a heritage area. Further discussions on the plans will be held after the general election.

...and finally

Universal, if its theme park close to Wixams, south of Bedford, goes ahead: "We're going to need a bigger station!"

EVENTS

Please keep your events coming, and update websites with any changes as soon as they are made. Also copy [Roger Blake](#), who maintains lists of [Events](#) and [Rail Dates](#) on the Rf website.

Blob colour indicates the type of event:

- Rf events (RUGs are cordially invited).
- National & regional rail events.
- Local Group events.

July

- Saturday 13. Rf National AGM and RUG Awards, Holyrood Hotel, 81 Holyrood Rd, **Edinburgh**, EH8 8AU, 1100.
- Saturday 13. British Regional Transport Association AGM, The Court House, Church Lane, **Berkhamsted**, HP4 2AX, 1400.
- Tuesday 16. Hampshire CRP, The Arc, Jewry Street, **Winchester**, 0930.
- Wednesday 17. Friends of the Barton Line AGM, White Swan Inn, **Barton** Interchange, 1800 (Also 19 September, No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes).
- Thursday 18. Rf London & South East, Sussex & Coastway division, **Haywards Heath**, West Sussex (tbc), 1800 (Also 5 September, Online).
- Thursday 18. Rf London & South East, London Metro division, 75 Cowcross Street, **Farringdon**, 1900 (Also 19 September).
- Tuesday 30. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Ajax Way, **Methil**, Leven, KY8 3RS and **Online**, 1830. (Also the last Tuesday of alternate months).
- Tuesday 30. Rf London & South East, Herts & Beds division, **Online**, 1930 (Also 7 September in Central London).

August

- Tuesday 6. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, 1930.
- Tuesday 13. Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester rail lines group, The Blue Pits Inn, 842 Manchester Road, Castleton, **Rochdale**, OL11 2SP, 1400.

- Saturday 17. Rf London & South East, Kent Division, **Online**, 1400.

Further Ahead

- 5 September. Rf North West, **Blackpool** tbc, 1300.
- 9 September. Ribble Valley Rail, The New Inn, Parson Lane, **Clitheroe**, 1900 (Also the second Monday of alternate months).
- 10 September. Rf London & South East, Eastern division. **Online**, 1900 (Also the second Wednesday of alternate months).
- 28 September. Rf East Anglia, Norwich, 1400 (Also 7 December in Cambridge).

Disclaimer: unless otherwise stated, views expressed are those of the contributor, and not necessarily shared by Rf.

Contact the editor by e-mail: ruglink@railfuture.org.uk, or phone: 01462 815992.

<https://twitter.com/Railfuture> <https://www.facebook.com/Railfuture/>
<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/railfuture-in-great-britain/30/22a/b59>

*Railfuture Ltd is a (not for profit) Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No. 05011634.
Registered Office: Edinburgh House, 1-5 Bellevue Road, Clevedon, BS21 7NP – **for legal correspondence only.**
All other correspondence to: 14 Ghent Field Circle, Thurston, Suffolk IP31 3UP*