



July 2025

Welcome to the Rail User Express

RUX may be forwarded, or items copied. Anyone may ask for it by email, or to be notified when it is posted on the [Railfuture \(Rf\) website](#); both options are free. Please advise [Rf Membership](#) if you no longer wish to receive it, or if you know of anyone who would like to be added. Comments on the content should be made to [the editor](#), **not** to the distribution address.

The various funding commitments for public transport are most welcome, but come the budget will they survive the ever-growing pressure on the public purse? And many of us will be sad to see the royal train decommissioned after 150 years of yeoman service.

Roger Smith

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

Friends of the West Highland Lines

Frank Roach of the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership told the AGM in April that the WHL needs more services. "Fort William having only three trains/day six days/week is pathetic. You cannot arrive in Glasgow until 1130. Oban is a lot better thanks to the doubling of frequencies that we managed to achieve in 2014." The lack of services meant cancellations had a disproportionate impact, and staffing problems were a major cause. There is a weakness in operating the rural depots – that's finding enough people to cover.

ScotRail responded: "Timetable improvements were considered in 2018/19, including an earlier first arrival in Glasgow and more trains for Fort William, but the extra cost and staffing was not considered affordable". There was also a lack of capacity on the single-track route and the need to coordinate with freight and suburban services. Staffing on the WHLs was at full complement, but as with any rural route, short-notice staff absences can occasionally impact services. ScotRail explores all possible options before cancelling services.

Planning Director Scott Prentice said: "ScotRail is proud of the growth of the WHLs in recent years. Recent infrastructure upgrades that support longer trains will help the route to further realise its potential. We are progressing a strategic business case to support future enhancements, including rolling stock replacement and potential timetable improvement". A [report](#) by transport consultancy Steer has revealed ScotRail's £4bn contribution to Scotland's economy.

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

Since the Levenmouth railway reopened a year ago, its two stations have seen around 300,000 journeys. The £116m rail link has significantly boosted the local economy, with increased footfall for businesses, new ones emerging, and visitors to the area. From Monday – Saturday, two Edinburgh trains/hour now run alternately around the Fife Circle via Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline.

LMRC continues to campaign on historic crossing points such as Doubledykes that have been closed, as well as on aspects of the new stations.

Light Rail Transit Association

Six Metro Mayors - the North East, Tees Valley, Liverpool City Region, South Yorkshire, the East Midlands and West of England - will benefit from Chancellor Rachel Reeves' award of over £15bn for transport infrastructure; Greater Manchester can extend its Bee network to Stockport, and the West Midlands its services from Birmingham city centre to the new sports quarter. There will also be a start on the West Yorkshire Mass Transit programme and new bus stations in Bradford and Wakefield.

LRTA Chair Paul Rowen hailed the announcement: "This is the biggest investment in Light Rail for generations; not only are existing systems like Metrolink or Nexus getting funding to extend, but new systems will be built in West Yorkshire and Bristol/Bath. For the first time in years the UK Light Rail industry has a pipeline of projects. It's a major boost to regional economies outside of London and the South East."

East Suffolk Travel Association

At the well-attended AGM in Lowestoft, Chris Chambers, Suffolk CC Cabinet member for transport, set out the four aims of its 15 year transport plan: decarbonisation; a strong, sustainable and fair economy; health, wellbeing and social inclusion, and creating better places to live. This meant more freight moving from road to rail; improved infrastructure, better bus services, and more investment to encourage cycling and walking.

Vice-President Peter Aldous stressed that ESTA was a statutory consultee on public transport matters. Achieving an hourly train service with modern stock were great steps forward; the next priorities were to fully exploit the central position of Lowestoft station in regenerating the town, and reduce the journey time to Ipswich. Its input into plans for London's Liverpool Street station and East West Rail (EWR) were also key to better transport links to East Anglia.

ESTA has two new leaflets, Saxmundham to the Coast, and Discover the Deben & Alde Valleys as well as stocks of leaflets on the Blyth Valley, Waveney Valley and Lowestoft & Oulton Broad.

From 11-14 August, as part of Railway 200, the national exhibition train "Inspiration" will stand in Lowestoft station. It will not give rides, but has displays of railways past, present and future. It's free of charge to enter but you do need to [book](#).

British Regional Transport Association

If EWR trains are to terminate at Bedford while the Cambridge section is still under construction, it will need more bay platforms, as Platform 1A is inadequate. But were they provided, it could have one Oxford train/hour now rather than in 2031. (*As the Marston Vale section is rebuilt? – Ed.*)

Every agency and council should have to work together for traffic reduction strategies, not just on paper but in terms of delivery, with rewards for doing so and Government override if they do not. Without a robust programme of local rail reopenings and selected new sections of railway, modal shift is not achievable on any scale like turning a mere 10% of freight by rail into 80%.

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group

When GWR removed some Advance fares being used by commuters, it told BTPG: "they are not intended for business or commuter travel but are designed to support the leisure market, encouraging customers to use less busy trains in order to reduce loadings on peak time services. "We do regularly review and reduce/increase quotas or remove/add Advance tickets to different routes and services, but they are not a guaranteed fare, and quotas can be reduced or removed at any time. This dynamic pricing allows us to manage loadings and helps to protect revenue".

In the absence of a direct rail link, BTPG lists four options to get to Heathrow from the west: the Heathrow Express from Paddington or Hayes and Harlington, the RailAir coach link from Reading, or the frequent local buses from Slough.

RAILFUTURE

Rf welcomes new members and groups to add weight to its campaigns. Join [here](#) by selecting the appropriate category from the "Membership Types" menu. Read the latest from Rf on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Consultation responses](#).

NEWS

Unfortunately there are no RUG Awards this year.

Rf Vice Chair Neil Middleton: "It was good to see the headlines for transport investment [in the Spending Review] but the devil will be in the detail; proposals such as Ely Junction weren't mentioned." Rf Director Roger Blake applauded the new investment: "Sustainable and sociable public transport...is the great economic enabler and lifestyle liberator so many marginalised communities yearn for. Better-connected places become more prosperous, and better-connected people become more productive and ambitious for new opportunities."

Eurostar is planning services from London to Frankfurt and Geneva by the early 2030s, with up to 50 new trains. However, Temple Mills International is the only UK depot able to take the larger continental trains, and Spanish start-up Evolyn, Virgin, and a partnership between Gemini Trains and Uber also want to use it. ORR expects to make a decision later this year. Analysis of capacity at TMI suggests there is room for at most one new operator.

Rf welcomes Eurostar's announcement. The order for new trains is not new, but the commitment to run from Britain is. It may have realised that it's best placed to expand, and doing so fast will keep the new entrants at bay. Adding the new routes is strategically significant in this respect.

RAILFUTURE SCOTLAND

Center Parcs' proposal to locate its first Scottish resort three miles north of Hawick has boosted the case to extend the Borders line beyond Tweedbank. It is hoped that a feasibility study will convince both the UK and Scottish Governments to complete the line all the way to Carlisle.

RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE

To maximise its benefit, the new Metro system must feed into the heavy rail system. As well as a central station in each district, it could have out-of-centre interchanges such as White Rose and Pudsey, with Cross Gates to follow. Or would a desire for such interchanges limit options to penetrate a wider area more remote from rail routes?

Bradford would have two city-centre stations: the proposed through heavy rail station replacing Interchange, and one at Forster Square. RfY Vice-President Mike Crowhurst would favour a route serving both major Leeds hospitals, and in Bradford extending beyond Forster Square to the Royal Infirmary. Hopefully, work can start before the end of this decade.

Designed for more fast trains, the December ECML timetable is still a concern for its impact on intermediate stations. After pressure from RfY and other organisations, local Mayor David Skaith has achieved a limited York – Newcastle shuttle. However, Northallerton and Thirsk, small towns with a big hinterland, need a better service for work, education and leisure.

RAILFUTURE WALES

A TfW feasibility study into reopening the line between Bangor and Afon Wen via Caernarfon favours tram train over conventional rail, whereas Rf thinks the priority should be heavy rail from Bangor to Caernarfon, at the heart of Snowdonia. Its local expert Bob Saxby believes this option could see trains from Manchester, Cardiff or even London with no need for additional units.

RAILFUTURE EAST MIDLANDS

At Nottingham Central Library on 19 July, local historian Steve Wright will give a [talk](#) on the history of railway lines in and around Nottingham. Tickets are free but booking is essential.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

The RfEA ‘mini-conference’ with the East Midlands and Lincolnshire Branches in Peterborough was a great success with 5 guest speakers:

- Lewis Banks, Peterborough City Council Transport and Environment Manager on the regeneration of the Peterborough Station Quarter
- Tom Ingall on the reunification of the Great Central Railway
- Martijn Gilbert, MD Open Access First Group, on the operation of Hull Trains and Lumo
- Anthony Smith, Chair Independent Rail Retailers Group, on rail ticketing
- Barry Coward on British Transport Films, set up after WWII to highlight the work of the British Transport Commission.

The jurisdiction of a sub-regional mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk for strategic transport planning, including the development of local rail services, would be wide enough to attract more resources and make a bigger impact. Single-tier authorities such as Greater Norwich would also be more engaged in the provision of local rail services. But as long as central government controls the purse strings, no solution will be a panacea. There has been a good deal of frustration with the Cambridge and Peterborough mayoral experience!

NR Anglia’s [Norfolk & East Suffolk Strategic Advice](#) doesn’t argue against any of the aspirations to improve its branch lines, but looks at problems with their infrastructure and what it would take to overcome them. Local authorities, the train operators and groups such as Rf recognise that for increased footfall every route needs at least two trains an hour.

RAILFUTURE THAMES VALLEY

At the RfTV AGM in April, Rich Fisher described GWR’s Project Churchward, to replace its diesel Sprinters and Turbos with bi-mode trains. If the line north from Didcot was electrified for just four miles as far as Culham, they could work through from Reading or Paddington as far as Banbury or Moreton-in-Marsh. Bedwyn could see its full through service to London restored, and the new trains would also serve the Henley and Marlow branches.

COMMUNITY RAIL NETWORK

On 1 June, the Leeds-Morecambe CRP ‘Grand Day Out to the Seaside’ celebrated the 175th anniversary of the line. Chairman Gerald Townson, and Catherine Huddleston welcomed guests and passengers aboard the 0831 from Leeds. On the return journey, the children travelling with the party helped to serve afternoon tea created by the Country Harvest Bakery in Bentham.

Some 70 guests at Govia Thameslink Railway’s Community Conference represented many of the CRPs, station partnerships, charities and local authorities on its network. The theme of the day was “working in partnership to celebrate and grow community rail now and in the future”.

In August, Days Out by Rail, CRN’s tourism and leisure campaign, will feature local knowledge of hidden gems that are easily accessible by train focused around four themes: family adventures; unlock the past by train; memorable moments for less; and from rails to reels.

The DfT Community Rail Development Fund for accredited CRPs in England and Wales, and Small Grants Fund for England are now open for applications. So too is CRN's training and development bursary that provides funding of up to £200 for a course or conference place that will boost skills, knowledge and empowerment in a CRP role or station group.

CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

On 16 July, starting at 0900, CBT and the National Railway Museum are holding an online symposium exploring the past, present and future of transport campaigning. railwaymuseum.org.uk/whats-on

TRANSPORT FOCUS

TOCs use TF's rail scorecards to identify improvements for customers and drive-up their scores. In the latest results, just five operators – Merseyrail, the Elizabeth Line, LNER, London Overground and ScotRail - scored over 90% for overall journey satisfaction.

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

On 4-5 June, NR and the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) hosted over 200 delegates from 22 countries at the National Railway Museum in York for two International Awareness Days: Rail Trespass and Level Crossings. Last year, 24 people lost their lives in preventable railway accidents - a five-year high. Five happened at level crossings, while the other 19 were a result of crossing the railway at unauthorised locations.

Two new NR and the British Transport Police films show the consequences of unsafe behaviour through the experiences of those who witness the aftermath. One explores the emotional impact on families when loved ones have been badly injured on the railway; the second features an NHS trauma specialist explaining the catastrophic injuries caused by getting hit by a train.

ORR's [report](#) into how the rail industry handles revenue protection and fare evasion found that the current system needs improvement in making buying the right ticket simpler and easier; more consistency in how passengers are treated when ticket issues are raised, with a particular need to spot genuine mistakes; and more fairness in the use of prosecutions. Revenue protection information needs to be easier to understand, with passenger rights set out more clearly.

Commissioned by ASLEF, compiled by Professor Andy Cumbers and Grace Brown of Glasgow University and launched in April at the Scottish Parliament, A Public Vision for Financing Scotland's Railways claims that over a 30-year period, up to £362m could be saved in procuring 69 new trains by using green bonds and the Scottish Government's borrowing powers rather than private capital.

NR has enlisted a pair of Harris hawks to ensure nesting birds don't cause costly delays to the £14m upgrade of Scarborough station. They put in two shifts a week at the coastal rail terminus, keeping gulls and crows from settling and nesting on parts of the roof that are being replaced. A hawk is also being used to deter pigeons at Euston.

As part of the Transpennine Route Upgrade, Huddersfield Station will be closed from 30 August to 28 September to make for longer trains, better facilities and a more accessible station. When it reopens, only Platforms 1, 2 and 3 will be in use as the remaining work continues. The upgrade is set to complete in early 2027.

NR is investing £7.5m to renovate one of the [twin viaducts](#) at Chapel Milton in Derbyshire. The 160-year-old Grade II listed 15-arch structure carries around 25,000 tons/day of building material from four major quarries. Each train takes about 76 HGVs off the Peak District roads.

The Spending Review included £445m for Wales over the next decade to improve Cardiff West Junction, as well as the sidings at Padeswood so that cement trains don't block the Wrexham – Bidston line as they split and shunt the load. It also supported plans for five new stations:

Cardiff East, Newport West, Somerton, Llanwern, and one serving the villages of Magor and Undy, although some could take over three years to build.

Because of problems during testing, East Midlands Railway's fleet of Class 810 bi-mode Aurora trains that will run via Leicester to Nottingham and Sheffield may not enter service until next year. And five of its Class 222 trains due to return to Eversholt Rail have already been earmarked for a refresh, and then for a Lumo London - Stirling service on the WCML.

Chair of England's Economic Heartland, Cllr Liz Leffman, welcomed the support for EWR in the Spending Review, as well as the long advocated multi-year transport funding for local authorities. "It is now vital for businesses and local authorities that positive announcements are made at pace on the future of other priorities, including investing in vital projects such as Ely Junction, the Cowley Branch and key road bottlenecks. We will continue to work with DfT and its agencies to make the strongest case for this investment as part of future funding plans".

However, Andrew Sinclair for BBC East is pessimistic about [Ely](#). Labour MPs insist that the Government understands its importance and are confident that it will be funded soon. But then producing a new business case, solving the B1382 problem, applying for planning permission, acquiring land and doing the work is likely to take the best part of a decade.

London Northwestern Railway is now running [Class 730/2 trains](#) into Euston from Milton Keynes and from Tring, with their wider implementation planned for later this year. The full fleet of 36 trains will add 15,000 seats/day, a 20% increase in capacity.

Grand Central and Great Northern trains tested the digitally signalled section of the ECML that includes the Welwyn bottleneck. Passenger services could start using ETCS on it next year.

Hitachi Rail expects to have fitted 16 Class 43 HST power cars with ETCS by the middle of 2026. RailAdventure uses four for freight and rolling stock movements, and Locomotive Services Ltd four more for private charter trains. Leased from Porterbrook, Colas Rail uses the other eight for infrastructure management, including NR's New Measurement Train, aka the Flying Banana. The upgrade will ensure the units can run on the ECML, and on other routes as the ETCS network grows.

Southeastern and NR have merged as the South Eastern Railway team with Steve White as MD. It will make the Kent network more responsive, with a common purpose and clear accountability for passenger and freight performance.

In Portsmouth, 130 dancers aged 14 to 69 celebrated Railway 200 in A Ride Through Time. The City College developed the project with funding from GWR. One of the youngsters dressed up as its original chief engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

On 16 June, after signaller and driver training, a train from Didcot to Maritime Transport's new Northampton Gateway freight terminal made the first commercial use of the EWR line to Bletchley since its completion last October. Chiltern will start passenger services on the line later this year.

Maritime Transport and GB Railfreight have launched two new intermodal rail services from London Gateway to rail depots at Hams Hall, near Birmingham, and Doncaster iPort.

Local MP Jayne Kirkham wants the line to Falmouth Docks reopened: "A rail linked port with import and export capacity for bulk goods...would be a great asset to the region. I have been canvassing opinion from businesses that may use it, have garnered the support of Lord Hendy, the rail minister, and have a meeting arranged with NR to discuss potential next steps".

...and finally

From one MP to another in a MATT cartoon in the Telegraph: "I'm in favour of assisted dying if it means HS2 will be put out of its misery".

And finally, 158 years after Queen Victoria commissioned special coaches in 1869, the royal train is to be decommissioned when its maintenance contract runs out in 2027, as costly major upgrades would be required. Prior to its removal from service, it will tour the UK, after which it could be put on public display. The train consists of nine carriages, with various locomotives hired to pull them.

CONSULTATIONS

- Surrey CC: [Local Government Reorganisation](#), closes 5 August.
- West Oxfordshire DC: [Preferred Policy Options for Local Plan 2041](#), closes 8 August.
- Medway Council: [Pre-submission Draft Local Plan 2041](#), closes 11 August.
- Transport for London: [Extending the DLR to Thamesmead via Beckton Riverside](#), closes 17 August.
- MHCLG: [Universal Entertainment Resort Complex Bedford](#), closes 31 August.

Please advise [Roger Blake](#) of any other consultation, eg that of a local transport authority.

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

- Monday 14. South East Northumberland RUG, Council offices, 82 - 88 Marygate, **Berwick-Upon-Tweed**, 1800.
- Monday 14. Ribble Valley Rail, New Inn, Parson Lane, **Clitheroe**, Lancs. BB7 2JN, 1900 (Also 8 September).
- Wednesday 16. Friends of the Barton Line AGM, White Swan, **Barton**, 1800.
- Thursday 17. Rf London & South East, Herts & Beds division, **Zoom**, 1930.
- Thursday 17. Rf London & South East, Sussex & Coastway division, **Lewes** (Also 4 September).

August

- Tuesday 5. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group, Town Hall, Parsonage Lane, **Chesham**, HP5 1EP, 1930 (Also 16 September).
- Tuesday 12. Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester rail lines group, The Blue Pits Inn, 842 Manchester Road, Castleton, **Rochdale**, OL11 2SP, 1400.
- Saturday 16. Rf London & South East, Kent division, 1400.
- Tuesday 26. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife Renewables Innovation Centre, Ajax Way, **Methil**, Leven, KY8 3RS and **Online**, 1830. (Also the last Tuesday of alternate months).

Further Ahead

- 10 September. Rf London & South East, Eastern division, **Online**, 1900.
- 16 September. Capital Rail Action Group, Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, **Edinburgh** EH1 2JL, 1900 (Also 23 October, 18 November, 16 December).
- 18 September. Rf London & South East, London Metro division, 75 Cowcross Street, **Farringdon**, 1900 (Also 20 November).
- 27 September. Rf East Anglia, Friends Meeting House, Upper Goat Lane, **Norwich**, NR2 1EW. 14.00.
- 4 October. Rf Yorkshire joint meeting with Rf East Midlands and Lincolnshire, **Nottingham** Central Library.

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: 3 Chandos Court, Martlesham, Suffolk IP12 4SU