



July 2026

Welcome to the Rail User Express

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RUX sends its condolences to the family and friends of EMR driver Shaun Burton, and wishes all those injured a speedy recovery. An interim [RAIB report](#) states that his train left Bedford station on an amber signal, passed another as it switched to the fast line, and then a red signal. However, "it is not yet possible to say what indication the driver received from the automatic warning system or how he responded". Prior to colliding with the stationary Nottingham train, the Corby train braked for about nine seconds to reduce its speed from 76mph to 49mph.

Roger Smith

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

Friends of the West Highland Lines

On 1 April, Lady Judy McAlpine, Honorary President of the FWHL and widow of the grandson of Sir Robert McAlpine who built the Mallaig Extension, unveiled a National Heritage Red Wheel plaque there funded by the FWHL to mark the 125th Anniversary of the line opening in 1901.

A framework Memorandum of Understanding between the UK and Scottish Governments sets out how they will work together following the establishment of GBR. Once signed, it will form a key part of reforming British railways through the Railways Bill. Scottish ministers will continue to have control over Scottish rail infrastructure, and be responsible for specifying and providing Scottish rail services.

A WHCRP leaflet [Walk from the Line](#) includes less challenging walks from Crianlarich, Tyndrum, Bridge of Orchy, Rannoch, Corrour, Roy Bridge and Spean Bridge.

West Coast Railways is committed to installing Central Door Locking across its entire fleet of Mark 1 carriages used on the Jacobite service, but it will take time to complete. ORR said that work remains to establish the feasibility, detail and delivery timelines of the proposed approach. Meanwhile, the service has [restarted](#) using Mk 2 carriages on 10 June. Visitors to the Glenfinnan viaduct are reminded to put safety first: follow local signage, use the marked viewpoints and keep well clear of the tracks.

Friends of the Barton Line

Thanks go to CRN and the Barton – Cleethorpes CRP for funding the print runs of the Summer 2026 editions of the Rail Ale Guide and timetable, which are being distributed.

Following pressure from FoBL and a question in Parliament from Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes MP Melanie Onn, the line did see fewer cancellations; but recently there has been a significant downturn in performance. The industrial dispute between EMR and RMT at Lincoln over rostering issues could get a whole lot worse with a recent ballot in favour of industrial action.

Andy Watkins, Community & Development Manager at TransPennine Express asked if FoBL would be interested in adopting Cleethorpes station. Although some of its members are individual adopters, this is not in FoBL's remit, so it passed on other organisations that may be interested.

On 2 July, FoBL attended the inaugural meeting of the South Humber RUG. Its first objective is to address the reduced Doncaster - Scunthorpe service.

East Suffolk Travel Association

Nearly 40 members and supporters attended the AGM in Halesworth on 16 May. In his Annual Address, Vice-President Peter Aldous said that modal shift to rail could be achieved by speeding up services. Greater connectivity with the rest of the network was also vital; enhancements to Ely and Haughley Junctions were key to this. A through train service to London should still be an objective. Both Lowestoft and Liverpool Street stations had great potential, and so justified investment. Plans to re-roof Lowestoft station concourse could soon come to fruition, while the long-term project to improve Liverpool Street would require a broad consensus, and Transport East had an important role here.

The summer timetables for the East Suffolk Line and the Wherry Line (Lowestoft to Norwich) have been printed and are available at Lowestoft station shop and many other outlets. A similar illustrated timetable leaflet has been produced for the Bittern Line (Norwich to Sheringham).

Following negotiations between the Wherry Lines CRP, Greater Anglia and First Bus, ESTA welcomes the changes to Northeast Suffolk buses that came into effect on 26 May. They offer better connections to Great Yarmouth, Gorleston and Southwold and tourist attractions including Pleasurewood Hills and Africa Alive! and passengers heading to places such as Hopton and Kessingland will also benefit as will local residents wanting to catch a train at Lowestoft. Could this be the first time that Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth rail stations have been linked by a direct bus?

Construction trains are now running along the branch from Saxmundham to Leiston, following upgrading of the track; and work is in progress on the temporary rail link across Leiston Common to take freight directly to the Sizewell C site. Work is also well under way on the park-and-ride site by the A12 next to Darsham station, which will be used to transfer workers by bus to and from the power station. Peter Aldous is corresponding with the Sizewell authorities about the transport legacy that this infrastructure work could bring.

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group

At the GWR Community Rail & Stakeholder Conference in Swindon, Steve Smith and Bill Wells presented MD Mark Hopwood, Mat Cambourne (Head of Train Planning) and Tom Lydon (Head of Public Affairs) with a comprehensive set of proposals to improve the Bedwyn service.

In the absence of additional IETs, their primary aim was to plug four gaps of about 90mins after the Paddington departures at 0906, 1112, 1305 and 1512. The late afternoon gap is of particular concern. If the 1403 and 1603 Paddington to Penzance services called at Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury passengers could double back, although the 1655 Bedwyn to Newbury would need to be slightly retimed to 1658. Alternatively, the 1403 and 1603 could call at Newbury, but that would require an additional shuttle in each case, and another Turbo.

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

The DfT consultation on Heathrow Airport expansion (see below) links to an associated document: [A Strategic Vision for Transport to an Expanded Heathrow Airport](#). While not endorsing any specific scheme, it does emphasise the need for modal shift from road to rail, and for links from the south and west.

In [Railwatch](#), Steve Costello of [Heathrow Southern Railway Ltd](#) presents their scheme. It meets all of DfT’s 2019 Strategic Objectives for Southern Access, and NR’s Western Rail Link to Heathrow that was paused in 2020, and has secured wide stakeholder support, including the Heathrow Area Transport Forum and Heathrow Airport itself. The proposed infrastructure allows for flexible service patterns, but the demand modelling and business case assume:

- Four tph from Paddington to Heathrow central terminal area and Terminal 5 via Old Oak Common (using the Heathrow Express train paths) with services extended to Woking, where two tph continue to each of Guildford/Portsmouth and Basingstoke/Southampton
- Four tph from Waterloo to Reading via Staines, Heathrow Terminal 5 and central terminal area, and Slough
- Two to six Elizabeth Line tph (dependent on Terminal 4 service frequency and line capacity) extended from Heathrow central terminal area and Terminal 5 to Staines.

[No need to wait for any expansion – the sooner the better! – Ed.]

The magazine also features a multimode plan for Cambridge with a diagram showing onward travel information from Cambridge station that has been adopted by Greater Anglia, and a Swiss style model of integrated transport in the Hope valley based on Bamford, Hope and Edale stations.

RAILFUTURE NORTH EAST

RfNE has updated the leaflet listing its aims of improving rail facilities from Gilsland on the Carlisle line north to Berwick-upon-Tweed and south to Stockton-on-Tees. Every MP in the region has had a copy, and it will be distributed to main stations, model railway exhibitions and local libraries.

Chathill Rail Action Group has asked to meet the North East CA to agree a way forward for more local trains to serve the Newcastle - Berwick corridor. Along with SENRUG, it wants the existing TransPennine semi-fast trains to call at Chathill, which has just two Northern trains each way Mon-Sat only that connect with buses to Bamburgh, Beadnell and Seahouses on the Northumberland coast. RfNE supports the County Council in its aim to reduce car use in its coastal resorts, and would like to see a more frequent service at Pegswood, Widdrington, Acklington, Alnmouth, Chathill, and Berwick on the ECML, and the reopening of Belford and Beal stations. CRAG is also planning to work with the North Northumberland CRP.

RAILFUTURE LONDON & SOUTHEAST

The main speaker at the LSE Branch AGM in April was Phil Hutchinson, Head of Strategic Planning at Govia Thameslink Railway. Every GTR scheme seeks to balance demand with performance, revenue generation, and cost management. From 2028 and beyond, anticipated demand arises from both organic growth and future events such as airport expansion and the opening of Universal Studios. Failing to plan now to meet it would constrain revenue to the detriment of finances; indicative modelling forecasts £2.8bn in 2035 growing to £3.3bn.

Clearly infrastructure improvements will be necessary; Rf emphasises the need for Croydon Area Remodelling and to address capacity issues on the Brighton Main Line. Clearly GTR is thinking along similar lines, and Rf hopes that this continues into the GBR era: the capacity decisions need to be made soon.

Rf has long called for a new station at Beam Park between Dagenham Dock and Rainham (Essex) on the London Fenchurch Street - Grays line, so it is delighted that the Housing Secretary has finally confirmed that a new station will be built to speed up housing development.

RAILFUTURE WESSEX

The new Hampshire and Solent CA will begin to receive central Government transport funding prior to replacing Hampshire CC, the Isle of Wight Council, and the city councils of Portsmouth and Southampton. Rf Wessex is preparing for a new round of campaigning to ensure that rail receives its fair share of the cash available as a new authority is set up.

Its top priority is for a new station between Fareham and Botley to support major housing development at Welborne. Then the reintroduction of passenger services to Marchwood and Hythe on the Waterside line west of Southampton. However, the ORR rejected the Alliance Rail open access proposal due to concerns about network capacity, the firm's future performance, the need for infrastructure and the scheme's financial viability - but Alliance says its timetable was workable, with Class 769 trains performing at the route's full line speed. Its proposals would create about 80 jobs and address chronic road congestion on the A326.

Closer signal spacing between Portsmouth and Southampton would enable a second stopping tph; the line between Fareham tunnel and Botley should be re-doubled to cater for more frequent services, and making the terminating platform at Fareham into a third through platform would give more flexibility, although the road bridge south of the station would need costly remodelling.

COMMUNITY RAIL NETWORK

As CRN bids farewell to Jools Townsend and welcomes back Bill Freeman as its new CEO from 3 August, it is excited about the future opportunities. Rail reform, devolution and greater integration across transport are creating a new landscape in which community rail has an increasingly important role. As ever, CRN exists to support, champion and connect the people and organisations making a difference in their communities, and it looks forward to working with all of them as it begins this next chapter together.

...and now the rest of the news

Analysis in [The Times](#) from two think tanks has concluded that infrastructure projects such as roads and railways cost 65% more in the UK than equivalent schemes in other European countries. Britain Remade and the Centre for British Progress say the Government could have saved £42bn over five years, if projects were delivered at similar costs.

Passenger assistance plays a vital role in helping those who require the service to be able to travel safely, confidently and independently. When it's not delivered as requested, the impact can be significant, causing disruption to journeys and distress for passengers. ORR has been working with passenger and industry representatives to develop a proposed framework to help rail operators determine appropriate redress when booked passenger assistance has not been provided.

Immersive simulation technology is helping train the next generation of NR mobile operations managers at its Gresley Institute. Three 86-inch screens create a 3D space, around which the user can move using a videogame controller. Any sort of railway landscape, scenario or challenge can be created as part of the MOM training.

Fylde MP Andrew Snowden met the Shadow Transport Secretary to campaign for a passing loop to double the frequency on the South Fylde line from Kirkham to Blackpool South via Lytham and St Annes. The single track line limits services to one tph each way, too few to cope with the level of demand for events such as the Open Golf Championship, which is coming to Royal Lytham and St Annes in 2028.

Corby town council has backed proposals for major rail upgrades, including a northbound platform at Corby station and restored links to Stamford and Peterborough.

The collision between an EMR Class 810 and a Class 360 will exacerbate its shortage of rolling stock, and thus concerns about the frequent delays, cancellations and overcrowding due to short-formed services through Market Harborough. EMR has blamed delays to the rollout of its new Class 810 Aurora train fleet, and a series of technical issues affecting those already in service. As of 19 June, 12 had been delivered, with six in passenger service and the others being used for testing, maintenance and driver training ahead of a wider rollout. Some of its Class 222 HSTs have already moved to another operator.

The EWR consultation that ended on 9 June attracted more than 3,100 people to the 16 in-person events, and over 5,000 feedback forms. A summary report in the autumn will outline the main themes received. The final design for the project will take account of the feedback before the application for a Development Consent Order in 2027.

Northampton South MP Mike Reader is calling for direct trains from his constituency to Universal's UK theme park, and will raise the issue with the Minister for Rail: "freight trains already use the line to Northampton Gateway, and all that's missing is the commitment to let local people use it". And West Northamptonshire Council has also asked the Transport Secretary for Northampton to be included in passenger service plans for EWR. A line from Stewartby would also allow freight trains from Felixstowe to access the WCML without reversing.

See it, say it, not sorted. Esme Rice was sexually harrassed as she left an Elizabeth Line train at Stratford, so she called 61016. An automated reply said she would hear back shortly, but 13 hours later having heard nothing she posted her experience on social media and it went viral. Shortly after, BTP did call to say it had opened an investigation and would take a statement. Assistant Chief Constable Ian Drummond-Smith then called Esme and acknowledged that a 13-hour delay was far too long. "He said I should have been called the same evening I reported the incident," says Esme. "I have since been informed there is now an internal investigation into why I was not offered additional support that night."

One element of BCP Council's ten-year growth plan is to reopen the Hamworthy branch line to Poole Port. In 2025, Western Gateway proposed to restart freight traffic on it, and to provide a cargo/freight handling facility.

British holidaymakers heading to Naples have a new travel option to explore some of the region's top destinations. Rail Europe has added Campania Express to its Italian rail lineup, giving tourists easier access to iconic spots like Pompeii, Herculaneum and the stunning coastal town of Sorrento. The limited stop service along the historic Circumvesuviana line links Naples with key locations across the Campania region.

...and finally

On 15 June, Harjinder 'Paul' Dhami, from Tipton in the West Midlands was presented with a long-service award to mark his 50 years of service – but he has no plans to retire. Fraser Pithie, station operations manager at Birmingham New Street, said: "Paul is a hugely respected member of the team and is known for his professionalism and strong presence on the platform. He makes sure trains are dispatched safely and on time".

The unique exhibition train *Inspiration* celebrated the final day of its historic tour in Scarborough. It saw 104,000 visitors as it travelled 12,000 miles and made 65 stops from the Scottish Highlands to the Cornish coast. The Wonderlab on Wheels carriage is heading to the Locomotion railway museum in Shildon, County Durham, while NR will house the Your Railway Future carriage at its test track in Melton. 1.4 million people engaged with Railway 200 events. Find out more about the campaign's achievements and legacy in [The Railway 200 Commemorative Review](#).

CONSULTATIONS

- Transport for London: [DLR extension to Thamesmead via Beckton Riverside](#), closes 16 July.
- House of Commons Transport Committee: Call for Evidence for its Inquiry into the Government's [Draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement](#), closes 23 July.
- North Devon / Torridge Councils: [A Plan for Northern Devon](#), closes 11 August.
- DfT: [Draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement, proposed amendments](#), closes 1 September.
- Central Bedfordshire Council: [Local Transport Plan 4 2027 - 2040](#), closes 20 September.

Please advise [Roger Blake](#) of any other consultations.

EVENTS

Please keep your events coming, and update websites as soon as any changes 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 events
- Local Group events.

July

■ Monday 13. Ribble Valley Rail, New Inn, Parson Lane, **Clitheroe**, Lancs, BB7 2JN, 1900 (Also 14 September).

■ Thursday 23. Rf London & South East, Metro & Eastern division, Alan Baxter Gallery, 75 Cowcross St, **London**, EC1M 6EL, 1900 (Also 17 September)

■ Wednesday 29. Rf London & South East, Herts & Beds, **Online**, 1930 (Also 27 August Online, and 26 September in St Albans, 1100).

August

■ Tuesday 4. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group, Town Hall, Parsonage Lane, **Chesham**, Bucks, HP5 1EP, 1930 (Also 15 September).

■ Tuesday 11. STORM - Oldham Rochdale Manchester RUG, The Blue Pits Inn, 842 Manchester Road, Castleton, **Rochdale**, OL11 2SP, 1400. (Also 13 October).

■ Wednesday 12. Friends of the Barton Line, White Swan, **Barton on Humber**, 1815 (Also 14 October, No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes station).

■ Saturday 15. Rf London & South East, Kent division, 1400.

Further Ahead

■ 9 September. Rf West Midlands, Platform 3, **Birmingham** Moor Street station. 1745 (Also 14 October).

■ 14 September. Skipton & East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership, Town Hall, High Street, **Skipton**, North Yorkshire, BD23 1AH, 1900.

■ 10 October. Rf Yorkshire, jointly with Rf Lincolnshire and Rf East Midlands, **Sheffield**.

- 12 October. Avocet Line RUG AGM, Manor Hotel, The Beacon, Exmouth, Devon, EX8 2AG.
- 24 October. East Suffolk Travel Association, Methodist Church, **Woodbridge**, 1400.

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

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