

Railfuture in London and the South East

quarterly branch newsletter

Campaigning by the Railway Development Society in London and the Home Counties - Kent, Surrey, Sussex, south Hertfordshire, south Essex, Bedfordshire, and Greater London

The *independent* campaign for a better passenger and freight rail network

Campaigns calendar

First, our regular quarterly review of some of our key campaign activities, since the June newsletter. More details can be found in the London and South East branch area of www.railfuture.org.uk/Local+action

Surrey Division led our end-June response to the County Council's consultation on their draft Rail Strategy. Read it in www.railfuture.org.uk/Surrey

At **Uckfield Festival's Big Day** we unveiled three banners in our Bridge the gap: connect East Sussex campaign. See www.railfuture.org.uk/Uckfield+Lewes

Eastern Division hosted a mid-July gathering of our London & South East and East Anglia branches to plan joint campaigning priorities and activities.

The **Railfuture Fighting Fund**-supported report "Access and Connections: East Sussex" by Jonathan Roberts Consulting was presented to the County Council and our open Sussex & Coastway meeting. See www.railfuture.org.uk/Sussex+and+Coastway

Our consultation response to Network Rail's draft **London & South East Passenger Market Study** can be read at www.railfuture.org.uk/submissions

The Office of Rail Regulation's consultation on their **Draft Determination** also prompted a Railfuture response, including a proposal for infill electrification of the Wealden line. See same web page as above.

TfL's consultation on **Crossrail 2** gained our support for the 'regional' option: mainline trains linking classic routes south-west and north-east of central London.

The annual **Fete de Newhaven**, with Dieppe Market, was a September opportunity to display our 'Bridge the gap: connect East Sussex' campaign banner.

Shaping Rail in East Sussex is the county's draft strategy launched in August by the new Lead Member for Economy, and discussed at a stakeholders' Symposium in September in which we participated.

Stakeholder Forums and **Passenger Groups** run by Train Operating Companies are always attended by Railfuture members – contact us if you'd like to go.

See www.railfuture.org.uk/Welcome+to+Railfuture

Next, some **forthcoming dates for your calendars and diaries**. Full details can be found later in this newsletter and at www.railfuture.org.uk/events

Monday 30 September Final date for entries to 2013 RUG Awards, presented on 2 November in Oxford. Details in www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Groups

Thursday 3 October Sussex & Coastway Division.

Thursday 17 October Southeastern Stakeholders' Open Forum. Contact Kent Division, back page.

Monday 28 October Copy date for your letters and articles to appear in December's Railwatch 138. Send them to editor@railwatch.org.uk

Thursday 31 October Copy date for *railse* 122, and London & SE branch Local Action in Railwatch 138.

Thursday 31 October Publication by Office of Rail Regulation of Final Determination for Network Rail's Delivery Plan for Control Period 5 for 2014-19. Watch www.rail-reg.gov.uk/pr13

Saturday 2 November Railfuture autumn conference, EGM, and presentation of RUG Awards for 2013, in Oxford. Details in www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences

Thursday 7 November Sussex & Coastway Division.



Bluebell Railway's Northern Extension Project Team in front of 'Imberhorne'. Source: East Grinstead Town Council

Saturday 9 November branch members' visit to and presentation by Bluebell Railway. Full details inside.

Wednesday 13 November Eastern Division.

Saturday 16 November Kent Division in Canterbury.

Thursday 5 December Sussex & Coastway Division.

Further details are always available in the London and South East pages of www.railfuture.org.uk/branches

Rail infrastructure investment: 'determinations' > delivery plan

The Office of Rail Regulation's **Periodic Review** for Network Rail's next Control Period 5, from 2014-19, and known as PR13 for the year it ends, nears its formal conclusion on 31 October. On that date the ORR will publish their 'final determination' on Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan published in January www.networkrail.co.uk/publications/strategic-business-plan-for-cp5 giving Network Rail five months to finalise their CP5 Delivery Plan. See www.rail-reg.gov.uk/pr13

In June the ORR published their 'draft determination' for comments until September. Railfuture's response can be seen at www.railfuture.org.uk/submissions

The draft determination has introduced an extra phase in view of the many enhancement projects, such as West Anglia main line and Wealden line capacity upgrades, which are still at early stages of scheme development. Network Rail must now produce for consultation in December a draft Delivery Plan for CP5. This should reflect those enhancement projects at more advanced stages in their eight-stage 'GRIP' [Governance for Railway Investment Projects] process – see www.networkrail.co.uk/asp/4171.aspx

In under three years' time PR18 starts, leading to CP6 from 2019-24. If the same process is followed an Initial Industry Plan in 2016 will be followed by a High Level Output Specification in 2017, a Strategic Business Plan in 2018, and a CP6 Delivery Plan in 2019. Foundations for 2019-24 are being laid now. As the final strokes are applied to the picture for 2014-19, what we cannot see there must look now for a place in the next session.

Network Rail's Long-Term Planning Process – LTPP

The primary foundation for CP6 is the new LTPP, successor to various Route Utilisation Strategies. See www.networkrail.co.uk/Long-Term-Planning-Process for vital background. Consultations began in March at www.networkrail.co.uk/improvements/planning-policies-and-plans/long-term-planning-process/market-studies and closed in July involved us in leading the Railfuture response to the draft London and South East Passenger Market Study. Three other Studies covered Freight, and Long Distance and Regional Urban Passenger, Markets. Our submissions can be read at www.railfuture.org.uk/submissions Network Rail expect the final Studies to be published late-October.

Ten Route Studies, akin to RUSs and aligned with Network Rail's devolved routes, and cross-boundary analysis, are the next elements in the LTPP – see www.networkrail.co.uk/long-term-planning-process/faq We should expect some drafts to have been published for consultation by the time of the next newsletter in December. Only Scotland and Wales Routes have no interface with our branch area; eight will be of interest, and stimulate our response, to varying degrees.

Refranchising – a fresh start, extensions and direct awards

In the previous newsletter's competition for the best anagram of 'refranchising', there was no prize winner.

The Transport Secretary's oral and written statements to Parliament and the DfT press release in March signalled a 'Fresh start for franchising'. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/rail-franchising> for the series of government documents published since 26 March.

The new language is of franchise extensions and Direct Award contracts. In order to find the answer to **The Railfuture Question: where's TOFI? *** the key markers over the past six months are these:

26 March – new Rail Franchising Schedule, and invitation to interested bidders.

24 April – high-level Franchise Procurement Process map [think electrical wiring diagram!] and narrative.

25 April – four members of Franchise Advisory Panel appointed, under Chair Richard Brown.

17 May – first 'Direct Award' contract to National Express operator c2c Rail Ltd to continue running **Essex Thameside** services from 26 May for at least 16 months [with extension option of up to eight four-week periods] until start of new franchise currently planned for September 2014.

22 May – UK Rail Opportunities Day for prospective bidders [speech by Transport Secretary and presentations published on 4 June].

25 June – Franchising Competition Process Guide.

10 July – government response to the Brown Review of the Rail Franchising Programme.

July - revised Invitation To Tender [ITT] for new 15-year **Essex Thameside** franchise issued to four existing short-listed bidders - Abellio, First, MTR, National Express, for new franchise award currently expected by April 2014.

July - the Rail Franchise Overview anticipated in March did not appear, delayed until the autumn.

September – extension of **Thameslink** franchise, and Direct Award contract to First Group until start of new franchise in September 2014. ITT for **Combined Thameslink** [with Southern and Great Northern] issued to five short-listed bidders - Abellio, First, Govia, MTR, Stagecoach - for new franchise award May 2014. Existing Govia South Central franchise operator Southern Railway Ltd merges-in July 2015.

Great Western – extension of current franchise from October 2013, then Direct Award contract to First Group until start of new franchise in July 2016.

* The Railfuture Question: where's TOFI?

The first example of an answer to the Railfuture question of where are The Opportunities For Influence in the 'Fresh start for franchising' processes is with Govia's current **Southeastern** franchise. Faced with the prospect of the longest, four-year, Direct Award contract, on top of a further franchise extension, Managing Director Charles Horton asked for feedback by early-October on eight topics:

- Customer service/journey experience
- Ticketing/fares/promotions/smart cards
- Community and passenger engagement
- Peak crowding management
- Transport integration with buses and cycles
- Station car parking
- Accessibility
- Disruption management/informed passengers.

Kent Division co-ordinated Railfuture's response, and represent us at Southeastern's Stakeholders' Open Forum in mid-October. See front page.

South Eastern – extension of current franchise from April 2014 to November 2014, then Direct Award contract to Govia until start of new franchise in June 2018! Unlike Greater Anglia below, Metro services will not be devolved to Transport for London.

Greater Anglia – extension of current franchise from July 2014, then Direct Award contract to Abellio until start of new franchise in October 2016.

May 2015 will meanwhile see the start of TfL's **Crossrail** operating concession, with the transfer of Greater Anglia's Metro services between Liverpool Street and Shenfield. In late-June TfL announced the four short-listed bidders as Arriva Crossrail Ltd, Keolis/Go-Ahead, MTR Corporation (Crossrail) Ltd, and National Express Group PLC. The ITT was due in September, then contract award by the end of 2014.

West Anglia inner services will follow into the TfL fold by the end of 2015, following the announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer during his Comprehensive Spending Review statement in late-June. Services currently operated by Greater Anglia between Liverpool Street and Enfield Town/Cheshunt and Chingford will transfer, but not Lea Valley services in an out of Stratford.

London Midland – extension of current franchise from September 2015, then Direct Award contract to GoVia until start of new franchise in June 2017.

South Western – extension of current franchise from February 2017, then Direct Award contract to Stagecoach until start of new franchise in April 2019.

For the remainder of 2013 the sequence is therefore:
September - Thameslink extension starts, Combined Thameslink/Southern/Great Northern ITT issued, and ITT for TfL Crossrail concession issued;
October - Great Western extension starts, East Coast OJEU issued.

Lea Valley Rail – a STAR for better access to jobs & homes

The Lea Valley Rail story continues to add chapters. Regular readers will be familiar with how far we have come in frankly a remarkably short time. Barely a year since the Railfuture Fighting Fund-supported report and presentations by JR Consulting for the Railfuture-affiliated Chingford Line Users Association [CLUA] reinforced the case, funding is now in place to deliver a key Network Rail output during CP5.

At each stage in the current Periodic Review for the next five-year Control Period from April 2014 the need for a Lea Valley line capacity upgrade has been identified. The transformation on the route in and out of Stratford since withdrawal of the Tottenham Hale shuttle in 1985 is nothing short of astounding. Despite incremental service enhancements in recent years the current basic half-hourly service, even with many trains extended to eight-cars, under-achieves in offering the capacity and quality of service required. The eastwards shift of London's economic centre is reflected clearly in the area of the Tube map now called central London. Stratford as both a destination and an interchange hub is a mark of that shift.



Angel Road station looking north, space for third & fourth Lea Valley tracks on right.

Source: Tarquin Binary via Wikimedia Commons

If West Anglia line capacity upgrade is the requirement, a doubled service frequency of four trains per hour between Stratford and Tottenham Hale is the rail industry's response. Network Rail therefore have an allocation of £44 million to deliver the necessary infrastructure, a third track from just north of Lea Bridge station, expected to re-open with the timetable change in December 2014.

Local stakeholders have an additional requirement, to extend that 4tph service initially as far as Angel Road station in order to support the Meridian Water regeneration development. With TfL offering £3 million, the London Enterprise Panel has now agreed £27.5 million from the London Growth Fund, £25 million making up the £72 million budget to extend the third track to Angel Road for the STAR service – **Stratford-Tottenham Hale-Angel Road** – and £2.5 million to upgrade the station to something worthy of the Meridian Water development.

See more in CLUA's website which can be found here: www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Groups The website hosts the JRC report and related slide presentations.

Bridge the gap: connect East Sussex

This Railfuture campaign has witnessed further significant developments since the previous newsletter went to press four months ago. The continually-evolving strategy and tactical interventions can be viewed at www.railfuture.org.uk/Uckfield+Lewes and in a diary at www.railfuture.org.uk/Sussex+Coastway

Building on May's confirmation of the former Uckfield station site transferring to Network Rail, in part for a new 139-space station car park, we continued to develop with our partners in the Uckfield Transport Hub Working Group the idea of an interim 'meanwhile use' of the site, pending the start of construction works. Targeting the annual Uckfield Festival in mid-July, what eventually emerged was a set of three Railfuture vinyl banners to raise public awareness of the site, to stimulate interest in the various short- and longer-term prospects for its future, including our programme to extend services south to Lewes and the Sussex coast, and to extol the range of stakeholders already coming together to work as partners.

The banners can be seen in our campaign website above, and were first attached temporarily to the High Street frontage of the fence currently securing the old station site, directly opposite and in full view of the present-day station. Among the first to see the banners was Transport Minister Norman Baker, MP for the adjoining Lewes constituency, when on the day the Uckfield Festival started he was at the station to launch the Forest Explorer, co-ordinated by the Wealden Bus Alliance as a way of exploring the Ashdown Forest using existing bus and rail services. See www.wealdenbus.org.uk/forestexplorer.html The banners then adorned our stall at Uckfield Festival's

Big Day, where we launched our new campaign leaflet, and the banner highlighting the Uckfield Transport Hub was left, with Network Rail's permission, on the fence opposite the station.

In mid-July we presented our Railfuture Fighting Fund-supported report commissioned from Jonathan Roberts Consulting, "Access and Connections: East Sussex", to East Sussex County Council's Lead Member for Economy and the Director for Economy, Transport and Environment. Sub-titled "Opportunities to align railway investment to the economic growth requirements of East Sussex", the report takes an evidence-based 'county and neighbours' view of population, employment, and travel trends, drawing heavily on data in the county's East Sussex in Figures website and the recent Census.

The report identifies a range of opportunities for a more successful railway to support a more successful county, for access to further and higher education colleges as well as centres of employment and business development. In addition to development of the Wealden line corridor, the East Coastway, Marshlink and Hastings direct routes all harbour potential to play a stronger role in connecting communities with business and education.

It was a noteworthy outcome of May's county elections that the rail portfolio is now with the County Council's Lead Member for Economy, indicating to us a recognition of the relevance of rail to improving the economic fortunes of the county's residents and businesses. This is in line with Network Rail's primary objectives for infrastructure investment as set out in their recent draft Passenger Market Study for London and the South East. Railfuture's consultation response can be viewed in www.railfuture.org.uk/submissions; publication of the final Study is expected this autumn.

In mid-August the Lead Member for Economy approved a draft Rail Strategy for consultation, including a stakeholders' Rail Symposium in mid-September, titled "Shaping Rail in East Sussex". Seen at <https://consultation.eastsussex.gov.uk/economy-transport-environment/rail-strategy> responses close as this newsletter is being delivered. We were represented at the Symposium, and welcome the County Council's commitment to developing the role of rail in its drive to enable growth in economic activity. One key finding in the JRC report is the divergent trends between higher-than-expected population growth contrasting with a static jobs market.

The county has a range of railway infrastructure development priorities, in three categories:- four new stations, two line upgrades, and two line re-openings. Each must now be referenced against the wider economic benefits to be delivered, as well as the more conventional transport improvements expected. They will also need to identify a process and programme through which they can be developed, whether for example through Network Rail's GRIP* stages and Control Period planning or DfT's New Stations Fund.

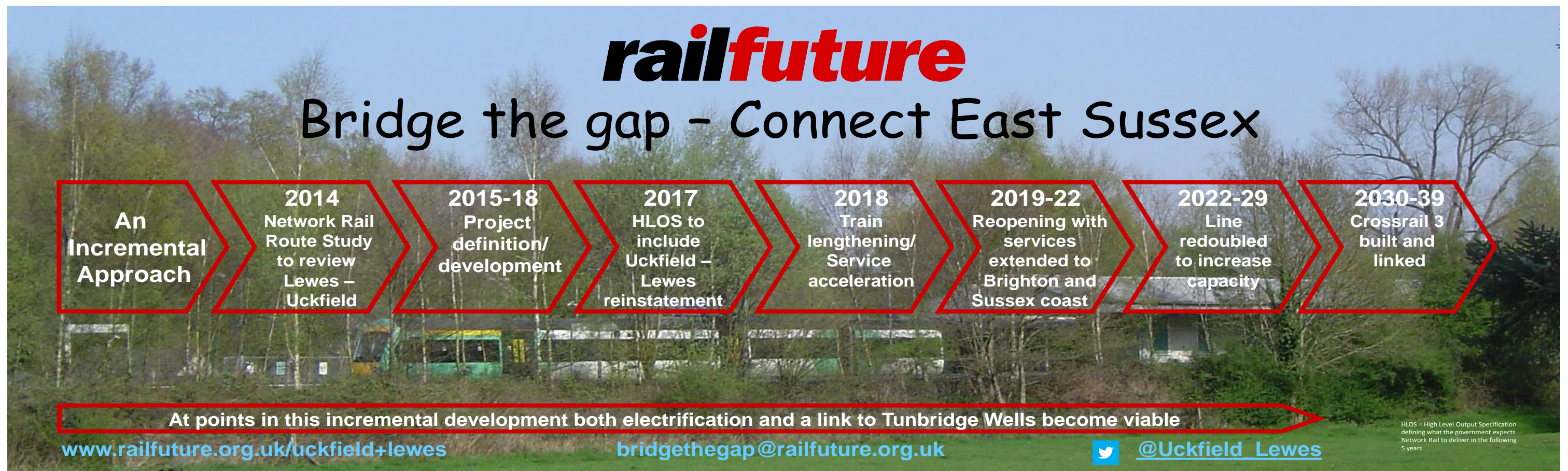
Two of those priorities have seen contrasting recent developments. Prospects for a station at Glyne Gap [closed 1915] look very bleak after a consultant's study showed an extremely poor business case. A third of its limited patronage was expected to transfer from nearby Bexhill, and its catchment includes the English Channel and low-density housing and open space.

Prospects for the Uckfield branch line however appear far more promising. Based on comments heard in Southern's June Stakeholder Forum, we developed an 'electrifying proposition' which has attracted endorsement from East Sussex, Kent and Surrey County Councils, Wealden and Sevenoaks District Councils, Wealden Strategic Partnership, Sussex Community Rail Partnership, Passenger Focus, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and Local Transport Board, and the Members of Parliament for Wealden Charles Hendry and for Bexhill and Battle Gregory Barker. The proposition is that in order to deliver the required extra peak capacity through longer trains on the Uckfield line by 2018-19, Network Rail should electrify the line rather than lengthen platforms. Corridor-connected electric trains are still being built, while extra diesel units, self-contained, are not; those released would add capacity on Marshlink services. This proposition was included in Railfuture's response to the Office of Rail Regulation's consultation on its Draft Determination on Network Rail's plans for CP5.

The new Combined Thameslink franchise is due to start next September, with the operator announced in May. Ahead of that the five short-listed bidders are expected to submit their BAFOs* this December, in response to the Invitation To Tender expected this month. Railfuture has been meeting all five to press our case for service and station improvements.

As this newsletter was going to press Railfuture's Board of Directors voted a second small grant from the national Fighting Fund to enable us to re-appoint independent adviser JR Consulting for further support with stakeholder engagement and alliance-building.

*GRIP = Governance for Railway Investment Projects
*BAFO = Best And Final Offer



Passenger satisfaction scores

Regular readers will be familiar with our twice-yearly review of the **National Rail Passenger Survey [NPS]**. Its future role as the definitive benchmark in raising passenger satisfaction levels was confirmed on 11 July when the government published its response to the Brown Review of the rail franchising programme.

“The Government accepts the recommendation of the Review that it should contract targets from the NPS in future franchises. New franchises will require franchisees to achieve clear levels of passenger satisfaction based on the NPS. The Department is working with Passenger Focus, who design and administer the survey, to make the appropriate changes to sample size or survey methodology for each franchise and is considering mechanisms to ensure that appropriate passenger benefits are delivered.”

The Spring 2013 survey results were published in June at www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/overview where many detailed reports, and occasional reports in the ‘Understanding Passengers’ series, can be found.

Satisfaction by journey purpose is surveyed in three categories. Probably unsurprisingly leisure travellers are a more tolerant breed with 89% overall satisfaction compared with 82% for business travellers and 76% for commuters. Those broad differentials are consistent across the five key indicators detailed below.

Principal results for our ten franchised and two non-franchised London and South East operators, with national and regional averages first, national ranking out of 23 in brackets, and change since Spring 2012:

Overall satisfaction

National 82%, London & SE 81%, both down 1%
Heathrow Express 94% [2nd] – up 4%
London Overground 92% [4th=] – up 2%
C2C 92% [4th=] – up 1%
Heathrow Connect 91% [8th] – down 3%
Chiltern Railways 89% [10th] – down 1%
South West Trains 81% [16th] – down 3%
First Great Western 80% [17th=] – down 2%
London Midland 80% [17th=] – down 7%
Southern 78% [19th=] – down 2%
Southeastern 78% [19th=] – down 3%
Greater Anglia 77% [21st] – up 4%
First Capital Connect 76% [22nd=] – down 3%

Value for money for the price of your ticket

National 42%, London & SE 38%, both no change
Heathrow Connect 54% [7th] – down 2%
London Midland 51% [10th] – down 1%
First Great Western 48% [13th=] – no change
London Overground 48% [13th=] – down 1%
C2C 46% [16th] – up 4%
Chiltern Railways 45% [17th] – down 3%
Heathrow Express 40% [18th] – up 7%
Southern 36% [19th] – down 2%
Greater Anglia 35% [20th] – up 6%
South West Trains 33% [21st] – down 3%
First Capital Connect 32% [22nd] – down 2%
Southeastern 31% [23rd] – down 1%

Punctuality/reliability [trains arrive/depart on time]

National 78%, London & SE 76%, both down 3%
Heathrow Express 95% [1st] – up 2%
C2C 94% [2nd] – up 1%
Chiltern Railways 89% [6th] – up 3%
London Overground 87% [7th=] – down 1%
Heathrow Connect 78% [15th] – down 14%
Southeastern 77% [16th=] – down 3%
South West Trains 77% [16th=] – down 5%
First Great western 76% [18th] – down 1%
Greater Anglia 74% [19th] – up 4%
Southern 72% [20th] – down 6%
First Capital Connect 71% [22nd] – down 5%
London Midland 70% [23rd] – down 12%

Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand

National 67%, down 2%, London & SE 65%, down 3%
Heathrow Express 95% [1st] – up 5%
Heathrow Connect 83% [4th=] – down 7%
Chiltern Railways 75% [9th] – no change
London Overground 72% [12th] – down 5%
First Great Western 68% [14th] – up 1%
London Midland 66% [15th=] – down 8%
Southeastern 64% [18th=] – up 3%
C2C 64% [18th=] – no change
Southern 64% [18th=] – down 2%
Greater Anglia 63% [21st=] – down 3%
South West Trains 63% [21st=] – down 10%
First Capital Connect 59% [23rd] – down 3%

Overall satisfaction with the station

National 76%, London & SE 75%, both no change
Heathrow Express 89% [1st=] – up 3%
C2C 84% [7th=] – up 1%
Chiltern Railways 84% [7th=] – down 3%
London Overground 79% [11th] – down 2%
Heathrow Connect 77% [14th] – down 7%
First Great Western 76% [15th=] – no change
Greater Anglia – 75% [18th=] – up 4%
First Capital Connect 75% [18th=] – no change
South West Trains 74% [20th] – no change
Southeastern 73% [21st=] – no change
Southern 73% [21st=] – down 2%
London Midland 73% [21st=] – down 4%

How well train company dealt with delays

National 38%, London & SE 36%, both down 1%
C2C 62% [4th=] – up 20%
Chiltern Railways 46% [9th] – up 8%
South West Trains 45% [10th] – up 8%
First Great Western 44% [11th] – up 3%
London Overground 35% [15th] – down 7%
Heathrow Connect 34% [16th] – down 4%
London Midland 32% [17th] – down 17%
Southeastern 31% [18th] – no change
Southern 30% [19th] – down 5%
Greater Anglia 28% [21st=] – no change
First Capital Connect 28% [21st=] – down 2%
(Heathrow Express no result, sample size too small)

Passengers broken down by age and sex! Three age groups are surveyed, the over-60's being 10% more satisfied than the 35-59's and 16-34's on 91% overall satisfaction. Gender difference is also apparent in the higher overall satisfaction rating by women on 84%, 80% for men. The gender difference is consistent across the five key indicators, but the 35-59's are least satisfied in two, stations and sitting/standing space.

Bluebell Railway awaits us – members' visit in November

Saturday 9 November is the long-awaited date for our planned group visit to one of the country's original, and now leading, preserved lines. See more at www.bluebell-railway.com for '50 years of preserved steam in Sussex' and www.bluebell-railway.co.uk for 'one of the best family days out in Sussex'.

The latest extension northwards into East Grinstead was achieved in March this year. It follows the nearby Spa Valley Railway's interchange with the adjoining Southern branch line from Hurst Green, to Uckfield, at Eridge. The steadily-growing national list of preserved lines with main line links can be viewed at www.raifuture.org.uk/Preserved+lines+as+public+transport

Plans for the day are preceded by a request to notify organiser Norman.Bradbury@raifuture.org.uk so that we can advise our hosts of numbers. Convene at East Grinstead in good time to catch the 12.00 to Sheffield Park, arriving 12.47. Latest connecting arrival in the half-hourly service at the mainline station is at 11.47. Some may wish to take the earlier 10.45 to break the outward journey at Horsted Keynes. All-line return fares are 3rd class £16 and 1st class £24. Lunch can be taken in The Bessemer Arms at Sheffield Park station. After lunch there will be a presentation and guided visit, concluding in time to for the last return train at 16.00, arriving East Grinstead at 16.41 and in good time for the 17.07 mainline departure.

GOBLIN – e for electrification, and evolutionary expansion

Campaigners' long-suspended expectations were met in late-June when the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Comprehensive Spending Review statement at last included the commitment to fund electrification of north London's outer-orbital mixed-traffic route, the Gospel Oak-Barking line. It also included development of an eastwards extension of services to serve new riverside developments in the Barking Reach area. TfL are reported as expecting the wires to be up in 2017.

Thoughts now turn to the broader implications of this electrification infill. Might we see attention given to the evolutionary development of an outer orbital network?

Chris Precey, Martin Parker RIP

Chris Precey from Hinckley in Leicestershire passed way in early-September. He was the Society's Electoral Returning Officer and Annual Draw organiser.

Martin Parker from Bedford, a former careers adviser, also passed away around the same time. He had been a member of our branch committee until 2011, and prior to that a member of the East Midlands branch committee. He was Chairman of Bedfordshire Rural Transport Advisory Committee, and a member of the Leighton Buzzard Railway www.buzzrail.co.uk

New East Coast infrastructure: better Great Northern services

With today's railway carrying as much traffic on a network only half its historic size, and rising usage and expectations demanding more and better services, the sort of timetable changes required by passengers can often have to await capacity being added or restored to that network.

The completion of Hitchin Flyover, and upgrading of the route between and the stations at Alexandra Palace and Finsbury Park, together enable operator First Capital Connect to make significant changes to their December timetable. The better-known Hitchin Grade Separation Project now allows northbound Cambridge/King's Lynn services to sweep over and avoid conflict with southbound trains on the East Coast main line. Perhaps less well-known is the upgrade of a southbound freight-only track between Alexandra Palace and Finsbury Park to service passenger train standards, and corresponding additional platforms at each of those stations. At Finsbury Park this follows platform lengthening for 12-car trains.

Key timetable changes include:

Morning peak – extra very-early 'up' fast from Cambridge, two 'up' Ely services to start from King's Lynn.

Off-peak – return Peterborough service lengthened to eight-cars, all King's Lynn services lengthened to eight cars between London and Cambridge.

Evening peak – in direct response to passenger feedback three 'down' services will call at additional stations.

Saturdays – lengthened to eight-cars are three afternoon 'down' to King's Lynn as far as Cambridge and two to Peterborough, an extra late-evening 'down' fast to Cambridge.

Sunday – late-evening to Ely extended to King's Lynn, three mid-morning trains lengthened to eight-cars.

Thameslink is not overlooked, with West Hampstead to be served by Brighton-Bedford stopping trains throughout the week [except peaks], and on Sundays Bedford-East Croydon trains extended to Three Bridges via Gatwick Airport.

Noteworthy about these changes are the operator being one of the two incumbents bidding for the new **Combined Thameslink** franchise and another area of our branch eagerly awaiting service improvements as soon as infrastructure has been upgraded. Soon to benefit from signalling and line-speed improvements will be **East Coastway/Marshlink**; faster services and better services at Marshlink 'minor' stations to follow!

Welcome to new members

Over the past six months or so we have been joined by Messrs S.Whitehead of Sutton, A.Portway of Cowden, J.Band of Guildford, R.Lancaster of Tunbridge Wells, A.Marchant of Redhill, H.Patton of Bedford, D.Powell of Camberley, A.Berriman of Gravesend, G.Livingstone of Lewes, J.Matthews of Bromley, and F.Henwood, F.Rodgers, S.Martin, R.Denman, J.Salmon of London.

Branch divisions' meetings – open to all members of our regional branch

Eastern [s. Essex and n. & e. London] – usually meet bi-monthly on the second Wednesday of odd-numbered months, at 18.30 in **Stratford** – next on **13 November**. Contact Division Convener Howard Thomas at howard.thomas@railfuture.org.uk or 24 South Primrose Hill, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2RG, or phone 01245 280503 before 21.00 hrs.

Herts & Beds – next meeting, probably St. Albans, to be notified direct to local members, on the website or/and in the next newsletter. Contact Branch Chairman Keith Dyall [opposite] for details.

Kent – usually meet quarterly on the third Saturday, each in a different venue – next on **16 November** in **Canterbury**. Contact joint Division Conveners Chris Fribbins at chris.fribbins@railfuture.org.uk or 5 Englefield Crescent, Cliffe Woods, Rochester, Kent, ME3 8HB, or tel: 01634 566256; and Ian Killbery at ian.killbery@railfuture.org.uk or 11 Western Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6RX, or tel: 01304 362569.



Surrey – next meeting to be emailed to local members, on the website or/and in next newsletter. Contact Division Convener Chris Page at chris.page@railfuture.org.uk or 'Clara Vale', Thibet Road, Sandhurst, Berkshire, GU47 9AR, or phone 01344 778643.

Sussex & Coastway – usually meet monthly on the first Thursday at 18.00. Next on **3 October** in Newhaven, then on **7 November** and **5 December**. Contact Convener Dick Tyler at richard.tyler@railfuture.org.uk or 27 Windsor Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN39 3PB, or phone 01424 211500.

This branch newsletter is free, published quarterly and usually distributed with each edition of the national *railwatch*. The copy deadline for *rail* issue 122, due to be published in December 2013, will be Thursday 31 October 2013. All items for this newsletter and the branch Local Action column in *railwatch* to be sent to branch Chair Keith Dyall

the Railfuture mission: to be the number one advocate for the railway and rail users

Websites: www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
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Our neighbouring branches

These and all other branches' websites can be seen in www.railfuture.org.uk/branches

East Anglia – contact Secretary Paul Hollinghurst – paul.hollinghurst@railfuture.org.uk

Board liaison is via Director Jerry Alderson.

East Midlands – contact is Secretary Roger Bacon – roger.bacon@railfuture.org.uk

Board liaison via Finance Officer David Harby.

Thames Valley – contact is Branch Secretary Andrew McCallum – andrew.mccallum@railfuture.org.uk

Board liaison is via Director Roger Blake [below].

Wessex – contact is Branch Secretary Charles Burns – charles.burns@railfuture.org.uk

Board liaison is via Director Chris Page [below].

and finally, it's your branch too

In between our April Annual General Meetings and elections to the branch committee, it meets six times to transact branch business. Such meetings are open to all members, in an observer capacity, and with the small proviso of prior notice, contributions and questions are welcome. Meetings are held from 18.00 on the fourth Tuesday of the odd-numbered months, next on 26 November, upstairs in 'The Bishop's Finger' 9-10 West Smithfield, London, EC1A 9JR.

London and SE Branch officers

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