

Welcome to this edition of Rail User Express.

As always, feel free to forward RUEX to a colleague, or to reproduce items in your own newsletter (quoting sources). If you want further details of any of the stories mentioned, look on the relevant website or, failing that, get back to me so I can send you the full text.

For details about group affiliation to Railfuture, see website [here](#) (from the "Membership Type" menu, select "RUG").

Guest User Group of the Month : Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association

The Sevenoaks Rail Travellers' Association is amongst the latest batch of organisations to join Railfuture. The group represents the interest of Southeastern commuters using Sevenoaks and nearby stations: Bat and Ball, Dunton Green, Eynsford, Kemsing, Otford and Shoreham. Recent issues include the development of the Thameslink service patterns and the proposal from the Mayor of London to take over "metro" services from Sevenoaks to London via Dunton Green.

New barriers have been installed at Sevenoaks station to control the queue for the ticket machines, and the SRTA think they're unnecessary and obstructive: "Sevenoaks rail passengers can be trusted to form an orderly queue themselves!"

Within the organisation is a "Trains Group" that keeps a close watch on service performance, timetabling, overcrowding etc. and a "Stations Group" to keep an eye on issues such as accessibility, passenger facilities and station staffing. Two-year membership of the SRTA costs £5, but 80% of members have chosen life membership which is available for £20.

We continue with the usual roundup of news items from rail user groups around the UK, starting from the Borders and working south. As always, I'm very grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins.

Campaign for Borders Rail – less than a year to go!

These are exciting times for CBR members: the new 30-mile railway between Edinburgh and Tweedbank is on schedule to open on 6 September 2015. Plans are in hand for a festival to mark the occasion: "Hopefully, the railway between Edinburgh and Tweedbank will come to be regarded as Phase One of the eventual restoration of Waverley Route services further through the Scottish Borders Council area. At the CBR, we believe that Hawick really deserves to get trains, but meantime we look forward to celebrating the opening through Galashiels to and from Tweedbank."

You can find out more about the Campaign by going along to their AGM at Galashiels on 6th November – see *Events list below for details.*

South East Northumberland Rail Users' Group – DVD project a way to connect with the young

The last few months have been a considerably busy time for SENRUG. The group has responded to both the formal consultations on the new East Coast and then Northern Rail / TransPennine Express franchises, and encouraging others to do the same. They've also been busy campaigning for improvements to Morpeth and Cramlington station facilities.

Referring to the furore surrounding changes to off-peak ticket validity on Northern Rail, SENRUG comments: "No-one seems to be aware that on the Morpeth-Newcastle route, Northern Rail has already withdrawn off-peak tickets completely – not just in evening peak but through the day as well. Only standard tickets are available. Perhaps those campaigning with Northern Rail on the evening peak issue would include this point too."

Hirst Park Middle School in Ashington won SENRUG's Schools' competition to create a 7-10 minute DVD setting out their reasons for re-opening the Ashington, Blythe & Tyne line. You can see their winning DVD [here](#). (*Do take a look. It's first class! – Ed*).

Six entries were received and the winner was announced at a public meeting at Morpeth Town Hall, attended by nearly 100 people; those present heard an update on the project from a council officer. SENRUG's Chairman commented afterwards: "We believe we have gone some way to connect a new generation of young people, not just with rail travel, but more importantly with the need to campaign for better services and more favourable government policies."

All six entries in the DVD competition can be viewed from SENRUG's new [website](#). To get funding for the revamp, SENRUG's Chairman travelled to London and took part in a "Dragon's Den" style meeting. Following advice from Passenger Focus, the group has now moved away from using personal email addresses in favour of "... @senrug.co.uk". Another new development is a 12-page colour brochure setting out the group's various campaigns – the brochure is available at Morpeth station, libraries and other outlets.

Keswick to Penrith Railway Project – *keeping everyone on board*

Earlier this year Keswick Town Council hosted the first in a series of meetings of Local Authority and Business Group representatives to co-ordinate policies and ensure that the Keswick-Penrith Railway Project is fully supported through the legal stages which lie ahead. Other local authorities and the Lake District National Park Authority have also taken an active part.

Project Director, Cedric Martindale, says "Keeping everybody informed and 'aligned' is a major task. The over-riding need, however, is for the Railway Project to be included in all the relevant Local Plans and Policies. Without such written policies, decisions can be made by different departments which conflict or might negatively affect the Railway."

He's pleased to report that, thanks to representations made by campaigners, the business development on railway land at Threlkeld has been obliged to include an un-obstructed route for a single line past the site.

"The line needs to be built to 'main line' standards, connected directly to the national network," says Cedric, "if it were done any other way, there would be substantial additional capital and running costs."

You can find out how to support the project on their website: <http://www.keswickrailway.com/>

Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group - *rail manager drops by*

The Managing Director of Northern Rail travelled the Bentham Line in August and met representatives of LASRUG during his morning stopover at Bentham Station – it was an opportunity to discuss issues of mutual interest, such as more suitable rolling stock to replace the well-worn Pacers. At the time, LASRUG were involved in preparing their submission for the Northern and TransPennine franchise consultations. In their response, the group called for a more regular service and suggested operating the line from both ends to offer greater flexibility; they also argued for a better fare structure, improved connections and better promotion of the line as a scenic trans-pennine route.

The office walls at Bentham station are adorned with school children's splendid paintings inspired by train journeys; these are currently being photographed by Friends of Bentham Station and turned into posters. Further projects involving schools are in the pipeline. In July, FoBS gave a platform party for members of the *We Are Bentham* group who sponsor the station planters. Then in September, a ceremony was held at the station to launch the newly-extended Bentham Heritage Trail; the accompanying photo shows the heritage map at the station being unveiled.

LASRUG is pleased that a local group of volunteers has come forward to adopt the station at Bare Lane. The new team has been busy renovating existing flower tubs and planting up new ones, and they're also working on the flower borders on Platform 1 and around the car park: "Passenger reaction has been very positive and supportive." The team has made contact with the local Traders' Association with a view to enlisting their support.

Friends of Bentham Station in conjunction with Bloomin' Bentham won the Small Projects award in ACoRP's Community Rail Awards 2014 for their Annual Planters Sponsorship scheme.

Don Valley Railway – special brew marks anniversary

Sheffield Brewing Company, whose micro-brewery is a few hundred yards from the Woodhead Line, is brewing an "Electrifying Ale" to mark the 60th Anniversary of the electrification of the Woodhead Rail Route, Britain's first all electrified inter-city main line. A press release from the DVR encourages people to buy the ale and drink a toast to the success of their campaign to bring the line back to life: "Alas the government called time on the Woodhead Railway, but as well as a drink to the memory of its opening 60 years ago, we'd like to raise a toast to a new future for the route."

Meanwhile, a DVR supporter has produced a photo catalogue looking at the line both now and when it was in full operation.

North Cheshire Rail Users' Group – a curve on everyone's lips!

After 10 years of campaigning for the return of passenger services via the Halton Curve, suddenly everyone is talking about its merits; however NCRUG's Chair, Janet Briggs, warns that "we must not take our eye off the ball but continue to keep up the pressure until we can finally travel directly to and from Liverpool." The study process is under way and commencement of activity on site is currently programmed for 2016/17. NCRUG's committee continue to meet with managers from organisations that stand to benefit from better rail connectivity, including Chester University, the planned 2,100-inmate prison at Wrexham and the Central Business Quarter in Chester.

The new public facility at Helsby Station was officially opened to much celebration during a brief ceremony on 15th Sept. Aspirations are for a staffed booking desk, timetable dispensers, advice for travellers and refreshment facilities. Compass Tours and Junction Travel will jointly operate the facility and look forward to meeting rail users and local residents alike.

Unfortunately, the station gardens at Helsby are currently somewhat unkempt due to a shortage of volunteers, and an appeal for more help has been sent out. Meanwhile, staff at the Hair Design tenancy in Frodsham Station building have grown good crops of tomatoes and runner beans in the enclosed courtyard at the station - with high brick walls all round, the courtyard enjoys its own micro-climate. Since the abolition of the £1.00 'coin in the slot' deposit for trolleys at Morrisons Supermarket in Frodsham, NCRUG members have found trolleys abandoned on the Manchester bound platform at Frodsham Station on three separate occasions!

Pauline Jenkinson, for 17 years a volunteer at Helsby Station, was awarded First Prize in the outstanding volunteer category of ACoRP's Community Rail Awards competition for 2014.

Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association – case builds for half-hourly service

The Mid Cheshire Line continues to be plagued by poor performance and MCRUA will be meeting with Northern Rail to see what can be done. The biggest problems remains overcrowding and the lack of any additional rolling stock to alleviate the situation. Meanwhile, the case for two trains an hour on the line is gaining widespread acceptance and the group is hopeful that there will be positive news about this early next year. Meanwhile, members are helping out with further passenger counts on the line.

With different sets of shortlisted bidders for the Northern and the Trans-Pennine franchise, MCRUA regrets that savings won't be possible from any pooling of resources: "we still appear to be dogged by the spurious notion of competition between train operators - most rail travellers have no choice of train operator for their particular journey." However, there are a number of infrastructure improvements to celebrate: (i) four stations on the line are to get Customer Information Screens (ii) Altrincham station improvements are nearing completion, and (iii) Hale station is due for a makeover under the "RSIS" scheme.

Members have been helping out with a "Take the Train" publicity project over the summer months, for which a grant from the ACoRP-administered Small Projects Fund was obtained. You can see the material produced on MCRUA's [website](#). It didn't help that the new evening peak ticket restrictions on Northern Rail came into effect after the fares information had been printed!

As the Music Train season draws to a close, the volunteers are thanked for another successful year. Unfortunately, MCRUA had to postpone their September charter train due to the operator's lack of resources.

Shrewsbury to Chester Rail Users Association – rail service under threat

SCRUA has launched a campaign to protect train services which it believes to be under threat. Arriva Trains Wales is investigating plans to axe the 0747 Wrexham to Birmingham rail service from the timetable from May 2015. Also facing the chop is understood to be the 0700 from Shrewsbury which arrives in Wrexham at 0739. What has been suggested by way of a replacement would cause much inconvenience for passengers, and SCRUA believes the overall package would be a deterrent to rail use.

SCRUA is currently engaging with local politicians and rail users and is encouraging members of the public to sign an on line petition [here](#). The petition calls on the Welsh Government and Arriva Trains Wales to protect this important and well used rail service.

Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association – new study raises hopes for the future

SARPA's Autumn newsletter carries pictures of the formal reopening (on 1st Sept) of the line to Pwllheli after damage caused by last winter's storm had been repaired. It had been a long wait!

The group's Chairman was interested to catch sight of a Network Rail document entitled "Welsh Route Study" which looks ahead as far as 2043. He thought NR had done quite a good job examining the potential development of passenger services, but astonishingly the study indicates zero growth in freight despite the glaring evidence that there is no shortage of freight transport on the roads.

"More" means cuts! ... the proposed extra trains on the Cambrian Line have not met with universal acclaim as ATW have confirmed that they are looking at cutting two services on the line to find a spare DMU. Also there's doubt over whether the Cardiff-Holyhead service justifies an hourly service, as being proposed by the Welsh Assembly Government, in view of the rather thin market, at least for end-to-end journeys.

SARPA has always been sceptical about where the huge sums of subsidy supposedly going into rural railways was actually going, given the low level of visible activity in terms of infrastructure spend and trains run. Now a report from [PTEG](#) published in July confirms that it's an accounting sleight of hand and not a real cost at all. A fairer accounting method would show that rural lines cost far less to run.

In his regular column, The Brigadier can be found battling against extortionate fares by calling on readers to take advantage of cheap ticket offers such as the Cambrian Railcard. He also urges anyone suffering delays to take full advantage of the compensation on offer.

Friends of the Barton Line – *time to consider redoubling?*

FoBL submitted their views on the franchising of rail services in their area, based on their aspirations list, to the Dept. for Transport. Constant disruptions to services on the Barton Line are doubtless exacerbated by the short-sighted singling of the line, and FoBL argue that funds should now be made available to redouble part of it.

FoBL's committee is looking into costs of producing promotional items for the line, including T-shirts or fleeces (or at least sewn-on badges) and a leaflet with comment form. Memorabilia may also be needed if they're to mark the anniversary of New Clee station (opened 1 July 1875). Another possibility being considered is the manning of Barton station with volunteers, similar to Chester-le-Street.

In August, various members of FoBL enjoyed a fascinating visit to all the signal boxes and manned crossings along the branch line from New Holland to Ulceby, courtesy of Network Rail. Then in September, several of them took a trip on the "Denton Flyer" which included a walk around the town of Stalybridge and a meal at the celebrated Station Buffet.

Stourbridge Line Users Group – *at last, a renaissance at Kidderminster*

In July, the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership announced that funding had been granted towards a new station and associated infrastructure (new approach road and bus interchange) at Kidderminster. This is very welcome news for rail users and for the officers of SLUG who have relentlessly campaigned for a new station fit for the purpose and worthy of the town. The group's Chairman feels there is sufficient demand for six trains an hour between Kidderminster and Birmingham, and hopes that the proposed new infrastructure will cope with future growth.

In a feature article, the author takes a close look at bus-rail interchange. His first comment is that information given by the Onward Travel Posters at stations is often out of date and that the posters themselves can be hard to find. He's recently travelled to both Bristol and Brighton, and presents photographs of the bus information, prominently displayed at the exits of the two stations, to show how much better it could be: "If this standard of bus information can be made available in other parts of the country, why isn't it available in the West Midlands? Centro produces excellent maps and bus timetables, but none is available at any railway station." That said, he does go on to castigate Centro for not using the familiar double-arrow "national rail" symbol on their timetables to designate bus stops adjacent to railway stations.

East Suffolk Travellers' Association – *members shape policy by relating their travel experiences*

For a couple of years, ESTA has been asking its members to complete questionnaires about their travel experience on trains and buses. However, they've now decided to change the approach and establish a new reporting process: a number of specific questions on travel matters will be presented periodically, with transport users invited to respond according to their experiences.

The ESTA stall was deployed at East Anglian Transport Museum's Gala Weekend in September. There was a high demand for the group's train and bus timetables, and their "Lucky Stations" game appealed to all ages and generated useful income for ESTA. Three walks from stations on the East Suffolk line have been organised for the Autumn, and plans for a members' Christmas Lunch are well advanced. Another activity this Autumn will be conducting a passenger count at Halesworth station and comparing results with previous years.

The group has participated in the development of the Rail Prospectus for East Anglia (published by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership) via discussions and a written submission. They've also taken the opportunity to meet managers from Abellio Greater Anglia and participate in the Company's Cycle Forum. Meanwhile a number of specific issues are being pursued including: signage to the buses at Lowestoft and finding a possible use for the dilapidated station building at Saxmundham.

Next year sees the 50th anniversary of ESTA, and preparations are in hand to mark the event – a commemorative booklet is planned, and members of the association are invited to submit further ideas.

Bedford-Bletchley Rail Users' Association – *mystery celebrity prompts NR's change of heart?*

The Association's long-running battle to get Marston Vale Line trains transferred from the bleak platform 6 at Bletchley to platform 5, with covered steps and heated waiting room, has met with some success. Most MVL trains now run into 5 enabling easy, cross-platform interchange with London trains. More good news for the users of Bletchley station came with the announcement that the Government has allocated £1.5m to redevelop the station as part of a Local Growth Deal.

All the redundant track and equipment left lying around at numerous lineside locations has prompted the Association to protest to Network Rail – they argue it gives a poor impression of the railway, presents an invitation to vandalism and is a hazard to wildlife. Sadly, the insides of some of the trains on the Marston Vale Line are not much better, and the Association is chasing up London Midland to restore their previously admirable reputation for clean trains. However, they're pleased to see that a bench seat has been reinstated at Bedford St Johns station – apparently it disappeared when a new equipment cabinet was installed.

Noting that the Thameslink franchise is now run by the same company that operates the London Midland service, the Association hopes that there will now be greater co-operation between the two at Bedford station.

It's that man again! ... Michael Portillo has been spotted travelling the line with a camera crew, filming for a future episode of his Great Railway Journeys. He was also seen at Bletchley climbing the steep steps from platform 6 – maybe that was the cause of Network Rail having a change of heart?!

The Marston Vale CRP was awarded Second Prize for Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre in the Most Enhanced Station Buildings category of ACoRP's Community Rail Awards competition.

Association of Public Transport Users (Hertfordshire) – *all eyes on the new train operator*

It's early days for the new Govia Thameslink Railway, but APTU reports that performance has not been good, although this has often been due to circumstances outside the Company's control.

APTU's Chairman has been looking through the report from Passenger Focus about information during times of service disruption, and comments that the findings will be useful when lobbying train operators. In the newsletter, he has also kindly included a reference to Railfuture's own survey about passenger experiences during disruption (*more about this below*).

Noting that various organisations, including Railfuture, have been trying to influence the design of the new Class 700 Thameslink units, APTU's Chairman says that he was told by the Rail Systems manager at Siemens that every change to the design has to be agreed by all 18 members of the banking consortium that funded the trains!!! (*And we can trust the bankers to get it right ... can't we? – Ed*).

Windsor Lines Passengers' Association – *additional rolling stock coming into service*

The group is generally supported of the rather complex re-allocation of rolling stock on the Windsor Lines, and is pleased with the aim to use Class 450 units to strengthen main line services, particularly on the Ascot-Guildford line. As ex-Gatwick Express coaches merge with Class 458 stock, the WLPA tells its members how to spot the former: they're the ones without the horizontal window bars!

The WLPA met South West Trains managers recently and were given an update on forthcoming station improvements in their area – the group had the opportunity to express their concerns over signage and the proposed circulation of passengers at Putney Station. They also feel that boards telling drivers where to stop at certain stations are not ideally placed in relation to platform canopies

and exits. Another point raised concerns the lack of publicity given to special ticket offers, and the group would like to see more cheap offers for lightly-used trains.

The group ends its September newsletter with a list of their published aspirations. Alongside each is a comment as to whether the aim has been met, is ongoing, or has yet to see any progress. One of the 2-dozen aspirations listed was to retain guards on all trains. A tick for that one - they are still there!

Transition Marlborough – townsfolk sign up to rail reopening proposal

The Transition Town group in Marlborough has produced a 15-page report about restoring the rail link to the town. Over 1,000 people have signed up for the proposal, which is to be presented at the next meeting of Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership on 29th October. The group will be asking for the £15,000 required to fund a feasibility study. They claim the rail link could be completed for £30m and have an economic return of 2:1.

Trans Wilts Rail – survey to gauge use of new service

Additional trains from Swindon to Westbury via Chippenham, Melksham and Trowbridge have been running for 9 months, with passenger numbers growing and some of the trains getting quite crowded. The enhanced service was introduced for a 3-year trial period with a Local Sustainable Transport Fund subsidy. To help the train operator and Wiltshire Council understand how it's being used, the TWR partnership organised passenger counts on all trains over the 4-day period of 11-14 October. Volunteers involved in the count will be handing out travel questionnaires and most passengers are able to fill these in before they get off the train. TWR has organised passenger surveys before, so the exercise is running like clockwork.

A free Rail Link bus has been introduced to connect with weekday morning and evening trains at Melksham and patronage is slowly growing. There's also a team of volunteers that keep the station at Melksham looking tidy and tend to the flower tubs.

Avocet Line Rail Users' Group – a start made on the new station for Newcourt

The front cover picture on ALRUG's Autumn magazine shows Baroness Kramer cutting the first turf to mark the start of the construction of Newcourt Station on 5th September 2014. The Chairman comments: "The opening of Newcourt station will present a considerable challenge, to maintain a reliable service to the same timetable with trains making an extra stop." However, it's clear that residents welcome the station. ALRUG's magazine editor reminds readers that, in the old days, halts could be thrown up very quickly using a kit of parts from a concrete factory at Exmouth; the one at Polsloe Bridge has lasted 87 years!

Performance on the line dipped badly in the Spring but has since got back to an acceptable level. One member has spent the summer analysing service disruptions using the "Real Time Trains" database (acknowledging that not all reasons recorded are accurate, but it's good enough to give a reasonable picture). Looking at the percentages of the various types of problem, it's clear that the ageing fleet of DMUs is largely to blame, accounting for some 36% of service interruptions. Track and signalling problems come in a very close second (33%).

ALRUG has started work on a new manifesto for the line setting out what passengers want, both in the period up to 2020 and in terms of development during the franchise that follows. A principle focus of the document will be on making the "Devon Metro" a reality.

The group has also completed its report "Station Standards for the Avocet Line" and all stations on the line have been audited against the standard. The main shortfalls identified are: lack of ticket machines, public address systems and CCTV; short platforms (only two stations on the line are long

enough for a 6-car train); and accessibility problems at some stations. ALRUG persuaded retired rail manager Chris Green, who visited the line in April, to write a Foreword to the report (which will be published on ALRUG's website in due course).

ALRUG's founder and Chairman, Tony Day, was awarded Third Prize in the outstanding volunteer category of ACoRP's Community Rail Awards competition for 2014.

You can read the full results of ACoRP's 2014 Community Rail Awards competition in their illustrated booklet [here](#). The awards ceremony took place at Scarborough on 2nd October.

...news from Railfuture follows...

RAIL USERS' CONFERENCE, - on 1st November at the University of Westminster, London

"Meet the women who run our railways"

... that's the title of a press release issued by Railfuture to publicise the forthcoming conference. There's no shortage of women in very senior positions in the rail industry, so securing an all-female platform of speakers for the conference was not difficult. The line-up includes: Transport Minister Baroness Kramer; Head of Capacity Planning at Network Rail, Fiona Dolman; Karen Boswell, the Manager of East Coast; Anna Matthews from Delta Rail; Sharon Hedges of Passenger Focus; and Jenni Borg, Head of Smart & Integrated Ticketing at the Dept. for Transport.

The conference, incorporating Railfuture's RUG Awards ceremony, takes place at the University of Westminster, New Cavendish Street, London. Bookings are still being taken, and the conference fee of **£35** includes buffet lunch and conference report.

Gents: At the risk of being horribly sexist, can I point out that this conference will be especially of interest to the ladies, so why not take advantage of the special price of **£60** for two delegates and bring along your partner?

More details and conference booking form [here](#).

DISRUPTION SURVEY – *your comments needed, please*

Railfuture's Passenger Group is carrying out a review of disruption handling and is seeking input from passengers as well as the rail industry. You can complete Railfuture's survey online [here](#). User groups can help by publicising the survey in their newsletters and magazines – *thanks*.

New research has been published by Passenger Focus into rail passengers' experiences and needs when trains are delayed; the full report can be downloaded [here](#). The outcome of Railfuture's questionnaire will serve to underline the importance of this issue to the travelling public, and it's hoped that as many people as possible will take a moment to fill in the form.

RAILFUTURE INSPECTS THE IEP MOCK-UP

Members of Railfuture's Rolling Stock Requirements Panel, Norman Bradbury and Keith Dyll, have now had access to the IEP mock-up, located in a warehouse in Warwick, and have prepared a 4-page report on their visit. The object of the display was to show examples of design features that are intended to be incorporated in the finished train.

Norman and Keith found the interior to be bright and in a pleasing colour scheme. They were concerned at the predominance of airline-style seating, which creates difficulty for people moving to or from the window seat while leaving little space for luggage to be stowed nearby. And predictably they found that seats did not align satisfactorily with windows.

The pair had a number of observations regarding tables, doors, toilets, reserved-seat indications and other features but felt, on the whole, that the IEP promises to be an excellent train. They hope that

it's not too late for their comments to be taken into consideration, saying: "We would suggest that in future users should be invited to comment at an earlier stage so that their views can be incorporated into the scheme before the production stage."

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

After many years lobbying for direct electric train service to Stansted Airport from Cambridge, East Anglia Branch was pleased to see an improved timetable introduced in August. The additional morning and afternoon trains are a great start which the Branch hopes will expand to cover the whole day.

There was further cause for celebration when the Government announced it would fund a detailed engineering study into the reopening of the line between March and Wisbech. The Branch says: "This level of funding would not have been announced were there not a strong chance of the line being reopened."

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

BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE WANT TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS

British Transport Police is running a survey to find out what of rail passengers think they should focus on, and would like as many as possible to complete their short survey by the closing date of 31st October. You can complete it online here: www.btp.police.uk/survey.aspx.

The introduction to the survey tells us: "the BTP is committed to getting you home safe, secure and on time. In setting our policing priorities for next year, we want to hear your views and find out about what matters to you while using the railway or London Underground network."

STATIONS AS A SERVICE

Hitherto, station improvements have been largely piecemeal and brought about by Train Operating Companies and local community initiatives. You will not find a national specification setting out what a station should provide. Upgrades have not been integrated to take advantage of modern technology. However, this uncoordinated approach may be about to change under a new banner of "Stations as a Service" (StaaS). A recent seminar hosted by the Rail Safety & Standards Board and IT company, Cisco brought together interested parties to discuss how new facilities and usage will be progressed.

StaaS is intent on looking at the whole operation of stations, what they do well and what could be done better. It's one of seven projects going forwards under the "Enabling the Digital Railway" collaborative approach. The four main headings for StaaS are: security, operations, retail and the passenger experience. IT is very much a part of all these, and the project will take account of the huge increase in smartphone usage.

In conjunction with Abellio Greater Anglia, three stations have been chosen as a trial, one large (Liverpool Street), one medium (Colchester) and one small (Ingatestone). All these currently have multiple, dissimilar systems and networks. The plan is for a station-based management automation system to support such functions as: WiFi, CCTV, alarm and safety systems, voice comms and help points, signage, and ticket machines. At smaller stations, there could be additional community functions. At larger stations, interconnecting transport modes and retail opportunities (eg "click and collect") would be brought in to the equation. Getting information out to travellers in advance of arriving at the station by use of social media will become the norm. Above all, it will be about re-educating the public on rail station expectations and this will only be possible when early trials of StaaS have been measured, analysed and updated in the light of experience.

– from an article in The Rail Engineer magazine

STATION IMPROVEMENT: A GUIDE TO POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

Rail industry funding

For larger improvements at busier stations bids can be made to the DfT National Station Improvement Programme and Access for All schemes. For smaller scale improvements train operators have minor works budgets and may fund particular renewal or enhancement projects. There are also small funding pots available for Community Rail lines. These sources can sometimes be combined with Network Rail funding.

Wider stakeholder funding

Local authorities have contributed to station improvement schemes, funding improvements that the industry could not fund, or providing match funding to help secure rail industry funding. Investment has often allowed highway, pedestrian and cycle access improvements to be made alongside station investment schemes.

For larger schemes the Single Local Growth Fund and the Community Infrastructure Levy will be potential funding sources. For smaller schemes existing funding from the Local Transport Plan allocation and Section 106 contributions should continue to be available.

Regardless of funding source, by matching funding from a number of sources or funders, it is possible to expand the scope of station improvement schemes.

- useful guidance from the Avocet Line Rail User Group's Autumn magazine

RAIL PASSENGERS' PRIORITIES – A MANIFESTO FOR IMPROVEMENT

New Passenger Focus research, just published, into passengers' priorities for improvement in the railways has identified better value for money tickets as their number one priority for improvement. Getting a seat, more frequent and punctual trains, and better information when there are delays, were also among their top priorities.

The report provides a wealth of data about what passengers think are priorities for improvement. This provides vital pointers for improvements for passengers today, but also as the debate begins for the next phase for investment in the railways and as a number of franchises come up for renewal. As such, it is a manifesto for rail passengers. The report can be downloaded [here](#).

CODE OF PRACTICE ON TICKET INFORMATION – your chance to influence the guidelines

The Office of Rail Regulation is seeking views from passenger groups (among others) to help inform the development of a Code of Practice on ticket information. The Code, which will be in place by early 2015, will provide clarity on what information passengers need to buy and use tickets, including information on the different types of fares, any restrictions that apply, and key terms and conditions, such as compensation and refund rights.

The ORR wants to ensure that passengers are provided with the information they need to get the most appropriate ticket for their journey and travel with confidence. To know more about participating in the consultation, click [here](#).

Railfuture Board Member, Chris Fribbins, is involved in discussions with the ORR on this matter, so you may wish to channel your thoughts via him at chris.fribbins@railfuture.org.uk.

CYCLE-RAIL FUND

The Department for Transport has made available £14.5 million funding from 2012 to 2014 to improve cycle facilities at railway stations. A further £15 million has also been made available for 2015 to 2016. This funding will be allocated to train operating companies via the Cycle Rail Working Group to improve integration between cycle and rail at stations. More [here](#).

TYNE VALLEY LINE NOW A COMMUNITY RAIL SERVICE

Transport Minister Baroness Kramer designated the Tyne Valley Line as a community rail service during a visit to Hexham on 2nd October. Designating the line between Newcastle and Carlisle will allow the community to design rail services according to local needs. In turn, this will help to increase passenger numbers, improve connectivity to key destinations and ultimately boost the local economy. Northern Rail will continue to operate services on the Line with the support of the community rail partnership. The partnership, which is funded by Northumberland County Council and the train operating companies, will work with community groups and other volunteers to decide how services should be run. It will also be able to apply for additional funding for future projects.

Dr Gareth Evans, of the Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership, said: "I am very pleased to have been involved in the process for securing official designation of the Tyne Valley Line services. This is a fantastic railway line with some wonderful scenery, serving a diverse range of markets, including commuters and rural communities alike. Official designation will give our line the formal recognition I sincerely believe it deserves, and provides the partnership with new opportunities to help us attract more people on to the services."

The decision to designate the line as a community rail service came after a 6-week consultation that ended in September. Research has shown that for every £1 invested in a community rail partnership, it can bring more than four times that in benefits such as better value for money, increased revenue, more community involvement and improved economic development. – *DfT press release*

- 37 lines or services in England have now been designated as community rail routes – the prospectus for each can be read [here](#).

WORK BEGINS ON NEW STATION AT BERMUDA PARK IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

The Department for Transport is helping to fund a major new connection on the Coventry to Nuneaton railway line. On 6 Oct, Rail Minister Claire Perry helped push the first spade into the ground at the site of the Bermuda Park station, marking the start of construction work.

The new connection on the Coventry and Nuneaton railway line will serve existing major housing and office developments, with more planned in the future. The station will benefit over 5,000 local residents in the catchment area. – *DfT press release*

WORCESTERSHIRE PREPARES TO CONSULT ON PARKWAY STATION

Worcestershire County Council will this month launch a public consultation on plans for a Worcestershire Parkway railway station. Earlier this year central government provisionally allocated £7.5m from the Local Growth Fund to the scheme. The remainder of the money required - around £10m - is expected to come from the county council. Construction of the new station is scheduled to start by spring 2016 for completion in time for the May 2017 timetable change.

Worcestershire Parkway station would be situated near Norton, Worcester, at the triangle of land formed by the intersection of the Cotswold and Birmingham to Bristol lines and the B4084. The plan is to have two platforms on the Cross Country line with one on the Cotswold line - although provision will be made for future redoubling which could then see a fourth platform added.

-Transport Briefing

WEST MIDLANDS FORTIFIES RAIL DEVOLUTION CASE

Councils from across the West Midlands have approved a formal proposition to government to devolve responsibility for the region's train services.

Last month metropolitan, shire and unitary authorities from across the West Midlands met at the County Buildings in Stafford to endorse the submission document *West Midlands Rail Proposition 2014*. The proposition will now be formally submitted to Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin.

The authorities believe devolving powers from central government to the West Midlands would create a better railway for passengers and the region's economy. Last month's event marked the launch of West Midlands Rail, a consortium involving 14 authorities - Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Herefordshire, Northamptonshire, Sandwell, Shropshire, Solihull, Staffordshire, Telford and Wrekin, Walsall, Warwickshire, Wolverhampton and Worcestershire.

If the government agrees to the rail devolution proposition then West Midlands Rail will be the public body responsible for overseeing local rail services once the existing London Midland franchise ends in 2017. - *Transport Briefing*

The Dept. for Transport's latest **Rail Franchise Schedule**, showing end dates of current franchises and start dates for new franchises, can be viewed online [here](#).

GROWTH DEAL ANNOUNCED FOR THE "HEART OF SOUTH WEST" REGION

A £270m Growth Deal for the Heart of the South West was signed on 8th October. The deal will help create jobs, build homes and improve transport links. The Deal includes an indicative allocation of £0.6m to invest in new stations at Marsh Barton and Edginswell in 2016/17, and a £4.6m investment in Taunton Station.

Infrastructure UK will advise on joint working between Network Rail, the Highways Agency, the Environment Agency and Heart of the South West LEP to design whole problem, holistic solutions to protect people (*eh?*), property and critical rail infrastructure. There will also be more engagement with stakeholders in the long-term planning process for rail and in the rail franchising process. You can download the Growth Deal document [here](#). - *from a Cabinet Office announcement*

PASSENGER COUNTS USEFUL FOR ORR STATS TEAM – send yours in!

Some Railfuture branches and rail user groups routinely conduct passenger counts at stations, usually with a view to checking the station usage figures published by the Office of Rail Regulation. I've been informed that the Stats Team at the ORR would like to be copied in on the results of passenger counts undertaken by voluntary groups as this would help them validate their station usage dataset.

The results of your passenger counts can be forwarded to this email address: rstats@orr.gsi.gov.uk or post them to the Office of Rail Regulation, One Kemble Street, London WC2B 4AN.

TRANSPORT DIRECT REACHES FINAL DESTINATION

Transport Direct, the government-sponsored multi-modal journey planning website, closed at the end of September 2014. The website was launched in 2004 as the only national door to door journey planner for Great Britain. But the Department for Transport says that, since then, a number of online planners and travel information websites have entered the market and now provide alternative sources of travel information. - *Transport Briefing*

TRAIN FIRMS GET £167m FOR DELAYS BUT GIVE COMMUTERS JUST £50m

Train companies have been accused of "ripping off" passengers by tens of millions of pounds a year over compensation for late and cancelled trains. The operators were paid £167m by Network Rail during 2013/14 for delays caused by track, signals and other infrastructure failures, for which the taxpayer-funded company is responsible. However, the train operators handed over an estimated £50m to passengers. The revelation sparked demands for a fundamental change to the rules. - *from a story in the Evening Standard, 29 Sept 2014.*

TRAIN TANNOYS WILL URGE DELAYED PASSENGERS TO CLAIM REFUND

Delayed train passengers will be informed over the tannoy at the point they become entitled to compensation under plans to be announced by rail companies in November. Operators will agree to make announcements encouraging delayed passengers to make a claim, as well as handing out forms and emailing them to people who booked their ticket online.

The measure is part of a wider plan by rail firms to improve the way they inform passengers of disruption on the railways, overseen by the Office of Rail Regulation. It comes after the regulator published a report earlier this year which found that train passengers are missing out on tens of millions of pounds in compensation for delays and cancellations because they are unaware they are eligible for a refund.

Arrangements vary by operator but all passengers can claim a full refund if their train is cancelled, and are entitled to compensation of at least 20 per cent if the service is delayed by more than an hour. Under the “delay repay” scheme, which is used by a growing number of operators, more generous compensation of 50 per cent can be claimed after a delay of just 30 minutes.

A new report published by the Passenger Focus consumer group today urged the industry to “ensure all passengers entitled to compensation know that they are and that it is simple to claim and receive what is due”. It said that on delayed trains “there should be, at least, an announcement encouraging passengers to submit a claim”, while staff should distribute claim forms and emails should be sent to passengers who bought tickets online.

The Rail Delivery Group, which represents Network Rail and rail operator owning groups, responded by announcing that it would shortly issue a “revised plan” for improving passenger information during disruption. This will include a range of measures to be adopted by this winter, including better real-time information at stations and increased use of technology to keep passengers informed of problems.

Longer-term priorities to be completed within the next two years include proactively informing passengers when they are eligible for compensation, including announcements on trains, and handing out, tweeting and emailing of claim forms to passengers. Some companies are already going further, for example C2C which automatically refunds delayed passengers who travel using electronic smart cards. – *The Telegraph*

FREE TAXI IF YOU'RE DELAYED?

Last month, I considered the circumstances under which a free taxi might be provided in the event of a major delay to your train. Dennis Fancett of SENRUG replied with his thoughts:

“My understanding of the policy is that the rail company’s standard ‘Delay Repay’ compensation applies and they are not obliged to provide you with a taxi (or road coach if several passengers) unless the last train of the day will not run, and you can’t get to your booked destination on that day. There are two grey areas which I think it worth Railfuture taking up:

- If the train reaches the station on same day but the delay means last bus from the station has been missed
- If the station you are waiting at is unstaffed. Who organises the taxi?”

EVENTS for the next 2 months

The events listed here are copied across from the Events listing on Railfuture's website, to which I now contribute. Coloured blobs differentiate between types of events...

- National & regional rail events.
 - Railfuture events (rail user group representatives are welcome to attend).
 - Events organised by other railway societies. ■ Party conference (a chance to lobby!).
- Local Rail User Group events are unblobbed. *Some URLs are blue, some are green, I know not why!*

October

- 14 October 2014. Tuesday. "Crossrail developments". Speaker: John Goldsmith, Crossrail. Location: Holiday Inn London-Heathrow, UB7 0JU. 17.45 for 18.30 start. Booking not required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)
- 14 October 2014. Tuesday. "Transform Scotland's Interchange Project". Speaker: Jolin Warren, Head of Research, Transform Scotland. Location: Edinburgh, EH2 3AB. 17.30 for 18.00 start, until 20.00. Booking not required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)
- 15 October 2014. Wednesday. Rail Vehicle Enhancements exhibition at Pride Park, Derby. 09.00-16.30. [onyxrail](#)
- 15 October 2014. Wednesday. Network Rail's Western Route Study briefing at Bristol Parkway Training Centre, Hynts Ground Road, Stoke Gifford, Bristol BS34 8PU. 11.00-13.00. Spaces limited. Contact: [WRS](#)
- 15 October 2014. Wednesday. Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association AGM - all welcome. Christ Church Hall, Littlecourt Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 2JG. 19.30. More info: [SRTA](#)
- 18 October 2014. Saturday. Trans Wilt Rail meet at The Laverton (or at Well Hall Manor; to be advised), Melksham from 10am to 3pm. Please email info@twcrp.org.uk to confirm interest / attendance.
- 20 October 2014. Monday. AGM of the Avocet Line Rail Users' Group. The Malthouse, Globe Hotel, Topsham, EX3 0HR. 19:30. Panel of experts to answer questions. [ALRUG](#)
- 21 October 2014. Tuesday. Railway electrification seminar by IET at One Great George Street, London SW1P 3AA. 08.30-17.00. More info: [IET](#)
- 21 October 2014. Tuesday. "Reducing the environmental impact of ScotRail's operation". Speaker: Stewart Cahill, Head of Environmental Compliance & Sustainability. Location: Glasgow, G2 6HQ. 17.30 for 18.00 start, to 20.00. Booking required for this event, free to CILT-UK members, £10 for non-members. More info: [CILT](#)
- 21 October 2014. Tuesday. "Rail links to airports worldwide". Speaker: Andrew Sharp, former Director, International Air Rail Organisation. Location: Redhill, RH1 1NN. 18.30 for 19.00 start, to 20.30. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)
- 22 October 2014. Wednesday. North Cheshire Rail Users' Group AGM. Guest speaker from Merseytravel. Frodsham Community Centre, Fluin Lane, Frodsham, WA6 7QN. 19.30. More info: [NCRUG](#)
- 23 October 2014. Thursday. "The Croxley rail link". Speaker: Richard Boutal, Major Projects Group Manager, Herts CC. Location: St. Albans, AL1 3ER. 18.00 for 18.30 start, until 20.30. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)
- 24-25 October 2014. Friday-Saturday. Plaid Cymru conference at Llangollen. More info: [PC conf](#)
- 28 October 2014. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users Group meeting. Chesham Town Hall HP5 1DS. 19.30. More info: [CDTUG](#)
- 29-30 October 2014. Wednesday-Thursday. Electrification Infrastructure congress, Westbourne Suite, Lancaster Terrace, London W2 2TY. More info: [RIC](#)

November

- 1 November 2014. Saturday. **Railfuture autumn conference and Rail User Group Awards.** London. More info: [conferences](#).
- 3 November 2014. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, Parson Lane, Clitheroe, BB7 2JN from 19:30. More info: [RVR](#)
- 4 November 2014. Tuesday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association AGM. The Sportsman, Newtown. 18.30. More info: [SARPA](#)

- 4 November 2014. Tuesday. "The future of fare collection: technology or customer experience". Speaker: Shashi Verma, Director of Customer Experience, Transport for London. Location: Lewes, BN7 2XH. 18.30 for 19.00 start, to 21.45. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)
- 5 November 2014. Wednesday. "UK Rail Infrastructure (track, structures, electrification and signalling)". Speaker: Malcolm Pearce, Secretary, Thames Valley Section, The Permanent Way Institute. Location: Reading, RG1 3EU. 17.00 for 17.45 start, until 19.00. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)
- 5 November 2014. Wednesday. Station adoption seminar at ScotRail offices, Atrium Court, 50 Waterloo Street, Glasgow G2 6HQ. More info: [ACoRP](#)
- 6 November 2014. Thursday. London and South East regional branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting. 18.00. More info: [Sussex and Coastway](#).
- 6 November 2014. Thursday. AGM of the Campaign for Borders Rail, St Peters Church, Abbotsford Road, Galashiels, from 19:00 (doors open and buffet from 18:15). www.campaignforbordersrail.org
- 6 November 2014. Thursday. Don Valley Railway meet at the Harlequin Pub, 108 Nursery St, Sheffield, S3 8GG. 19:00. More info: [DVR](#)
- 10 November 2014. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meeting at Hastings Direct, Collington TN39 3LW. 19.00. More info: [BRAG](#) and [ESRA](#)
- 11 November 2014. Tuesday. Association of Community Rail Partnerships members' seminar for the North of England in York. More info: [ACoRP](#)
- 11 November 2014. Tuesday. A People's Railway for Wales & the Borders presented by Shrewsbury-Chester Rail Users' Association. All Saints' Church Hall, Chirk Road, Gobowen, Oswestry, SY11 1TQ. Speaker: Paul Salveson. 19.30. Contact: [SCRUA](#)
- 12 November 2014. Wednesday. London and South East regional branch, Eastern division meeting. 18.30. More info: [Eastern](#).
- 12 November 2014. Wednesday. "Reversing Beeching - a winning formula for Levenmouth" organised by the LevenMouth Rail Campaign. Speaker: Paul Tetlaw, Transform Scotland. More info: [LMRC](#)
- 13-15 November 2014. Thursday-Saturday. Scottish National Party conference at Perth. More info: [SNP conf](#)
- 14 November 2014. Friday. Suffolk Rail Conference at Suffolk County Council headquarters, Ipswich. Contact: [KA](#); more info: [Suffolk](#)
- 15 November 2014. Saturday. London and South East regional branch, Kent division meeting, Canterbury. 14.00. More info: [Kent](#)
- 15 November 2014. Saturday. North West branch meeting. Room F12, Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester, M2 5NS. 13.00. Lunch at 12.00 in The Waterhouse, 67-71 Princess Street, Manchester.
- 15 November 2014. Saturday. Railfuture Scotland Autumn meeting at 14:00, in the Royal Overseas League, 100 Princes Street, Edinburgh. The speaker will be Lord Faulkner on the subject 'From despair to hope - the revival of Britain's railways from Beeching to HS2.' All welcome.
- 17 November 2014. Monday. Bedford Commuters' Association AGM. RAFA Club, Ashburnham Road, Bedford, from 19:30, with railway managers in attendance. More info: [BCA](#)
- 18 November 2014. Tuesday. "The rebirth of the Great Western Main Line". Speaker: Stuart Baker. Location: Cheltenham, GL50 2SY. 19.30. More info: [RCTS](#)
- 18 November 2014. Tuesday. Association of Community Rail Partnerships members' seminar for the South of England in London. More info: [ACoRP](#)
- 19 November 2014. Wednesday. Friends of the Barton Line. No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes DN35 8AX. 19.00. More info: [FBR](#)
- 20 November 2014. Thursday. Seminar "Next steps for transport policy in London and South East England". More info: [PFL](#)
- 22 November 2014. Saturday. Thames Valley Branch and London & SE Branch joint meeting from 11:00 at The New Hope Centre, 95 York Road, Reading, RG1 8DU. Our guest speaker will be George Bathurst of the Windsor Link Railway who will address us about their plans.
- 22-23 November 2014. Saturday-Sunday. Railfuture stall at [NEC](#), Birmingham.
- 25 November 2014. Tuesday. "Extensions to the Underground - past, present and proposed". Speakers:

David Leboff and Jon Kirkup, Major Programme Sponsorship, TfL. Location: Woking, GU22 7HA. 19.00 for 19.15 start. More info: [RCTS](#)

■ 25 November 2014. Tuesday. "HS2: Building in the benefits at the local level". To ensure that LAs, LEPs, developers, transport consultants are aware of practical steps they need to take to make HS2 a success story for their regions, local communities and businesses. For more information or to book your place at this event, please contact: <mailto:info@ptrc-training.co.uk>; more info: [HS2-PTRC](#).

■ 27 November 2014. Thursday. Air Rail UK, London. More info: [AR](#)

28 November 2014. Friday. Ashchurch, Tewkesbury & District Rail Promotion Group public meeting. Tewkesbury library, Sun Street, Tewkesbury, GL20 5NX. 19:30. Guest speaker: Chris Green. More info: [AT&DRPG](#)

December

1 December 2014. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, Parson Lane, Clitheroe, BB7 2JN. 19:30.

More info: [RVR](#)

2 December 2014. Tuesday. "Highspeed Hastings - a new 'Brede' of total route modernisation". Speaker: Roger Blake, Railfuture. Location: Lewes, BN7 2XH. 18.30 for 19.00 start, to 21.45. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#). See also: [MarshLink](#).

■ 4 December 2014. Thursday. London and South East regional branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting. 18.00. More info: [Sussex and Coastway](#).

4 December 2014. Thursday. Don Valley Railway meet at the Harlequin Pub, 108 Nursery St, Sheffield, S3 8GG. 19:00. More info: [DVR](#)

■ 4 December 2014. Thursday. Next Generation Rail conference. Crewe Hall CW1 6UZ. 08.30-16.00. More info: [NGR](#)

■ 6 December 2014. Saturday. Lincs/East Anglia branches joint meeting. Museum and Art Gallery, Priestgate, Peterborough, PE14 1LF. 13:30.

8 December 2014. Monday. Bexhill Rail Action Group meeting at Hastings Direct, Collington TN39 3LW. 19.00. More info: [BRAG](#) and [ESRA](#)

■ 9 December 2014. Tuesday. "The Stranraer to Ayr Line Support Association". Speaker: Richard Carr, SAYLSA Development Manager. Location: Glasgow, G2 6HQ. 18.00 for 18.30 start, to 20.00. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#).

9 December 2014. Tuesday. Chesham & District Transport Users Group meeting. Chesham Town Hall HP5 1DS. 19.30. More info: [CDTUG](#)

■ 10 December 2014. Wednesday. "National infrastructure planning: investment priorities, the Planning Act review and progress on major projects". London. Morning seminar. More info: [WEETF](#)

13 December 2014. Saturday. Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association AGM. White Lion, Machynlleth. 11.00. More info: [SARPA](#)

■ 14 December 2014. Sunday. **National rail timetable change.**

For events further than 2 months ahead, see the [Events listing on Railfuture's website](#).

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This bulletin has been sent by...

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