

❄ **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, please contact the [Membership Secretary](#)

GUEST RAIL USER GROUP OF THE MONTH – The Remembrance Line Association

Since the decline of cross-channel ferry traffic, the future for the Folkestone Harbour branch line has looked very bleak; the final charter train to use the line was in 2009. The Remembrance Line Association actively campaigns for the line to be retained and wants to see passenger services return. They argue that rail-based transit should form the centrepiece of any redevelopment of the town's waterfront area, and they've set up a company with the name of Folkestone Harbour Railway Limited to promote the concept of hybrid tram-train units connecting Folkestone Central station with the waterfront via the harbour branch line.

A first step was to get historic infrastructure on the line, most notably the viaduct and swing bridge, listed and thus retained as features within the Seafront Development plan. They feel that the unique platform canopies and the World War 1 cafe are of national importance – the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the war provides an opportunity to press home these arguments. With proposals for 1,000 new homes and a large retail development on the table, the line could play a vital role in the coming century for the benefit of both residents and visitors.

You are invited to join the Remembrance Line Association – further details are on their website [here](#).

LATE NEWS:

Government publishes closure notice for Folkestone Harbour branch line – see Page 9.

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

Stranraer to Ayr Line Support Association – direct services to Glasgow under threat

The new ScotRail franchise could herald the end of through trains from Stranraer and Girvan to Glasgow. This is the alarming conclusion of SAYLSA after they studied Transport Scotland's draft Invitation to Tender document for the next ScotRail franchise, due to start in April 2015. Passengers will have to change trains at Ayr or Kilmarnock and wait up to 15 minutes for a connection. SAYLSA points out that Ayr is one of Scotland's coldest stations with no step-free access between platform 4 and the rest of the station.

Chair of SAYLSA John McCutcheon said in a press release "First we saw the abstraction of 60,000 ferry passengers, now we see the potential ending of through rail journeys; I hope the next stage is not the end of rail services to Stranraer completely. Over the past few years rail services to the Central Belt have become slower and there is a real danger that under this proposal SW Scotland will become further isolated from the rest of the country leading to further economic decline".

SAYLSA concedes that the draft ITT has many encouraging elements, including a new initiative to introduce purpose-built trains on scenic lines ... but the Stranraer line is left out of this initiative, which is mandatory only for the Oban, West Highland and Kyle of Lochalsh routes (although bidders could include the Stranraer line if they so wish). SAYLSA is pleased that the successful bidder will need to invest heavily in Community Rail Partnerships such as their own organisation.

Rail Action Group East of Scotland – new Dunbar service is well used

RAGES is pleased that the late-night Saturday train from Edinburgh to Dunbar is well used, proving how much it was needed; the group wants the service to be extended to Berwick and is aware that there would be enormous support for it in the town. Connectivity between Dunbar and Berwick suffered after the introduction of the “Eureka” timetable on the East Coast Main Line, and RAGES wrote to CrossCountry suggesting some extra stops that would help solve the problem – they’ve received a reply to the effect that the changes would not be possible and detailing the operational reasons for the decision.

There’s been a number of opportunities in recent weeks for the committee members of RAGES to meet with senior ministers and rail managers. A Passenger Focus meeting and reception in Edinburgh provided the chance to discuss operational matters with the MD of First ScotRail, and to quiz the Scottish Transport Minister about station reopenings at East Linton and Reston (although he wasn’t giving anything away). At a First ScotRail Stakeholder Reception, the RAGES representative had the opportunity to press the Company for specific service improvements, and at a separate ScotRail Parliamentary Reception, there was the chance for RAGES representatives to rub shoulders with Scottish MPs, councillors and other people who could potentially lend support to the group’s campaigns.

RAGES is currently refining its aspirations for the new ScotRail franchise which is due to start in April 2015, and will be seeking meetings with the bidders. The group was concerned that the results of a study into the reopening of East Linton and Reston stations would not be released in time for the refranchising process, but was pleased that the recently-published “draft Invitation to Tender” document did, in fact, contain the new stations as part of a priced option.

The RAGES [website](#) has had a total makeover which is proving popular with users. The webmaster takes the view that “a website can only be considered good if it is regularly updated and easy to navigate.”

South East Northumberland Rail User Group – council still on board with AB&T reopening

In order to allay any confusion about Northumberland County Council’s position on the Ashington Blyth & Tyne line re-opening, SENRUG asked the Council’s Strategic Transport Manager to contribute an article for their newsletter giving the current position. Judging from the article, it seems the Council is still very much on board, having now established the governance arrangement and a stakeholder group to push the scheme forwards - they’re working to have a re-introduced passenger service included as a priced option in the specification for the next North of England passenger rail franchise. However, SENRUG comments that the failure of the County Council to obtain immediate prioritisation of the scheme from the regional Local Transport Board is a real setback.

“Must do better” is SENRUG’s verdict on the newly-installed Customer Information Screens at Morpeth. A photograph of a CIS shows a train departure as “on time” despite the clock at the bottom of the screen showing that it’s 10 mins past the scheduled departure time. Has it passed through unnoticed or is it late, if so how late? – on that occasion, the CIS served no useful purpose. Another photograph shows an erroneous information display on a platform at Newcastle station: “Not one member of staff was visible to assist confused passengers; no-one to whom the incorrect CIS could be reported. This isn’t just poor customer service. It’s poor operations.”

Members of the group took part in a naming ceremony of an East Coast locomotive in July. The Company then invited stakeholders to accompany them for a complimentary journey, during which the managers were on hand to listen to concerns and suggestions. SENRUG found this to be a very useful event, and was able to talk about the need for additional trains calling at Morpeth and for improved passenger facilities at Newcastle as part of the station redevelopment.

A Computing Science undergraduate at Newcastle University is working with SENRUG to produce a Smartphone App that will enable rail users to engage with the group while on the go, as well as being able to find out about train departures and arrivals from their local stations.

Furness Line Action Group – an invitation to experience overcrowding and cancellations first-hand.

There has been a number of train cancellations on the Furness Line in recent weeks and FLAG says this demonstrates how the railways are now being run on very tight staffing and rolling stock levels. There is certainly no spare capacity to cope with rising public demand. The group has sent, via their MP, an invitation to the Office of Rail Regulation for a representative to come to the North West to experience first-hand the problems with the rail service in the area: “will anyone from the ORR take us up on our offer?” FLAG argue that they can’t wait 20 years for HS2 to solve capacity problems.

FLAG's current key aspirations can be summarised as (i) the retention of through trains to Manchester Airport and possible new services to Leeds, (ii) a Sunday service between Barrow and Whitehaven, (iii) regular frequency trains at all stations with improved connections, and (iv) increased use of the Cumbrian Coast line by freight. They say that “with the help of our two local MPs and the *Cumbria Better Connected* campaign, we must prevent the Dept. for Transport marginalising the Cumbrian Coast to a branch line backwater.”

Commenting on the funding arrangements for the new Rail North organisation, FLAG has grave concerns about the Government passing the buck to local councils who are already struggling with massive spending cuts.

FLAG urges us to visit the Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve as featured on the BBC's “Autumnwatch” programme; the reserve is only 250 metres from Silverdale station, and offers a substantial discount for those arriving by rail. We’re told that there are many other scenic walks to enjoy in the limestone country around Silverdale and Arnside – you can pick up a leaflet from the countryside office at Arnside station.

Harrogate Line Supporters’ Group – business case shows benefits of electrification outweigh costs

The campaign to electrify the Harrogate Line received a boost during recent weeks when local MP Andrew Jones raised the subject twice in the House of Commons, firstly in a question to the Prime Minister, then later in an exchange with the Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin. The Transport Secretary said in his reply that the recently-published Business Case for the scheme “looks promising” – his statement was later widely reported in the local media.

The analysis and preparation of the Business Case for electrification and service improvements was jointly funded by relevant local authorities. Network Rail and Northern Rail supported the work with technical and commercial data, while the Harrogate Line Supporters’ Group chipped in with feedback on customer needs and technical issues. The benefit:cost ratio came in at a healthy 3.61:1. The Business Case is now being submitted to the Ministers in the Treasury and the Dept. for Transport to seek funding for the scheme. You can catch up with the latest campaign news [here](#).

Huddersfield Penistone & Sheffield Rail Users’ Association – who wants to wait 59 minutes?

HPSRUA has been in discussion with Northern over the May 2014 timetable proposals in an attempt to bring about some improvements. The group had some modest success in securing the retiming of one or two services by a few minutes to give a uniform arrival or departure time, but were unable to prevent the loss of the through Leeds to Sheffield via Penistone evening service on Mon-Fri because the path is needed for an additional TransPennine Express train to Manchester Airport.

A feature article in HPSRUA’s newsletter seeks to dispel some of the ill-informed media criticism of the HS2 project. The group firmly believes that HS2 will be good for their region, economically and socially. They think that the Penistone Line will benefit from much increased patronage for services to the Midlands and London, but point out that this will only come about if plans are made early to improve capacity on the route; they want to see a half-hourly service and the Penistone Line electrified. As one writer points out “the difference between waiting 59 minutes for the next train and waiting 29 is not 30 minutes, it is *phenomenal*.” There’s some comfort in the news that improvements to passenger information on the West Yorks section of the line are planned for the coming year.

We read that “Le Tour de France will be coming to a Penistone Line station near you in 2014”, and HPSRUA hopes that the railway will be able to handle the hundreds of passengers expected.

Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester line (STORM) – remembering the Oldham Loop

On 2 Nov, 150th anniversary celebrations were held to mark the opening of the line from Oldham Mumps to Rochdale (the “Oldham Loop”, now part of Metrolink), and STORM members helped to make the event a great success. Proceedings began with the Town Crier proclaiming a report of the “opening of the line” from the Oldham Chronicle of November 1863. The Mayor of Oldham and other dignitaries arrived at station by tram, which acted as a reception area for the large civic party. The Mayor of Oldham made a short speech before unveiling a commemorative plaque.

There are various reports from STORM members which suggest that Northern Rail is letting passengers down at times of service disruption, for example...

- One member checked Smithy Bridge station at a time when buses replaced trains and found that the only advice to passengers was a couple of small notices in the road-facing window of the signal box.
- On another occasion, when a cable theft led to multiple cancellations, the official information was that stop-orders had been placed on fast trains so that passengers would not be stranded at Castleton and Mills Hill – clearly this advice had not filtered down to the operating staff!
- More recently, a twisted rail at Walsden led to a number of cancellations - the customer information screen at Mills Hill showed a particular service as “delayed” but a passenger with mobile-phone access to Northern’s website was able to tell everyone that the train they were waiting for had been cancelled!

Friends of the Barton Line – volunteers making a difference

At a recent meeting of the FoBL, two members of the group were thanked for repainting the running-in boards at Thornton Abbey station. It was also announced that volunteers were being sought to help maintain the community garden at Barton Interchange.

FoBL is suggesting that a pair of Barton Line train services be marketed as boat trains, since they provide handy connections to the P&O ferry arrivals and departures at Hull. The Barton Line Santa Specials this year will run on Dec 7th.

The Treasurer told the meeting that he had managed to find an instant-access savings account that paid 0.05% interest, explaining that the group was not eligible to receive the higher rates of interest available to personal customers (*can any RUG beat that miserly rate of interest? – Ed*).

Stourbridge Line User Group – group celebrates a major campaign victory

London Midland has responded to numerous requests from SLUG to recognise the potential of Hartlebury Station which currently has only a skeletal rail service. The operator is to introduce an hourly service between the morning and evening peaks, giving an opportunity for residents of Hartlebury to go shopping by train and visitors to travel to the station. SLUG hopes the service will be well used, justifying evening and Sunday trains in the future.

The Winter timetable for the Stourbridge Line introduces a new cross-city extension and adds two stations to the list of through services from Stourbridge Junction: Bearley and Claverdon; SLUG’s newsletter supplement gives historical notes about the two villages by way of encouraging members to pay them a visit. Train times at Stourbridge Junction will be altered significantly in December, prompting SLUG’s timetable gurus to see if an adjustment to the Stourbridge Town shuttle service is warranted - after a detailed analysis (spreading across three pages of their newsletter), they decided that it was probably better to leave things as they are!

In a comment column, SLUG’s Chairman reflects on trams in the West Midlands, past and present, and wonders if Metro Line 2 will ever happen. He concludes optimistically: “I believe that a railway of some sort will eventually connect our neighbouring towns. History (and common sense) tells us that public transport must take people where they want to go.”

Cotswold Line Promotion Group – one short franchise after another (...possibly)

The CLPG is worried that the short extension of the First Great Western franchise brings no opportunity for an improved service specification. Even more worrying is the rumour that another short franchise extension could follow on from the first because of uncertainties over the many development projects in the region. Another cause for concern is the replacement of a busy 8-car HST working with a 5-car Class 180 unit due to a rolling programme of refurbishing HST units - the CLPG fears gross overcrowding which could continue for up to three years. On the other hand, it's thought that some Cotswold Line commuters may transfer their allegiance to the new Chiltern Railways service to Marylebone from Oxford Parkway when it opens.

Although not on their patch, the CLPG has been helping to promote the much-improved service from Hartlebury station which begins in December. Elsewhere we read that the CLPG has brokered a deal with London Midland to enable supporters of Worcester City Football Club to travel cheaply to Kidderminster, where the Club will be staging home games for a period until a permanent home can be established. Local publicity resulted in over 100 supporters using the train on the first Saturday of the promotion, generating useful off-peak revenue for the railway. The CLPG thinks there's scope for other sporting venues in the area to make greater use of rail.

In September, a plaque was unveiled at Moreton station dedicated to the memory of CLPG founder, Oliver Lovell. Oliver had left a generous legacy to the group; they hope to double the amount using proceeds from events such as the recent charter train to Swanage, and by inviting donations from members. A memorial fund has been established which will be used for station projects.

There are to be celebrations next year to mark the 100th anniversary, not of any railway infrastructure ... but of a poem! It will be 100 years since Edward Thomas travelled by train to Ledbury along the Cotswold Line and wrote his famous poem beginning "Yes, I remember Adlestrop". The station at Adlestrop closed in 1966, but the station nameboard and a tablet inscribed with the poem live on in a village bus shelter.

Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users' Association – group argues that service extension is practicable

The BBRUA has now published its response to the advice from London Midland that the Company was not prepared to consider extending Marston Vale Line services to/from Milton Keynes Central for operational reasons. The group challenges the assertion that there's insufficient time in the schedules and that the business case is weak, and questions whether the severe speed restriction at the junction beyond Bletchley is really warranted, adding : "we have tried to be as patient and practical as possible but feel very let down by both LM and Network Rail."

BBRUA members have been helping the MVL Community Rail Partnership to man the gift shop and other facilities at the restored Ridgmont Station. The CRP is also looking to BBRUA members to help out with the MVL Santa Specials on 14 Dec.

One member of BBRUA got in touch to say how impressed they were with the "new train" on the Marston Vale Line. In fact it was a quite-old, but recently-refurbished, class 150 unit. Obviously it's been refurbished to a very high standard!

Bedford Commuters' Association – new franchisee must offer "Operating Excellence"

In September the BCA (and neighbouring group, APTU) met the Franchise Bid Manager for First Capital Connect, then in October they had a meeting with Stagecoach. Further meetings with the other shortlisted bidders for the new Thameslink franchise are planned. The group is expecting the new franchisee to provide "Operating Excellence" which includes a reliable fleet of trains, up to date information, good disruption management and robust contingency plans. They will also be looking at timetable proposals and arrangements for stakeholder engagement.

After several years of campaigning, the BCA has finally got agreement from East Midland Trains that, from the Dec 2013 timetable change, an early morning St Pancras to Sheffield service will now call at Bedford, thereby plugging a gap in the northbound peak-hour service. The group continues to strive for reinstatement of the half-hourly service to Leicester and beyond.

Following the announcement of fare increases for 2014, the BCA's Chairman wrote to the three local MPs, quoting the additional amount that commuters in the area would need to find for their annual season tickets, and asking the MPs to lobby for a reduction.

Technical problems with the new Automatic Number Plate Recognition system at Bedford Station car park should have been rectified in recent weeks, and members are asked to contact the Chairman if they have any further problems so he can take them up with FCC.

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group – standards must not slide under latest LU plans

In the minutes of CDTUG's most recent meeting, the NCP car park attendant at Chesham was singled out for praise for his action in warning commuters of operational delays to Met Line services before allowing them to pay for parking, thus giving them the opportunity to drive to other stations along the line, where Chiltern Line services were running almost normally. Praise was also given for the new garden displays at Chesham, reminiscent of the days when the station used to regularly win awards for its gardens.

One member of CDTUG reported on his visit to the Control Room at Baker Street which was currently responsible for the day to day operation of the Metropolitan Line. A new Control Room in Hammersmith for the Met and other sub-surface lines would come into operation shortly.

Responding to the news that London Underground plans to close all ticket offices by 2015, CDTUG's Secretary says the group "will continue to do everything it can to ensure it protects what we have currently, as any measures to reduce the current standards are likely to be unacceptable."

...news from Railfuture follows...

RAILFUTURE RAIL USER GROUPS AWARDS, 2013

The **Railfuture 2013 Rail User Group Awards** were presented by Railfuture president Christian Wolmar in front of a near-capacity audience at Railfuture's Rail User Conference, held in the oak-panelled splendour of Oxford Town Hall on 2 Nov. The judging panel comprised Railfuture vice-presidents Ian Brown, Barry Doe, Roger Ford, and Chris Green.

- In the **Best Campaign** category, the winner was the Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group for their campaign to secure electrification. The Harrogate Line Supporters Group and the South East Northumberland Rail Users' Group were both highly commended for their recent campaigns.
- The Clara Zilahi Award for **Best Campaigner** (in memory of a stalwart East Anglia branch member and national Board Director who died this year) was Steve Smith, leader of Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group. Steve had successfully fought off service cuts at the Wiltshire station.
- The Gold award for the **Best Website** went to the [Portishead Railway Group](#) with the [Avocet Line Rail Users' Group](#) taking Silver. Click on each link to see why the judges were so impressed!
- The Oliver Lovell Award for **Best New Group** (in memory of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group founder who died this year) was the Harrogate Line Supporters Group, in recognition of their campaigns to achieve firstly more direct trains between London and Harrogate and secondly the recent bid for electrification of the whole of the Harrogate Line between Leeds, Harrogate, Knaresborough & York.
- In the **Best Newsletter** category, the winner was the Avocet Line Rail Users' Group. Click [here](#) to view a recent newsletter and see how the group announced the award on their website.

- The **Judges' Special Award** was presented to Peter Wakefield, Chair of East Anglia branch, for his work on the Wisbech campaign.

Congratulations to all concerned! You can see a slideshow of the winners [here](#). And remember ... you've only got 11 months to work on your entry for 2014!

BOTH HS2 AND UPGRADES TO THE CLASSIC NETWORK ARE NEEDED

Following the Commons vote on 31 Oct paving the way for HS2, Railfuture has added its voice to the debate, issuing the following statement:

"Britain's railways face a capacity crisis which is not going to go away. There is no "do nothing" option. Additional enhancements to existing lines to increase capacity are very welcome, but these cannot provide the step change that new lines can provide. It's not an "either/or" choice - we need upgrades to the classic network and a new high-speed network too.

"HS2 is the only game in town. If HS2 is abandoned, we run the risk of losing this investment for decades. Therefore, we support the route of Phase 1 with the exception of the HS1/HS2 link which we believe needs to be re-evaluated along the lines of the Euston Cross proposal, albeit with an underground junction with HS1

"We support the proposals for Phase 2 although we may want to make suggestions for a refinement of some station locations on the Leeds arm of the route. We urge the Government to press ahead with proposals for Phase 3 to connect Scotland"

PUBLIC RECOGNITION FOR RAILFUTURE'S CONTRIBUTION TO RAIL STRATEGY

East Sussex County Council's *Rail Strategy and Action Plan* was officially approved at a recent "Lead Member" meeting. The main priorities of the plan are to electrify and redouble both the Uckfield line and Marshlink line as building blocks for reopening Uckfield - Lewes and extending Javelin services from HS1 to Hastings. The plan can be downloaded [here](#).

The important contribution of Railfuture's London & SE Branch was publicly recognised at the meeting by council members and officers, showing that the Society's approach of building a partnership with a broadening range of stakeholders is valued. The Branch has a seven-page article in the December issue of *Modern Railways* magazine explaining their Uckfield - Lewes campaign.

NEWS FROM EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

Railfuture's East Anglia branch joined up with the East Suffolk Travellers' Association at Halesworth Station in October to count passengers. They report that the numbers were up an impressive 43% compared to the same time last year, thanks mainly to the introduction of an hourly train service. Manea Station will also have a much improved service from Jan 2014, and the Branch has been delivering leaflets door-to-door to publicise the new service.

Branch members have been concerned about ticket offices found to be closed across the Greater Anglia network when they should be open, and a letter of complaint has been sent to the Managing Director. The Branch's Wisbech Rail Reopening Campaign has made further progress after the Stage 1 Study concluded that the line could be operated profitably; the Stage 2 Study into engineering costs will be published in the New Year.

East Anglia Branch is looking forward to hosting Railfuture's Summer Conference in Cambridge next June.

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

DfT RAIL FRANCHISE CONSULTATION SURVEY - *there's just time to respond if you hurry*

The Dept for Transport is currently reviewing the way it consults with the public on rail franchises:

"It is very important that we get a full picture from rail users of where we are doing well and what could be done better and differently. We would therefore be very grateful if you could take the time to share with us your group's experience of rail franchise consultations and your views on how they could be improved by completing our online survey. The Department will not respond to individual comments and responses, but your answers will be considered alongside views from other stakeholders when determining how best to consult on future rail franchises."

The survey can be found [here](#). You have until **Thursday 5 December** to complete the survey, after which this link will no longer work.

BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019

Following consultation with members of the public, consumer groups, industry bodies and Network Rail, the Office of Rail Regulation has set Network Rail's funding and the outputs they expect NR to deliver in the next five year control period. The ORR's final determination of Network Rail's outputs and funding for 2014-19 can be found [here](#).

The ORR will set new regulatory targets for Network Rail's asset management in key areas where performance needs to improve, particularly focusing on how it manages, maintains and renews the rail network. Better asset management will allow the company to move from a 'find and fix' approach to maintenance to a 'predict and prevent' way of working, helping to boost capacity and improve performance on the network. The regulator will also put additional checks in place to monitor the company's progress on making the network more resilient to bad weather and climate change. Getting timely and accurate information on Network Rail's progress will help the ORR track its performance and intervene at an early stage to highlight any emerging problems early on for customers.

Over the coming months, the ORR will be engaging with stakeholders on their regulatory approach for the future and priorities for the growth and sustainability of Britain's railways. – *gov.uk*

HS2 PHASE ONE HYBRID BILL

HS2 took a major step forward on 25 Nov with the publication of the Bill for phase one of the country's new railway between London and Birmingham. The hybrid Bill, effectively the planning application for the scheme, will give the government the powers to construct and operate the railway. It will also give those affected by the proposed line the opportunity to petition Parliament, both for and against the proposals, and have their case heard by a committee of MPs.

The publication of the hybrid Bill has been widely welcomed as a significant milestone towards delivering HS2. More details on the dedicated website [here](#).

TOCs EMPLOYING 10,000 MORE PEOPLE THAN PRE-PRIVATISATION

Rapid growth in the number of train travellers has resulted in train operators (TOCs) employing 10,000 more members of staff than they did 15 years ago, a new report by ATOC has shown.

The number of staff employed by TOCs rose by 25% since the late 90s to 50,100 people between 2011-12. In that same period, the number of services has gone up 20% and the number of passengers has increased by more than 70%.

Michael Roberts, chief executive of ATOC, said: "By encouraging more people to travel on the railway, train companies are oiling the wheels of the British economy. Not only are operators growing the market for train travel, they are also increasing their workforce, supporting 10,000 additional jobs and generating extra money for Government." – *railwaypeople.com*

WALES AND SCOTLAND LEAVING ENGLAND BEHIND ON RAIL FARES

Martin Abrams' blog on the Campaign for Better Transport website includes this, dated 21 Nov:

As a rail fares campaigner it is rare to hear good news, so how refreshing to see that Wales and Scotland are both taking steps to make train fares more affordable.

Firstly in Wales the Government have committed to keeping season ticket price increases 'below the rate of inflation'. This means that season tickets on all routes covered under this franchise are to be held to below the Retail Price Index of 3.1 per cent for Jan 2014. Regulated fares will still be allowed to be increased above the rate of inflation but this measure from the Welsh Government is a huge step in the right direction, and will mean less New Year anguish for Rail Commuters when they renew their season tickets.

In Scotland things are looking even brighter for rail users as the Scottish Government have also committed to making fares cheaper. The ScotRail franchise that is up for renewal in 2015 has some ambitious minimum requirements including capping off peak fares at below the rate of inflation at RPI -1 per cent, whilst peak fares will be held at RPI 0 per cent. Other requirements include introducing smart ticketing across the network and the winning bidder paying all staff at least the National Living Wage.

What's clear now is that Wales and Scotland are leaving England behind when it comes to rail fares. English commuters will be wondering how they can afford to pay for their season tickets as the eleventh above inflation fare increase in a row is levied on 2nd January.

RAIL NORTH ENTERS PARTNERSHIP WITH DfT ON RAIL DEVOLUTION

Rail North, representing local authorities across the North of England, has agreed to enter into a partnership with the Department for Transport (DfT) for the renewal of the Northern and TransPennine rail franchises. The process for replacing these two franchises will begin next year; successors will be in place in February 2016.

Over the past year, north of England authorities have worked together to develop proposals for local decision-making to play a central role in defining future rail services in the North. The Rail North proposals include a Long Term Rail Strategy for the North, a strong business case, and a new decision-making framework for northern authorities to work together.

A joint Rail North/ DfT working group will develop the detail of the partnership proposals for presentation to the Secretary of State, Patrick McLoughlin, and north of England local authority leaders early in the new year. – *railpro.co.uk*

CLOSURE NOTICE FOR FOLKESTONE HARBOUR BRANCH LINE – have your say!

On 20 Nov 2013, the Dept. for Transport published a consultation document seeking views about permanent closure of the 1-mile Folkestone Harbour railway branch line and Folkestone Harbour station. They estimate that the full reinstatement cost would be around £4.6m, plus an annual maintenance bill of just under £50k. These costs, they say, far outweigh the required level of benefits that would be needed for any reopening scheme, such as that proposed by Folkestone Harbour Railway Limited (*see Page 1 – Ed*), to represent value for money.

You can read the consultation document and submit your views via the GOV.UK website [here](#). The consultation period runs until 28 February 2014.

NEW GROUP TO CONSIDER CAMBRIAN RAIL LINE IMPROVEMENTS

A group is being created to consider proposals to improve the Cambrian main and coastal lines through mid Wales. The Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Railway Liaison Committee said hourly services could boost employment and tourism. Its report also called for more trains on the coast line in the summer months.

Committee members and other bodies, including local businesses, have been invited to join the Cambrian Rail Implementation Group by Transport Minister Edwina Hart. She said she wanted the group to look closely at the committee's recommendations and report back in January on costs and feasibility of implementing changes.

Railway liaison committee chair Mansel Williams said the report's recommendations had been based on an analysis of passengers' responses in a survey and consultation: "The volume of responses has been very high and the results back up a number of existing reports made over the past few years that show the need for an hourly service along this key transport artery for mid Wales." – bbc.co.uk

NORWICH IN NINETY

Chancellor George Osborne has announced a new taskforce to look at speeding up journey times to East Anglia to drive growth in the region. Plans for a new expert group charged with finding ways to speed up rail services to the East of England by as much as 25% have been set out by the Chancellor. The new taskforce will be made up of Department for Transport officials, experts from Network Rail, and local MPs.

As part of their work they will identify practical and affordable options to improve services to stations along the line from London to Norwich. This will include examining the potential for cutting journey times to London by around 30 minutes and how 'Norwich in Ninety' could be achieved.

Chancellor George Osborne made the announcement as he addressed the Norwich Chamber of Commerce on Thursday 7 November. More [here](#). – gov.uk

LONDON UNDERGROUND PRESENTS ITS VISION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

London Underground has just set out its vision for the future of London Underground: "a Tube fit to serve London in the 21st century." The vision document tells us that "London is a 24-hour city and to support the capital's vibrant night-time economy we will be introducing a 24-hour Tube service at weekends from 2015, with services running right through the night on Fridays and Saturdays." Other promises include:

- improving reliability and capacity
- cutting delays by a further 30 per cent
- line and station upgrades
- more staff visible in ticket hall areas and on platforms rather than being based in a ticket office
- all LU stations controlled and staffed while train services are running (as now).
- simpler ways to pay at stations and online
- more wi-fi on stations
- all the travel information you need, when you need it, especially while you're on the move
- fares that represent the best possible value for money

Read the full story, watch the video clip and see where the night trains will operate [here](#). – tfl.gov.uk

NEW HOME ON THE WEB FOR DPTAC

The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee has its moved content onto the new GOV.UK website - the single home for all government services and information. Railfuture was among the organisations that successfully campaigned for the retention of DPTAC at the time when the Government was set on abolishing quangos. The new web address for DPTAC is:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disabled-persons-transport-advisory-committee

NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER OPERATORS' MAP

The 2014 edition of Barry Doe's franchise map has just been released, dated for the December timetable change and showing the relevant network changes. It also has additional stations and routes, clarification of seasonal services and some amendments to operator details.

Anyone may download copies for private or commercial use, including printing at any size, from the (now-expanded) 'Rail Operators' section of www.barrydoe.co.uk.

GOOGLE STREET VIEW GOES INDOORS WITH AIRPORTS AND TRAIN STATIONS

Google has added 16 international airports and 59 train and subway stations to Street View, including a number of British locations. They include Gatwick Airport and train stations in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds, as well as a (nearly) full set of London mainline stations: Paddington, Victoria, King's Cross, St. Pancras, Charing Cross, Waterloo, London Bridge, Cannon Street, Fenchurch Street and Liverpool Street. Google is pitching the new additions as a feature for tourists. "Now, in addition to scoping out your destination, Street View can help you cut down the stress of travelling by giving you a preview of your journey, too." - *theguardian.com*

CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Here are some questions to see if you've been paying attention over the last 12 months. No prizes ... and no Googling! Answers will appear in the New Year edition of Rail User Express.

- 1) We've just read about the reopening scheme for the Remembrance Line, but there are many other routes where campaigners are pressing for passenger services. Where are these?
Minsters Line; the South Sub; Waterside Line; Wealden Line
- 2) These lines are very much open for business, but can you say where they are?
Abbeey Line; Atlantic Coast Line; Heart of Wessex Line; Wherry Line
- 3) These curves feature in reopening projects. Where are they?
Bacon Factory curve; Burscough curves; Hall Farm curve; Halton curve
- 4) There are station reopening campaigns at these sites. Where they are?
Blackford; Carno; Flaxby Moor; Magor
- 5) Most campaign groups include a geographical reference in their name, but some retain an air of mystery. Where do these groups operate?
Association of Public Transport Users; Coastliners; Into the West; RailQwest

EVENTS

National & regional rail events are highlighted in **yellow**. Community & environmental events are in **purple**. Railfuture events are in **green** – rail user group reps are welcome to attend!

Mon 2 Dec [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meeting at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.

Mon 2 Dec [Watford Rail User Group](#) Open Meeting (with) in Watford Town Hall from 18:45. Representatives of train operators will attend.

Thu 5 Dec [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Sussex & Coastway) meet in Lewes at 18:00.

Thu 5 Dec [Don Valley Railway](#) drop-in meeting at Harlequin Pub, Nursery St, Sheffield from 19:00.

Sat 7 Dec [Barton-Cleethorpes CRP](#) Santa Specials: two return trips along the line.

Sat 7 Dec [Railfuture East Anglia](#) meet at St Paul's Church, Hills Rd, Cambridge from 14:00. Guest speakers include representative from Greater Anglia.

Sat 7 Dec [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Surrey Division) meet in Guildford from 10:30

Sat 7 Dec [Three Oaks & Winchelsea Action for Rail Transport](#) rallying in support of a better service at Winchelsea Station from mid afternoon.

Sun 8 Dec National rail timetable change.

Mon 9 Dec First day of new Grand Central service from Bradford to London & back

Mon 9 Dec [BRAG](#) members' meeting with Christmas meal at Conquest House, Bexhill from 19:00.

Wed 11 Dec [Meldreth Shepreth & Foxton RUG](#) meet at Elin Way Community Room, Meldreth, 19:30

Sat 14 Dec Santa Special on the Marston Valley line, with Christmas gala at Ridgmont Station.

Mon 16 Dec [ALRUG](#) Christmas Social at The Globe, Lymstone (tbc) from 19:00.

2014

Mon 6 Jan [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meeting at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.

Wed 8 Jan [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Eastern Division) meet in Stratford from 18:30.

Thu 9 Dec [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Sx & Coastway Division) meet from 18:00.

Mon 13 Jan [BRAG](#) meeting at Conquest House, Bexhill from 19:00.

Sat 18 Jan [Railfuture Yorkshire](#) branch meeting in Doncaster.

Mon 3 Feb [Ribble Valley Rail](#) meeting at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30.

Wed 5 Feb [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Workshop & Seminar, Terraces Hotel, Stirling.

Thu 6 Feb [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Sussex & Coastway) meet at 18:00.

Thu 13 Feb [TravelWatch NorthWest](#) conference in Warrington.

Sat 15 Feb [Railfuture London & SE](#) (Kent Division) meet at 14:00.

19/20 Mar [ACoRP](#) Designated Lines seminar, Blackpool

Wed 26 Mar [ACoRP](#) Station Adoption seminar, Birmingham

Mon 21 Apr 25th anniversary of saving of the Settle-Carlisle Line.

Sat 10 May [Railway Development Society \(Railfuture\) AGM](#) in Sheffield.

Tue 13 May [ACoRP](#) members' spring seminar for the North of England, held in York

Sun 18 May National rail timetable change.

Tue 20 May [ACoRP](#) members' spring seminar for the South of England, held in London

Wed 21 May [ACoRP](#) conference "Community Rail in the City"

Thu 22 May UK Local and European Community elections

Sat 21 Jun [Railfuture summer conference](#) at the University Centre, Cambridge

More events on the Railfuture and ACoRP websites.

Please say if you no longer want to receive Rail User Express, or if someone else in your organisation wishes to be included on the circulation list.

This bulletin has been sent by

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