



June 2018

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

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Oh dear, in two key areas the May timetable wrought utter chaos. In the North, delays to electrification, and thus the cascade of diesel units, forced a frantic rewrite of the whole timetable. North and south of London, as Chris Page's (well attributed) [Railfuture article](#) recounts, it was clear from quite early on that the full Thameslink timetable would not be viable. The decision to de-risk it by deferring some services for up to a year was finally taken in November, but proved wholly inadequate. Moreover, it was not shared with stakeholders until February, too late to identify the resulting gaps, and for GTR to cover them. Note that Chris's comment on funding does not apply to the TSGN franchise, as all of the fare revenue goes to the DfT. Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has written to local MPs regarding the performance of both [GTR](#) and [Northern](#).

Roger Smith

We continue with the usual roundup of news items from groups around the UK. Please keep your contributions coming: they are all gratefully received.

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

LMRC hopes as many as possible sign up its Campaign Charter, launched at the 2nd LMRC Conference, which enables any local business or group to demonstrate its commitment to the reinstatement of rail services to Levenmouth with a charter certificate and member sticker. The key message of the Conference was the opportunities a rail link would bring to the area, and the potential for improved connectivity would switching more freight from road to rail, while the actual cost would be around half the inflated estimate in the previous STAG Report. The brainstorming session generated a range of practical suggestions.

Students from several Levenmouth schools and colleges demonstrated their support for rail services at a "Walking the Line" event to mark Scotland's Year of Young People. They have most to gain from reinstatement, as it would restore study, training, work and leisure opportunities denied to Levenmouth youth for almost 50 years. The event generated such enthusiasm that LMRC hopes to run further Walks, to enable other schools to participate.

Campaign for Borders Rail

Campaigners fighting to extend the Borders Railway to Carlisle heard from the MPs who represent either end of the proposed new line. Carlisle MP and Borderlands Growth Deal Champion, John Stevenson, hosted John Lamont, MP for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk, together with Campaign representatives. The meeting was briefed on the success of the line to Tweedbank, and on the potential benefit to the Scottish Borders and Cumbria of its extension. The MPs agreed to take up the issue with the UK Government, whilst ensuring that the project formed part of the Borderlands Growth Deal.

The first draft of the Jacobs Report, to inform the Borders Transport Corridors study for Transport Scotland, was published on 19 April. It considered a total of 21 options, five of which were rail-based:

- Option 9 – Extend Borders Railway to Hawick and/or Carlisle.
- Option 10 – Extend Borders Railway towards East Coast Main Line via Berwick.
- Option 11 – Enhance Rail Services – extend double track, increase frequency, improve journey times.
- Option 12 – Open new stations on existing railway
- Option 13 – Link the Borders Railway with Edinburgh Gateway and the Fife Circle [*or Leven? – Ed.*]

Scottish Transport Minister Mr Humza Yousaf confirmed that all of the options would be taken forward and ‘sifted’ through formal appraisal processes as part of the current Strategic Transport Projects Review. There will be further public and stakeholder consultation before a shortlist of projects is drawn up in early 2020.

CKP Railways

Cumbria Chamber of Commerce responded to Transport for the North’s (TfN) consultation on its draft Strategic Transport Plan by asking it to investigate re-opening the line from Penrith to Keswick. The response was informed by a questionnaire addressed to Cumbrian businesses on the transport issues they faced, and their priorities for improvement. A total of 141 businesses identified the main congestion blackspots. There was outrage at the idea that HS2 trains to Scotland might pass through Cumbria without stopping, and many complaints about the inadequate rail service between Lancaster and Carlisle via Barrow. But the surprise was the level of support for re-opening the Keswick line to stimulate tourism and ease congestion. Unprompted, 19 businesses mentioned it, 7 of whom also wanted Keswick – Workington reinstated. Cedric Martindale, Director of CKP Railways plc, duly briefed Julian Whittle, the Chamber's Business Engagement Manager, on the project – what is proposed, costs, feasibility, benefits and so on.

In a constructive meeting with Northern Powerhouse Rail Director Tim Wood, Cedric explained the work of CKP Railways, Corus Rail Infrastructure Services and the Northwest Regional Development Agency to prove the feasibility of a new railway to Keswick, develop a design package, and demonstrate the business case. Other parts of the railway industry have contributed to studies, and expressed interest in operating trains on the route. But whereas Penrith to Keswick survives sufficiently to be rebuilt and operated as a commercial project, extensions east or west would require more work, cost much more per mile, and require a greater level of political commitment to achieve, so they are not in CKP's scope at this stage.

Friends of Settle-Carlisle Line

The new timetable offers extra services, later trains and more opportunities, but there are still extended service intervals, particularly on Sunday mornings. The Settle-Carlisle Railway Development Company is working with Northern on future improvements, to be informed by passenger feedback and suggestions from the online survey it is currently running: <https://www.settle-carlisle.co.uk/may-2018-timetable/>.

FoSCL Guided Walks restarted on 26 May under the voluntary co-ordination of John Carey and John Disney. There is a range of themes including Full Day, Explorer, Railway and Wonder & Wander walks, to suit every capability. Full details of the new programme are now available [online](#). The website is updated with any late changes due to weather conditions and train disruptions, so do check before you set out. Note that (except for Registered Assistance Dogs) DOGS ARE NOT ALLOWED on any FoSCL walk.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines

Responding through the Rail North Partnership (RNP) to performance issues and travel disruption, TfN and DfT have agreed an action plan for Northern to restore services to acceptable levels of reliability at the earliest opportunity. It involves:

- Improved driver rostering
- Increased driver training on new routes
- Additional contingency drivers, and management presence at key locations in Manchester
- Additional peak services along the Bolton corridor, from Buckshaw and Preston into Manchester.

Meanwhile, the RNP will focus on:

- Improving Northern’s communication to the public regarding service disruptions
- Strengthening its team, to monitor the Action Plan as it is implemented
- Daily calls between the train companies and NR to manage the operation of the new timetable.

Access to Mills Hill station requires the use of stepped and non-compliant ramps. There is no ticket machine for down passengers, and to expect a passenger to walk to the up platform ticket machine and then return to the down platform is unacceptable whatever the Penalty Fares regime suggests. They would have to return to ground level, walk through the bridge, undertake some more mountaineering, return to ground level, walk through the bridge, undertake a third mountaineering expedition, and finally board the train – if they were still breathing! According to Richard Chapman of Rochdale Council, NR have the extensive alterations at Mills Hill in hand, and under DDA must complete them by March 2019.

Together with the Yorkshire and North West branches of Railfuture, four RUGs covering the length of the Calder Valley Line (CVL) have come together in a grass-roots campaign to revive plans to electrify lines across the North of England. The CVL is a strategic route that links Leeds with Manchester and Preston via both Bradford and Brighouse. Three years ago, in a report "Northern Sparks", the Northern Electrification Task Force ranked it in top place.

Harrogate Line Supporters Group

HLSG was delighted to hear that Northern Rail had managed to include the additional weekday morning stops it had requested at Pannal, Weeton, Headingley and Burley Park in the May timetable. Its Planners and Managers deserve credit for negotiating them less than a week before it started!

Rugby Rail Users Group

Far from grumbling about the impact of the May timetable, RRUG is claiming credit for the introduction of regular Virgin Trains throughout the day from Rugby to Crewe, Preston the North West and Scotland. Passengers for these destinations no longer have to choose between London North Western stopping trains, or Virgin Trains via Birmingham and the Black Country, with a change en route. Passengers can comfortably do their business and return home within a day. The Group's main priorities are now:

- Contributing to the West Coast Partnership (HS2/WCML) franchising process
- Consolidating and further improving express Trent Valley services to London, the West Midlands, the North West and Scotland, with direct services to other destinations
- Enhanced weekend services, not least in the Sunday afternoon peak
- Later fast services from Euston on Saturday night, to enable evenings out in Town
- Better integration at Rugby station with other means of transport, both public and private.

Association of Public Transport Users (Bedford Branch of Thameslink)

APTU hopes that the May timetable for Flitwick, Leagrave and Harpenden will be short lived, pending East Midland Trains (or its successor) reversing its decision to omit to Luton and Bedford in the peaks: it deprives London travellers of their fastest service, and the bus from Wellingborough takes four times as long as the train. It is supporting local MPs and Transport Focus in lobbying EMT to revisit the timetable, citing ex-rail industry members about its inefficiency (some train sets dwell for over an hour at St Pancras). Evidence collected since the timetable started will now be the best justification for change, as APTU can show (or not) that its fears have crystallised.

A recent NR planning application to redevelop St Albans station was refused on technical grounds, but will no doubt be resubmitted. APTU doesn't believe there to be enough barriers, whilst the travelling public values both Charlies Coffee in the am and the Pudding Stop in the pm, so both should be retained.

Hitchin Rail User and Rail Commuter Facebook Groups

Herts CC leader David Williams has written to GTR MD Charles Horton, the DfT and NR to express its dissatisfaction with the current Thameslink service. GTR is working on an interim revision.

Phasing in the new timetable over 18 months rather than 6 as a risk reduction measure caused one of the two Cambridge-Brighton trains per hour to be slipped to December. Unfortunately, the announcement came too late to fill the gaps that this created, eg of half-hour in the peak service from Hitchin to Finsbury Park between 0741 and 0811. A HRUG proposal for a Letchworth-Kings Cross service calling at 0758 is under consideration, but would need NR approval, even if GTR can identify the necessary resources.

Then, stopping the fast Peterborough services at Stevenage and Biggleswade rather than at Hitchin does not fairly reflect its 3.1million/year footfall, the more so as Virgin/LNER also serve Stevenage. At the very least, the service should alternate between the two calling patterns. HRUG did succeed, though, in extending its Kings Cross service in the evening to 2154.

Other issues include signage at Kings Cross St Pancras Underground station – left for St Pancras, or right for Kings Cross? – and the disparity between the Great Northern and Thameslink branches regarding both cost/mile, and the validity of the Carnet and of tickets to “London Terminals”.

Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group

Three days before it was due to start on 20 May, the timetable for the Goblin line was still “in production”! Commuters had no idea what to expect. Long cursed by serious overcrowding in the peaks, passengers had been promised 4-car electric trains and a new timetable. But Transport for London (TfL) had yet to admit that there were no new trains and, apart from retiming one morning peak service (for the worse), no new timetable!

When TfL finally published the timetable late on 18 May, BGORUG was dismayed to see that five trains were missing, including the one above. Responding to its concern, Jonathan Fox, TfL Director of Rail, said “We will continue to operate additional peak services on the Gospel Oak to Barking line until the new, larger capacity electric trains are introduced later this summer. While these additional services are not timetabled, they will operate with a similar frequency as they do now. We are committed to continue with the current level of service, wherever possible, ahead of the new electric trains coming into service”.

Tonbridge Line Commuters

TLC was dismayed when the new May timetable reduced the Tonbridge - Redhill service to a mere shuttle, with only hourly off-peak trains. This most retrograde step is hugely inconveniencing passengers wishing to continue to Croydon and London. TLC has been fighting this, and would like the whole line transferred to the South Eastern franchise, the Invitation to Tender for which was issued last November; the winner is due to be announced in the autumn.

TLC is disappointed with the proposed Monday to Friday peak service, particularly the introduction of “Metro” stock for the Hildenborough and Chelsfield services, and the addition of an Orpington stop in West Kent services. However, the off-peak service is better:

- The return of two trains per an hour running fast between Tonbridge and London Bridge off-peak on weekdays, and all day Saturday and Sunday
- Doubling of the weekday off-peak and Saturday service to Ashford, with two trains per hour set to run fast between Paddock Wood and Ashford
- Two trains per an hour for Hildenborough on Sundays, a key TLC campaign aspiration
- Two trains an hour all day on the Maidstone West line, seven days a week. One service per an hour may run fast from Paddock Wood to Maidstone West.

Until recently, anyone buying a ticket from Tonbridge to Bromley South on a Southeastern ticket machine was presented with “Any Permitted” as the first fare option. This afforded them the privilege of taking a journey of nearly three hours to travel to Ashford, change onto a High Speed service to St Pancras, and then double back on Thameslink to Bromley South - compared to 50 mins via Sevenoaks at almost a third of the cost. Many customers would have been overcharged simply because they did not know to avoid the “Any Permitted” option. Finally - after several years! - TLC managed to persuade Southeastern to remove these misleading High Speed fares from ticket machines at Tonbridge, Hildenborough and Paddock Wood. Passengers are now presented with “Not Valid on HS1” as the first option, with “Any Permitted” removed from the list.

On 2 March, a train failure in the Lewisham area stranded a number of trains, some of which were severely overcrowded through earlier delays and disruption. On at least one train stuck just outside a station, passengers opened the doors, jumped down onto the trackside, and walked to the platform – forcing traction current to be turned off, potentially adding to the disruption. Southeastern reacted by issuing dire warnings about the possible consequences of passengers opting to “self evacuate”. However, TLC believes that the incident protocol works on the premise that passengers stuck on or behind a failed train are “safe”, and so can more or less be ignored whilst the issue is fixed.

More flexibility is needed to take into account passenger loading, the environmental conditions on the train(s), and the proximity to safety. All of these factors should inform a deadline to resolve the problem, after which alternative action such as controlled evacuation must prevail. An independent investigation into the incident, including the safety and welfare of stranded passengers, and communication with them, is expected to report shortly.

South Hampshire Rail Users' Group

Some ex-Thameslink Class 319 units are to be converted to tri-mode stock, that could use diesel, third rail, or overhead wire power. Hogrider moots the idea of using them on a direct Southampton–Paddington service, possibly incorporating the Reading–Basingstoke local service, as a pragmatic way of improving access to Heathrow Airport from the South. Bi-mode diesel and third rail electric units would also seem to be ideal to re-open the Southampton–Fawley route, which could be timetabled as an extension of SWR's prospective new Portsmouth–Southampton semi-fast service.

NR has taken over Clapham Junction and Guildford stations to facilitate their major upgrade. As at Waterloo, it will be responsible for renewal and maintenance work, and all commercial activities except tickets sales. SWR staff roles will not be directly affected. Major enhancements are also promised at Southampton Central, Wimbledon and Pokesdown (including the provision of lifts). 1,500 extra car parking spaces are promised across the network, with electric vehicle charging points at key stations. Replacing the short flight of steps with a ramp at Totton would make the westbound platform accessible.

The putative timetable from December would be the most ambitious ever to operate in Hampshire, and First/MTR is to be congratulated on the scale of the consultation which helped to shape it. Various suggestions by the Group have been adopted, including the doubled service frequency at Totton; the additional hourly Portsmouth–Southampton service, with more services at Woolston and Netley; extension of the Portsmouth–Southampton stopping service to Bournemouth, and retention of two trains per hour between Waterloo and Weymouth. However, its idea for a Poole–Brockenhurst stopping service, with good connections to London and Manchester trains, could not be included. In many cases, connection times at Southampton Central with CrossCountry (and GTR and GWR) trains will be extended. Chandlers Ford and Romsey would seem to have poorer connections from London, and those from the Netley line will be missed in certain hours.

Rail & Bus for Herefordshire

R&BfH and the Herefordshire Sustainable Transport Group have produced a [video](#) showing how difficult it is for pedestrians and cyclists to reach Hereford station, and for bus passengers to find the right stop.

RAILFUTURE

Railfuture welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more effective our campaigns. Join Railfuture [here](#). From the "Membership Types" menu top right, select either the appropriate category of individual or, to affiliate, select "RUG or similar". Read the latest from Railfuture and its Campaigns by clicking on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Railfuture consultation responses](#).

PASSENGER GROUP

The European Passenger Group discussed the proposed direct Eurostar service to Marseilles, but preferred regular connections to hub stations such as Lille Europe and Brussels. Eurostar's terms of reference regarding fares should explicitly cover rail passes. It does not book through tickets to Germany, and Deutsche Bahn in Berlin is not particularly helpful, but Rail Europe (now Voyages-SNCF) and the Ffestiniog Railway were other options.

Bids for rail franchises are based on projected fare revenue, so altering fares subsequently could impact the financial projections on which the bid was based. The Scottish government sets Scotrail's fares, which has complicated addressing fares anomalies, whilst others have arisen when transport authorities subsidise rail fares in their area. Railfuture will continue to campaign on value for money, clarity of fares, and "smart" payment and ticketing. The topic could be an agenda item in its Autumn Conference in Reading.

Unlike English Heritage, National Trust handbooks will not include the nearest station to each of its properties. However, its Getting Here guide does include this information, and is available online.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

Lisa Barrett, NR's Senior Programme Manager, told the 2018 AGM that development studies into a new Cambridge South station would go ahead. Current thinking is for four tracks between Cambridge and a grade-separated junction at Shepreth, where the Liverpool Street and Kings Cross branches diverge. Local Enterprise Partnerships are contributing £8 million to a study due in 2019 into increasing the capacity at Ely from 7-8 trains per hour probably to 11; flyovers and further track work are likely to prove unaffordable. nick.dibben@railfuture.org.uk would welcome views on which services should be prioritised and how. Other projects being considered are a new station at Waterbeach, north of Cambridge; Haughley Junction, where Ely and Cambridge trains join the Norwich - London line; doubling Trowse swing bridge outside Norwich; the Cambridgeshire Area Study, and expanding the concourse at Liverpool Street.

The target date to complete NR's GRIP4 governance process for the Western section of East-West Rail (Oxford–Bedford) was brought forward from December to March 2019. The Transport and Works Act order is expected in autumn 2019, and final commissioning by January 2024. Work to find a 'line on the map' for the Central section from Bedford to Cambridge continues. NR envisages informal consultation on its initial proposal between October and December, a final choice early in 2019, and then the development of alignments.

At Cambridge, advancing the non-stop service to London from H+51 to H+44 means that passengers from the Ipswich line arriving at H+41 have just 3 minutes to make the connection. Instead, they are directed to the Thameslink service at H+54, adding 25 minutes to their journey (*assuming it's running! – Ed.*)

Railfuture received several useful responses to its report in February on Seamless Public Transport in East Anglia. For example, with a "Lowestoft Buses" ticket from Cambridge, you can catch a bus from Lowestoft station to Africa Alive, a wildlife park in Kessingland, or to the Transport Museum in Carlton Colville. Trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk would like further examples of destinations located a convenient bus ride from a station where PlusBus is not (yet) promoted: museums, cultural, sporting and education venues, as well as hospitals and major employers.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

English CRPs with designated routes are invited to bid for up to £25,000 from the DfT's £320,000 Designated Community Rail Development Fund for 2018-19; and CRPs for up to £2,500, and station adoption groups for up to £1000, from the Small Grants Fund (England).

In conjunction with Herts CC, and supported by the train operator London North Western, the Abbey Line CRP invited children from three local schools to work on an 'Adopt a Station' project. After visiting the stations by train to see how they operate, the children had a few weeks to come up with ideas, pictures and drawings on how to best improve them, before presenting their ideas in a workshop. There, they heard about the history of Bricket Wood station from the Bricket Wood Society, with photos of the line as far back as 1858, and learned about the work of the CRP and events such as Santa Express and the Community Rail Fun Day. Finally, the children were presented with adoption certificates, which are also displayed at their local station:

- How Wood School – How Wood Station
- Parkgate Junior School – Watford North Station
- Park Street School – Park Street Station.

The Sussex Community Rail Partnership (SCRCP) and Southern have formed a new CRP covering the stations and communities between Hove and Angmering that will promote the railway and its importance to the community. It will complement two existing CRP lines: Seaford to Brighton in the east, and Gatwick to Chichester (the Arun Valley line) in the west.

CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

4,000 people signed the joint Railfuture and CBT letter to the Government calling for [a dedicated fund for reopening disused rail lines and stations](#). In the 1960s, Dr Beeching closed 5,000 miles of track and over 2,000 stations. With rail resurgent, it's time many were reopened. To emphasise their success, the letter was delivered to the Government via reopened lines and Lea Bridge Station in London. Closed for 31 years, this reopened in 2016, and reached 80 per cent of its 15-year passenger target in just eight months! With targeted support from the Government, other new stations and lines could similarly benefit.

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

The DfT has updated [TAG unit A5-3](#) that provides guidance on the appraisal of rail interventions, and how transport appraisal supports the development of investment decisions to support a business case.

The DfT has published a "[Short-term Intercity East Coast train operator 2018 options report](#)". Having failed to generate sufficient revenue to cover its contractual payments to the DfT, Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) rail franchise is being terminated on 24 June. There were two options to maintain the service: a new short-term contract with VTEC, with tightly defined performance requirements, or its transfer to an Operator of Last Resort (OLR), owned wholly by the DfT. The analysis was finely balanced, but to provide maximum flexibility, and in order to drive his long-term vision for the future operation of services on the route through the development of an East Coast Partnership, the Secretary of State opted for an OLR. The decision has no effect on Virgin Trains West Coast Main Line operation.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) will publish a draft of its Periodic Review of NR on 12 June for consultation ahead of its final determination in the autumn. The Review sets out: changes to how NR is regulated, to support its devolution to eight geographical routes and a system operator; ORR's assessment on NR funding, and the outputs NR will be expected to deliver in the next Control Period.

NR has been convicted of an offence under the Health and Safety at Work Act. A signalman suffered life-changing injuries as he was closing the level crossing gate at East Farleigh in Kent on 24 April 2015. CCTV footage shows a vehicle hitting the gate, causing it to bounce back and knock him to the ground. The ORR determined that NR's risk assessment, which consisted only of a 30-minute traffic census and a conversation with a signalman, was neither suitable nor sufficient. It had incorrectly assessed the risk of deliberate misuse of the crossing as being 'significantly lower than average', whereas the risk of a driver failing to see that the gates were being closed was clearly foreseeable. But NR had done little or nothing to protect its employees.

South Western Railway has reinstated the summer Saturday service from Basingstoke to Weymouth via Yeovil Junction and Pen Mill, returning to Waterloo in the evening by the same route. However, from Weymouth a 3-car unit now runs on to Wareham and then, by arrangement with Swanage Railway and the Purbeck CRP, makes three return shuttles to Corfe Castle. The promotional fares for a day return to Corfe are just £5 from Weymouth, Dorchester, Moreton and Wool, and £10 from Salisbury, Tisbury, Gillingham, Templecombe, Sherborne, Yeovil and Maiden Newton. On production of a National Rail ticket to Corfe, the add-on fare to Swanage is £10. It is the first ever through service between Purbeck and the Heart of Wessex line, and runs until 8 September. The [Dorset Daily Echo](#) reports that the inaugural run was a huge success. Rail User Express congratulates all concerned for this groundbreaking initiative.

The 41st edition of Barry Doe's [rail franchise map](#) is now available, and may be downloaded free of charge. Changes include the replacement of VTEC by LNER, and SWR's excursions to the Swanage Railway – the first scheduled National Rail services on the line since BR services were withdrawn in 1972.

Peter Taylor, the new Mayor of Watford, and Councillor Ian Stotesbury have launched a petition to get four of its stations re-zoned. Carpenders Park is currently in Zone 7, Bushey and Watford High Street in Zone 8, and Watford Junction is in its own 'W' zone. Commuters from Epping travel a similar distance into London, but from Zone 6, so they pay up to £1000 less.

CONSULTATIONS

- NR: [Western rail link into Heathrow \(amended\)](#), closes 22 June.

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

...and finally

How fortuitous that, on the day before a regular train service between Cambridge and Brighton was due to start, HM the Queen should create a Duke of Sussex to complement the Duke of Cambridge.

When 60103 (aka 4472) Flying Scotsman arrived at London Victoria on a rail tour, its steam and smoke set off the fire alarm, causing the station to be evacuated for 15 minutes. Fire alarms are normally switched off when a steam engine visits the central London terminus, but on this occasion the warning was not heeded.

A Japanese rail company has apologised after a train left a station 25 seconds early. The conductor thought his train was scheduled to leave Notogawa at 0711 instead of the scheduled time of 0712. After closing the doors a minute early he realised his mistake, and could still have averted the problem. But he couldn't see any passengers waiting on the platform, and so went ahead and it left early. However, there were indeed people still hoping to board, and when they complained, the rail operator issued an official apology: "the great inconvenience we placed upon our customers was truly inexcusable".

When 450 GTR trains were either cancelled or ran late on just one day, a passenger tweeted a screen shot of a departure board. Thameslink responded: "Very sorry, Kevin. Appreciate at the moment the service is less Ferrero Rocher and more Poundland cooking chocolate." But Poundland retail director Austin Cooke said GTR had "no right to use our name to describe poor service. Poundland served eight million shoppers last week, and has a pretty good idea about what great customer service is - but if we ever fall short, perhaps we'll describe ourselves as a bit Thameslink." GTR removed its tweet – but Poundland is now facing administration!

EVENTS

Do please keep your events coming, both to me and to [Roger Blake \(Railfuture\)](#), who maintains the Railfuture [List of Events](#) to attend, and now a [List of Key Dates](#) for consultations, franchise changes, CP6 planning, service alterations for major rail projects etc. As a Calendar of Events embedded in a document may be discarded, and that is a problem if the venue changes from month to month, a stand-alone copy would be very helpful.

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

- Railfuture events (rail user group representatives are cordially invited).
- National & regional rail events.
- Local Group events.

June

- Saturday 9. Cumbrian Coast Rail Users' Group, Methodist Church hall, **Seascale**, 1350. (Also 14 July, 11 August and 8 September).
- Saturday 16. Railfuture East Anglia, St Mary's at Stoke Church Hall, Stoke Street, **Ipswich**, IP2 8DA, 1400 (Also 29 September in Norwich TBC).
- Tuesday 19. Chesham and District Transport Users' Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, 1930 (also 7 August, 18 September (followed by the AGM), 23 October, 11 December.)
- Tuesday 19. Association of Public Transport Users AGM, Trinity United Reformed Church (Main Hall), 1 Beaconsfield Road, **St Albans**, AL1 3RD, 1930.
- Thursday 21. Magor Action Group On Rail, Golden Lion, **Magor**, 1930 (and the 3rd Thursday every month).
- Friday 22. TravelWatch SouthWest cross Country Franchise Consultation meeting, COACH Conference Centre, French Weir Ave, **Taunton**, 1100.
- Saturday 23. Railfuture Summer Conference, Hallmark Hotel, Court Square, **Carlisle**, CA1 1QY, 1000 for 1045.
- Tuesday 26. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife College, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also 28 August, 25 September and 30 October).
- Saturday 30. Railfuture Herts and Beds, St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, **St Albans**, 1045 (Also 20 October).

July

- Monday 9. Skipton East Lancs Rail Action Partnership, New Road Community Centre, **Earby**, 1900 (Also, 10 September, Crown Hotel, **Colne**; 12 November, Herriots Hotel, Skipton; 28 January 2019, Earby, and 11 March, AGM at The Lesser Municipal Hall, Albert Road, Colne).
- Wednesday 18. Friends of the Barton Line AGM, The Sloop, **Barton**, 1800 (also 19 September, 21 November).

Further Ahead

- 6 October. Railfuture Branches and Groups Day, **Birmingham**, 1030.
- 15 October. Avocet Line Rail Users Group AGM, Globe Hotel, **Topsham**, 1900.
- 16 October. Felixstowe Travel Watch, Salvation Army Church, **Felixstowe**, 1430.

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Contact Roger Smith by e-mail: ruglink@railfuture.org.uk, or phone: 01462 815992. *Follow us on Twitter@Railfuture*

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