



August 2018

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

Feel free to forward it to a colleague, or to reproduce items in your own newsletter (quoting sources). For further detail of any of the stories mentioned, consult the relevant website, or come back to [me](#) for the source material. Please say if you no longer wish to receive Rail User Express, or if you know of anyone or any Rail User Group (RUG) who would like to be added to the circulation list.

After last month's bumper issue, I feared a lack of copy during the summer leave period. In fact, I have had to be quite selective in what I chose to use, and apologise if I've omitted any story that you particularly wished to broadcast. Every contribution is appreciated; RUX would not exist without them.

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.

Friends of the Far North Line

The final meeting of the Review Team set up in 2016 to examine every aspect of the line takes place on 7 September. FoFNL is hoping for some radical changes, to build upon recently completed improvements, or those in the pipeline such as the push-button system for request stops. The FNL will also benefit from at least one of the five Class 153 single carriage units that are being converted to include a dedicated area for carrying bicycles. Running in multiple with the Class 158s, it will encourage the many cyclists who tour Caithness and Sutherland to have confidence in the railway.

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

The online survey for businesses closed on 27 July. Over 100 have signed up to the Charter, with more to come. LMRC has seen a real desire to get the area reconnected. While the media focus on the rail network's failings, communities cut off from it such as Levenmouth wonder what all the fuss is about. Having a rail service at all, let alone one that mostly runs on time, seems a luxury. Many Scottish Government policies are focused on inclusion and socio-economic duty, but LMRC believes that an Accessibility Tsar is needed to identify gaps in public transport provision, with the power to address them. Otherwise such policies are mere platitudes.

Meanwhile, thanks to Social Stork, a complete revamp of the Campaign website is nearing completion. It will focus on the area's potential if rail services were reinstated. Facebook and other social media will update some sections automatically, and a Comments page will make it more interactive and dynamic. The site will also carry links to several short films by MidgieBite Media (usually 30 secs to 5 mins) covering various aspects of recent campaigns. The old website will remain until the new site is fully up to date.

Cumbrian coast Rail Users' Group

Although most of the May timetable has been restored, reliability continues to be a problem. Over a three-week period, there were just nine days with no cancellations at Whitehaven on the Coast line, and only two days without cancellations on the Furness line. There have been cancelled trains every Saturday and Sunday.

In June, CRUG discussed the problems with the May timetable and the gaps with Northern and Community Rail Cumbria. CRUG agreed to put together a priority list for cycle storage for when funding became available – Foxfield, Silecroft, Aspatria and Millom were mentioned. Northern has appointed Chris Jackson as Regional Director West from October, succeeding Sharon Keith. It is addressing complaints about loco hauled trains not stopping next to humps, particularly at Seascale. It was confirmed that the ticket machine at Seascale would be outside the station on the village (southbound) side.

Cancellation of last trains is a particular problem on the coast, when people wait in vain at unstaffed stations, and there are no buses south of Whitehaven. If possible, it would be preferable to cancel an earlier service. Rail replacement buses replacing last trains can be very late in the evening. However, a micro franchise was thought unlikely given that the DfT had taken on LNER, and had greater problems with Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR). Nor had the idea of a Devon and Cornwall franchise proved popular. A Cumbria franchise could benefit from local knowledge, but would need to use other operators' facilities for repair and maintenance, and would probably lose through trains beyond Oxenholme or Lancaster.

Furness Line Action Group

The May timetable gave the whole Northern network first-hand experience of the high level of cancellations Cumbria had suffered over previous months. Taking Barrow, Windermere and Blackpool out of the TransPennine franchise area was a fatal mistake. Both the DfT and Northern have failed miserably to correct staffing and stock issues after over two years. Northern is clearly incapable of running a full service on both the Furness and Lakes lines simultaneously. Tellingly, while West Coast Railways was running the Lakes Line service, reliability on the Furness line was at its highest level since Northern took over the franchise. Nor did it not suffer the emergency cuts Northern imposed across much of its network: there were more trains all day, and Sunday services north of Barrow.

However, all came crashing down again when Northern recommenced Lakes Line services: Furness line cancellations swiftly returned to the appalling levels before the timetable change. West Coast Railways running the Lakes Line service on a full-time basis, charging all the costs back to Northern until it could operate that service alongside others, would focus minds and provide the incentive to resolve the staffing issues. For its part, FLAG looks forward to working positively with the train operator to promote rail travel.

Friends of the Settle – Carlisle Line

Following the passing of Sir William (Bill) McAlpine, FoSCL is delighted and uniquely privileged to announce that The Rt Hon Michael Portillo, who had such a key role in the line's reprieve from closure, has graciously accepted the position of FoSCL President. Also, the indomitable Olive Clarke OBE JP DL, who chaired the Transport Users' Consultative Committee for North West England at the time of the proposed closure, has been made a Vice President.

Mike Hogg, FoSCL's Line Speed Champion, and his team of experts in the field, are building the case for a substantial increase in line speed. Factors such as signalling, structures, sight lines and stopping distances all have to be considered. Their work will then be 'peer reviewed'. Meanwhile, Drew Haley reports that Transport for the North and West Yorkshire Combined Authority are supportive of proposals for through trains to Glasgow, and wish to work up the business case.

The popular FoSCL Guided Walks programme has been relaunched, with the "2 Johns" (Carey & Disney) taking over as Coordinators. New themes reflect FoSCL's diverse range of interests, from the Armthwaite Signal Box to High Cup Nick, Leaping Salmon at Stainforth Force, Swaledale and Dentdale. Walks are free of charge and open to all, and are planned to connect with trains from Leeds or local buses. Prospective walkers are strongly recommended to check www.foscl.org.uk for the latest information, as transport changes or weather conditions may cause the walks to vary at short notice.

The week long Ride2stride Festival 2018 attracted a total of 801 walkers from all over England and many from overseas. Most popular of the 29 walks on the programme was that to Oxenber Woods on a sunny May Day Bank Holiday, which attracted 48 walkers. Friends of DalesBus participated for the first time, with a very successful walk from Austwick to Horton-in-Ribblesdale, a great example of how walkers can access the Dales by bus and train.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines

With new signalling east of Hebden Bridge, the October possession should see the 60 mph speed limit raised. Mills Hill, Castleton East and Rochdale West boxes will close next year. Signals east of Smithy Bridge have been four aspect since 1972, when they were part of the Preston Power Box project. However, the three aspect Signals to the west do slow services, and can lead to delays between Slattocks and Rochdale. STORM understands that some time in 2019 the Vitriol Works-Castleton and Rochdale section will be converted to automatic signalling, controlled from Ardwick Signalling Centre. However, it is not aware of any plans to raise the Littleborough - Hebden Bridge, or Burnley – Todmorden speed limits.

Work has started on a new Smithy Bridge station, but which 6 car units will it accommodate: 20m, 23m or 24m? And when will Northern have enough stock to lengthen its trains? NR have said: "As part of the Great North Rail Project, platforms will be extended at Littleborough, Smithy Bridge and Mills Hill stations. These details are being finalised, and will be confirmed for each location as soon as possible."

According to "Informed Sources", none of the recently introduced trains yet matches the reliability of the old Pacers. These lo-tech trains have had all the glitches ironed out, so they rarely fail in traffic. However, with such a bad name, none is being retained to strengthen trains when required.

NR is drawing up a feasibility study to extend the East Lancashire Heritage Railway from Heywood to Castleton - as an East Lancashire Railway Trust plan mooted in 2009. In 2014, Rochdale Council said it was developing a master plan for the area, which would support improvements around Castleton station, and the extension of the heritage railway to the town.

Rugby Rail Users' Group

Building on the upgraded Virgin Trains service reported in June, West Midlands Trains' December timetable would have further improved services from Rugby. However, the Rail Delivery Group announcement that many operators, including West Midlands Trains, would be unable to introduce their new timetables until May has delayed some much needed changes, not least the significant increases in capacity from 8 car trains between Birmingham and Euston, direct services from Stafford to Crewe avoiding Stoke, and through services to Liverpool. The repercussions of NR's inability to cope with the May timetable changes for GTR and Northern Rail extend far beyond those franchises.

King's Lynn to Hunstanton Railway Campaign

Hunstanton once enjoyed a Pullman service through from London Liverpool Street. The [campaign](#) to reopen the line from Kings Lynn has solid local support, but is seeking to raise its profile. One way to do so would be to put itself up for a Railfuture RUG Award in the Best Campaign category (see below). To offer your support, or if you can help in any way, [Bob Edwards](#) would love to hear from you.

East Suffolk Travellers' Association

A few days after Easter, work was completed on the northbound platform at Beccles, including new drainage and a smart new shelter, matching the one on the southbound platform. However, three months after the fire at Saxmundham station, the remains of the building are still fenced off, and there is nowhere under cover for passengers to sit or read the information boards.

On 1 June, ESTA members, the Lock family and representatives of Greater Anglia, the Community Rail Partnership and the East Norfolk Transport Users' Association celebrated the 159th anniversary of the opening of the East Suffolk Line in its entirety, and expressed their thanks to Rod Lock, who has stood down as ESTA Secretary after 21 years. He has now been elected its President, following in the illustrious footsteps of Lord (Benjamin) Britten, Gerard and Jean Fiennes, and Albert Godfrey. Rod will continue his active role, including research, giving advice, administering surveys, holding the ESTA archives, and posting out its quarterly NEWS.

Over 30 outlets now have the 2018 edition of ESTA's leaflet "Discover the Blyth Valley", with its subtitle "by taking the Halesworth Train, Southwold Bus." It can also be obtained from leaflet dispensers in Konect buses, and seen on ESTA station boards. Meanwhile, the new edition of the Community Rail Partnership's free East Suffolk Line Walks leaflet should now be available from libraries and tourist information offices, and can also be ordered (£1.50 p&p) from the Lowestoft Station Visitor Information Point, which also has copies of the new guide for the Lowestoft - Norwich Line.

In his Annual Report, Chairman Trevor Garrod welcomed the better rail connections for bus services from Ipswich to Saxmundham, Leiston and Aldeburgh, but bemoaned the almost total withdrawal of bus services to Snape and Tunstall, and the suspension of all local train services (except for Felixstowe freight), during the six days of severe weather.

Hitchin Rail User and Commuter Groups

HRUG and its sister Commuter Group are making a joint submission to the House of Commons Transport Committee's Call for Evidence on the failure of the May timetable. They are also drawing up a prioritised list of service improvements for Bim Afolami MP to put to GTR.

The level of overcrowding at Hitchin was [graphically illustrated](#) in the Comet newspaper; even the station staff described it as "dangerous". Taking out the 12-coach Brighton service that would have called at 0756 left a grievous lack of capacity at a critical time. HRUG's pleas for one of the fast Peterborough departures at 0705 and 0714 to call have fallen on deaf ears.

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group

The new Piccadilly Line trains will be built at Siemens new factory in Hull.

On Sunday, 9 September, a train formed of 1938 Tube stock will run on the Metropolitan line between Amersham and Harrow-on-the-Hill. At Amersham, a retro housewife in 1940's garb will greet visitors, and the Susie Qs will perform Andrew's Sisters classics. The London Transport Museum will have a pop-up shop selling Metropolitan line gifts, while free flag-making craft activity will keep children aged 3-12 entertained.

Barking and Gospel Oak Rail User Group

The London Assembly Transport Committee has launched an investigation on "*The future of rail in London*". On 10 July, Jerry Gold's presentation to the Assembly on "*Priorities for the rail network*" was well received; it also accepted a supplementary paper on the current rolling stock crisis. The presentation notes are on the BGORUG [website](#), together with short-term proposals to mitigate the crisis. The Mayor faced questions on the crisis; the added pressure on Blackhorse Road caused by regeneration around Blackhorse Lane; the very poor access at the former station, including a lack of signage to the lifts; and access to Walthamstow town centre from Queens Road station.

Oxford and Bucks Rail Action Committee

England Economic Heartland (EEH) Strategic Transport Forum and the East West Rail Company (EWRC) updated the progress of EWR:

1. Pending NR's application for a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) (now submitted), more work was needed under existing powers in the Launton and Calvert areas
3. Work on Central Section continues, with a consultation due in 2018 Q4, and a preferred route announced early next year.
4. EWRC is drafting a Prospectus for Eastern Section, having identified serious opportunities in advance of the Central Section opening.
5. Further work on EWR freight was needed, especially as the Mayor seeks to divert freight away from London (*But no East-North chord at Bletchley to enable Felixstowe – Nuneaton traffic – Ed.*)
6. The West Coast Main Line will have extra paths after HS2, so their possible use by EWR should be considered, eg Northampton-Old Oak Common via Aylesbury
7. Scope for EWR to have Oxford-Didcot paths needs exploring to ease congestion at Oxford.
8. Heathrow Western Access should consider an EWR service given all the possible connections
9. Cross-Country refranchise should consider EWR opportunities
10. The Midland refranchise needs to consider EWR opportunities and address current issues.

The Oxon Growth Board has provided £200k for a Rail Connectivity study; EWRC and EEH are each contributing £25k. The DfT has provided £300k, and required match funding, which is being finalised. The study includes the Cowley Branch, but Witney is not mentioned. Some councils have deferred their EWR contributions due to delays.

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group

The turn-back siding at Bedwyn needs a short extension to accommodate new five-car bi-mode Intercity Express Trains (IETs) from next January; the existing foot crossing will be re-sited some 10m to the west, and the footpath realigned. The work is scheduled during the blockade planned for 28-30 August, with most of the noisier work in the daytime. Parking is also an issue, as Hungerford station is set to lose 80 spaces to a proposed housing development, so the Group is working with GWR to identify land for a station car park in Great Bedwyn.

Avocet Line Rail Users Group

Five years ago, an Avocet Line Community Rail Forum report “Station Standards for the Avocet Line” drew on national and local sources to identify reasonable aspirations for smaller stations. Once these had been agreed with GWR, an audit was undertaken to produce a ‘shopping list’ of desirable improvements. Most stations already met many of the agreed standards. Newly built Newcourt, the one station that meets them all, validates the list. More costly capacity and access issues will be addressed in an Avocet Line Plan that is in preparation.

At the April Meeting, Mark Langman, NR’s Western Route Director introduced its draft Strategic Plan for Control Period 6 (2019-24), which will be finalized in October. Across the Western Region, it envisages a 12% increase in train mileage and 140,000 extra trains per annum. Some platform extensions and track doubling at Exmouth Junction are desirable if not essential, but who will pay? NR is funded to maintain the railway, not enhance it. That said, ALRUG has had success in all three years of the DfT’s Customer and Communities Improvement Fund. Aided by the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership and GWR, this year’s bid was for a next train indicator at Polsloe Bridge.

The January timetable change should see new services to Paddington, half hourly Exmouth to Paignton, and a better service on the Tarka Line to Barnstaple. ALRUG asked GWR for a clock face timetable, with trains at the same minutes past the hour all day - easier for passengers, and a marketing point to attract new custom - but it wasn’t to be: there are many variations, and connections at St Davids are all over the place.

The Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership “Avocet Line Foodie Guide” includes a wide range of eateries including cafes, restaurants, pubs, bakeries, and fish & chip shops. It is available at manned stations and other information sites. If you patronise any of them, let them know you found them in the guide.

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](#).



Nominations for Railfuture’s seventh RUG Awards are open until Saturday 1 September in nine categories:

- 1 & 2 - Best newsletter - Gold and Silver awards [not available to last year’s winners]
- 3 & 4 - Best website - Gold and Silver awards [not available to last year’s winners]
- 5 - Best social media promotion
- 6 - Best campaign
- 7 - Best individual RUG campaigner [for Railfuture members only]
- 8 - Best new group
- 9 - Judges' Special Award

Its [website](#) explains how to make a nomination/submission. RUGs and individuals can self-nominate, except in Category 7. A Railfuture Vice-President will visit to assess each nominee, offering a photo opportunity. An independent Judging Panel, including the Vice-Presidents, will make the awards on merit; the Judges' Special Award is at its sole discretion. The awards will be presented at the [annual conference](#) in Reading on Saturday, 10 November. Early bird booking for members is open until 31 August.

Two volunteers from Cambridge Heath and London Fields RUG, a 2016 Award-winner, made their annual head-count at their London Overground stations - as they have done every year since 1996! Since TfL took over in May 2015, weekday patronage has risen by around 28% at Cambridge Heath and 23% at London Fields, to over a million at each station, which puts them in the same league as others receiving Access for All funding for lifts, although with 3.9 million neighbouring Hackney Downs is ahead in that queue. Meanwhile, neither of the RUG's stations has enough platform shelters for current passenger volumes, so 'Chufferlug', as the group is dubbed by some, continues to huff and puff!

RAILFUTURE THAMES VALLEY

At the February meeting, Rob Mashford set out the scale and the benefit of work in the Oxford corridor: a new track layout and bi-directional, four aspect signalling, to provide greater capacity and operational flexibility; new northern ladders to allow access to and from Platforms 1 & 2 without conflicting access to Platform 3, and a higher speed turnout into the up loop at Wolvercote. Plans for a new Platform 5 on the down side (which required demolition of the youth hostel) and re-building Botley Road bridge were ongoing, but those for Didcot-Oxford electrification were complete, though a bridge at Appleford had proved difficult. To increase capacity, additional loops were more likely than full quadrupling.

The top four core objectives for the Branch were:

- Witney - Oxford. Enlisting the support of local MP Robert Courts. A rail link is the only real solution, and has a good Benefit/Cost Ratio, but will take time.
- Bourne End – High Wycombe (Milton Keynes - Heathrow). The feasibility study is ongoing. The study of the works needed at Bourne End is progressing to GRIP 3 (slowly).
- Grove – Wantage. Council Leader Matthew Barber is enthusiastic. With a BCR of 3.7, the scheme is a no brainer in a growth area, although main line capacity is an issue.
- Cowley Branch. Railfuture supported the planning application. The issue remains live with more studies to be done.

The Schedule of work to construct Phase 2 of the East West Rail Western Section includes three stations with "listed" status: Quainton Road is home to the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre, so may not re-open for EWR services. Ridgmont and Woburn Sands will see platform extensions, with associated fencing and other works. TV Branch is coordinating Railfuture's formal response.

The West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) Area Action Plan (AAP) proposes a development of 2200 houses and employment areas around 2 miles south of Hanborough station on the North Cotswold Line, and adjacent to a P&R being developed. However, it makes scant reference to the potential to develop the station: the planned timetable changes from December are mentioned, but not GWR's strategy for the line, with the increased frequency of 3 trains per hour towards Oxford and London. Oxford is only 9 minutes away by train, whereas buses are delayed by congestion within the city, and at pinch points such as Wolvercote roundabout. WODC should insist on developer contributions to improve Hanborough station and its services, provide it with bus and mini-bus links, and upgrade local roads, although the pedestrian and cycling improvements are welcome. To ensure that the inevitable link is not blocked, be it train, tram-train, tram or guided bus, WODC and Oxfordshire County Council, the transport authority, must also safeguard the route of the old railway line to Witney: the southern edge of a second major development of 1000 houses on the west side of Eynsham crosses the trackbed.

RAILFUTURE WESSEX

Southampton City Council has launched a 12-week consultation on its transport strategy to 2040; Wessex Branch will focus on the rail aspects. It would like to hear from anyone in the area with ideas for inclusion, or who is willing to help review the background documents.

James Waight, NR's Head of Strategic Planning, told Borough Councillors in June that Woking would be the first station on the Wessex Route to benefit from the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline, which allows third party bids to fund improvements. Proposed changes included a new station with a new Platform 6, and grade separation of the Portsmouth and Bournemouth lines to allow two more paths into Waterloo every hour. This £2-300 million project was the subject of a £5.2million study. It could be a dive-under or a fly-over, depending on the water table.

However, Wessex Chair Bruce Duncan suggests that the crossing might prove less effective than forecast, as the number of peak trains through Clapham Junction was limited, so the extra paths might be to no avail. Crossrail 2 could relieve some of the pressure, but is not expected to be operational until "the early 2030s" [by which time the inexorable growth in demand may have cancelled out the benefit! Alternatively, Heathrow Southern Railway's links to the Elizabeth line could provide both relief and the justification - Ed.]

A new [leaflet](#) supports the campaign for the proposed new town of Welborne, north of Fareham, to have a station on the Eastleigh line. Contact [John Holland](#) by email, or 02392 839660 for printed copies. Meanwhile, The Salisbury to Exeter Rail Users' Group has joined the West of England Line Strategy Group, which wants to double track Tisbury – Dinton, with a second platform at Tisbury. The scheme could be the first use of NR's Continuous Modelling Strategic Planning regime. The GRIP process is still there of course, but CMSP allows continuous development rather than shoehorning work into fixed 5-year Control Periods.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

As part of its Dementia and Community Rail project, and with the support of train operator Northern, the Leeds-Morecambe CRP invited members of the Pioneer Projects group, their carers and supporters to take the train from Bentham to Morecambe, where they had tea at the iconic art-deco Midland Hotel, whilst taking in the sea views over to the Lakes, and spending time together with friends.

From 18-24 August, the South Downs National Park Authority Heathland Reunited team is running a walking festival aimed primarily at dog owners entitled "[Take the Lead](#)". The Information Hub at Petersfield station is now open 1000 – 1400 Wednesdays to Sundays until the end of September. With all relevant information leaflets, newsletters and events, and hot and cold drinks in return for donations, it also has for sale a selection of art by one of the station staff. In October, work to make the facility more attractive out of season will brighten the reception area, improve the heating and lighting, and install an internal toilet.

Headline sponsors of this year's Community Rail Awards, Abellio and ScotRail, are putting on a [programme](#) of events and excursions from 3 - 5 October. Highlights include a Civic Reception at Glasgow City Chambers, a subterranean tour of Glasgow Central Station and excursions to community rail projects, including a Borders Railway tour. All events and activities are free to attendees.

CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

CBT research into cuts in bus services is deeply concerning. In the last eight years, funding for supported buses has almost halved overall, and been totally withdrawn in some areas, leaving many places without public transport. Alone of all modes of transport, buses have no long-term national investment strategy. However, the decline is not inevitable, as its [Buses in Crisis](#) research shows. Have your say by responding to the House of Commons transport committee inquiry (see below).

TRANSPORT FOCUS

A Transport Focus [survey](#) asked more than 12,800 passengers across the country to rank improvements to their station. Passengers said that toilets were the most important facility, followed by seating on the platform, free Wi-Fi, and shelter. As regards the rail journey, the top three priorities were the price of tickets, availability of a seat, and on-time arrival.

When Mr G was hospitalised, he was told he would be unfit for travel for the duration of his season ticket. He asked c2c how to secure a refund for the remaining period, but they didn't tell him to surrender the ticket at the time, so he sent in a photocopy. After Mr G had recovered, c2c said that they could not provide a full refund because he hadn't complied with the procedure. At the behest of Transport Focus, c2c accepted its error, and agreed to refund Mr G £193.20 to cover the period he was signed off work, along with £50 in rail vouchers as a goodwill gesture.

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

A House of Commons Transport Committee Inquiry Call for Evidence "about the scale and impact of the May 2018 timetabling changes" (see below) runs until 4 September. Copies of evidence given to date are on the [Parliamentary website](#).

The DfT has published the [Invitation to Tender](#) for the West Coast Partnership, which will embrace operation of both the West Coast Main Line and HS2. However, the specified [Train Service Requirement](#) applies only until the start of high-speed services. Following several over-ambitious bids to operate the East Coast Main Line (ECML), the DfT has amended its bid evaluation processes, in particular the Financial Robustness Test, to ensure that bids are based on prudent financial assumptions.

However, [TransportXtra](#) reports the view of Lord Berkeley, formerly Chair of the Rail Freight Group, and quantity surveyor Michael Byng, that the first phase of HS2 from London to the West Midlands will take at least four years longer to build, and cost twice as much as the Government claims. One paper explains why the station plans for Euston, Old Oak Common, Birmingham Interchange and Birmingham Curzon Street are all at risk; a second paper then argues that the project should be axed in favour of its numerous proposals to improve the existing rail network.

The Secretary of State has granted a [Transport and Works Act Order](#) (TWAO) and given Planning Direction authorising NR to construct, maintain and operate a dive under the ECML at Werrington Junction, 3 miles north-west of Peterborough, that will allow trains to move between the Stamford and Spalding lines without crossing the ECML on the level, so adding two more ECML train paths per hour in each direction.

NR has applied for a [TWAO](#) to upgrade the Midland Main Line between Bedford, Kettering and Corby, including track realignment, station remodelling, platform lengthening, bridge reconstructions, signalling works and electrification. The application documents include a consultation report, with a summary of the feedback. The Secretary of State has ruled that no environmental impact assessment is required.

NR has also applied for a [TWAO](#) to construct Phase 2 of East West Rail between Bicester and Bedford, and Aylesbury and Milton Keynes. It entails major track and signalling upgrades, and the reinstatement of a 'mothballed' section between Bletchley and Claydon Junction. However, there will be no increase in the 60mph line speed on the Marston Vale section between Bletchley and Bedford. A statutory consultation period lasts until 7 September. If granted, major work could start as early as next year, with trains by 2023.

The 1,000+ responses to the DfT consultation on its draft Accessibility Action Plan have informed a new [Inclusive Transport Strategy](#), setting out how HMG will deliver the necessary changes, both through direct intervention and working in partnership with industry and others. Infrastructure improvements or legislative changes will naturally take time, but much can be done quickly and at relatively low cost, such as improving staff training, making information more accessible, and ensuring legislation is properly enforced.

In the longer term, the Future of Mobility Grand Challenge set out in the Government's Industrial Strategy will seek to ensure that all transport technologies and services are designed to be fully inclusive. To that end, the DfT has now launched yet another [call for evidence and consultation](#) to inform both that initiative and its Future of Urban Mobility Strategy. Meanwhile, TRL Ltd has published a report on behalf of the DfT that seeks to discover which of the accessibility documents "Inclusive Mobility" and "Guidance on the Use of Tactile Paving Surfaces" are still relevant or require updating, and the scope and form of any updates.

TfL has published the [report](#) of its consultation on proposals to upgrade Holborn station, where the Central and Piccadilly lines cross. 98% of respondents agreed that an upgrade was needed, and 96% per cent supported the TfL proposals - but don't hold your breath! TfL expects a further consultation in 2020, followed by a TWAO application in 2022. If the Order is made, about six years of work could start in 2023. These are revised timescales due to changes to TfL's business planning process.

Transport for the South East, the Shadow Sub-national Transport Body, has published an [Economic Connectivity Review](#) with the following vision statement: "The South East is crucial to the UK economy, and is the nation's major international gateway for people and businesses. We will grow the South East's economy by facilitating the development of a reliable, high quality, integrated transport system that makes the region more productive and competitive, improves access to opportunities for all, and protects and enhances the environment."

To offset the area's deprivation and poor public transport links, the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission wants HMG to commit £20 million to extend Crossrail from Abbey Wood to Ebbsfleet. It supports Government plans for a Lower Thames Crossing, including a rail link and a second Thames flood barrier, to be delivered by 2050.

Train operator Greater Anglia has done a £3 million deal with the Mid-Norfolk Railway to house its fleet of 58 new Stadler trains, which will be based at Norwich Crown Point depot. The heritage railway, with its main line connection at Wymondham, will lay extra tracks for Greater Anglia to store some of its new trains during their testing and commissioning phase in 2019-20. GA needed to find new capacity after abandoning plans for a new train depot at Brantham, Suffolk.

The [BBC](#) has released shocking images of children sitting and playing on a level crossing at Wing, between Stamford and Oakham, where trains pass at 60mph. NR said they showed a "complete disregard" for safety, and urged parents to educate their children about the dangers.

The [Dorset Echo](#) reports that Graham Cross, Chief Executive of Heathrow Southern Railway (HSRL), foresees 3 trains an hour to Dorset by 2026, creating new opportunities for businesses and tourists. But he claimed that HSRL would not impact on Bournemouth Airport, which is currently used by more than 700,000 people a year. However, DfT figures suggest that the new Heathrow runway could cost it 1,590 flights a year. [*Presumably the same would apply to Southampton Airport, although that might benefit from a direct rail link to Heathrow – Ed.*]

[Heath Rail Link](#) is campaigning to reopen the currently mothballed 4.5 mile stub from Newton Abbot to Heathfield, where the Teign Valley line to Exeter once diverged from the Moretonhampstead branch. NR has authorised HRL to lease the line once funds were submitted, to provide a commuter service into Newton Abbot from a park and ride facility at Heathfield. Expressions of interest (and donations) would be gratefully received.

London Euston station will close over three weekends whilst North Wembley junction is replaced. No Virgin Trains West Coast, London Northwestern Railway or London Overground services will run to or from Euston on 18-19 August, 25-27 August (bank holiday weekend) and 1-2 September.

Railfuture's List of Reopening Campaign Groups (RoCs) has been updated, with the A-Z List of Rail User Groups to follow soon. Please check the [Rail User Groups web page](#) for any groups you are aware of, and report any errors or omissions to [Tony Smale](#).

CONSULTATIONS

- DfT: [Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise](#), closes 30 August.
- ORR: [Periodic Review 2018 draft determination on NR's CP6 Strategic Business Plans](#), closes 31 August.
- House of Commons Transport Committee Inquiry: [Call for Evidence](#) on the failure of the May timetable, closes 5 September.
- NR: [application under the Transport & Works Act](#) for an Order for East-West Rail Western section Phase 2, closes 7 September
- RDG/Transport Focus: [Easier Fares Consultation](#), closes 10 September.
- DfT: [Future of Mobility: call for evidence](#), closes 10 September.
- House of Commons Transport Committee Inquiry: [the bus system in England outside London](#), closes 24 September.
- Southampton City Council: [Connected Southampton - Transport Strategy 2040](#), closes 16 October.
- TfGM: [The Future of Manchester City Centre Transport](#), closes 17 October.

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

...and finally

RUX congratulates [Barry Doe](#), whose web site counter has passed half a million. The 'Best Timetables' section now has 25 entries, each with a full critique read by many professionals to see what others are doing. Many operators and authorities [*but regrettably not all – Ed.*] still appreciate that printed timetables complement, but **do not replace**, electronic versions or journey planners.

On 15 August, [Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway](#) ran special services to mark the opening of its new Platform 4 at Princes Risborough. Weekend services start on 18 August. It will be the nearest main line connected heritage railway to London, with a cross-platform interchange facility.

An estate agent's advert in a national newspaper for a £7 million detached house north of Oxford had as its top selling point "Situated less than 3 miles from Oxford Parkway". Only then did it go into the property details - proof if any were needed of the "Oxford Parkway effect".

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.

August

- Saturday 18. Railfuture Kent Division, venue TBN, 1400.
- Tuesday 28. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife College, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also 25 September and 30 October).

September

- Thursday 6. Railfuture Sussex and Coastway Division, Goring United Reformed Church, by Durrington-on-Sea station, at the corner of Shaftesbury Avenue and Barrington Road, **Worthing**, West Sussex, BN12 4EA, 1800.
- Monday 10. Skipton East Lancs Rail Action Partnership, Crown Hotel, **Colne**; (Also 12 November, Herriots Hotel, Skipton; 28 January 2019, Earby, and 11 March, AGM at The Lesser Municipal Hall, Albert Road, Colne).
- Wednesday 12. Railfuture Eastern Division, St. John's Church, **Stratford Broadway**, London E15 1NG, 1830.
- Saturday 15. Cumbrian Coast Rail Users' Group, Sy Cuthbert's church, **Seascale**, 1350 (NB. Change of date and venue, also 13 October at Methodist Church hall, 1305 – NB change of time).
- Tuesday 18. Chesham and District Transport Users' Group AGM, Town Hall, **Chesham**, 1930 (also 23 October, 11 December.)
- Wednesday 19. Friends of the Barton Line AGM, The Sloop, **Barton**, 2000 (also 21 November).
- Thursday 20. Magor Action Group On Rail, Golden Lion, **Magor**, 1930 (and the 3rd Thursday every month).
- Wednesday 26. Rugby Rail Users' Group AGM, Clarendon Centre (Age UK), 43 Clifton Rd, **Rugby**, 1930.
- 29 September. Railfuture East Anglia, Friends Meeting House, Upper Goat Street, Norwich NR2 1EW, 1800.

Further Ahead

- 7 October. TravelWatch SouthWest AGM. Somerset County Cricket Club, 7 Priory Avenue, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 1XX, 1100.
- 4 October. ACoRP Community Rail Awards, Doubletree by Hilton, Cambridge Street, **Glasgow**
- 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.
- 20 October. Railfuture Herts and Beds, St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, **St Albans**, 1045.
- 27 November. Railfuture Surrey, Redhill.

Disclaimer: unless otherwise indicated, views expressed in Rail User Express are those of the contributing organization, and not necessarily shared by Railfuture.

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