



November 2018

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

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From 16-24 February 2019, and on [several weekends](#) until next May, no trains will run south of Three Bridges to Lewes or to Brighton, as Network Rail (NR) undertakes major brickwork, track work and resignalling in the Victorian tunnels at Balcombe, Clayton and Patcham. Railfuture would create an alternative route between London and the Sussex coast by reopening an electrified [Uckfield – Lewes](#) line, which could then link into [Thameslink 2](#), another Railfuture project, at East Croydon. If only...

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 West Highland Lines

As a trial to inform future rolling stock requirements, single-car Class 153 units will be added to the Class 156 formations on certain WHL services next summer to cater for cyclists, their bikes and sports equipment. Hopefully, it will lead to more trains and improved services, especially to and from Fort William. Electrification of Central Scotland routes should cascade additional Class 156s to the WHLs.

David MacBrayne Ltd, parent company of CalMac Ferries and one of the last transport operators controlled by the Scottish Government, is interested in making a public sector bid for the ScotRail franchise from 2025. CalMac Chairman David McGibbon would like to explore with Transport Scotland what it would entail.

Modifications to the windscreen on the new Hitachi Class 385 EMUs proved a success, and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), the rail regulator, approved their entry into traffic in late June. Following further tests to confirm their reliability, the first seven-car set entered service on 24 July, and the second on 28 August. In September, more sets started running on the North Berwick line. In the interim, Class 365 sets displaced by Thameslink Class 700 units filled in on the Edinburgh-Glasgow route.

The Scottish Government has failed to deliver its 2008 promise to cut 35mins off Highland Main Line journeys between Inverness and Edinburgh/Glasgow by 2012. To date, an average of just 4mins has been achieved, leaving the HML struggling to compete with the £3 billion upgrade to the A9. However, Siemens has won a £20m contract to re-signal sections of the HML, including both Aviemore and Pitlochry stations, and to extend the double track north of Aviemore.

LevenMouth Rail Campaign

Levenmouth is the most deprived area in Fife (and amongst the worst in Scotland), whilst the local economy is badly affected as welfare reform cuts revenue for local businesses. With the Edinburgh economy 35 miles away doing well, better transport links are key to much-needed regeneration. An hourly rail service would lower housing costs for city dwellers, and expand the horizons and ambitions of Levenmouth folk by bringing job, study and leisure opportunities.

"Growing Scotland's infrastructure is critical for future economic prosperity" states new Transport Minister Michael Matheson in announcing this year's Programme for Government. Infrastructure investment will increase by £1.5 billion per year from 2019-20 to 2025-26. Reopening the Levenmouth rail link to serve a catchment of some 50,000 would require only 3.3% of that annual spend. Whether trains return to the 5.5mils of track during this period will be a clear litmus test of the Government's intentions.

Campaign for Borders Rail

CBR is seeking to build on the success of the Borders Railway by extending it through Hawick to Carlisle. The AGM in October heard that the Scottish Government was taking forward for further examination two rail-based proposals from the recent Borders Transport Corridors Study (the so-called Jacobs Report): Tweedbank to Carlisle, and a link to the East Coast Main Line at Berwick-on-Tweed. However, CBR Chair Simon Walton reiterated that: "The Campaign remains committed to re-establishment of the former 'Waverley Route' as the most achievable outcome [which] will bring about the best return on investment for the benefit of the widest possible cross-section of the community".

At a meeting with Michael Matheson, Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, each side expressed its position. "The fact that we are discussing options for extension rather than trying to argue the case for the railway, shows how far we have come". Committee member Robert Drysdale added: "It's our job as a Campaign to bring together all the political points of view, the statutory bodies, and the interests of commerce and community. This is particularly important now that we're promoting a new cross-border strategic rail route connecting Scotland with England."

Cumbrian coast Rail Users' Group

Breaking news: the planned Moorside Nugen nuclear plant will not now proceed, so much of the associated railway infrastructure - a new station at Mirehouse, a longer passing loop at St Bees, and a line into the site - will not be installed. CRUG will press for other improvements for which it has been waiting. In Cumbria on 2 November, SoS Chris Grayling spoke of ongoing discussions with local partners regarding a major programme of upgrades on the Cumbrian Coast line, to support expected major investments in West Cumbria and the creation of new jobs: 'The economy in West Cumbria, and Cumbria as a whole, needs better transport. We're putting several million pounds into the initial development work on the coastline. It's probably not a single project. This is a line that is going to need to be resignalled and upgraded.' However, that preceded the Moorside announcement.

Although Northern promised that the introduction of ticket vending machines (TVM) at local stations would be properly announced, this did not happen. Unaware of the TVM, several Seascale passengers have been charged the full fare on the train, not the day return fare they were expecting, nor any railcard discounts. There is also concern about TVMs not taking cash: it is still possible on trains, but only with a Promise to Pay from the machine. More publicity at stations and on trains is needed, and some flexibility initially. More TVMs are being installed this month.

Three members of the Group met Peter Warhurst, who leads a Northern timetabling team. There will be track closures for renewal work on six Sundays in January and February, probably from Millom to Whitehaven. From January, Class 156 diesel units, initially with two coaches, will replace the loco hauled trains. CRUG is concerned about the reduction in capacity for Sellafield, and the platform alterations needed for the four-car trains by December 2019.

In May, most of the missed stops will be reinstated. Northern will revisit the timing of the first train north from Whitehaven at 0657, as the franchise specifies "by 0630". Likewise, the first Sunday train south should run earlier, but NR needs possession in Carlisle at that time. Elsewhere, the promised two trains an hour between Carlisle and Newcastle should start, together with eight Barrow-Manchester Airport trains, though it was uncertain whether these would continue to serve Piccadilly.

Rail Delivery Group conclusions regarding easier fares were generally in line with CRUG thoughts: eliminate split ticketing where possible, end return tickets, and base fares on a combination of distance, facilities, busyness, and loyalty for regular travellers, with savings for different classes of people.

South East Northumberland Rail Users Group

On a visit to SENRUG, Ian Brown CBE FCILT, Railfuture's Policy Director, met Chair Dennis Fancett and the responsible County Councillor. On a road tour of the Ashington Blyth & Tyne line (AB&T), Ian was shown most of the stations, level crossings and signal boxes. Reinstating a passenger service is SENRUG's most ambitious campaign. Later, Ian addressed about 40 people at the public meeting in Morpeth Town Hall.

Harrogate Line Supporters Group

Good news: The December timetable is unchanged from May, so the extra stops should continue - rolling stock and staff permitting. The extra "fast" trains every half hour are expected from May 2019. Capacity, comfort and reliability on the Harrogate Line have all benefitted from the entry into service of the Class 170 Turbostar trains cascaded from Scotrail.

Bad news: Northern Rail and its owner Deutsche Bahn are in crisis talks with HMG, as the level of disruption cripples the franchise. They blame late-running electrification work, and the dispute with the RMT about on-train staff. The HMG subsidy was supposed to fall, but the chaos and strikes have seen it rise to £282m.

Friends of the Settle – Carlisle Line

Many people drive all the way from Leeds to catch the train from 'Settle to Carlisle', so FoSCL is delighted with the sign recently installed at Leeds station promoting Leeds – Settle – Carlisle. Following the RDG decision, tweaks to the timetable from December will have to wait until May. New trains from Spain should enter service at the end of the year, but not on the S&C. However, the resulting cascade should allow S&C services to be strengthened from two cars to three.

The winter walks programme running to Easter has been re-launched, with a free leaflet widely available. Walks have either been moved to a Sunday, or retimed to use trains or replacement buses on strike Saturdays. New Leaders would be most welcome, especially at the Northern end of the line.

Last year several heavily loaded northbound gypsum trains lost traction at Stainforth causing widespread disruption, but lessons have been learnt. NR has deployed its Railhead Treatment Trains (RHTT) (see below) a month earlier, and the Class 66 locos have been replaced with older Class 60, which have better adhesion in adverse conditions; the weight of the train has also been reduced.

The FoSCL [website](#) has been rebuilt using the latest development software. It has many new features including a really good Virtual Visit: high-definition webcams, fly over the line, a new image gallery and comprehensive Conservation Area, with photos and full details of virtually every structure along the line.

Northern Weekly Salvo (Paul Salveson)

By a stroke of luck, on a visit to Scotland, Paul was able to take advantage of an invitation to travel on a Vivarail battery-powered Class 230 train. It had been shipped up to the Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway, on the banks of the Forth, to give a series of demonstration runs to the Scottish rail industry and Government.

Unfortunately, as [RTM](#) reports, diesel versions of Class 230 for the Marston Vale Line between Bedford and Bletchley will not now be ready for December due to "technical issues", but London Northwestern will still operate the new timetable using existing rolling stock. Adrian Shooter, CEO of Vivarail, is confident that his team will deliver the finished trains with minimal delay.

The Bolton Station Community Development Partnership is working to create Britain's Number 1 community hub station. CBR Chair Simon Walton outlined the success in re-opening the famous 'Waverley' line from Edinburgh as far as Galashiels and Twedbank. Partnership Chair Paul Salveson commented: "Simon's story about the way community support was harnessed to re-open the line was inspiring. He underlined the importance of broad community involvement with the campaign to ensure success."

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines (STORM)

Rail North appears fixated on connecting cities instead of meeting existing demand. Passenger numbers between Bradford and Manchester do not justify three or four fast trains an hour, whereas four Greater Manchester stations with housing development within walking distance of the station lack an adequate service. TfGM has proposed additional peak hour services at Littleborough, Smithy Bridge, Castleton and Mills Hill, and would favour three trains per hour throughout the day. So what happened? Has it been overruled by West Yorkshire PTE, which is also pressing for a call at Low Moor to be inserted in a Manchester service? Clitheroe to Blackburn could be an extension of the half hourly service via Bolton, with Victoria, Burnley to Blackburn/Clitheroe extended to Preston, calling at all stations from Blackburn.

Rochdale Online reports that TfN is preparing outline plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail for submission to Government in December. The system will provide fast, frequent and reliable rail links between the North's six major city regions, reducing journey times and integrating with the high-speed rail across the North. Also, Rossendale Council and Lancashire County Council have engaged consultants to explore the case for investment in the Rochdale/Rawtenstall Manchester corridor, taking in large towns not currently on the national network including Ramsbottom, Bury and Heywood. It could access Metrolink tram-trains at Buckley Wells (Bury), or use a heavy rail curve at Castleton near Rochdale. Any solution would need to integrate with the East Lancs Heritage Railway.

On Tuesday 6th November Castleton, Mills Hill and Moston had no trains to Manchester between 0830 and 1000. In that time, at least six half-full trains passed through without stopping. NR should require Northern to arrange special stops by some of these non-stopping trains when there are cancellations at peak times.

STORM Chairman Richard S Greenwood's letter to the Manchester Evening News expressing the views of its members regarding the state of Manchester Victoria station attracted much support. Platforms 4, 5 and 6 in particular are dark and dingy; the walls are stained with oil film from exhaust fumes, as the extractors are ineffective. There are also problems with the lifts, the amount of seating especially on Platform 6, the public address system, and information screens: the main footbridge needs one above each platform, together with an escalator from the Platform 3 circulating area. There are no toilets or refreshment facilities after passing through the ticket barriers. All in all, it's extremely depressing, and Manchester City Council [*Northern? – Ed*] should be ashamed of it.

Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association

The Northern franchise requires a minimum of two trains per hour between Manchester and Greenbank from 7am to 7pm from December 2017. The service was delayed to May 2018 owing to shortage of diesel trains, and then again to May 2019. However, the minutes of TfN's Rail North Committee meeting state that: "Northern have not been able to bid the second Greenbank to Manchester train due to pathing issues between Stockport and Manchester. They have bid to provide a second train per hour between Altrincham and Chester, benefiting the core section of route and enabling interchange with Metrolink."

A Chester to Altrincham service (changing there onto Metrolink) is no substitute. It is slower than the train via Stockport, and omitting that stop is important for commuters and for train connections. MCRUA is dismayed, and has written to every MP along the line asking them to press Chris Grayling for the train service that is promised and written into Northern's contract.

The Mid Cheshire Rail Link connects Northwich and Sandbach stations via Middlewich. The line still carries occasional freight trains and diverted passenger trains, but has not had a regular passenger service since 1960. MCRUA is cautiously optimistic about the chance of re-opening it. The campaign has the support of the two borough councils and strong, cross-party support from local MPs. Fiona Bruce MP, whose constituency includes Middlewich, asked Chris Grayling to confirm his support. He replied that the line was one of his top two priorities for rail re-openings in the north of England, the other being Colne - Skipton. He had asked the Cheshire & Warrington LEP to produce an appraisal of the case for re-opening the line, a significant development. It is already included in the LEP's transport strategy, and they have appointed consultants to do an appraisal. Their report should be published early next year and, if positive, will be followed by development of a full business case.

Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users Group

Norwich - Cumbria passengers should change at Manchester. The option to travel via Warrington entails a mile-long walk between Central and Bank Quay stations.

PENRUG has updated its [Birmingham-March-Stansted Airport](#) webpage with aspirations for earlier trains to Stansted Airport, later trains from the Airport and Cambridge to stations west of Ely, and more trains between Leicester and Peterborough; the biggest issue facing passengers along this route is the lack of capacity; passengers should not have to stand for more than 20 minutes. Some resources have been re-allocated as a result of passenger counts.

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group

The Interim July timetable is proving more reliable, and two Great Northern services were restored in September. From December, the May 2018 weekday service will be reinstated, but not the weekend timetable, a key concern. GTR staff were monitoring platforms to learn how best to restore specific peak services. The Group's priorities are the 0751 Kings Cross to Cambridge, a useful school train, and the 1757 from Cambridge for commuters returning home. With the loss of semi-fast services, it was no longer possible to reach London from local stations in less than an hour, except by changing at Royston. GTR has agreed to consider restoring at least one semi-fast service each morning and afternoon.

Some children had been left stranded when trains were cancelled at short notice. GTR would try to provide replacement buses or taxis where possible, but few are available at that time. Stagecoach Busway A runs close to Foxton station, then to Cambridge Station and as far as Cambridge Regional College and St Ives, so GTR will also discuss the possibility of the Busway accepting its tickets in the event of cancellations.

Foxton and Shepreth passengers can miss their train if the barrier drops after they have purchased a ticket on one platform for travel from the other, whilst those from Meldreth have to cross a footbridge twice. Additional ticket machines could not be justified given the low footfall and risk of vandalism, but third party funding could be sought to provide an amenity for the local community. There is a Key-Go pedestal on every platform, but Greater Anglia has not yet enabled it for travel into Cambridge.

At Meldreth only doors in the front four coaches open. On the Class 700 trains, there are announcements, the information screens show this, and there are no internal doors, so it is easy to move to the appropriate carriage [*if the train isn't jam packed – Ed.*] However, Class 387 trains are formed of two four-car sets, and it isn't possible to walk between them. GTR will look into improving the platform information so that Meldreth passengers will know in advance to be in or to move to the front four coaches in order to alight.

Letchworth Rail Users Group

As the full May 2018 timetable will be delayed for at least a year, Leanne Stott sent DfT a letter on behalf of Great Northern RUGs from Alexandra Palace to Foxton and Biggleswade (a combined footfall of almost 19 million/year!) calling for a fare freeze in January. DfT's initial response said that that would place an unfair burden on the taxpayer – but the Chancellor froze motor fuel duty for the 9th year in a row!

English Regional Transport Association

An ERTA report calls for a rebuild of the former Great Central railway from the Leicester-Nuneaton line to Rugby and Calvert, with links via EWR to Aylesbury/Heathrow and Oxford/Reading and further afield. It is available as a download priced £3.50 from the [ERTA Website](#). [*Extending the Chiltern Line from Aylesbury Vale to a P&R station at Brackley (for Silverstone) might be more tenable – Ed.*]

ERTA supports East-West Rail, but has launched a [petition](#) to cancel the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway. The closure of the line created a rail deficit that drove traffic onto road, fuelling demand for more and yet more roads. Only a new rail line can break this vicious cycle.

In an [article](#) in Transport Times, Jim Steer too questions the need for the Expressway: are rail and highway projects attempting to address the same problem? In this instance, both strategic cases point to 'unlocking housing growth' across the Oxford-Cambridge 'arc of prosperity' as the key aim. But Martin Mogridge, of the GLC and later UCL showed that, with adjacent networks, improvements to one mode had a negative impact on the other. Without road user charging, attempts to reduce highway congestion through network expansion could have the opposite effect to that intended [*Hear, hear – Ed.*]

Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group

Trials of the new Class 710/2 trains that started on 3 October were suspended on the 27th. BGORUG assumes that their Type Approval has had to be withdrawn. Meanwhile, one Class 172/0 unit left off-lease in June and now another in November, leaving six units to cover six diagrams. With no spare to cover breakdowns or maintenance, prospects for passengers look grim. If any more units leave the fleet before February 2019, ARL would be unable to operate the published timetable; TfL have ruled out bringing in any other trains as a stop-gap. However, neither BGORUG nor Assembly Member Caroline Pidgeon can get any firm information from TfL or the Mayor. **BGORUG can but advise passengers to seek alternative routes or expect cancellations, extended service intervals and severe overcrowding for the foreseeable future.**

The Mayor has announced that Leyton Midland Road was among 21 Overground stations for which he has submitted a bid to the DfT's Access for All fund for approval in Control Period 6 (CP6) (2019 – 2024).

Chesham & District Transport User Group

West of Chalfont and Latimer, the Metropolitan line branches to Amersham or to Chesham. But although Chiltern line trains too serve Amersham, in the event of disruption it is invariably Chesham trains that are cancelled or diverted. The Baker Street loudspeaker system may not be used after 8pm, so platform staff need clear and reliable information to provide updates via notice boards.

The new signalling system from Kensington Olympia to Finchley Road cannot be extended beyond Harrow, as from there the track is shared with the Chiltern line. However, a report in the Bucks Free Press of a new signal equipment room at Amersham would seem to contradict that.

Preparatory work to install step free access at Amersham station began on 1 November; substantive works will begin towards the end of the year, and the project is due to be completed by next autumn.

Tonbridge Line Commuters

Award of the Southeastern franchise has been delayed to at least November, and may be as late as Easter 2019. Under current proposals, six out of nine possible trains an hour must call at Orpington unless the operator can demonstrate that there are no available seats on the preceding stop. TLC believe that this would inevitably lead to overcrowding, so passengers for Hildenborough and beyond may not be able to board services at London Bridge. A compromise proposal would cut the six mandatory calls to three, with stops at either Chelsfield (as is currently in place on some services) or Orpington.

At the AGM, Chris Vinson and Ross Balcombe from Southeastern highlighted increased passenger satisfaction, with passenger ambassadors introduced at London terminals. It was the first operator to focus on right-time performance, and had worked with NR on removing temporary speed restrictions. Local MP Tom Tugendhat said that getting home from work was equally important.

The Tonbridge-Redhill shuttle service was unsatisfactory; Gatwick Airport services were needed. The passenger ambassador initiative should include Tonbridge as the busiest station in Kent. Alex Hellier of NR said that drainage in Sevenoaks tunnel had been improved, and re-railing was underway. Proposals for investment were being drawn up in the Kent Route Study. There was growth on the HS1 and Tonbridge lines, with the capacity of Charing Cross and Cannon Street now the biggest constraint.

As the only station in the area without step-free access, Hildenborough was an obvious candidate for an Access for All bid. A reliable, ie 'low-tech', solution would use a parcel of land for a ramp from Platform 2 up to the roadside (Rings Hill) and to Philpots allotments, where there is alternative parking. It would take people from the bridge to improve passenger flow, and serve as an alternative exit point were the bridge ever to be out of use.

For almost a year now, Southeastern has had difficulty ensuring that toilet tanks on trains were emptied; many services have had reduced facilities or even none at all. In 2014, a cleaner had been killed, and a subsequent review found that staff were not always following safe working methods. A £5m programme was set up to rectify the problem. Since TLC raised the issue, the information on departure boards and from guards about toilet availability has improved.

Rail & Bus for Herefordshire

On 14 October, responsibility for the Marches Line through Herefordshire and Shropshire transferred to the Welsh Government through its agency, Transport for Wales Ltd (TfW). The new operator is a consortium of Keolis, which is French railway owned, and Amey plc, whose parent company is Spanish. TfW promises are impressive: new trains, more services, station modernisation, better ticketing, and a metro system for South East Wales; a full list can be found on the [RBFH website](#) under the title The Welsh Government's Brave New Railway. How far the £5 billion investment will stretch remains to be seen, and sceptics are wondering how much will go to English train services and stations under Welsh control: 'we have no representation, and no say on what the Welsh Government does'. Unfortunately, the first day of Welsh/French/Spanish operation was inauspicious, with no trains between Newport and Shrewsbury because of good old-fashioned engineering work.

West Midlands Trains confirm that its Access for All Scheme nominations include Ledbury, where the situation is desperate. There is no disabled access to the up platform, so wheelchair passengers for Worcester, Birmingham, Oxford or London have to travel to Hereford, and return on the same train!

At long last, the West Midlands cross-city line is operational to Bromsgrove, with two electric trains per hour to/from Birmingham New Street. The Hereford-Birmingham service still calls at Bromsgrove, but hopefully the overcrowding that existed when that provided the only service will dramatically reduce. However, some Bromsgrove residents may still find it more convenient to take up space on a Hereford train rather than use the electrics, which call at all stations.

Pilning Ststion User Group

NR demolished the Pilning Station footbridge in November 2016 to electrify the South Wales Main Line. Now only Bristol trains can call – but not after dark, as the station is unlit. To mark the second anniversary, a new song, based on "Imagine", and with lines like "Imagine there's a footbridge / And platform lighting too" can be found on the Group's [website](#).

When Meridian Water station replaces Angel Road in May 2019, the footbridge there will be redundant - and it spans overhead lines. It's all steel, so should be relatively easy to dismantle, move and re-erect. The Group hopes that responses to the Angel Road consultation will suggest that its footbridge be relocated to Pilning – but don't delay: it closes 21 November. Bristol needs all possible public transport infrastructure.

Friends of Templecombe Station

FOTS has joined over 1000 other station adoption groups as members of ACoRP. SWR covered the £35 cost of its annual membership. Check out the FOTS [website](#) for further news.

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](#).



STOP PRESS: At Railfuture's national autumn conference in Reading on 10 November, Vice-President Stewart Palmer presented the seventh [Rail User Group Annual Awards](#) as follows:

Best website: [Great Western Coffee Shop](#) – a 'virtual RUG' and online forum hosted by a GWR customer, with three active administrators and a further nine moderators!

Best newsletter: [Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield Rail Users' Association 'Track Record'](#). Paul Abell, a Railfuture VP and member of the Awards Judging Panel paid a visit to its Chairman.

Best new group, the Oliver Lovell Award: the [South East Wales and West of England Business Link \(SEWWEB\)](#), to develop the connectivity of a corridor via Bristol between Newport and Weston-super-Mare.

Best campaign: the [Hastings & Rother Rail Users' Alliance](#) of six local RUGs for 'The Eastbourne Overlap', an innovative timetable proposal negotiated with GTR to split the hourly Brighton-Ashford 2-car diesel service. The replacement 4-car electric service from Brighton runs to Hastings as planned, but the Ashford service continues west of Hastings to Eastbourne, thus increasing the Eastbourne – Bexhill - Hastings service from 3 tph to 4. The HRRUA members are Ore Transport Group [OTG, Railfuture affiliated], MarshLink Action Group [MLAG, affiliated], Three Oaks and Winchelsea Action on Rail Transport [THWART, affiliated], St. Leonards & Hastings Rail Improvement Programme [SHRIMP, affiliated], Bexhill Rail Action Group [BRAG], and the Normans Bay Residents Association. Affiliated membership of Railfuture at just £21 gives access to the [Fighting Fund](#) to support local campaigning activity.

Best campaigner, the Clara Zilahi Award: [Graham Collett](#), co-Vice-Chair of Yorkshire branch, for leading on Railfuture's responses to two important ORR consultations: on Improving Assisted Travel, and on the impact of the May timetable on Northern and TransPennine services and their passengers. Both resulted in an invitation for Railfuture to participate in a follow-on workshop and contribute to their final report. Graham was visited by Railfuture VP and member of the Awards Judging Panel Ian Brown CBE FCILT.

Finally, the **Judges' Special Award**, acknowledging the growing integration of preserved and heritage operations with mainline operations: a joint award this year to the [Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway](#) for restoring the link to the Chiltern Railways main line in August, and to [Pat Marshall](#) of [West Coast Railways](#), working with local MP Tim Farron, for the short-notice, replacement loco-hauled '[Lakelander](#)' service to Windermere in June, which carried 17,000 passengers in just two weeks.

On the Railfuture [website](#), Policy Director Ian Bolton critically examines the "sweeping review to transform Britain's railways". Whereas privatisation was based on the premise of zero growth, the Review needs to focus on significant growth, with well-informed changes including much better investment processes.

RAILFUTURE WEST MIDLANDS

The Urban Growth Company secured £9.2m from the West Midlands Combined Authority for a £286m transformation of Birmingham International station into a multi-modal interchange by 2025, bringing together heavy rail, HS2, air, trams, buses, rapid transit, private vehicles, taxis and bicycles; it could generate up to 77,500 jobs, 4,000 new homes and add £4.1bn/year gross value.

The Camp Hill line in Birmingham will reopen in time for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, with new stations at Moseley, Kings Heath and Hazelwell, and possibly Balsall Heath, offering a 15 min journey to the city centre. Due to constraints at New Street Station, there will initially be only two trains per hour, none of which will stop south of Hazelwell before Bromsgrove. However, it is almost certain that the Bordesley chords to the Chiltern Line will go ahead, enabling Camp Hill trains to use Moor Street station, and so at least 4 tph. A new local campaign group 'Friends of Kings Heath Station' will serve all the new stations; over 50 people attended its inaugural meeting. Railfuture will be represented at future meetings, and will support them in any way possible. Other major improvements for the 2022 Games include a completely new, £40 million concourse for University station, and a £20.5 million rail/bus interchange at Perry Barr.

Meanwhile, Transport Design International, based near Stratford-upon-Avon, has won a tender to create a state-of-the-art, battery-operated very light rail vehicle for Coventry, which could operate with no driver. The VLR system will be compatible with Midland Metro, and the city Council will collaborate with TfWM to ensure operating systems, branding and information are consistent. The prototype vehicle will have 20 seats, with up to 50 standing. It will be tested at the VLR National Innovation Centre in Dudley before the track is installed across Coventry, and a fleet of vehicles manufactured.

Alongside the Mayor of Bristol and local MPs, Chris Grayling unveiled a plaque to mark the official opening of Bristol Parkway's new 'Platform 1'. With Filton Bank redoubling, it will significantly improve the rail infrastructure in the Bristol area. CrossCountry's MD Andy Cooper said that a more robust timetable would enable XC to operate more trains on time. By extending afternoon and evening trains that previously terminated at Bristol, XC aims to add three more weekday services each way to Taunton and Exeter by May 2019, so departing Bristol every 30 mins between 1545 and 1845, whilst a new northbound service from Newton Abbot at 1520 and an enhanced local rail service will improve connections from Torbay.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

An ACoRP [brochure](#) lists the Winners in its [Community Rail Awards 2018](#). The Lifetime Achievement Award went to Chris Austin OBE, the Heritage Liaison member of Railfuture's Passenger Group. Working with Chatham's Bradfields Academy and the British Transport Police, Kent CRP won the 'Community Art Schemes - Renewable & Smaller' Award for making the railways a safer environment. Posters in four designs displayed at 20 stations along the Medway Valley Line and Swale Line promoted BTP's text number – 61016 (the police non-emergency number 101 with a 6 at either end). A [video](#) shows the pupils taking the train to see their posters down the line.

The Poacher Line CRP, winners of the Best Marketing Campaign, reached for the skies. Lincolnshire has a wealth of aviation history with the RAF, so there was a "golden opportunity" to mark its centenary year. Partnering with the RAF100 Appeal team, the CRP raised the profile of both Lincolnshire and RAF100 events with a range of marketing materials, and interactive activities to entice and engage the public. The campaign received "incredible" feedback, and raised over £1000 for the RAF100 Appeal.

As part of its 'Dementia and Community Rail' project, the Bentham Line (Leeds-Morecambe CRP) organised a trip to Morecambe for residents of Regency Court Care Home in Keighley. Northern staff made boarding and leaving the train an easy process, with an extra wheelchair made available when required. Rod Tickner, of Dementia Friendly Keighley and Vice Chairman of the Bentham Line, said: "this is the first time we have attempted this kind of supported visit with a group from a care home...Careful planning and the thoughtful support from both our volunteers and railway staff...brought obvious pleasure to the group."

The East Hampshire CRP's Stakeholder Group Meeting at the Hollycombe Steam Collection will include updates on its activities, SWR plans, and workshops on Dementia Training and the 2018/19 business plan. RSVP to info@easthampshirerail.co.uk.

CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

Recent CBT research showed that funding for supported bus services has fallen by 45 per cent over the last eight years, resulting in over 3,000 routes being reduced, altered or withdrawn. People who no longer have a car really depend on the bus to maintain their independence. Villages and new housing developments are increasingly being isolated. But it's not just a local problem. If there is no public transport to a nearby station, residents cannot access social events, shopping and employment farther afield by rail.

TRANSPORT FOCUS

Case Study: Mrs G holds a digital Railcard via an app on her phone. She purchased tickets at a station and boarded her train, but when the ticket inspector asked to see her tickets and Railcard, her phone battery had died. Mrs G asked if she could charge her phone on the train, but was denied the use of a power socket because “that would be stealing from the train company”. The inspector issued an Unpaid Fares Notice, and the Revenue Protection Support Services (RPSS) rejected her appeal. Southeastern argued that the Unpaid Fares Notice was issued correctly, but agreed that a degree of leniency should be shown when evidence of a valid Railcard is supplied at a later date, and by a ‘first time offender’. After discussing the case with RPSS, Southeastern agreed to cancel the Unpaid Fares Notice. They also assured Transport Focus that RPSS intends to offer further training and guidance to ensure this remains an isolated incident.

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

According to RTM, enabling work for Phase 2 of East West Rail (EWR) line is almost complete. Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said that the Oxford - Cambridge line would create one million homes between the two cities by 2050. Responding to environmental concerns, he said: “We're on the edge of a rail power revolution. I was in Berlin seeing the new power technology in development of battery trains, of hydrogen trains. EWR won't be a conventional diesel-powered line [but have] new generation, low-emission trains.” The Western section of EWR will be delivered with conventional signalling, but the DfT is exploring the possible future benefit of implementing the European Train Control System (ETCS) across the whole line.

ORR's [final determination](#) on NR's £35bn plans for CP6, from April 2019-24 include £7.7bn to maintain the existing railway, and £16.6bn for its renewal – a 17% increase from CP5. It hopes that this will cut delays caused by infrastructure failures. ORR also confirmed a major boost from £145m to £260m in the forecast spend on NR's timetabling and planning functions.

Leaves on the line act like black ice on roads, and can cause train delays throughout the autumn months. Trains compress them into a smooth, slippery layer, reducing wheel grip. Leaves can also interfere with the signalling system by insulating the wheel from the track, degrading the ability to detect a train's location. To combat the problem, NR is rolling out a fleet of 61 RHTT and Multi-Purpose Vehicles (MPV), which blast away leaf mulch with a water jet at very high pressure (1500 bar), and then apply a layer of adhesion modifier – a mixture of suspension gel, sand and steel or iron shot – to the railhead to aid traction.

Yet again, the main line through Dawlish has had to be closed, initially as a precaution, but fully justified as high tides washed over the sea wall and flooded the track. Services could not resume "until sea levels reduce and the railway line can be inspected". Climate change can only exacerbate what is already an unacceptable level of disruption. The inland Exeter-Plymouth route via Okehampton and Tavistock needs to be reopened ASAP. [Railfuture Devon and Cornwall](#) is on the case!

The 42nd edition of Barry Doe's [Rail Franchise Map](#) reflects the replacement of Arriva Trains Wales by TfW, plus minor changes such as the Sheffield Supertram Tram/Train extension. Courtesy of his sponsors, copies may be downloaded free of charge.

...and finally

Improbably, the hot, dry summer has forced West Coast Railways to cancel its Christmas Jacobite services. The tyres on the Mark1/2 coaches are normally changed twice during the summer season; this year it will be up to 5 times, the last coming too late to resume the winter programme.

CONSULTATIONS

- West Midlands Rail: [Investment Strategy](#) closes Monday 19 November, at 12 noon!
- DfT: [Angel Road Station Closure](#), closes 21 November.
- NR: [Croydon Area Remodelling Scheme](#), closes 17 December.
- Gatwick Airport: [Draft Master Plan](#), closes 10 January 2019.

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

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 (RUGs are cordially invited).
- National & regional rail events.
- Local Group events.

November

- Monday 19. East Hampshire CRP Stakeholder Meeting, Hollycombe Steam Collection, **Liphook**, 1000
- Tuesday 20. Bolton Station Community Development Partnership, An evening of railway song and poetry, Community Room on Platform 5, **Bolton Station**, 1930, admission free.
- Saturday 24. English Regional Transport Association Aylesbury Forum, The Bell, 40 Market Square, **Aylesbury**, HP20 1TX, 1400.
- Tuesday 27. Railfuture Surrey, NEW Travelodge Redhill Town Centre, 26 London Road, **Redhill**, RH1 1NN, 1800.
- Tuesday 27. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife College, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also last Tuesday of every month except December and July).

December

- Saturday 8. Cumbrian coast Rail User Group, Methodist Church Hall, **Seascale**, 1305
- Tuesday 11. Chesham and District Transport Users' Group AGM, Town Hall, **Chesham**, 1930.
- Thursday 13. Westminster Social Policy Forum: Next steps for the Cambridge - Milton Keynes - Oxford Corridor, Central **London** TBN, 0900
- Thursday 13. Association of Community Rail Partnerships AGM, The Church, Carrs Lane, **Birmingham**, B4 7SX, 1330.

Further Ahead

- 28 January 2019. Skipton East Lancs Rail Action Partnership, **Earby** (Also 11 March, AGM at The Lesser Municipal Hall, Albert Road, Colne).
- 5 February 2019. Cheshire Best Kept Stations Awards, The Grange Theatre, Bradburns Lane, Hartford, **Northwich**, 1900.
- 12 February. Felixstowe Travel Watch, Salvation Army Church, Cobbold Road, **Felixstowe**, 1430 (also 7 May (AGM)).
- Thursday 20. Magor Action Group On Rail, Golden Lion, **Magor**, 1930 (and the 3rd Thursday every month).
- 23 February. English Regional Transport Association Rugby Forum, Rupert Brooke, 8-10 Castle St, **Rugby**, CV21 2TP, 1400
- 9 March. English Regional Transport Association Olney Forum, The Bull, 9 Market Place, **Olney**, MK46 4EA, 1400.
- 23 March. English Regional Transport Association, The Bell, 40 Market Square, **Aylesbury**, HP20 1TX, 1400.
- 18 May. Friends of Settle-Carlisle Line AGM, Victoria Hall, Kirkgate, **Settle**, BD24 9DZ, 1200

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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