



February 2019

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

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On 28 January, Railfuture's 30-year [Oxford-Cambridge](#) rail campaign took a major step forward when East West Railway finally launched a [consultation](#) on five possible routes for the Central section between Bedford and Cambridge: two northern routes via Cambourne, and three southern routes via Bassingbourn, but all entering Cambridge from the south via the new Cambridge South station (a Railfuture top priority). Both options for the Midland Main Line interchange - Bedford Midland or a new out-of-town station - are still open, whilst the interchange with the East Coast Main Line will be a new, split-level station somewhere between Biggleswade and St Neots. However, with their established public transport networks, the option of using one of those stations for the interchange should not be ruled out.

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.



A plug for Railfuture's summer conference in Darlington on Saturday 22 June 2018 at the Dolphin Centre (entrance above).



The venue is about 10 minutes' walk from Darlington station. The conference will be in the Central Hall (pictured – right) although the layout will be group tables rather than theatre style. Book online for the very reasonable price of **£15** (just £12.50 'early bird' for members), which includes lunch and refreshments.

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/>

Offer: Book and join Railfuture for a year from £24.

Friends of the Far North Line

The Far North Line relies heavily on lines onward from Inverness, so it urges the Scottish Government to get a grip on upgrading the Highland Main Line. Any incident on a single-track section can cause massive delays. FoFNL proposes doubling a further 25 miles, making a total of 62 of the 118 miles between Inverness and Perth, leaving just 56 miles of single track. The government's own policy to encourage modal shift from road to rail is being ignored. FoFNL has written to all members of the Scottish Parliament asking them to support the Scottish Government's wish to see Network Rail Scotland Route devolved to Holyrood. The UK Government actively opposes this against the wishes of the Scottish rail industry.

The final meeting of the FNL Review Team took place on 1 February. Transport Scotland will set out its achievements before the end of March. FoFNL hopes that it will soon become clear what work is to be done in CP6. Some temporary speed restrictions have been removed, and work is in progress on the design and testing of electronic passenger-operated request stop equipment. NR is putting several options for infrastructure improvements such as the Lentrans Loop - for which FoFNL has campaigned for years - through the Scottish Transport Analysis Guide (STAG) process, to determine the best way to proceed, and to obtain funding from Transport Scotland. Various level crossing works have been done and are planned: once a bridge has replaced the Delny crossing, the equipment there will be used to improve the crossing at Kildonan. On the Kyle Line, two of Dingwall's three crossings have been converted to full barrier crossings. In 2020 NR also plans to install a double-line automatic full-barrier crossing at Rogart to replace the current open one. These improvements are a significant contribution to safety, and provide some line-speed increases.

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

2019 sees the 50th anniversary of the closure of passenger rail services to Levenmouth (in October 1969), although Beeching recommended the line remain open. That a settlement as large as Levenmouth still lacks direct rail services when the line is still in place and public transport and road connections are so poor, points to an abject dereliction of duty by the transport authorities. Travel challenges highlighted 5 decades ago still persist: "The A915 to Kirkcaldy, and the A955 road via Dysart, are [still] the two worst roads in Scotland" and "The working day of local commuting residents will be increased by 2 hours" and they will face "extra financial outlay for bus as well as train fares". "Without good time-keeping and bus connections, people would be driven to seek alternative means of transport".

CKP Railways

Last summer, Friends of the Lake District (FoLD) said that they would be "spearheading work to help find practical and creative transport solutions to...one of the most pressing challenges facing the Lake District" – 19 million visitors per annum, 93% arriving by car. FoLD were reminded of the work done by CKP, and the by the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) report that envisaged Keswick as a transport hub, with the rail link from Penrith re-instated, and possibly west to Cockermouth.

In December 2015, Storm Desmond washed out two bridges and 200m of trackbed, and damaged one abutment of a third bridge. In December 2018, the LDNPA and Lake District Foundation (LDF) announced that funding had been secured to re-instate the path between Keswick and Threlkeld along the trackbed. Consultants Capita collaborated with CKP to ensure that the path for light traffic (pedestrians, cyclists and maintenance vehicles) would not need to be "un-done" later to allow the railway to be rebuilt.

Much of the funding to protect the route towards Penrith will come from Highways England (HE), which also owns other bridges and part of the track-bed further east, through its "Historical Railways Estate". CKP hopes that HE will retain those structures, and ensure that the route is not blocked or compromised. LDNPA core policy CS04 protects the route; in 2014 its rejection of an application to infill a bridge over the track-bed was upheld. However, last October 2018, Jacobs, consulting Engineers for HAHRE, applied to LDNPA to strengthen bridges at Hill Cottages and Gillsrow with concrete and steel inserts, severely reducing clearances, so that trains could not pass. Despite CKP's written objections, the LDNPA approved the Hill Cottages application with no regard to re-instatement of the railway, or its planning policy and history.

To ensure that current and credible data is available to support political approaches and defend planning issues, CKP has asked Brian Eaton, a local specialist familiar with the CKP project, Lake District transport in general, the Borders Railway and other areas, review the estimated passenger numbers of 250-450,000 per annum used in the NWDA Business Case report 15 years ago. Several recent re-opening schemes have far exceeded "official" estimates, so the figure of 450,000 now seems the more likely. Tata Special Projects (successors to Corus Rail, who produced the design package) are updating the construction cost estimates.

Cumbrian Coast Rail User Group

Does CRUG have a future is the blunt question posed by its Treasurer Graham Worsnop. Both he and the Secretary have moved away from the area, and will be giving up their roles. Unless someone is prepared to take them on, CRUG cannot continue.

The May 2019 timetable is likely to be as previously reported, with most of the current missed stops reinstated. There should be ten Barrow and four Windermere return journeys to Manchester Airport. CRUG continues to press for more education around the use of ticket machines, particularly when penalty fares are introduced.

Northern Weekly Salvo (Prof Paul Salveson)

The Rail Reform Group chaired by Professor Salveson has submitted a detailed response to the Rail review, chaired by Keith Williams. "Our paper – Railways for The Common Good - is intended to make a positive and constructive contribution to the Government's Rail Review," says the Group. " We believe that Britain's railways could be run in a way that makes less call on the public purse; takes pressure off Government to 'micro-manage' the industry; and offers high quality, reliable services to passengers." The Group argues for a new 'not for dividend' railway operator - 'Lancashire and Yorkshire Railways' - covering the 'metropolitan belt' from the Mersey to the Humber, and combining infrastructure management with train operations. Freight would be encouraged, though LYN wouldn't run services itself. There may be scope for partnerships with freight operators, including sharing of some engineering facilities. Community rail is strongly endorsed, with support for experiments in more local management for some rural lines.

Transport for The North's plan for HS3, 'Northern Powerhouse Rail', is to build (or burrow) a new line from Manchester to Leeds via Bradford - massively expensive and highly unlikely to ever get built. Rational considerations have been over-ridden by the need to 'do something' for Bradford. The best thing in that regard would be to reconfigure the West Yorkshire rail network by connecting the two separate networks, with Interchange and Forster Square replaced by one good quality station in the middle of the city; route Calder Valley services via Shipley, (some) Aire Valley services via New Pudsey, and some LNER services via the 'Bradford Loop', so the conurbation is, once again, properly served by regular intercity services. An obvious fast route from the North-West to Yorkshire is via Woodhead. East of the tunnel, a route to Wakefield could diverge northwards, whilst services to Sheffield and the East Midlands continue along the old alignment (just divert the TransPennine Trail to run alongside). As for freight, it's mad that there is no TransPennine route that can take maritime containers.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines (STORM)

Calderdale Council has launched an [online petition](#) to step up pressure on Government to electrify the Calder Valley rail line, which links Leeds and Manchester via Bradford Interchange, Halifax and Rochdale, plus several other towns in the upper Calder Valley, and provides a connection between York and Blackpool and Huddersfield via Brighouse.

Early in January, Smithy Bridge, Castleton, Mills Hill and Moston had no Sunday service at all; trains ran through nonstop. However, on the Sunday following a letter from STORM in the Manchester Evening News, all four stations had their Leeds stops reinstated. But on 27 January it was back to square one. Because of engineering between Todmorden and Halifax, the train service was confined to Todmorden to Victoria calling only at Walsden, Littleborough and Rochdale: the same four stations were again deprived of their rail service. Having been shamed into correcting the error, to repeat it so soon is totally unacceptable.

STORM and Rochdale Council suggest that a TfGM response is misleading. ORR passenger figures for local stations counts only tickets sold. Within its area, Greater Manchester concessionary pass holders travel free off peak on local trains, so both they and season ticket are excluded, missing 20% - 25%. By contrast, West Yorkshire pass holders pay 50% of the regular fare, so these journeys are counted. TfGM also claims that, as well as the Manchester service at Low Moor, other improvements to Calder Valley rail services are planned for 2019. However, these are not new for 2019 but delayed from 2018.

The ORR safety team upheld STORM's complaint regarding the ventilation system at Manchester Victoria. Arriva Northern has persuaded NR to upgrade the extraction system on the overbridge by the end of March and to install a green living wall as a potentially effective method for air pollution control. Arriva is also conducting occupational DEEE (Diesel Engine Exhaust Emissions) surveys, and monitoring its engine idling

policy, in addition to the automatic engine shut down system already in place. Accordingly, ORR is satisfied that Arriva has identified DEEE as being a health concern at the station, and is working to manage the situation so far as is reasonably practicable. The ORR thanks STORM for bringing this matter to its attention.

Northern Rail will soon be introducing additional Class 158 trains in the North East, so the Pacers from this area will be used to strengthen services on other routes across the north of England. STORM welcomes the idea, as those Pacers are of better quality than those operating on its line. It has long felt that most passengers would rather have a seat on a Pacer than stand on a 'short formed' service of only two carriages.

Shrewsbury to Chester Rail Users Association

Detailed timetable information is fairly limited at the moment. On the Shrewsbury to Chester line, from 2022 there will be an hourly service between Shrewsbury and Liverpool Lime Street via the Halton curve, which will re-open this year. A two-hourly service between Liverpool and Cardiff has also been announced, although these will presumably be an extension of the Shrewsbury trains. Three Cardiff to Holyhead services each way daily will be locomotive hauled Inter City style services (as with the current weekday Holyhead to Cardiff Premier Service) using refurbished 'Mark 4' coaching stock dating from the early 1990's, and currently used on the East Coast Mainline.

The proposals are currently silent in respect of 'extra' services, and it is unclear what the intentions are regarding services continuing to Birmingham New Street and Birmingham International. Shrewsbury may become a hub, with passengers having to change for onward travel towards the West Midlands.

West Midlands Trains promise an extra hourly train between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton, resulting in a shorter 'change' at Shrewsbury, but any loss of direct services to Birmingham from north of Shrewsbury would be of great concern. However, SCRUA is pleased that new services will be heading east from Chester, including Liverpool via Runcorn, and Leeds via Manchester Victoria. The more frequent service will ensure a shorter change at Chester and less waiting around.

Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users Group

Express trains from Liverpool to Norwich are delayed when London trains are given priority after Grantham, or Felixstowe freight trains after Peterborough. Two major new causes of delay have now emerged. The May 2018 TransPennine Express timetable cannot be reliably resourced until new trains are in service, so up to 27% of its services that should go to Manchester Airport are being turned round at Oxford Road or Piccadilly stations, sometimes leaving Norwich trains queuing for their platform. Ten minutes or so late out of Stockport risks being stuck behind a succession of stopping services all the way to Norwich. Another problem is the state of the track east of Peterborough, and the succession of speed restrictions. With turn round times in Norwich as short as five minutes for Cambridge trains, these delays quickly spread from one train and one route to another.

In November, PENRUG monitored the arrival in Thetford of 3 key commuter trains from Cambridge, 4 from Norwich and 3 expresses from Liverpool. Of the 200 monitored trains, 3 were cancelled but 2 replacement trains ran: one from Nottingham to Norwich, and a Cambridge-Norwich service that was replaced east of Ely. Thus, the reliability of the monitored trains was virtually 100%, but only 60% of them reached Thetford within ten minutes of schedule. Track maintenance and renewal need a much higher priority.

Felixstowe Travel Watch

A significant corps of the 'Orange Army' descended on Trimley station over the Christmas holiday. It seems they made better than expected progress, as passenger services were reinstated by Thursday and continued throughout the following weekend and over the New Year holiday. As a result, the 'Trimley loop' project to increase capacity and reliability on the branch is on schedule for completion later this year.

Meanwhile FTW eagerly awaits Greater Anglia's new trains, possibly as soon as early summer - the most significant improvement for 60 years, and the first new trains since the line was opened in 1877!

Regrettably, the price of the popular Anglia Plus ranger ticket has increased by a whopping 37%, so for some 'out and back' journeys it will now be cheaper to purchase an off-peak day return.

Association of Public Transport Users

Stakeholders for Thameslink (TL) services on the Midland Mainline have received an analysis from GTR that:

- Provides information about current usage of TL services
- Confirms that weekend services will almost return to planned levels from May (with the missing element being an improvement on the pre May 2018 service)
- Details a number of other small changes to the Monday to Friday service
- [Consulted on options](#) for changes in the calling patterns of TL Express services at St Albans, Harpenden & Luton from May 2019
- Notes that further changes can be consulted on for December 2019
- Confirms that the current timescale for East Midlands Trains (or successor) to return to Bedford and Luton is December 2020.

A meeting on 31 January came to four broad conclusions:

- An equitable share of the stops between St Albans, Harpenden & Luton was either 5:3:2 or 4:4:3.
- Gaps in TL Express services most impacted passengers who couldn't leave before a certain time (eg after dropping off their child) but needed to be at work by a set time
- For Harpenden, the TL Expresses that pass through around H+13 corresponded well to an H.00 school / nursery drop-off, combined with an H+1.00 start of work in Central London.
- That the gaps in the timetable caused by TL Expresses were a bigger problem than a lack of seats.

A meeting of principal stakeholders including local MPs and chaired by Railfuture was held on 11 February and the outcome is awaited.

Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group

Pending the arrival of the new Class 710 trains, TfL has modified three of its Class 378 electric trains used elsewhere on the Overground network for temporary use on the Gospel Oak to Barking Line, so customers should continue to see a full timetable. If Bombardier does not have the new trains ready for passenger service before the last diesel trains are released in mid-March, it will then need to reduce the weekday service to two trains per hour, although the modified electric trains can carry twice as many passengers as the existing trains. The Mayor has spoken directly with Bombardier, and asked them to fund a month's free travel to customers on the Gospel Oak to Barking line when the new trains are fully introduced. BGORUG believes there are plenty of off-lease electric trains that could have been hired and staff trained had TfL moved six months ago, thus avoiding this 'disaster'. BGORUG accuses TfL of merely kicking the can down the road to mid-March, when passengers will find completely unacceptable levels of service, and overcrowding every bit as bad as usual, with no end in sight. It says TfL has no idea when the new trains will be fit for public service.

South Hampshire Rail Users' Group

As part of the rolling stock cascade following the conversion of Paddington commuter services to electric or bi-mode operation, Class 165/166 Thames Turbo trains are being phased in on the Cardiff-Portsmouth Harbour route, but is this an improvement?

- The 3-car Class 158 units that the Turbos will replace were all air-conditioned and had 2+2 aside seating. The 5-car Turbos are formed of 2-car Class 165 (non-air-conditioned) and 3-car Class 166 (air-conditioned) units, with suburban 2+3 seating. The additional capacity is desperately needed, and expediting boarding and alighting should improve punctuality.
- The Turbos are marginally newer than the Class 158 units and have been reasonably maintained, but have the same top speed of 90 mph. Originally, refurbished Class 166 trains with 2+2 seating were planned for the Cardiff-Portsmouth line, which is recognised as a major regional route.

In the latest satisfaction scores, Southern leapfrogs SWR. Broken-down scores are: Southern Metro services 71%; other Southern services 62%; SWR Metro services 54%; SWR outer-suburban and local services 57%; SWR longer-distance services 73%. So local services are boosting Southern's scores, but hitting SWR's, possibly reflecting the influx of new Southern Metro rolling stock against SWR's aged suburban stock.

A similar pattern arises in the cost/mile of tickets: an SWR off-peak day return from Southampton Central to Weymouth (63 miles) costs £29.30 or 46.5p/mile; Southern's off-peak day return from Southampton Central

to Hastings (102 miles) costs £16.60, just 16.3p/mile. SWR has also retained the time restrictions imposed by Stagecoach on super-off-peak weekend day return fares. UK rail fares are some of the highest in Europe, while car drivers are paying less for fuel than in 2011. The government seems to be giving priority to polluting and inefficient road transport, particularly around Southampton.

However, some positive effects of the new franchise are beginning to evolve:

- Significantly more longer trains, particularly at weekends. No diesel trains on electrified routes.
- Better communication with users and willingness to improve timetables to meet public aspirations.
- Innovations such as fare provisions to help regular travellers who travel less than daily.
- Ad hoc timetable enhancements, eg 'flyer' services for passengers leaving work at lunchtime on Fridays 21 and 28 December: a 12-minute acceleration of several Waterloo-Salisbury trains, and additional Clapham Junction-Weymouth services at 1157 and 1357, first stop Brockenhurst!
- Comfortable Wessex Electric trains entering service between Waterloo and Portsmouth Harbour via Guildford. Originally built for the longer Waterloo-Weymouth route, SWR operates them in pairs, and the power supply west of Poole is sufficient only for a single unit.
- Refurbishment of the Class 444 Desiro units, the mainstay of Waterloo-Weymouth services, during the first half of 2019, with the blue Class 450 outer suburban units to follow.
- Some station enhancements, such as better-quality seating on platforms.

Pilning Station Group

Of 27 responses to the DfT consultation on closing Angel Road station in North London, no fewer than 21 urged that the footbridge be dismantled and re-erected at Pilning station, to replace the one that was controversially demolished in 2016 to make way for overhead electrification.

Although the station has just two trains a week, on Saturdays, and only one-way (to Bristol Temple Meads), its estimated footfall has increased tenfold (to 478 in 2017/18), and there is a growing campaign to restore a full two-way service. The Group has submitted a business case to GWR for "modest, cost-neutral and do-able" service improvements:

- Reinstate the mid-day train, so people can visit Pilning for lunch, and return on the afternoon train.
- An early-evening train during the summer months, enabling Pilning people to enjoy a full day out and still get home. At present the station's "last train" calls at 15.34.

Avocet Line Rail Users Group

The poster warning of a one-day closure did not include the bus timetable, and the bus did not serve Lymptone Village. ALRUG campaigns for a bus timetable, and a service that calls at every station. During the three weeks of major work on tunnels between Plymouth and Taunton, bus timetables will be essential. Ongoing issues that ALRUG will take up with GWR include overcrowding and rolling stock, late running cancellations and skip stopping, passenger information, ticket selling and checking and revenue protection. Notices say "Buy before you board", but many stations have inadequate facilities or none at all. Confusingly, if you travel from a station with no ticketing facility, you could be punished by a "settle out of court" penalty of £80, whereas if you ignore the TVM at a Penalty Fare Station, it could cost you just £20.

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](#).

Railfuture has submitted its initial response to the [Williams Rail Review](#), with the theme of incentivising the rail industry to work efficiently on behalf of its customers. The Review is focused on the interests of passengers and freight customers against a background of cost issues, reliability and accountability.

RAILFUTURE NORTH WEST

Following on from the May timetable chaos, the DfT vetoed almost all of the service enhancements and changes due in December. TransPennine suffered from issues with pathing of new services via the Ordsall Chord, where presentation of trains at the right time is critical to its operation. However, TPE were allowed to add another unit to the roster of train diagrams, so that what was a tight turn round at Manchester Airport on long distance services (late running services from Middlesbrough were often turned round early at Manchester Victoria) was changed into nearer 40 minutes, leaving much longer recovery time.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling's statement in October, "what we will do is replace every train with a newer and more reliable train...we will get rid of all the old Pacer trains..." was somewhat economical with the truth. According to its own figures, Northern originally had 158 Class 142 Pacers and 56 Class 144s, a total of 214 vehicles. The new DMU fleet of CAF vehicles will consist of 25 2-car units and 30 3-car units, a total of 140 vehicles, 74 fewer than the Pacers they are supposed to replace. Northern is also due to lose 18 Class 153 single-car Sprinter units, leaving a total shortfall of 92 vehicles. The difference will be made up of diesel units cascaded from other operators: 48 Class 170s built 2004-05; 16 Class 158s built 1989-93; 10 Class 156s built 1987-89; 46 Class 150s built 1985-87, a total of 120 vehicles - almost half of which are as old as the Pacers they are replacing!

The Electric Railway Charter, a campaign group that aims to revive electrification plans, has written to Chris Grayling regarding the Trans Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU). Recent media reports suggest the Government may be about to electrify only about two thirds of the route, with Stalybridge – Huddersfield left unwired. But that section across the Pennines, with gradients requiring high performance to maintain good timings, could benefit most from modern electric traction. Bi-mode electro-diesel trains cannot match the acceleration and hill-climbing of pure electrics, and will continue to emit pollutants that damage local air quality and add to global warming. The Group's view (supported by Railfuture) is that, to get the most benefit, the North of England needs full electrification from York to Manchester, with re-instatement of lost 4-track sections between Huddersfield and Mirfield/Ravensthorpe. Digital signalling cannot match the gain in physical capacity from additional tracks.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

On 23 January at Leeds station a train was named "The Bentham Line – A Dementia-Friendly Railway" by Peter Wilkinson, Managing Director of Passenger Services, Rail Group, at the DfT. Fifty people were present including representatives from ACoRP, the Leeds-Morecambe CRP responsible for the Bentham Line, and various local charities including Dementia Friendly Keighley, Dementia Friends, the Bay Dementia Hub and Bentham & District Dementia Friendly Community, all of whom provide support for those living with dementia and their carers, several of whom were also able to be present, together with their supporters.

ACoRP is working with the DfT and Welsh Government to prepare to transition from line designation to CRP accreditation. It is conducting trials with the Cambrian Railway Partnership and Essex & South Suffolk CRP to identify any potential issues and ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible, given the differing organisational structures of CRPs. A third trial scheme is expected to finish this month, with a full presentation on accreditation taking place at the upcoming Community Rail Conference.

In consultation with members, board members, partners and organisations working to empower young people, ACoRP has developed a framework document to support the greater engagement of young people (11-25 year olds) within the community rail movement: how it will support its members to develop their confidence, skills, abilities and activities to reach out to and effectively engage with a younger audience.

Community involvement in Purbeck's heritage and main line railways – for the benefit of residents, visitors and the environment – is being given an important boost with the of the area's first Community Rail Partnership Officer. Employed by the Swanage Railway, and funded by SWR through the Purbeck CRP, Kelly Marshall's 'patch' includes the SWR main line between Holton Heath and Moreton, as well as the heritage line from Swanage to Corfe Castle and Norden. One of her challenges is to re-instate a regular train service from the Swanage Railway to the main line at Wareham.

TRANSPORT FOCUS

As rail passenger satisfaction falls to its lowest level in a decade, the short-term focus is very much about re-building trust around a more reliable railway. In the longer-term, the Williams' Rail Review is looking at more fundamental reform of the structure, funding and operations of the railway. His final report is due in the summer, but initial thoughts should appear later this month. TF has given the Review team a detailed insight into what passengers want from the rail network.

Its first submission outlines passenger needs and priorities: the role of timetabling in the development of Britain's railway; reliability, frequency, value for money and cleanliness all feature. Next it will focus on non-users and how to get more people to choose rail, and a final paper will look at what passengers think about the structure of the rail industry. A report on exploring the issues with focus groups in Glasgow, Cardiff, London, Birmingham and Manchester should be out by the end of February.

Case study: last April, Mr M planned to travel from Blackpool North via Preston to catch the 0945 flight from Manchester Airport. When this train was cancelled, he drove/got a lift to Preston for the 0705 and bought new tickets - but ended up catching the 0745, and missed his flight. The new air tickets cost £300, putting him £500 out of pocket. Northern agreed to refund his train tickets, but said he should claim the additional flight costs on his travel insurance. However, the excess on this was £195. On his behalf, TF argued that Mr M had taken all reasonable steps to check the train times prior to travel, and did everything possible to catch his flight from Manchester. Under National Rail Conditions of Travel, it could be argued that he should be compensated as an exceptional case. Once Mr M had proved that he had not claimed on his travel insurance, he duly received a cheque from Northern for £315.

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

RTM reports that Northumberland County Council plans to reintroduce direct passenger services along the 20-mile freight line between Newcastle Central and Ashington. Journey times could be reduced to as little as 35 minutes, and several new or rebuilt stations along the route would provide towns with transport links across the wider region and the UK. The emerging business case indicates a positive outcome: it could boost the local economy by up to £70m, with more than 800,000 annual return journeys by 2038. NCC wants to submit formal proposals by the end of the year, and commence passenger services in 2022.

Over 30 yrs ago, there was a poster campaign "Give yourself ticket time", but how long do you need? 5 minutes might not be sufficient if there is a queue, and the new ticket machines take time to go through all the options. As an alternative, Wesley Paxton suggests a picture of the conductor with the caption: "Find Me Before I Find You". This would sort out the fare dodgers from the last minute arrivals, and be in keeping with "innocent until proven guilty", which the concept of a penalty fare repudiates.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) is preparing to regulate NR differently in the Control Period starting on 1 April. It thanks everyone who responded to the consultations, which have helped to develop an improved approach to holding NR to account for the benefit of passengers and other railway users. A market study into station ticket gates and ticket vending machines is ongoing. ORR also highlighted to the European Commission the significant threat to competition in the UK signalling and rolling stock markets posed by the proposed Siemens-Alstom merger. Accordingly, the Commission blocked the merger, stating that the companies "were not willing to address our serious competition concerns." The deal would have harmed competition in markets for railway signalling and high-speed trains and, without sufficient remedies, led to higher prices across the industry.

...and finally

On 22 and 23 June, London Transport Museum & TfL will mark 150 years of the District Line with a special heritage event that will see a steam train travel through tunnels into central London on the Underground. Tickets will be available later in the year via the Museum website.

CONSULTATIONS

- Hertfordshire County Council: [A414 Corridor Strategy](#) closes 23 February.
- City of London Corporation: [draft City Plan 2036](#), closes 28 February.
- West Midlands Railway: [Worcester Foregate station improvements](#), closes 1 March.

- EWRCo: [East West Rail Central Section](#), closes 11 March.
- Cheshire East Council: [Crewe Station Hub Area Action Plan](#), closes 26 March
- [South Downs National Park Authority](#): Local Plan – main modifications, closes 28 March.
- EDF Energy: [Sizewell C Nuclear Power Station](#), closes 29 March.
- DfT: [Extending PAYG](#), closes 1 May.
- DfT: [Light rail – call for evidence on how to better use and implement light rail and other rapid transit solutions in cities and towns](#), closes Sunday 19 May.
- DfT: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/williams-rail-review>, closes 31 May.

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.

February

- Thursday 21. Magor Action Group On Rail, Golden Lion, **Magor**, 1930 (and the 3rd Thursday every month).
- Saturday 23. Railfuture North West AGM, Blackpool Hotel, North Promenade, **Blackpool**, FY1 2JQ, 1230.
- Saturday 23. Railfuture East Anglia AGM, Friends Meeting House, St. John's Street, **Bury St. Edmunds**, IP33 1SJ, 1400.
- Saturday 23. English Regional Transport Association Rugby Forum, 8-10 Castle St, **Rugby**, CV21 2TP, 1400.
- Thursday 28. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife College, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also last Thursday of every month except July and December.)

March

- Tuesday 5. Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association, **Shrewsbury** station, 1745 (also 6 April, 18 May, 8 June, 2 July, 6 August, 7 September, 5 October, 12 November 7 December – various locations and times).
- Wednesday 6. Railfuture London & SE branch's Sussex & Coastway Division, Cavendish Hotel, Eastbourne. 1800.
- Saturday 9. Cumbrian coast Rail Users' Group, Seascale Methodist church hall. 1305.
- Saturday 9. Railfuture Lincolnshire AGM, St. Swithin's Community Centre, Baggholme Road, Lincoln. 1230.
- Saturday 9. English Regional Transport Association Olney Forum, The Bull, 9 Market Place, **Olney**, MK46 4EA, 1400.
- Monday 11. Skipton East Lancs Rail Action Partnership, **Colne**. 1900.
- Monday 11. Bexhill Rail Action Group, **Collington**, East Sussex. 1900.
- Wednesday 13. Railfuture London & SE branch's Eastern Division, **Stratford**. 18.30.
- Saturday 16. Railfuture Devon & Cornwall AGM, Plymouth. 1330.
- Saturday 16. Railfuture North East AGM, Newcastle Art Centre, 67 Westgate Road, **Newcastle**, 1400.
- Thursday 21. Magor Action Group On Rail, Golden Lion, **Magor**, 1930 (and the 3rd Thursday every month).
- Saturday 23. Railfuture East Midlands AGM, Mansfield.
- Saturday 23. English Regional Transport Association, The Bell, 40 Market Square, **Aylesbury**, HP20 1TX, 1400.
- Tuesday 26. Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group AGM, **Foxton** Village Hall, 1930.
- Thursday 28. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife College, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also last Thursday of every month except July and December.)
- Wednesday 29. Marlow-Maidenhead Passengers' Association AGM, Bourne End. 1945.

Further Ahead

- 2 April. Chesham & District Transport User Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, 1930 (Also 14 May, 18 June, 6 August, 17 September, 22 October, 10 December).
- 19 April. Friends of the Barton Line, a two-part lecture on the Barton line to mark the 50th anniversary of Barton Civic Society and the 21st anniversary of FBL, Joseph Wright Hall, Queen Street, Barton, 1930.
- 27 April. English Regional Transport Association's Transport and Environment conference, Campanile Hotel, 40 Penn Road, **Fenny Stratford**, Milton Keynes, MK2 2AU, 1100 (fee required).
- 7 May. Felixstowe Travel Watch AGM, Salvation Army Church, Cobbold Road, **Felixstowe**, 1930.
- 18 May. Railfuture national AGM, **Cardiff**.
- 18 May. East Suffolk Travellers Association AGM, **Saxmundham** (Also 5 October, Lowestoft Station).

- 18 May. Friends of Settle-Carlisle Line AGM, Victoria Hall, Kirkgate, **Settle**, BD24 9DZ, 1200.
- 22 June. Railfuture Summer Conference, Dolphin Centre, **Darlington**.

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