



June 2019

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

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Whisper it quietly, but the introduction of the May 2019 timetable seems to have gone quite well. There are still some anomalies touched on below, but the deafening silence from the media tells its own story. The few cancellations due to crew shortage are likely the result of intensive training programmes, as drivers convert to new stock coming into service. Well done!

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 last few weeks have seen a very variable service on the Far North Line. Driver shortage is still an issue, but ScotRail is recruiting and intends to stop relying on Rest Day Working for staffing the normal rosters, so things should improve. It also seems difficult to retain catering staff; there have been many occasions when passengers have boarded a train for a four-hour journey only to discover there's no trolley service. Although trivial in operating terms, this is a real annoyance which could deter people from choosing to travel by train.

FoFNL's AGM & Conference in Brora on 21 June has an impressive line-up of speakers - Bill Reeve, Director of Rail, Transport Scotland; Sir Peter Hendy, NR Chief Executive; Scott Prentice, Head of Business Development, ScotRail; and David Shirres, Editor of Rail Engineer, as well as Frank Roach from HITRANS and Dr Nick Lindsay, who will speak about the Clyne Heritage Society, based in Brora.

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has warned the world is facing a "climate emergency", and vowed Scotland "will lead by example" by cutting carbon emissions. "Everyone in Scotland must come together in a shared, national endeavour to tackle climate change, or future generations will pay the price", insisted Scottish Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham. Well, they might seek to persuade the Transport Secretary and Transport Scotland. In a letter to the press, Leven resident James Robertson pointed out that, according to the European Environment Agency, rail travel accounts for 14g of CO2 emissions per passenger mile, dwarfed by the 285g generated by air travel, and the 158g from car journeys. Reopening the Levenmouth rail-link would capitalise upon an existing green asset in the form of line already in place but currently mothballed, and at a fraction of the cost of any new road project.

Thornhill Station Action Group

The high level of public support for the proposal to reopen a station at Thornhill on the Glasgow-Dumfries line was amply demonstrated in January when over 300 people from across Mid-Nithsdale attended a public consultation event on the Transport Study. Action Group Chair David Formstone commented: "We were delighted that so many people turned out on a cold winter evening, demonstrating what a huge difference improving access to rail services would make to local people and businesses". Consultants from PBA were most impressed by an enthusiastic and well-informed presentation given by pupils at the local school, who see the benefits of having easy rail access from a nearby station. A questionnaire circulated within the surrounding area produced well over 600 responses. The consultants' report has now been submitted to the South West Scotland Transport Partnership. A meeting of the Partnership board scheduled for 28 June will determine whether the Thornhill bid will be progressed to the next stage in securing station funding.

Rail Action Group East of Scotland Group

On 13 March RAGES met with PBA, East Lothian Council's consultants, to develop the Scottish Transport Appraisal Group (STAG) Case for Change in the corridor along the A1 and the East Coast Main Line (ECML) west of Drem, where the North Berwick line joins. The potential demand for rail travel is constrained by services and infrastructure operating at capacity, whilst Haddington is now accessible only by road. The railway must better serve local travel, which has largely been replaced by intercity and cross-country operators. Capacity improvements should include quadrupling the ECML between Prestonpans and Drem (or additional loops, eg Monktonhall, Blindwells and Longniddry); speeding up Portobello Junction; re-opening former bay platforms on the east side of Waverley; re-quadrupling between Waverley and Portobello Junction, including re-doubling North and South Calton Tunnels; re-opening the Abbeyhill Loop, and providing a second loop at Dunbar, possibly with re-signalling to shorten sections.

RAGES would also like to see the Haddington branch re-opened, ideally to the previous terminus on Station Road. A single track would also permit a footpath/cycleway, as the line was originally double track throughout. Minimal compulsory purchase or relocation of industrial units would be required, the biggest physical obstacle being reconstructing the A1 overbridge, which failed to preserve the railway alignment and loading gauge. Either a level crossing would be required at Gateside, or the development north of the line provided with new road access onto the A199. The substantial Letham Mains & Gateside developments would need more parking, with a park and ride station at Oak Tree.

A half-hourly electric train service from Haddington to Edinburgh would provide the speed and capacity that road transport cannot match. Stops on ScotRail services to/from Berwick, Dunbar, North Berwick or Haddington could be "staggered" to reduce journey times and maximise track capacity - although the increasing importance of Musselburgh station (serving Queen Margaret University and the pending Edinburgh Innovation Park) was noted. PBA suggested serving Haddington with a light rapid transit avoiding the ECML, but RAGES felt that this would not best serve the majority of travellers who want quick access to Edinburgh and beyond.

Through electric services to and from Alloa, Ayr, Dunblane, Glasgow and Helensburgh would improve train-crew and rolling stock utilisation, and reduce dwell time at Waverley. East Lothian platforms should accommodate 8-car EMUs as a minimum (Reston is set to get 10-car sets). Not just in the East Lothian area, public transport needs to be properly integrated, with bus and train services interconnecting. The study also covers the Blindwells and Cockenzie developments, with 10,000 new houses and supporting facilities. Some of its northern perimeter bounds the ECML, so RAGES suggested the provision of a new station between Prestonpans and Longniddry, with platforms either on the "slow" lines or on new loops.

South East Northumberland Rail User Group

SENUG has secured funding for a Feasibility Study on extending the existing Newcastle to Morpeth service to Berwick, with an hourly service each way calling at Pegswood, Widdrington, Acklington, Almouth and Chathill, and eventually re-opening former stations at Belford and Beal, and possibly elsewhere. However, the first step is to establish whether there is enough line capacity for local trains, and if not what would need to be done to enable such a service. The study will include a market appraisal, and indicative costs for the proposed new stations.

Northern Railway and Northumberland County Council are jointly funding the study, with a small contribution from SENRUG. Northern's Seed Corn Fund is available for station adopters and community rail partnerships wishing to improve their local stations or routes. International transport consultancy SYSTRA has been selected to manage the study. Project Manager James Jackson said: "We will bring our significant experience of feasibility studies and new service appraisal to the project, and will build on our experience of a similar project looking at local services between Berwick and Edinburgh".

Harrogate Line Supporters Group

Azuma trains will be phased in during 2019 and 2020; the first ran from London to Leeds on 15 May, and to Hull on 16 May. New direct services between Harrogate and Kings Cross are due to start on 8 December. Passengers will benefit from improved WiFi, better catering options, and significant improvements for passengers with disabilities, with both audio and visual announcements and universally accessible toilets, as well as increased wheelchair spaces and unreserved priority seats. Azuma trains' inbuilt technology will make them more resilient during disruption, whilst more technologically advanced engines with reduced emissions and noise will help to improve the environment at stations and along the line.

Extra services between Harrogate and Leeds began on 18 May, with express trains calling only at Hornbeam Park and Horsforth, adding a third train per hour (tph), and cutting the journey time from 35mins to 30mins without affecting the current half-hourly schedule. Plans for a fourth tph are on hold pending construction of Platform 0 at Leeds.

Friends of the Settle – Carlisle Line

S & C services are little changed in the May timetable, but there are some improvements, particularly for stations north of Appleby. The last train of the day will now stop at several of them, so residents in the Armathwaite and Lazonby areas will be able to have an extended day in Glasgow or Edinburgh, and have a train home from Carlisle at 2013. 19 May also saw the re-launch of Dalesrail, which will run every Sunday until 8 September. Starting from Blackpool North at 0840, it travels via Preston, Blackburn, and Clitheroe, joining the S & C at Hellifield, and then on to Carlisle, returning at 1748 by the same route. There are a series of [Guided Walks](#) for those wishing to take some exercise from the train.

Overcrowding is increasing, particularly on the 0919 from Leeds, which is popular with walkers wishing to spend a day in the Dales. Saturdays are particularly bad, and two carriages full and standing from Skipton is simply not acceptable. When people come to the S&C for the journey of a lifetime and are treated in such a way, to call the situation a scandal is putting it mildly. One day, three coach trains may be standard for the line, hopefully sooner than later. *[Couldn't Northern reassign some commuter stock to strengthen tourist routes at weekends? It would improve their revenue stream! – Ed.]*

Last September, Mel Cookson-Carter, the Heritage Development Office for the Museum of North Craven Life, approached FoSCL to update the 'Railway Room' at the Folly in Settle, which had an S&C exhibition. DCC Concepts, a company well known to railway modellers, agreed to take the model railway depicting Settle station on long-term loan, and seek to restore it to working order. DCC relocated from Australia to a showroom opposite Settle station. Then iPrint of Settle solved the problem of how to mount an image of Ribbleshead on a curved wall. Nigel Robinson came up with the idea of printing it on wallpaper, which was expertly put up by Martin Lambert. The entire wall is now filled by Bill Lewis' wonderful image of Tornado crossing the viaduct on 15 February 2017 with the 'Plandampf' special.

Northern Weekly Salvo (Prof Paul Salvesson)

Paul made a Spring visit to Skye using a Scotrail [Grand Tour of Scotland travel pass](#), which allows you to make a round trip from Glasgow/Edinburgh to Inverness, Kyle of Lochalsh, then bus/ferry to Mallaig and back on the West Highland, including travel on the steam-hauled Jacobite. At £89, or £58.75 with a Senior Railcard, it is good value for money, and covers four days travel in eight.

The Urban Transport Group represents the seven strategic transport bodies which, between them, serve more than twenty million people in Greater Manchester, Liverpool, London, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and South and West Yorkshire, with associate members in Strathclyde, Bristol and the West of England, Tees Valley and Nottingham.

At a workshop in Batley, UTG launched its report [About Towns – How Transport Can Help Towns Thrive](#), a highly readable piece of work, with many good examples – including community rail projects at stations including Kilmarnock. “The restoration of the best of historic transport infrastructure and the building of new high quality interchanges in towns can provide destinations in their own right. These can instil a renewed sense of civic pride, provide an engine for wider regeneration, become a welcoming gateway for visitors and investors, as well as celebrate the history and heritage towns have to offer.”

The Bolton station partnership management committee has agreed to establish a community rail partnership, using the Government’s new Community Rail Development Strategy as a framework. It will cover every station in the Bolton area, and link with Community Rail Lancashire and individual station groups in Hindley, Walkden and elsewhere.

Skipton – East Lancs Rail Action Partnership

90% of the 1,300 who took part in a poll on the SELRAP facebook page supported re-opening the Skipton - Colne line. The poll reached 10,702 people and had 1,395 engagements where users voted, commented, liked or shared it. SELRAP also entered the Taxpayers’ Alliance [‘Great British Transport Competition’](#) (see page 8), and was delighted to come top of all the rail projects.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines (STORM)

In the new May timetable, Castleton and Moston lost another of their half hourly Manchester Victoria services to freight trains, leading inevitably to a loss of traffic. The three Rail Utilisation Studies adjacent to the Littleborough - Hebden Bridge line all seem to have thought that another one was studying that section of the Calder Valley line. Between Rochdale and Manchester there are six passenger trains an hour each way, and four between Rochdale and Sowerby Bridge. There is only one loop in the up direction - at Brewery Junction, only a mile and a half from Victoria station - and two down loops, one at Brewery Junction and another at Castleton, some nine miles further on. All three loops are cleared for passenger trains. When work to upgrade the Standedge line eventually starts, the mass diversion of TPE services onto the Calder Valley line will make things very difficult. Between Manchester and Bradley Wood Junction (where the Calder Valley and Trans Pennine routes diverge) the ten loops in each direction have been reduced to two down and one up. Many more will be needed, with high-speed entry and exit.

Northern has reached a bridging agreement with ASLEF over driver rest day working in the north-west, and expects to operate a normal Sunday service with the re-introduction of services on the following routes: Liverpool Lime Street - Wigan North Western; Manchester Victoria - Wigan Wallgate via Atherton; and Manchester Piccadilly - Hazel Grove. It seems that drivers in the NW will earn more for working a Sunday than a rest day. In exchange for this, booked Sundays must be worked unless cover is available. However, this may only be a temporary arrangement.

Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association

The May timetable greatly improved the Crewe-Liverpool line, with Sunday services at Acton Bridge, and a half hourly service northbound at Hartford (so now mainly half-hourly in each direction). There is also an hourly through service (or two an hour in some hours) from Hartford to London Euston via Birmingham New Street. So unlike Arriva’s Northern, Abellio’s London Northwestern is delivering in excess of its franchise commitments.

In stark contrast, there are no significant changes to the Mid Cheshire timetable, and the line is no nearer getting the promised “two trains an hour” service due in December 2017. NR turned down Northern’s proposed short-term alternative of an extra hourly service between Chester and Altrincham, and failed to reply to its request for an explanation. The DfT did respond to a letter from Esther McVey, MP for Tatton - but did not address its core point: better connecting Mid Cheshire with Manchester. Also, it claimed that “Northern did not put a bid in”, whereas MCRUA knows from its contacts that NR turned down at least two Northern bids. The statement that “Knutsford...will benefit...from new...trains” is also incorrect: the Pacers dating from 1985 are being replaced by refurbished Sprinters dating from 1984!

MCRUA believes that its request to implement the franchise commitment for two trains an hour and hourly on Sundays is perfectly reasonable. Currently, Knutsford has two direct trains to Manchester in the morning peak taking 43/44mins, whereas in 1986 it had five taking 33-36 minutes; similarly in the evening peak.

Service reductions took place in 1990 when the line through Sale was transferred to Metrolink, and in 2008 to facilitate the introduction of a high frequency London service via Stockport. The progressive reduction in Mid Cheshire connectivity to its main employment base has led to serious road congestion and a poorer regional economy. Then in 2018, when the cascade of stock from other operators failed to materialise, Northern had to create a new May timetable at desperately short-notice: they could not continue with the previous one, as DfT insisted TransPennine Express operate its new timetable using the Ordsall Curve. Since then NR (or DfT?) has blocked any increase in services from Piccadilly via Stockport to Stoke, Crewe, and the Mid Cheshire Line.

Friends of the Barton Line

From 29 April the Humber Flier bus service between Hull and Cleethorpes via Barton and Humberside airport has been doubled to half-hourly. So, together with the existing Humber Fastcat service, there was now a daytime bus service between Barton interchange and Hull Paragon every fifteen minutes. However, the lack of a weekday connection for Hull with the last train to Barton remained. TPE had applied to NR to have all their South TransPennine trains call at Habrough from the start of the December 2019 timetable. This would increase the number of TPE calls there from nine to sixteen, greatly facilitating interconnection with stopping trains on the Barton line.

Barking - Gospel Oak Rail User Group

Following successful tests of software drop No. 33 at NR's Asfordby test centre, and a tweaked version (33.1?) at Bombardier's Willesden depot, the first two Class 710 EMUs entered passenger service on the Barking - Gospel Oak route on 23 May. The three 'borrowed' 4-car Class 378 EMUs will continue to operate the temporary half hourly timetable, with the 710s operating some of the paths cancelled in mid-March when the last Class 172 DMUs moved to West Midlands Trains.

So far around a third of the drivers have been trained on the 710s; those trained before the latest software drop will need a further day's training. Once all the 710s have received the updated software and demonstrated their reliability, the 15-minute service interval will be restored. The Class 378s will then be returned to 5-car formation, allowing Euston - Watford Junction also to move to a 15-minute service from its irregular 3 tph 'Interim timetable'.

RAILFUTURE

Rf welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more effective our campaigns. Join [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 Rf and its Campaigns by clicking on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Railfuture consultation responses](#).

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On 18 May, Railfuture's Cymru/Wales branch hosted Rf's 15th AGM in the Sport Wales National Centre. Well-known campaigner Christian Wolmar delivered his Presidential address, and Colin Lea, Commercial and Customer Experience Director, Transport for Wales Rail gave an insight into the new franchise operator in Wales.

CONFERENCE

The 2019 Rf Conference will be in Bristol on Saturday 21 September, entitled "Every Passenger Matters". Sponsorship from Cross Country enables the attendance fee to be kept to £20 for the member 'early bird' (book by 31 July) and £25 thereafter and for non-members. Any volunteers to join the Conference Organising Committee should contact Wendy Thorne at wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk.

RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE

Improvements in the May 2019 timetable include through trains from Leeds to Chester, routed via the Calder Valley and Warrington, and with a simple transfer to North Wales trains; a limited stop Harrogate Line service, making trains three tph; extension of the Huddersfield-Wakefield service to Castleton; an hourly Hull-Scarborough service, and a new service from Sheffield to Gainsborough Central.

However, there is still no proper service on the York-Sheffield direct route; Goole still has no regular service to Leeds, and both the Skipton – Carlisle and Skipton-Morecambe services remain less than hourly.

Toby Hart points out some more anomalies. His award for the most incoherent goes to the stopping service between York and Leeds/Blackpool on Sundays: after 25 years, Micklefield loses its hourly Sunday service to York – but in ONE DIRECTION ONLY! Not far behind is the hourly Newcastle–Carlisle service, whose departure times vary by up to 18mins from one hour to the next, whilst the lunchtime journey on the hourly service from Stoke to Manchester omits its Stockport call for an empty stock refurbishment move that runs just a few times a year. Toby puts this down to NR centralising timetable planning in Milton Keynes: they have taken on more staff, but not yet got to grips with all the ongoing issues – things are still significantly worse now than they were 3 years ago.

The need to demolish recently built houses in Mexborough for the official route of HS2 created much controversy. The Sheffield Star reported an alternative route through South Yorkshire, which the Combined Campaign Group Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire claim would save £9bn and involve less demolition. On entering south Sheffield, the route would follow the line passing the Rother Valley, Beighton, Woodhouse and Darnall, and terminate at Victoria Station. Manchester and Leeds would be linked via the Woodhead Line and tunnel. Note that Rf has not been involved in this proposal.

RAILFUTURE WALES/CYMRU

Following the cancellation of the M4 relief road south of Newport, the Welsh Govt is setting up a Commission, chaired by Prof/Lord Terry Burns, to examine and make recommendations on the alternatives. It has been asked to produce an interim report within 6 months. Rf Wales says that some of the £1.4bn saved should be spent on public transport including rail. The Commission needs to identify the primary causes of the congestion on the M4 around Newport, ie what proportion is relatively short local journeys that might be amenable to transfer to rail. Rf's [interactive map](#) shows potential new stations in the area, which could improve local access to the rail network: Magor and Llanwern east of Newport, and Newport West and Coedkernew between Newport and Cardiff.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

In March Railfuture was invited to the Accelerate Rail 2019 event in London. Along with Greater Anglia, LNER and West Midlands Trains, Jerry Alderson was on a panel chaired by Transport Focus Chief Executive Anthony Smith, about the 'Passenger Experience'. It considered how the railway needed to evolve so that more people could and would travel by rail more often. Opening the conference, NR's Chief Executive, Andrew Haines talked about putting passengers first: if they were present when decisions were being made then different decisions would be made. However, Jerry suggested that the railway industry currently put passengers last, citing how recently opened and re-built stations were designed around everything but the passenger. Rail operations came first for safety reasons, followed by minimising operating costs.

Greater Anglia's new trains on its rural routes will be longer, a mix of three- and four-car units, but can the stations cope? Selective Door Operation (SDO) prevents doors being opened beyond the platform end, but it means passengers can only use some of the doors on the train – and the new trains will have only one set per carriage. Those alighting will have to make their way down the train. Dwell times increase, as people boarding have to wait. Moreover, the platform can become quite crowded, and potentially dangerous.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

TYNE VALLEY CRP

As part of Community Rail in the City, the TVCRP took a stand at Glasgow Central Station to promote the Tyne Valley line in Northumberland and Cumbria, and to make Glasgow travellers aware of the fantastic scenery along the Roman Wall, which is well within reach by train for a stress-free day out. A 4.8m long model of the Roman Wall attracted attention, with banners showing the line and the stations served, and a model Class 153 running up and down. And walking around the station were two re-enactors portraying a Roman soldier and a Celt. The stand was staffed not only by TVCRP volunteers, but also its partners, the Conservation Manager of the World Heritage Site, Hadrian's Wall, and Carlisle City Council.

The volunteers were rewarded with a Tour of the Central Station, to see where goods were delivered and stored in Edwardian times, and later used by the Post Office Mail Trains. The train involved in the Great Train robbery in 1964, left from Glasgow Central. The Low Level Station was one of the last underground stations to be served by steam trains, and it was very grimy. It was busy with troop trains in the First World War, and examples of an early wheelchair and stretcher were on display. The walls are decorated with murals featuring the history of the railway, and there are plans to expand the museum.

LEEDS - MORECAMBE CRP

The May timetable added 12 more services to the Bentham Line each week, in addition to those introduced last May. There are now eight trains in each direction Monday to Saturday and five on Sundays, taking the total to 106. Connections to and from the Furness Line at Carnforth are greatly improved, reflecting the growth in travel between North and West Yorkshire and the Cumbrian coast. And the last train from Lancaster at 2130 now connects at Skipton with the last train to Leeds, arriving there at 2338. Residents in the more rural communities are taking advantage of the new services, reflecting both the interest in new journey opportunities and the wish for 'greener' travel options. Passengers on the line will also see more refurbished and more comfortable trains over the coming months, as the classic 'Pacer' units are withdrawn from service in the North.

Courtesy of Northern, [Morecambe Bay Sling Library](#) collaborated with Community Rail Lancashire to give a group of mums a day out with their babies by train from Lancaster to Clapham on the Bentham Line - but not a single pram or pushchair was in evidence. The library loans baby slings to families, and provides support in how to use them. Community Rail Lancashire's Education Officer Karen Bennett said: "Travelling by train is a lot easier with a sling than with a pram. I had my son, Laurie, in a sling until he was three and I...want to encourage more parents to use slings rather than prams on a train."

MELDRETH, SHEPRETH & FOXTON CRP

Courtesy of Great Northern, Junior Travel Ambassadors from Meldreth primary school travelled to Foxton with two teachers and Sarah Grove, the CRP Project Officer. NR staff showed them how the signals and crossing barriers work together to keep everybody safe as a train passes, and how the barriers are operated at Foxton and, using CCTV, at Shepreth. The children were fascinated by the technology, especially the screens showing where trains were on the local network. Under supervision, the children were allowed to operate the barriers for passing trains including local stopping trains, fast trains to Cambridge and London, a Thameslink train from Brighton, and a quarry train that reversed into the Barrington Quarry branch line.

BEDFORD AND ST ALBANS CRP

Govia Thameslink Railway was proud to support the official launch of the newest CRP, Bedford and St Albans, with a special celebration event at St Albans on 6 June. And, as the world marked the 75th anniversary of D-Day, it was delighted to involve veterans. The team at Bedford station put on a special welcome for our guests, before travelling on a specially decorated Thameslink service to St Albans. At St Albans, the group was joined by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, representatives of local councils and wider stakeholders to welcome the latest CRP in style.

EAST HAMPSHIRE CRP

EHCRP is delighted to see the return of the South Downs Rambler Rail Bus link between Winchester and Petersfield rail stations. The service will operate every Sunday and Bank Holiday between 7 July and 8 September, taking in breath-taking views of the South Downs and visiting most of the tourist attractions.

TRANSPORT FOCUS

The timetable changes ushered in from 19 May 2019 were different in scale and spread to last year, but the 1000 extra services are now in the timetable, and passengers are using them. Better still, the underlying reliability of the railways seems intact. Achieving a smooth transition represents a big step for the rail industry on the way to rebuilding public confidence. Punctuality is invariably one of passengers' top priorities for improvement; it is the biggest single driver of satisfaction with train companies.

On 24 May the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) published the latest set of rail punctuality results. While there has been some improvement in the last quarter (January-March) the results over the entire year are less reassuring. Punctuality is worse than in 2017-18, with 86.3% of trains arriving on time, down from 87.8%. The new 'Right Time' measure of performance introduced in April this year means to-the-minute at every station and not, as was the case with PPM, that arriving at the terminal station within five or ten minutes of the advertised time is good enough.

Case study: Mr G's 15-year-old son mislaid his return ticket during a stay in London. Unable to produce a valid ticket when asked, he was issued with an Unpaid Fare Notice (UFN) for £1040.70! A TF review, though, showed that some of the details on the UFN were clearly incorrect. A UFN is not a fine or penalty, but the cost of a ticket for that journey, so the amount should have been half of £140.70 – the price of a super off-peak single. However, it was correct to issue a UFN in line with the National Rail Conditions of Travel, and as the age of legal culpability is set at 10 years old, the inspector was not obliged to request or take details of the young man's parents. TF asked LNER to review Mr G's case, and as he found and was able to send them the original tickets, LNER waived the UFN in full, so there was nothing further to pay.

TAXPAYERS' ALLIANCE

Scrapping HS2 would free up at least £50 billion from its current budget of £56 billion to improve transport links up and down the country. But were this to happen, what should replace it? To address this question, a distinguished panel of judges in a range of disciplines joined the TaxPayers' Alliance in launching The Great British Transport Competition, to propose rail and road alternatives to HS2. After many hours of detailed deliberation and discussion, their fascinating [report](#) identifies 28 winning entries, all but four of which are rail projects. The sum total of their construction costs would be just £45.1 billion.

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

After more than 3 decades of service, the unloved Pacers are being phased out. Rail Minister Andrew Jones is seeking ideas on how a Pacer donated by rolling stock company Porterbrook could continue to serve communities. This summer, the rail industry will launch a competition offering community groups the opportunity to suggest how to convert one into a new public space. Railfuture Yorkshire Chair Nina Smith suggests that Cross Country could do with a goodly number to replace Voyagers on longer routes, enabling 8/9/10 car Voyager pairs on their shorter routes. Shortened pairs could be used on the Settle and Carlisle, with one carriage wholly or partially for cyclists and their cycles, several wheelchair spaces, and maybe a section for parcels/mail. *[So could Salvo's Pacer Dining Club really happen?! – Ed.]*

ORR congratulates the rail industry on the May 2019 timetable changes: over 1000 services were added with very little disruption. However, the question of access rights is an area that can and must improve. Over 80% of the applications requiring ORR approval to change the timetable were received within six weeks of the start date, so any changes would have led to major disruption. Such short notice requests cannot be given the necessary scrutiny, and opportunity for review and challenge from other users. A bad culture has developed: train operators engage with NR and third parties too late; NR is unwilling to commit to access rights before a full timetable has been developed; conflicts in train service specifications are identified/resolved too slowly, and ORR has been too flexible in trying to accommodate this. Accordingly, the ORR Chief Executive wrote to the industry on 30 May to set out what needs to be done.

On 1 June, work started on a £30 million scheme to raise the height of the sea wall at Dawlish from 5m to 7.5m, and to widen the promenade in front of it from 3.1m to 4m, with a safety barrier. Work on the concrete foundations will last until 14 July, when there will be a break until 9 September to avoid disruption during the summer. Pre-cast concrete panels will then be installed, track drainage put in and the existing promenade sections replaced with pre-cast concrete units. The promenade will be resurfaced, and lighting and seating installed. Work is due to finish in January 2020.

Stop Press: NR is also seeking ways to protect the 1.1 mile stretch of the line between Parson's Tunnel and Teignmouth. It wants to realign the tracks to make room for remediation measures to stabilise the cliffs. Work would need to be carried out on land outside the railway boundary, and would affect some public rights of way, so NR will apply to the Transport Secretary for a Transport and Works Act Order to secure the necessary rights and permissions. Meanwhile it has launched a consultation (see below) running until 15 July.

20 May saw the start of weekday rail replacement bus services between Stevenage and Watton-at-Stone and Hertford North pending completion of a new running line and bay platform at Stevenage station. Work is due to complete in time for weekday services to resume next May. Great Northern will be able to double services from Watton-at-Stone into Stevenage, providing new connections. The first three weeks of the replacement bus services have gone smoothly, with very light passenger loadings.

NR is using the August bank holiday to transfer all signalling control on the ECML to the York Railway Operating Centre, and is completing engineering works along the entire route, so no trains will operate anywhere north of King's Cross on Saturday and Sunday of the bank holiday weekend.

Graham Lund argues that, on the Glasgow-Kilmarnock-Carlisle line, it would be cost effective to (re)open stations at Hurlford, New Farm Loch and Bellfield, at or near Kilmarnock, as well as Mauchline, Cumnock, Eastriggs and Thornhill. An appraisal for each is unnecessary: Mauchline and Cumnock have a similar profile to Auchinleck, whilst Thornhill maybe needs a layer of tarmac atop the old but good existing layer. Eastriggs needs more input, but this must be functional not palatial. Cumnock, Auchinleck, Barrhill, Girvan, Dumfries need better bus/rail connections, and a minor relocation of Stranraer Harbour station has been sought for years. Crossrail needs to be implemented as soon as possible via St Enoch's Bridge, which is currently freight only. There is demand for travel to Ayrshire/Renfrewshire for work, study, holidays, including via the ferry ports, and sports fixtures like football, golf and racing, including global/national events like the British Open Golf Tournament and the Scottish Grand National.

CONSULTATIONS

- NR: [Parson's Tunnel to Teignmouth Resilience Project](#), closes 15 July
- ORR: [Market Review into rail compensation claims companies](#), NO published closing date!

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 a [List of Events](#) and 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 in Word format would be very helpful.

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

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

June

- 14-16 June. Rf East Midlands stall (provisional) at Great Central Railway's annual Model Event: volunteers welcome!
- Saturday 15. Rf Thames Valley stall at Oxford-Didcot 175, Grandpont recreation ground and pavilion, **Oxford**, OX1 4NA, 1200-1800.
- Saturday 15. Rf North West EGM and Branch Meeting, Merebrook pub, Greenfields Avenue, Bromborough, Birkenhead, CH62 6DD, 1300.
- Saturday 15. Rf East Anglia, St Mary Stoke Church Hall, **Ipswich**, 1400 (also 28 September in Norwich, 7 December in Cambridge).
- Tuesday 18. Chesham & District Transport User Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, 1930 (Also 6 August, 17 September, 22 October, 10 December).
- Wednesday 19. Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group, Elin Way Community Room, Elin Way, Meldreth, SG8 6LT, 1930.
- Friday 21. Friends of the Far North Line AGM, Royal Marine Hotel, Brora, 1115.
- Saturday 22. Rf Summer Conference, Dolphin Centre, Central Hall, Horsemarket, **Darlington**, DL1 5RP.
- Saturday 22. English Regional Transport Association, The Lynd Cross, 1 Springfield Road, **Horsham**, West Sussex, RH12 2PG, 1500 (Also 16, 23 July; 3,17 August; 7, 21 September; 5, 19, 26 October – [various locations](#)).
- Thursday 27. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife College, Levenmouth Campus, **Buckhaven**, 1830 (also the final Thursday of each month).

July

- Tuesday 2. Ribble Valley Rail, *New Inn, Clitheroe* (TBC), 1430.
- Tuesday 2. Watford Rail Users' Group Annual Members Meeting, 'The Junction', adjacent to Watford Junction Station, 1815 – open meeting from 1845.
- Tuesday 2. Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association, The Sportsman, Severn St, **Newtown**, 1900. (also 6 August, 7 September, 5 October, 12 November, 7 December - various locations and times).
- Saturday 6. Rf London & South East stall at Uckfield Festival, Luxford Field, **Uckfield**, East Sussex, TN22 1AL, 1000-1600.
- Saturday 6. Rf Yorkshire, The Central Methodist Church, Newgate, Pontefract, WF8 1NB, 1300.
- Monday 8. Skipton – East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership, Community Centre, **Earby**, 1900.
- Wednesday 10. Rf London & South East, Eastern Division, St. John's Church, Stratford Broadway, **London**, E15 1NG, 1830. (and every second Wednesday of alternate months.)
- Monday 15. Campaign for Better Transport West and North Yorkshire Rail Group, "Veritas", 43-47 Great George Street, **Leeds**, LS1 3BB, 1930
- Wednesday 17. Friends of the Barton Line AGM, the Sloop, **Barton**, 2000 (Also 18 September in Cleethorpes and 20 November in Barton).
- Thursday 18. Rf London & South East, Sussex & Coastway Division, Perrymount Methodist Hall, Pinewood Gate, 28 Perrymount Road, **Haywards Heath**, West Sussex, RH16 3DN, 1800.

Further Ahead

- 21 September. Rf Autumn Conference, St. Michael's Church Centre, The Green, **Stoke Gifford**, (by Bristol Parkway station), BS34 8PD.
- 28 September. Rf East Anglia open meeting, **Norwich**, 1400.
- 5 October. East Suffolk Travellers Association, **Lowestoft** Station, 1400.
- 15 October. Felixstowe Travel Watch, Salvation Army Church, **Felixstowe**, 1430.
- 21 October. Avocet Line Rail Users Group AGM, Globe Hotel. **Topsham**, 1930.
- 26 October. Rf Branches and Groups Day, **Birmingham**, venue and timing TBN.

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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