



October 2019

Welcome to the Rail User Express.

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A vital element of any rail campaign is to enlist the support of the local planning authority. So it is good to see the initiatives of councils in Northumberland, Leicestershire and West Northamptonshire in driving forward proposals in their area. However, to take advantage of rail developments, you have to get to and from the station. So we must hope that councils also exploit the new National Bus Strategy to drive rail/bus connections, thus reducing individual car use.

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.

St Andrews Rail Link Campaign

Rf board member Allison Cosgrove joined StARLink's Jane Ann Liston at an event to raise awareness of the campaign to reopen the St Andrews rail link, buoyed by the success of the Leven campaign. The Sustainable Transport evaluation is already under way, with the initial results of the Case for Change section expected imminently. In August, Transport Scotland boosted hopes of the reopening by adding £180,000 to the £40,000 already pledged to complete the funding for the STAG evaluation.

Campaign for Borders Rail

A full house for CBR's 20th anniversary AGM, and the first in Edinburgh for over ten years, was told that completing the main line from Tweedbank to Carlisle, was 'absolutely rock solid'. Rebuilding the southern section to extend the Borders Railway from Edinburgh would make a through route in the Scottish Borders a reality for the first time in fifty years. This enthusiastic message came from Christine Grahame, MSP for Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale, who has supported the Campaign since its inception.

South East Northumberland Rail User Group

SENUG is calling on the community to back Northumberland County Council's plans to restore passenger services between Newcastle and [Ashington](#), which were withdrawn in 1964 - the line still carries freight trains to and from the power station at Lynemouth. A phased approach would align with emerging funding opportunities. The first phase would create new stations at Northumberland Park, Newsham, Bedlington and Ashington, with an hourly service (high peak half hourly). It could be running by late 2022, with the remaining stations at Seaton Delaval and Bebside opening over the next two years.

However, SENRUG will continue to campaign not just for Seghill and other stations not included in Phase 1, but also for further extensions such as Ashington to Woodhorn and Newbiggin, Newsham to Blyth Town Centre, and Bedlington to Choppington and Morpeth. Finally, an Ashington to Alnmouth link via what is currently a privately owned freight line, together with a new west-north chord onto the East Coast Main Line south of Widdrington, would also serve as a diversionary route from Benton Junction.

Lakes Line Rail User Group

With First Trenitalia having been awarded the West Coast Partnership from December, the Group faces another round of getting to know a different operator, and bringing them up to speed on local needs: more and better waiting accommodation at Oxenholme, and extending the canopy north along Platforms 2/3; and improved staffing, so passengers have someone to ask for information between trains. The station staff will not change, but the Group will have to get to know a new tier of management, and the Chairman has already made an initial contact.

Each bidding group had to include an operator with successful experience of running high speed trains, as the new Partnership is to oversee the start of HS2 services. Trenitalia introduced the Direttissima between Rome and Florence, as long ago as 1977, operating initially at up to 160mph/250kph, and now at up to 190mph/300kph. It even runs high speed freight trains between Caserta and Bologna at an average speed of 110mph/180kph. (Thanks to Wikipedia for some of this information.) First Trenitalia will also replace the diesel-only Voyager fleet with environmentally friendly trains, cutting CO₂ by 61%, and invest £117 million in refurbishing the current Pendolino fleet, with 25,000 new, more comfortable seats and additional luggage space.

Seven new Class 195 trains now connect Windermere and Barrow with Manchester Airport. Passengers appreciate their comfort, space and cleanliness. They are also quiet both inside and out: a Burneside resident who lives close to the line asked if the new trains were electric or hybrid as they are so quiet! However, there are still too many cancellations on the line, some due to the mechanical problems, particularly with the doors, but also to staffing difficulties.

Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group

RUX congratulates LASRUG on its 30th anniversary. In 1989, Richard Watts, a keen member of the Railway Development Society, warned a meeting in Bentham that, unless action was taken, the line would probably be closed. At that time the Settle-Carlisle line was just about winning its fight to stay alive, and the LASRUG case seemed equally urgent if not more so.

Northern's Class 331 EMUs entered service on 9 September between Skipton, Bradford Forster Square, Ilkley and Leeds. They are much brighter and roomier, with four seats across the carriage rather than five. Groups of four seats with a table are spread throughout the train. There are extensive customer information screens, and a CCTV system monitors the unit both the inside and outside.

Friends of Bentham Station

On 13 September, FOBS celebrated their 8th birthday, the third anniversary of twinning with Mytholmroyd Station Partnership, and a Social Stations Investment Fund grant towards Bentham becoming a 100% Green Energy Station: 30 solar panels on the roof of the station building should generate all the electricity needed for new led platform lights, information screens, ticket machines and office equipment.

Harrogate Line Supporters Group

Over the weekends 21/22 and 28/29 September, during the UCI Road World Championships in Harrogate, seven extra LNER Azuma services to and from Leeds gave spectators a preview of the new trains ahead of their introduction on the route later in the year.

The Flaxby Park development company claims that Harrogate Borough Council's revised Sustainability Appraisal tilts the 'finely balanced decision' to build a major new settlement back in its favour, but the draft Local Plan still prefers Green Hammerton. On the Flaxby site, Goldsborough Station would reopen as a park and ride facility, significantly reducing traffic on the A59 into Harrogate, stimulating tourism and the local economy, and servicing both the proposed homes and new and existing jobs.

Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines (STORM)

In support of the region's planned growth, Manchester's [Prospectus for Rail](#) would double passenger numbers to 200,000 by 2040, double rail journeys to the airport, and move towards a minimum service level of four trains per hour (tph).

Whilst STORM (Calder Valley (CV) West), HADRAG (CV East) and the Upper CV continue to pursue their respective local issues, they should speak with one voice on such strategic issues, to help shape commuter services on either side of Summit Tunnel. Frank Salt remarks that he made that very suggestion both last year and the year before!

Meanwhile, the Friends of Castleton and Littleborough Stations have asked Rochdale councillors to support a Community Rail Partnership (CRP) for the CV line. It would give it a national identity, promote tourism and could play an important part in social inclusion, community wellbeing and economic development, whilst enabling people to access sustainable and healthy travel.

On 28 September, TransPennine Express inaugurated its Class 802 'Nova 1' set in passenger service between Newcastle and Liverpool via Manchester Victoria.

North Cheshire Rail Users' Group

Northern 'Connect' services to Leeds are becoming more popular, although a full marketing campaign for the route is on hold until new rolling stock arrives later this year, and the Class 142 and 144 Pacers have been retired. Northern seems to be through the nadir of its franchise, and improvements in performance and customer satisfaction indicate a more stable phase with a deliverable timetable.

3 months in, patronage of Halton Curve services continues to grow. When rolling stock becomes available, NCRUG would like an 05xx and 18xx from Chester, and 19xx from Lime Street. It also seeks to improve both the Ellesmere Port service and the vital Liverpool South Parkway/John Lennon Airport link. The latter's Surface Access Strategy should refer to the Personal Rapid Transit (POD) system, like that at Heathrow Terminal 5. Prior to his attendance at the Airport's Consultative Committee on 20 September, NCRUG also asked Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham if the Liverpool City Region could consider this idea.

Following successful static testing, the first Stadler Class 777 unit for Merseyrail is now running on a test track at Wildenrath in Germany. It should arrive in the UK in December, and will be stabled at Kirkdale as a base for further testing and driver training before entering passenger service next year.

Friends of the Barton Line

Abellio began operating the East Midlands Railway franchise from 18 August as planned, but the transfer of the Barton line service from Northern Rail has been postponed to May or December 2020. The Chairman and Secretary will seek assurance from the respective MPs for either end of the Barton line that the promised improvements to its service be honoured. Following the transfer, EMR plans to install public information screens on all Barton line stations. Meanwhile, in order to satisfy the Persons of Reduced Mobility (PRM) regulations, several changes to the rolling stock are possible: continued use of Class 153 units under special dispensation arrangements, a compliant class 156 unit on its own or paired with a Class 153, a Pacer, or a Class 150 or Class 170 subject to crew training.

LNER is to introduce its new Azuma trains on the Lincoln-London Kings Cross route on 21 October. As well as the one service currently, there will be four more direct trains each way, two of which will be Azumas.

Campaign for the Reopening of the Ivanhoe Line

Since it began last December, the campaign to reopen the Ivanhoe line (Leicester - Burton) to passenger services has taken off; the Facebook group now numbers 1,050. On 23 May, CRIL gave a presentation to local MPs, the Leader of Leicestershire County Council, other councillors from all three counties, and Edward Funnel of Abellio. Leicestershire County and Leicester City councils have since pledged £10,000 towards a fresh feasibility study for the line, subject to other councils along the line making similar donations. Work is also ongoing to identify station sites, and to ensure that these are protected and entered into local plans. [*Incidentally, both the [Rf East Midlands](#) and the [NR website](#) refer to Leicester – Loughborough as the Ivanhoe line – Ed*].

East Suffolk Travel Association

The 0525 and 1807 trains from Lowestoft connect with sailings from Harwich to the Hook of Holland, which now forms part of the Rotterdam metro network. With a fast and frequent rail service from the quayside to the centre of Rotterdam, and easier interchange with trains to Amsterdam and many other towns and cities, this could be a good time to try the "[Dutch Flyer](#)" ticket, which enables you to travel from any Greater Anglia (GA) station to any station in the Netherlands using rail/sea/rail.

Felixstowe Travel Watch

Currently, few of GA's 38 new bimodes are yet in passenger service, although deliveries are well under way, as can be seen when passing Crown Point depot on the approach to Norwich station. However, they are currently confined to the lines from Norwich to Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. In performance figures for local lines, the Felixstowe line was tops for punctuality – when the trains run! The recently completed Trimley loop has delivered increased flexibility, benefitting both passenger and freight services. However, on several occasions over the summer, trains were cancelled at short notice when the branch unit failed. The new trains cannot come soon enough!

From 15 July, a £3/day parking charge was introduced at Trimley and 14 other GA stations. And whereas at larger stations such as Ipswich, 20mins are allowed for pick up and set down, no such concession is advertised at Trimley. As a result, motorists are parking on local roads, or no longer using the train – a real own goal! FTW is seeking an on-site meeting with NCP, but negotiations may prove tricky.

English Regional Transport Association

It's not often that a local authority moots the idea of reopening a railway, but that is what the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit consultation (now closed) has done with its proposal to rebuild the Northampton-Market Harborough line, giving direct passenger and freight access from Leicester and the Midland Main Line to Milton Keynes and thus East West Rail; it is currently a 14mile walking and cycle route known as the Brampton Valley Way. The Government is also considering two possible sites for a freight depot in South Northamptonshire: Rail Central and Northampton Gateway, located to the west of the M1 close to Junctions 15 and 15A.

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group

Chairman Chris Emery wanted to collect pre-ordered tickets to Devon at a London Underground station, but found that this was not possible; he had to go to a local rail station. GWR is seeking a solution.

LU/TfL have confirmed that the staircase shown on the drawings for Amersham station would be for staff use only; the public would still have to use the rickety old one, which was unacceptable. However, no work on step-free access appears to be ongoing at Amersham or Harrow on the Hill, and the proposed SFA construction at Rickmansworth has also been deferred.

Windsor Lines Passengers Association

A meeting with South Western Railway covered a number of points including:

- A visit to the NR/SWR control unit in Basingstoke, if this can be arranged
- The many minor delays. SWR will tightly monitor services designated "golden trains"
- Delays until mid-2020 to the introduction of the Class 701 trains due to manufacturing delays
- The adaptation of Kew bridge station to cope with the new Brentford football stadium
- Confusion as to where the taxis will wait when Twickenham station fully reopens
- Land sheriffs helping with respect to security
- The difficulty of recruiting new drivers
- Barnes platform displays, which should reflect the Sunday platform stopping pattern.

With a target date of 2026 for Phase 1, TfL has put forward a business case for 4tph on the West London Orbital line from Kew Bridge to Hendon, and from West Hampstead to Hounslow, with a turn-back siding. However, with 4tph on the section from Hounslow to Kew Bridge, and 2tph from Windsor and the peak Camberley trains, it will be tricky for NR to fit them all in.

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group

In 2009 the DfT announced electrification as far as Newbury, relegating Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn to a diesel shuttle service to and from Newbury. It's been a long campaign, but from December bimodes should offer the best service ever. Following concerns over the peak service as originally proposed, there will be an evenly spaced, half-hourly service between 0530 and 0830 and, at BTPG's behest, 1606 and 2006: mostly through Paddington trains with shorter journey times.

Following its response to the Franchise Consultation last year, BTPG now wants an early semi-fast service, at least to Westbury but preferably Bristol Temple Meads, together with a similar mid-evening return service. It will work with other interested parties to achieve this aim in a subsequent timetable change.

West Sussex Rail Users Association

Buses will replace trains on the West Coastway between Barnham and Havant on eight weekend days between 26 October and 1 December, and between Fareham, Havant and Chichester from 28 October to 1 November (half-term week). NR will replace the track, and update several level crossings with new, more reliable, technology.

There are no changes to Southern services in West Sussex in the December timetable, but on Thameslink, the Saturday service between Horsham and London Bridge is extended to Peterborough, as on weekdays.

Avocet Line Rail Users Group

December will see the most significant timetable changes in the South West since the 1970s, capitalising on new rolling stock, infrastructure changes, and the performance of the new Intercity Express Trains (IET), with modest improvements in journey time and more, albeit less comfortable, seats. However, it will no longer be possible to arrive in London before 1000 (except on the sleeper departing Exeter St Davids at 0101 - recommended), and the last London departure connecting with an Exmouth train will be at 2104. An ALRUG/GWR plan to resolve these issues will be implemented by May 2020, but GWR is trying hard to introduce it in December.

In the Exeter area, Paignton trains will now go to and from Exmouth, rather than Barnstaple. However, the 2tph will neither be at 30min intervals, nor 'clock face' (ie departing at the same time each hour). 4-car Class 150s (2 x 2-car) should work most ALRUG line services, and 150s also work every other branch line in Devon and Cornwall except the Tarka Line to Barnstaple. This requires all of GWR's 20 units, so 2 x 3-car 150/0s are booked to operate two Avocet Line diagrams. Currently these are due to move to Northern Rail by 1 April, but ongoing negotiations with the DfT may see them retained for a while. Another issue is the new PRM regulations. GWR was to withdraw its eight Class 143 Pacer units by the end of the year, but the DfT has invited it to apply for a dispensation into 2020. One way of operating would be to couple a 143 to a 150, so that PRM requirements are met in at least a section of each train.

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](#).

The Rf Branches and Groups Day 2019 in Birmingham on 26 October (see Events) will feature some of the key techniques it uses to engage with its stakeholders and the wider public. As well as the presentations, there will be two Workshop Sessions: "Construct the Message" and "Social Media". All active members are urged to attend.

Miriam Ricci is leading a [project](#) in the Bristol area to encourage rail passengers with disabilities to gain access to the countryside. Volunteers with disabilities and/or mobility constraints are invited to engage in one or two activities, a guided walk and/or a ticket buying exercise. If you would like to take part, please contact Miriam, preferably by email: miriam.ricci@uwe.ac.uk. All expenses will be met by the project.

Policy Director Ian Brown CBE confirms that Rf actively supports the integrated development of heavy and light rail in the West Midlands where a sustainable business case, including the wider economic, social and environmental benefits, justifies the investment, both in terms of the capital works and operating cost.



Inaugurated in 2012 but paused for 2019, the annual RUG Awards will return for 2020. The closing date for nominations is 1 March, with the presentations made at the national AGM on 27 June. The Award categories open for [nominations](#) are:

- 1 – Best website
- 2 – Best social media promotion
- 3 – Best newsletter
- 4 – Best new group - the Oliver Lovell Award
- 5 – Best campaign
- 6 – Best campaigner - the Clara Zilahi Award (for Rf members only).

The Judges' Special Award is made or not at their sole discretion.

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH

West Midland Trains have incorporated many of the improvements suggested by WM Branch. Saturday services are now based on the off-peak Monday-Friday timetable, whilst earlier and later Sunday services recognise the weekend leisure opportunities. Overall the May 2019 timetable has been very successful, with 150,000 extra passengers a week on WMT. There are ten additional trains on the Birmingham - Worcester line, and the overcrowded New Street departures to Hereford at 1550 and 1620 will be strengthened from two carriages to three.

The direct services to Euston from Rugeley Trent Valley via the Chase Line entailed coupling and uncoupling with Liverpool trains at Birmingham New Street. However, services must run to time, and delays at either end have led to Chase Line services terminating short at Hednesford. WMT are monitoring the situation, but if they cannot resolve it then they may have to revert to a self-contained service next May. NR will not accept any timetable changes before then.

After a long campaign, £15 million has been released for new stations at Moseley, Kings Heath and Hazelwell on the Camphill Line, currently a freight and only diversionary passenger line. Together with the West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE), Transport for West Midlands and the City of Birmingham, the Branch also seeks to enlarge University station to meet the demands of the 3.3 million passengers/year currently using a building originally designed for 400,000.

EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

Throughout East Anglia, there is a lack of capacity, both on track and train. Currently about 25% of containers landed at Felixstowe go by rail, but it is estimated that this could be doubled, avoiding 75% of 'container miles'. The opening of the Ipswich Freight Chord in 2014 increased capacity from around 24 trains per day to 34, and the freight loops at Trimley together with bi-directional signalling at Derby Road from 34 to 45, with a more reliable passenger service. However, these improvements merely displace the problem: to Ipswich, where locomotive servicing and the freight yard are on opposite sides of a busy passenger line; to Haughley Junction, where the Ely and Cambridge line meets the main line to Norwich; and to Ely North Junction, where the Peterborough - Norwich and Cambridge – Kings Lynn lines cross.

Overcrowding on the London services north of Cambridge will remain until the platforms at Waterbeach and Littleport are extended in mid-2020; even on Saturdays, southbound trains can be full by the time they leave Ely. In some European countries platforms for an eight-car train would be built for nine, so that drivers can approach at a higher speed, not having to stop on a pinhead. Cambridge North was built down to an affordable cost, so trains from the bay platform run 'wrong line' for far longer than necessary, exacerbating the capacity problem. And the canopy on the 12-car platform covers just three carriages, so when it rains heavily, train are delayed as passengers all board at one end.

Upgraded signalling to allow trains to run closer together, and for train speeds to be adjusted to optimise the use of junctions, is not yet funded - but even if it were, there would be too few skilled engineers to implement it. Creating a trained workforce should be a government priority.

To end on some better news: Chris Burton tried out a Stadler Class 755 Flirt bimode, which will soon be the norm across non-metropolitan East Anglia. It was a good experience. The platform-level entrance is excellent for wheelchair users, and those with bikes or any sort of mobility issue. The crisp, clear audio is pitched at just the right volume, and the information/destination screens are among the most easily read Chris has seen. So how did the train perform? The Yarmouth route is a good test, containing both welded and jointed track. Like the Class 158s, the new trains have double-glazing and no drop-down windows, yet internal noise levels are almost silent by comparison. In the front coach, away from the diesel engine, is the sort of quiet that can only be found in an unpowered coach on an EMU, whilst the acceleration is much better than any diesel unit presently working in East Anglia.

LONDON AND SOUTH EAST BRANCH

With the aim of an increased service frequency and a clock-face timetable between St. Albans Abbey and Watford Junction, ABFLY - the user group for the Abbey Line - crowd-funded a report from the Railway Consultancy Ltd. It recommends an extended platform at Bricket Wood, with a passing loop to enable a two trains service. The 16-minute end-to-end journey-time should enable a 3tph peak / 2tph off-peak service. Hertfordshire County Council has adopted the proposal as one of top ten priorities!

TfL has published a Strategic Outline Business Case for passenger services over the Dudding Hill line, from Acton to Cricklewood - the West London Orbital. It concludes that "there is a strong case for the scheme to be taken forward to the next stage of business case development...further work would be required to identify the preferred service pattern, develop a financing strategy, and develop options to close the subsidy gap relating to operating costs."

GWR plans to meet its franchise commitment for a second limited-stop service in each hour along the North Downs line between Reading and Gatwick Airport via Redhill in May 2020, subject to the completion of any level crossing upgrades that may be necessary. With other stakeholders, Rf shares the ambition for the new service to evolve into a Gatwick-Reading-Oxford service.

TRANSPORT FOCUS

Work on the Brighton Main Line from October 2018 to February 2019 aimed to improve reliability from Brighton to Lewes and Three Bridges. As NR and Govia requested, TF researched two main factors:

- The success of communications activity, shown through passenger awareness
- The effectiveness of the operational arrangements – train diversions and replacement buses.

While significant efforts were made to minimise the impact on passengers, more could have been done. Passengers were frustrated about the lack of information around compensation; when the works would finish, and what benefits they would bring.

Case study: During a ticket check between Paddington and Henley-on-Thames, Mr S had only the photocard of his 16-25 Railcard, not the part showing the expiry date. He said he was unaware that the Railcard came in two parts, and was sure he had not been issued a second part when buying it at Clapham Junction. He was reported for prosecution, and GWR offered a pre-court settlement of £173.20. As he had paid by cash, Mr S had no record of the payment, so TF contacted the Rail Delivery Group. They were able to confirm that the card had been purchased at Clapham Junction, as Mr S had registered it online. GWR's prosecutions team accepted the evidence and closed the case.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

At the 15th national [Community Rail Awards](#), West Yorkshire's Mytholmroyd Station Partnership scooped the top award – ‘Outstanding Contribution to Community Rail’ - with a series of projects that put the station and railway back into the heart of the community. Peter Roberts MBE was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award, having served as ACoRP Chair for 15 years.

The Leeds-Morecambe CRP won first prize in the ‘Influencing Positive Change’ category for its extensive ‘Dementia and Community Rail’ project on the Bentham Line. Introducing the award, Jools Townsend, ACoRP Chief Executive, said: "Our judges were bowled over by the winning project. They described it as an exemplary, ground-breaking project...[that] tackles an issue of growing importance, in a sensitive, positive and empowering way...[It] should be rolled out across our railways."

Founded in June, the Bolton and South Lancs CRP is now up and running, covering the four lines from Bolton to Preston, Wigan, Bromley Cross and Manchester. Discussions on gaining ACoRP accreditation are at an advanced stage, and there is three-years of funding for a community rail officer. An exhibition by local artist Phil Porter (‘The Journey’) opens in the Platform Gallery on Bolton station on 21 October. Phil will be giving a talk about his works on a date to be confirmed.

CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

After years of campaigning, CBT hails the Government announcement of a National Bus Strategy from March 2020. Millions rely on buses to get to school, work and training, shops and services, and to combat loneliness; their steady decline cut off communities and increased car dependency. Backed by a long-term funding settlement, the Strategy will allow local authorities and bus operators to plan for the future, stem cuts to sustain critical services, and increase patronage. CBT will seek to ensure that it contains the right fiscal and policy interventions, with a new generation of rail interchanges, and digital innovations like account-based ticketing. Crucially, it must focus on:

- Increasing the use of bus services across the country
- Better integration of buses with other modes of transport
- A clear route to zero emission buses
- Growth in use of technology to improve services.

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

The Bedford-Cambridge section of East West Rail (EWR) has been designated a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), streamlining the planning process. The Chancellor also made specific mention of the scheme in his 2019 Autumn Spending Review. A report on the consultation of the five possible route options is expected later this year, together with the preferred route.

Meanwhile James Palmer, the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has said that delivery of a train station at Cambridge South to serve the Addenbrooke’s biomedical campus must be decoupled from EWR. The need is urgent, and the focus should be on its completion by 2023, not 2027 at the earliest.

England’s Economic Heartland, the Sub-national Transport Body for the Oxford-Cambridge arc, is commissioning a study to identify opportunities to maximise the potential of the region’s rail network. It will identify key strategic hubs, how those relate to employment centres, and the impact on rail demand. The final report is likely to be published in spring 2020. Meanwhile, the Oxfordshire Rail Study, which was match-funded by EEH, shows that improvements are required throughout the Didcot-Oxford-Bicester Knowledge Spine, both for end-to-end journeys and between intermediate stations at Culham, Oxford and Oxford Parkway. This supports the argument for extending EWR services through Oxford to Didcot.

The Scottish Transport Secretary, Michael Matheson, has approved £15m of funding to develop options for the Edinburgh Waverley Western Approaches project. From the existing west-north freight spur, a new Almond Chord would provide an alternative link from the Glasgow line via Linlithgow to the Aberdeen line, bypassing the flood-prone Winchburgh tunnel, and allowing Glasgow trains to serve Edinburgh Airport.

The latest [ORR figures](#) show that the number of signals passed at danger (SPADs) on NR controlled infrastructure averages about 300/year, of which some 5% are classified as potentially severe.

An interim NR/GWR report into an accident in July at Margam, south of Port Talbot, that killed two rail workers found that there was no safe system in place. The group of six, all wearing ear defenders, had split into two groups of three 150 yards apart. Then the designated lookout became involved in the rail work. The investigation will look deeper into the root causes before making final recommendations.

On 1 October, the 21st Class 717 train entered passenger service on the Great Northern Metro routes into Moorgate, so the £240m fleet is now complete. The new trains have transformed the service with air conditioning, Wi-Fi, live updates from London Underground, modern accessibility features and space for an extra 100 passengers.

To celebrate the release of its new December timetable, GWR IETs have set two modern speed records. To reach London Paddington, a Gloucester service took just 44min 22sec from Swindon, and one from Bristol Temple Meads only 72min.

Transport for Wales (TfW) plans to provide for up to 6,500 more commuters a week from December. Improvements include:

- More four-carriage trains on peak Valley lines services
- Modern Class 170 trains between Cheltenham and Maesteg, and between Cardiff and Ebbw Vale, with passenger information systems, accessible toilets, air conditioning, wi-fi and power sockets
- More modern 'Mark 4 intercity' carriages on some services between North Wales and Manchester.

London Overground is to run Boxing Day services on parts of its network for the first time. This year, they will operate from Highbury & Islington to West Croydon, and Clapham Junction to Hackney Wick.

KLM operates five flights daily between Brussels and Amsterdam, even though there is also a high-speed rail service on the route. So from next April, it will offer customers a choice: take the plane or the train.

...and finally

From BR Eastern Region Rules and Regulations, Southern Area, York, October, 1972: "When it is necessary for a freight train or light locomotive to run from New Holland to Barton whilst vehicles occupy the platform at Barton...The Station Manager at Barton must arrange for a man...to be posted at the ground frame [90 yards east of Barton Station], and exhibit a Danger signal". Barton station was de-staffed in 1969!

CONSULTATIONS

- DfT: [Huddersfield to Westtown \(Dewsbury\)](#), closes 25 October.
- England's Economic Heartland: [Outline Transport Strategy](#), closes 31 October.

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, that is a problem if the details change from month to month, so 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.

October

- Saturday 19. Rf Scotland, Friends' Meeting House, Victoria Terrace, **Edinburgh**, 1400.
- Saturday 19. English Regional Transport Association, The Ivy Wall, 18–19 New Road, **Spalding**, Lincolnshire, PE11 1DQ, 1500.
- Monday 21. Campaign for Better Transport London, 75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon, **London**, EC1M 6EL, 1800.
- Monday 21. Avocet Line Rail Users Group AGM, Globe Hotel, 34 Fore Street, **Topsham**, EX3 0HR, 1930.
- Tuesday 22. Bolton and South Lancashire CRP, The Community Room, Platform 5, Bolton Station, Trinity Street, **Bolton**, BL2 1BE, 1900.

- Tuesday 22. Chesham & District Transport User Group, Town Hall, 14 High Street, **Chesham**, HP5 1EP, 1930 (Also 10 December).
- Saturday 26. Rf Branches and Groups Day, John Dickens Room, Birmingham and Midland Institute, 9 Margaret St, **Birmingham**, B3 3BS, 1030.
- Tuesday 29. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Levenmouth Academy, Methilhaven Rd, Buckhaven, **Leven** KY8 1EA, 1830 (and the last Tuesday of every month).
- Wednesday 30. Lakes Line Rail User Group AGM, The Shakespeare Centre, Highgate, **Kendal**, LA9 4HE, 1930.

November

- Saturday 2. West Sussex Rail Users Association AGM, Studio of the Capitol, Horsham Arts Centre, **Horsham**, 1015.
- Monday 4. Bedford Commuters Association AGM, RAFA Club, 93 Asburnham Road, **Bedford** MK40 1EA. 19.30.
- Tuesday 5. Ribble Valley Rail, New Inn, 20 Parson Lane, Clitheroe, Lancashire, BB7 2JN. 14.30.
- Tuesday 5. Rf Thames Valley joint event with Chipping Norton Railway Club, Town Hall, Market Place, **Chipping Norton**, OX7 5NA, 19.30.
- Wednesday 6. ACoRP AGM, West Midlands Rail Executive, 16 Summer Lane, **Birmingham**, B19 3SD, 1430.
- Thursday 7. Rf Sussex and Coastway Division, Hassocks Hotel, Station Approach, **Hassocks**, BN6 8HN, 1800.
- Monday 11. Bexhill Rail Action Group meeting, Conquest House, Collington Avenue, **Bexhill-on-Sea**, East Sussex, TN39 3LW, 1900.
- Tuesday 12. Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association, The Sportsman, Severn Street, **Newtown**, 1900 (also 7 December - Royal Naval Club, Market Street, Aberystwyth).
- Wednesday 13. Rf London & South East, Eastern Division, St. John's Church, Stratford Broadway, **London**, E15 1NG, 1830 (and every second Wednesday of alternate months.)
- Wednesday 13. Rugby Rail Users Group AGM, Claremont Centre, 43 Clifton Rd, **Rugby**, CV21 3QE, 1930.
- Saturday 16. Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield RUA, The Village Hall, **Stocksmoor**, 1100.
- Saturday 16. Rf Severnside, Stonehouse Community Centre, Laburnum Walk, **Stonehouse**, Gloucestershire, GL10 2NS, 1400.
- Saturday 16. Fen Line Users Association AGM, Heritage Centre, Priory Road, **Downham Market**, 1400.
- Monday 18. Campaign for Better Transport West and North Yorkshire Rail Group, Editor's Draft, 88 Wellington Street, **Leeds**, LS1 4LT, 1930.
- Wednesday 20. Friends of the Barton Line meeting, The Sloop Inn, 81 Waterside Road, **Barton-upon-Humber**, DN18 5BA, 1800.
- Thursday 21. Magor & Undy Walkway Station meeting, The Golden Lion, 23A The Square, Magor, **Caldicot**, Monmouthshire, NP26 3HY, 1930 (Also 19 December).
- Saturday 23. Rf Herts & Beds, St Paul's Church on Hatfield Road, **St Albans**, AL1 4JP, 1100.
- Thursday 28. Campaign for Better Transport London, 75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon, **London**, EC1M 6EL. 1800.

Further Ahead

- 3 December 2019. Tuesday. Ribble Valley Rail, New Inn, 20 Parson Lane, **Clitheroe**, Lancashire, BB7 2JN. 14.30.

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