

Welcome to this edition of Rail User Express.

As always, feel free to forward RUEX to a colleague, or to reproduce items in your own newsletter (quoting sources). If you want further details of any of the stories mentioned, look on the relevant website or, failing that, get back to me so I can send you the full text.

Please include railfuture.org.uk in your list of useful contacts on your website and in newsletters!

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For details about
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We begin with the usual roundup of news from rail user groups around the UK. I'm grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins. Once again, we have not one but two Guest Rail User Groups...

GUEST RAIL USER GROUPS OF THE MONTH

Friends of the Barton Line

[website](#)

FoBL was formed in 1998 to represent passengers using the railway line between Cleethorpes and Barton-upon-Humber. They've managed to halt the service cuts of the 1990s and are starting to see some improvements. Much of their work is concerned with campaigning and promoting the line, but members also get involved with practical projects like station gardening and refurbishing historic artefacts, obtaining a staggering total of around £10,000 in grant funding along the way. After uploading photos of local attractions onto the website, the group were surprised with the interest generated – from as far afield as Istanbul!

Among the group's aspirations are hourly trains on weekdays, better facilities for cyclists and real time information displays. They've noticed that the worn platform surface at New Holland station has been patched up once again bringing the total number of patches to 38, and ask if this is a record for a platform on the rail network (now there's a challenge for other station adopters!)

The group meets from 20:00 at the Sloop Inn, Barton, on the second Wednesday of alternate months, the next meetings being: 9 May, 11 July (AGM) and 12 Sept.

Friends of Rose Hill Station

[website](#)

Moving across to Cheshire, we arrive at Rose Hill Station to find the award-winning Rose Hill Station adoption group. FoRHS was formed in June 2009, and members get involved in station gardening projects and generally keeping the platforms tidy. They've worked with local schoolchildren on artwork projects as well as planting out the flower beds – of course, roses feature prominently in the station planters! Rose Hill was named community station of the year at the Cheshire Best Kept Stations awards for 2011.

From Dec 2010, the station gained an extra service per hour during the off-peak which resulted in a 27% increase in passengers. The group would like to see an extended service to include late night trains and a Sunday service.

...next, news from our regular contributors (from north to south)...

Dornoch Rail Link Action Group

[website](#)

DORLAG has awarded itself a "pat on the back" after strongly advocating (along with other organisations) the retention of services between Inverness/Aberdeen and London – the Scottish

Transport Minister has now promised to retain these through, cross-border services. Meanwhile, the group is pursuing the results of its survey of Far North Line users with Scottish Government ministers; the survey showed huge support for the line and DORLAG argue that the spread and number of respondents will make it difficult for ministers to ignore.

Furness Line Action Group

[contact](#)

FLAG has enlisted the help of their local MP in keeping a watchful eye on the impact rail electrification in the North West could have on through trains from Barrow to Manchester – a sample timetable that appeared on Network Rail’s website shows only four through trains each way per day. This issue promises to grow into a major campaign involving enterprise agencies, local authorities etc.

The group has discovered some “startling anomalies and hidden surcharges” in connection with fares on the Cumbrian Coast line, and lays the blame at the door of the Dept. for Transport who’ve allowed TransPennine to set some of the fares despite running none of the trains! FLAG’s latest newsletter devotes several pages to a roundup of rover tickets, rail excursions and special events in the North West that may appeal to members.

In an article about improvements at Barrow Station, we read that FLAG was one of the contributors to the funding of 12 new artwork panels. There are various updates about Dalton Station: the group is involved in discussions about the best use for redundant station buildings; they’ve been trying to get someone to repair a street light on the station footpath for three years without success; however, they’re pleased that the design for a Harrington Hump, to alleviate the stepping distance to the platform, has been approved (FLAG had suggested a hump to British Rail back in the 1980s!) but they predict problems aligning the different types of multiple units with the short hump being proposed.

Ormskirk, Preston & Southport Traveller’s Association

[website](#)

The chairman’s roundup in OPSTA’s March newsletter begins: “it’s difficult to remember a time when so many changes to the railway network in the North West are planned” before listing schemes such as electrification, the Ordsall Curve and improvements on the Hope Valley line. “It’s a lot to try to take in...but there are a lot of unanswered questions.” He cites some major issues to be considered: (i) will their services become a disconnected island of diesel trains? (ii) can the Pacers and Merseyrail fleet go on for ever? (iii) how do OPSTA’s aspirations, eg rail link to Skelmersdale, fit in? Planned meetings with MPs, councillors and Transport for Greater Manchester will help to address these questions. OPSTA has also been putting across these concerns and other campaign aspirations by engaging in the West Lancashire Local Plan process.

A contributor to the magazine has drawn a cartoon depicting the chairman of an active rail user group – it’s a juggler expertly spinning plates labelled with the various industry and local authority bodies that one has to deal with! Members have long complained about revenue loss from unchecked tickets and uncollected fares; the group’s committee will be compiling a dossier of instances, and taking up the problem with Northern Rail.

A page about the proposed Skelmersdale Rail Link begins with the revelation that the town “vies with Fleetwood for the title of England’s largest town without a rail link.” [*This gives me the opportunity to repeat yet again that the largest town in England with an operational railway station is, in fact, GOSPORT - Ed*].

OPSTA’s stall at a community event in Burscough generated a lot of interest and several new members. Of course, the hot topic locally is the interconnection of the two rail lines by means of the Burscough Curve project, but OPSTA’s secret ingredient to draw people in was the provision of tables and chairs, which provided a welcome relief for those tired from all the standing about.

Huddersfield, Penistone and Sheffield Rail Users' Association [contact](#)

A local-authority-funded Enhancement Study for the Penistone Line (to which HPSRUA had contributed) was published in March, giving seven possible timetable variations to accommodate a half-hourly service. It is disappointing that the study concluded that the likely increase in patronage isn't large enough to support the cost of a major enhancement. HPSRUA takes the realistic view that more effort to grow rail use in the coming years could well tip the balance in favour of justifying an improved service. Nevertheless, the group still intends to campaign for platform lengthening and 3-car trains to provide sufficient capacity in the short term.

After years of pressure from HPSRUA, Kirklees Council has agreed to do something about the lack of car parking space at Honley. There's also news that the journey on the Penistone Line is now "just that bit smoother" after the completion of major track renewal; apparently, the night-time possessions overran a few times, and buses were pressed into use at the last minute leading to some interesting detours in search of Penistone Line stations!

Greater Manchester Transport Campaign [website](#)

GMTC welcomes additional trains for Northern Rail to alleviate overcrowding – there's a net gain of 22 diesel vehicles, although the operator loses some much-liked Class 180 units and gains a large number of Class 142 Pacers.

In an editorial, the group's chairman deplors the fact that the Dept for Transport controls all rolling stock purchases and exchanges: billions of pounds worth of locos and carriages have been left to rot in sidings, huge sums have been spent on consultants for the Intercity Express Train project, Britain's one remaining trainmaker is laying off staff and the 202 new diesel carriages promised by the previous Government were never ordered. "We are promised some more second or third hand electric trains from London when the electrification of the Manchester to Liverpool scheme is completed in 2014 but we are still the Cinderella area as far as trains and the DfT are concerned."

Friends of Denton Station [website](#)

Following prompting by the Friends and their local MP, Network Rail has now completely rebuilt Denton Station after it had fallen into disrepair, despite the station having only one scheduled train per week (plus some specials, including Compass Railtour trains). The group plans to build two flower beds on the platform after receiving £700 funding from Manchester Airport's Community Trust Fund.

Meanwhile a meeting has been set up at Transport for Greater Manchester involving FoDS and the neighbouring group, Friends of Reddish South, at which the case for a regular train service will be discussed.

Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association [website](#)

SARPA congratulates Arriva Trains Wales on several improvements: lengthening some Cambrian Line trains for the busy summer months; progress with the Class 158 refurbishment programme; installation of information screens; and achieving the best punctuality record for over a decade. The latest station patronage figures from the Office of Rail Regulation shows that the "nil growth" ATW franchise has in fact seen a growth of around 50% over 8 years!

In his editorial message, SARPA's chairman says "we've been banging away about inefficiency and waste in the railway industry stifling improvements for passengers and increasing fares for nigh on a decade" and cites the staggering £40k sum paid for an appraisal study into a new station for Carno, adding "I'm sure the local builders if given the money would have been well on the way to building a usable [single platform] station by now."

In his regular, always-entertaining feature the “Brigadier” tells us (by way of the Munich crisis, dried egg omelette and limestone Karst formations near Haifa) that the ETRMS signalling system being trialled on the Cambrian Line needs three times as many staff as were needed to run the system it replaced – thus theirs is likely to be only line fitted with this “expensive wonder system” for years to come. He’s also heard persistent rumours that “the McNulty report was altered as the embarrassing truth he highlighted is that the cost and subsidy increases that Government doesn’t like were in fact caused by Government in the first place.”

Stourbridge Line User Group

[website](#)

On the threat to ticket office opening hours arising from the Government’s Command Paper on Reforming the Railways, SLUG say they are alarmed that rail passengers could fork out even more for “high peak” fares, and that travellers may not be able to buy turn-up-and-go tickets, concluding: “dampening down demand ... benefits no one in the short term or the long term.” The Government’s other proposal to devolve some railway decision-making to local transport authorities was welcomed by the transport authority for the Midlands (Centro), and SLUG wholeheartedly backs this sentiment.

While welcoming the impressive new Stourbridge Interchange facility, SLUG’s chairman feels that it’s a rather disappointing bus/rail interchange because the bus element is so lacking after 6pm.

SLUG’s committee has taken up the issue of the wholly inadequate waiting shelter just installed at Old Hill station after a member had contacted them, attaching a photograph as evidence. The structure clearly offers little protection from the elements and cannot accommodate more than half a dozen passengers. A reply to their complaint from the operator claimed that there’s insufficient space for anything more elaborate. Well, at least SLUG can now use the lack of a proper shelter as an argument against de-staffing, as reduced manning would lead to even more hours when the waiting room is locked!

Cotswold Line Promotion Group

[website](#)

The group’s committee has been busy working on its response to the Great Western franchise consultations and hopes to have the opportunity for discussions with the bidders. They particularly want to see a regular hourly service in the off peak and some journey time improvements.

The group is looking forward to the return of Class 180 Adelante trains to their line and hope that previous reliability problems have been overcome. A member (who is also a journalist for the Oxford Mail) had the chance to visit Wabtec in Scotland and see the major overhaul being carried out on the 180s, and on the conversion of 15 HST buffet cars into standard-class seated accommodation – his report and photos are in the group’s magazine.

Now that Ashcott-under-Wychwood station has a second platform as a result of the line redoubling scheme, the CLPG successfully persuaded the First Great Western to run additional Saturday trains in the run up to Christmas 2011 on a trial basis. The group helped to publicise the trains by printing a leaflet that was distributed to households, tucked inside the village magazine. The results were said to be “encouraging” and it’s hoped that the additional trains will be a permanent feature for Ashcott.

In his regular column, the CLPG’s past chairman, Derek Potter, makes some the same points about Rolling Stock companies that I’ve been banging on about. He concludes: “why aren’t the British ROSCOs (whoever currently owns them) supporting British manufacturing while they still can, and why is it that it is the Government through the DfT which is expected to provide the TOCs with the trains they so obviously need?”

After their successful High Speed Train charter to Portsmouth in 2011, the CLPG will be running a similar excursion to York in September, courtesy of First Great Western. Elsewhere, we read that the committee is seeking views from members about enabling them to opt into receiving the Cotswold

& Malvern Line News by email in view of the “massive hike in postage costs” – about a third of the copies are already hand delivered by volunteers.

Mid Anglia Rail Passengers' Association

[website](#)

MARPA told us some months ago about an overcrowded morning train being strengthened to 3-car length, with the unfortunate result that it overhung the platform at Kennett Station, forcing pedestrians using the foot crossing to venture onto the trackbed to get around the back of the train. The operator quickly reverted to 2-car formation pending a solution to this dangerous situation. MARPA now report that a temporary footbridge has been installed so that the foot crossing could be closed and the 3-car unit reinstated – swift progress indeed!

An hourly service to Peterborough from Ipswich is a high priority for the group and, with “other aspirations too numerous to mention”, MARPA plans to draw up a formal “shopping list” in the coming months. Meanwhile, MARPA has been invited to Greater Anglia’s Rail User Group forum at Liverpool Street station – the new operator is clearly keen to engage with its passenger groups. It’s also reported that MARPA is organising a meeting involving the train operator and local authority representatives at Newmarket Station to review the station’s poor facilities and see what can be done.

MARPA regrets that it has had to raise the annual subscription to £5 due to the “ever increasing costs of stationery, postage, hiring of rooms etc.”.

East Suffolk Travellers' Association

[website](#)

ESTA’s spring newsletter begins with the good news that there’s visible work in progress towards the long-awaited passing loop at Beccles which will enable an hourly train service to be introduced on the East Suffolk Line from Dec 2012. ESTA plans to mount exhibitions later in the year to publicise the hourly service; they also intend to produce a high-quality leaflet promoting the line in time for the 2013 tourist season.

Speaking at the group’s spring meeting, a representative of the new Greater Anglia company made the observation that “the average non-rail user thinks rail is half so frequent, half as reliable and twice as expensive as it really is.” [*Have other RUGs come across this misconception? – Ed*]. He also stressed to members that they have the opportunity to influence the long-term aspirations of the next (15-yr) franchise from the summer of 2014.

The group’s new email “hotline” that enables members to report problems with their train or bus journey has proved popular, and some issues raised have already been taken up with operators. There will be plenty of events in the coming months to keep members busy: a sponsored cycle ride, information stalls at various locations as well as social events.

Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users' Group

[website](#)

PENRUG officers recently spent a stimulating hour with their MP, George Freeman, and were especially interested in his ideas on how developments, including rail infrastructure, might be planned and funded; they were impressed by the MP’s enthusiasm and positive approach.

In the Government’s consultation document on devolving railway decisions to a local level, there is a section which states that inter-regional express routes (eg Liverpool-Norwich) should remain a national responsibility – a stance which PENRUG fully supports.

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group

[website](#)

Members will be visiting the signal box at Foxton level crossing on 11 May in order to understand issues relating to pedestrian safety. This will be followed by a visit to Cambridge Station signal box, which is connected to the Foxton signalling system.

First Capital Connect's Customer Services Manager has reiterated his thanks to the Rail User Group for efforts on the station gardens, which he said have been the catalyst for reducing and eliminating car parking charges at Meldreth and Shepreth respectively. The gardening team will next meet at Meldreth Station on 1 Jun from 11am with a picnic lunch break, to refresh the platform flower tubs and Meldreth Primary School's flower & veg patch.

Bedford Commuters Association

[website](#)

With the Thameslink Franchise Consultation Document due out in May 2012, the BCA is already working on its response, and will be liaising closely with RailFuture and neighbouring rail user groups to ensure consistency when dealing with the Dept. for Transport and bidders.

The BCA has responded to the consultation document for East Midland Train's December timetable change arguing, in particular, for an additional morning stop to plug the gap in the northbound service. The BCA committee has been invited to join the Steering Group for the Amptill and Flitwick Local Area Travel Plans, and the inaugural meeting should take place very soon. Meanwhile, at the latest meeting of the Bedford Station Travel Plan group, the BCA argued for a second station entrance for Bedford Midland.

The group urges members to write to their MPs to express strong support for the East-West Rail Link project [*also see below for Railfuture East Anglia's initiative – Ed*].

Association of Public Transport Users (Herts)

[website](#)

In a brief update, APTU advises its members about changes to the entrances at Blackfriars station and temporary closure of the car park at Harpenden station for resurfacing. APTU has suggested to First Capital Connect that they should provide an alternative pick up and drop off zone during the works.

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group

[website](#)

After it was announced that Great Western Electrification would extend only as far as Newbury, the group had been in touch with two local MPs and relevant local authorities making the case for continued through services to London, rather than the diesel shuttle to Reading proposed by the Dept. for Transport; all parties contacted have been very helpful and supportive.

There could be further opportunities for the group to press for Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury to be served by semi-fast trains between Paddington and the Westcountry at the hoped-for meetings with the four bidders for the new GW franchise. When BTPG met with the DfT, they were assured that the Department will be looking for a "robust response" from the bidders as to how the three stations will be served.

Bexhill Rail Action Group

[website](#)

BRAG is pleased to note that the Marshlink line between Hastings and Ashford re-opened on 11 Mar after a 9 week closure, and that the 20mph speed limit south of Ashford has been lifted – the group hope there will be further improvements on this increasingly important route.

Southern's local Area Manager was the guest speaker at BRAG's meeting on 12 Mar, giving members the chance to raise various issues about the train service.

Normans Bay station serves only a small community and has no Sunday service. BRAG intends to campaign for summer Sunday trains, at least on a trial basis, in view of the large numbers of visitors to the area.

Meanwhile, the group is preparing its detailed submission for the forthcoming consultations on the new Southern/Thameslink and SouthEastern franchises. BRAG hopes that rationalisation of services

on the Brighton line may free-up more paths for East Coastway trains, but warns of a possible downgrade of the through coastal service between Brighton and Ashford as well as threats to the cheap off-peak fares.

West Sussex Rail Users' Association

[website](#)

WSRUA is taking the opportunity to shape the new Thameslink franchise (which will be extended to include services currently operated by Southern) and the Committee hope to have a dialogue with each of the five bidders. The guest speaker at WSRUA's AGM on 26 May will be the Franchise Improvement Director of Southern.

Parts of the West Coastway line has been closed at weekends for engineering works, and WSRUA is upset by the unnecessarily lengthy delays for passengers caused by the inconvenient replacement bus service. Buses were slow getting away and held up on the narrow road to and from Ford station; buses then went past Arundel station without stopping en route for Littlehampton, taking London-bound passengers miles out of their way!

Tarka Rail Association

[website](#)

The new, Barnstaple-based "North Devon Public Transport User Group" has set the cat amongst the pigeons by suggesting that all but three of the intermediate stations between Barnstaple and Exeter should close to save 15 minutes on the overall journey time. The TRA says "whilst we are happy for anyone to have their own opinion...we cannot support the proposals, as we attempt to represent all users of the line, and not just those that live in the greater Barnstaple area." The row sparked a huge debate in the local media, and resulted in expressions of support for the TRA's stance from some of the communities that might be affected. Certainly the line is more popular than ever, with over half a million passengers for the year in 2011 for the first time ever.

Notwithstanding the hours spent rebutting the NDPTUG intervention, the last six months have been exceptionally busy for the committee. Among other things, there have been: the GW Franchise consultations, a "Farewell to the Class 142" event and numerous meetings, including one with the local business forum to help formulate plans for a "Barnstaple Gateway" project. The group has also played host to a contingent from First Capital Connect who were keen to learn more about how to develop community rail liaison (the TRA had been put forward as an example of best practice!).

After receiving a grant from Barnstaple Town Council, the TRA is to produce a leaflet in time for the summer tourist season about getting to the town's main attractions.

...next, news from Railfuture...

RAILFUTURE CONFERENCE IN STIRLING – *hurry hurry, book now!*

Achievements and issues with Scotland's rail services will be discussed at Railfuture's summer conference in Stirling on **Saturday June 16th**.

The successful reopenings of the Stirling-Alloa and Airdrie-Bathgate lines will be featured at the event, as will the ongoing project to rebuild the line from Edinburgh southwards to Galashiels and Tweedbank.

Capacity improvements are needed on the rail network in central Scotland, between Edinburgh and Glasgow, to enable more trains to run - this will be the subject of a presentation by Network Rail. The European dimension will be covered in a presentation on what the European Union can do, and is doing, for train passengers. Current campaigning by Railfuture Scotland will also be the subject of a presentation.

The all-day conference will take place at the **Golden Lion Hotel**, a short walk from Stirling station, and non-members will be welcome. To book, visit the [Railfuture website](#) or send £30

(including lunch and other refreshments) to Railfuture, 14 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk, IP9 2ND

RAILFUTURE TO STUDY LINKS TO AIRPORTS – *your help needed, please*

The Railfuture International Committee has drawn up a questionnaire on public transport links to UK airports. Trevor Garrod writes: “As part of a wider project (also involving Bus Users UK), we want to hear our members' experiences of travelling to and from airports by train and/or bus - or indeed why they do not use public transport to get there.

“The questionnaire will be sent to all of our members with the June/July Railwatch. **We should also like local rail users' groups to distribute it to their members.** One group has already offered to do so. If YOUR group could do so, please email [Trevor Garrod](mailto:Trevor.Garrod@railfuture.org.uk). Please also stipulate whether you would like an electronic copy (from which to print a supply for your members) or hard copy (in which case how many.) Responses to the questionnaire must reach us by the end of September.”

EAST WEST RAIL – *help us keep up the pressure!*

John Henderson of Railfuture East Anglia has sent us the following plea:

“As you know Railfuture has been campaigning for a railway to link Oxford and Cambridge for many years. In the past few months our efforts have been rewarded with the inclusion of the ‘Western Section’ of the project in the government’s Infrastructure Plan. However, there is still some way to go before the line opens (especially the section east of Bedford) and the safest course is to keep up the pressure.

“With that in mind, I would appreciate your direct support: **please visit the campaign website www.railfuture.org.uk/ox-cam and press the ‘Register your support’ button.** Only brief personal details are requested; email address and phone number are not obligatory, but if you do supply them you will be contacted only occasionally.

“Oxford-Cambridge supporters have proved their value as a group. For example, they successfully lobbied Network Rail to acknowledge the project in one of their route strategy documents, something NR had been reticent to do. Supporters come from all over the UK (and a fair few from further afield), reflecting the national benefits that the project would bring. Why not join them?”

RAILFUTURE PASSENGER COMMITTEE

The committee is currently working on its response to the Dept for Transport’s consultation on Fares and Ticketing, which has a deadline of 28 June; the process will involve canvassing the opinion of Railfuture’s branches. A novel idea they are considering is for Anytime/Off-Peak ticket types to be colour coded, with the colour repeated on timetables. Also, there’s been the suggestion that passengers should have the legal right to buy tickets anonymously in cash.

NEW REGIONAL LIST OF RAIL USER GROUPS

After recently updating Railfuture’s national list of rail user groups, I’ve now created a [regional list](#) which shows user groups in each of the separate Railfuture branch areas. It would be helpful if you could take a moment to look at the entries for your region and let me have any comments – thanks.

RAILFUTURE FIGHTING FUND

Railfuture Branches and rail user groups affiliated to Railfuture are invited to apply for grants from Railfuture’s Fighting Fund. Typical awards are between £100 and £500. The money can now be used for a wider range of purposes, including: promoting the railway, campaigns for new/reopened lines and stations, and fighting reductions in services or railway closures. Click [here](#) for more details and an application form.

...and now the rest of the news (fewer items than usual this month)...

CONSULTATION DEADLINES

The following [Department for Transport](#) papers are out for consultation:

- Rail Fares & Ticketing Review, due date 28 June 2012
- Devolving decision making on rail passenger services in England, due date 28 June 2012
- Essex Thameside Refranchising, due date 11 May 2012
- [Aviation Policy – expected soon]

Also note that [HS2 Ltd](#) has published an initial consultation paper on the Environmental Impact Assessment of HS2, with a due date for comments of 30 May 2012.

INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY UPDATE

HM Treasury's 12-page Infrastructure Delivery [update](#), dated 21 March 2012, is well worth reading, as it deals primarily with transport schemes. The update sets out progress that has been made on the priority infrastructure investments identified in the 2011 National Infrastructure Plan and progress on other infrastructure measures identified in the Plan and the 2011 Autumn Statement. – hm-treasury.gov.uk

ATOC ACKNOWLEDGES NEED TO IMPROVE INFORMATION, FARES AND TICKETING

Speaking at a lecture at the Institution of Civil Engineers in central London in April, Tom Smith, Chairman of the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC), mentioned the need for train companies to keep on improving the 'customer experience' for passengers by developing a 'top to bottom service culture'. ATOC's Chairman recognised that there are significant improvements that need to be made on information, fares and ticketing. He pointed to major industry-wide projects to overhaul passenger information and improve ticketing and retailing to give passengers greater confidence that they are getting the best fare to suit their needs. – *from an ATOC press release*

NOW POSSIBLE TO AMEND YOUR ADVANCE TICKET

Following customer feedback, CrossCountry has introduced "Change of Journey" online functionality to their website. This development allows customers who have purchased Advance tickets to amend their tickets online before they are due to travel. The process for the customer is simple and easy to follow. – *from XC's In Focus magazine*

EUROPEAN PASSENGERS' FEDERATION

The European Passengers' Federation (of which Railfuture was a founder member) brings together 33 national and regional public transport users' organisations in 19 European countries. Seven Railfuture members attended EPF's 2012 Conference and AGM at Salzburg, Austria, on March 9th/10th. The report of this conference will be available at the beginning of May from [Trevor Garrod](#).

You may like to note the date of the 2013 EPF Conference, which will be in Basle (where Switzerland, France and Germany meet) on March 15th/16th. Improvements to the French high-speed network have brought Basle to within six hours' travelling time of London.

To keep up to date with what EPF is doing, log on to www.epf.eu

WREXHAM-CHESTER LINE TO BE REDOUBLED

Wrexham Council has welcomed the news that the railway line between Wrexham and Chester is to be redoubled after 30 years of single track lines. Between Saltney Junction and Wrexham General, seven miles of track will be redoubled, having been singled in the 1980s and the line speed will be increased to 90mph on some sections. The costs of the proposed redoubling and line speed works are estimated at £36.66m. The works are expected to be completed by early 2015.

Redoubling of this line has been one of the council's strategic rail objectives and has been a priority of Taith, the regional transport consortia for some time. The scheme is being delivered under the Welsh Governments National Transport Plan, as part of the North-South Wales journey time enhancement project. - *from wrexham.com, spotted by George Jones*

BIG SOCIETY CAPITAL – latest developments

Early in April, the Government announced a range of groundbreaking initiatives to help grow the social investment market in the UK. They are about to launch a £10 million *Investment and Contract Readiness Fund*, which will provide grants and support to ambitious charities and social enterprises that want to grow and deliver more services for communities but just need that extra help before they are ready to take on a loan or bid for a contract to run public services. There will also be a programme called *Inspiring Impact* to accelerate social impact measurement, which will enable frontline charities and social enterprises to deliver better outcomes for society, plus a review into the financial barriers to social enterprise – *from a Cabinet Office press release*

[Interestingly, one of the beacon organisations cited in the above press release is a social enterprise company, HCT Group, delivering transport services in the London area.]

THE FUTURE OF CHEQUES – your comments would be helpful

The Secretary of Tonbridge Line Commuters has asked for our advice on collecting subscriptions from members now that there's uncertainty over the future of payment by cheque. "How do other user groups organise their subscription collection? Is there a more modern way of getting members to renew their subs easily?"

I've replied with examples that I know about from reading hundreds of user group newsletters over the years, but if you would like to contribute to the debate, please reply to ruglink@railfuture.org.uk and I will collate responses.

EVENTS

National & regional rail events are highlighted in **yellow**. Community & environmental events are in **green**.

Thu 3 May Railfuture London & SE Branch, Coastway division meeting from 18:00. [Contact](#).

Sat 5 May [ESTA](#) AGM in St Mary's Church Hall, Woodbridge from 14:00. Speaker from Network Rail.

Sat 5 May MCRUA's [Lincolnshire Poacher](#) raitour from Chester and Mid-Cheshire stations.

Sat 5 May [SARPA](#) meet at the Tallylyn Railway, Tywyn from 11:45.

Wed 9 May Railfuture London & SE, Eastern division meeting in Stratford from 18:30. [Contact](#)

Sat 12 May Railfuture AGM at the Worcester Guild Hall.

Mon 14 May ACoRP "Members' Seminar, Midlands" in Crewe. Details [here](#).

Mon 14 May [BRAG](#) meet at The Sackville Bar, Bexhill from 19:00.

Tue 15 May ACoRP "Members' Seminar, North" in York. Details [here](#).

Wed 16 May ACoRP "Members' Seminar, South" in London. Details [here](#).

Wed 16 May Stourbridge Line User Gp AGM, Kidderminster SVR Station from 19:30.

Thu 17 May [Edenbridge & Dist. Rail Travellers' Assn](#) open AGM at WI Hall, Edenbridge from 19:00

Thu 17 May [SCRUA](#) AGM at Gobowen Station from 19:30.

Sat 19 May Railfuture London & SE, Kent division meeting at The Elephant, Faversham. [Contact](#)
Sat 19 May [MARPA](#) AGM at the Friends Meeting House, Bury St Edmunds from 14:00.
Sat 19 May [CLPG](#) AGM at the WI Hall, Moreton from 10:30
Mon 21 May [Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton RUG](#) meet at Foxton Village Hall from 19:30.
Tue 22 May [Felixstowe Travel Watch](#) AGM
Sat 26 May [West Sussex Rail Users Association](#) AGM at the Capitol Theatre Horsham from 10:00.
Thu 31 May [Assn of Public Transport Users'](#) annual meeting with First Capital Connect & Network Rail at Trinity URC church hall, Beaconsfield Rd, St Albans from 19:30.

Sat 2 June [SARPA](#) meet at the White Lion, Machynlleth from 11:00.
2 – 10 Jun Railfest at the [National Railway Museum](#), York
Thu 7 Jun Railfuture London & SE Branch, Coastway division meeting from 18:00. [Contact](#).
Sat 9 Jun [DORLAG](#) AGM at the Pentland Hotel, Thurso, from 11:15. Speaker from DRSL.
Mon 11 Jun [BRAG](#) meet at The Sackville Bar, Bexhill from 19:00.
16 - 24 Jun [National Bike Week](#) – team up with local cyclists to promote train+bike travel.
Sat 16 Jun Railfuture [Rail Reopenings Conference](#) Stirling. Topics incl Alloa and Airdrie-Bathgate reopenings and the Borders Rail scheme. Fee only £30 - includes lunch, drinks & report.
Fri 22 Jun Closing date for entries in ACoRP's 2012 Community Rail Awards.

Sat 7 Jul [SARPA](#) meet at the Railway Inn, Borth from 12:00.
Wed 18 Jul ACoRP seminar "National Station Adoption" in Manchester. Details [here](#).
Tue 4 Sep [SARPA](#) meet at the Sportsman, Newtown from 18:30.
Sat 22 Sep Annual [World Car Free Day](#) helpfully falls on a Saturday this year!
Fri 28 Sep ACoRP Community Rail Awards at the Steam museum in Swindon.
Sat 6 Oct SW TravelWatch autumn meeting at the Somerset College of Art & Tech'y in Taunton.
Sat 6 Oct [SARPA](#) AGM at Shrewsbury Station from 13:00.
Sat Oct 27 [CSV Make A Difference Day 2012](#). A day for recruiting volunteers from the community, setting them to work and reaping the publicity. Register your event on the CSV website.
Tue 30 Oct [Felixstowe Travel Watch](#) public meeting
Sat 3 Nov Railfuture Rail Users' Conference, Birmingham

More events on the Railfuture and ACoRP websites.

Please say if you no longer want to receive Rail User Express, or if someone else in your organisation wishes to be included on the circulation list.

This bulletin has been sent by

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