

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.

For details about group affiliation to Railfuture, see website [here](#) (from the "Membership Type" menu, select "RUG").

Guest Reopening Campaign Group of the Month**The Somer-Rail Trust**

The Somer-Rail Trust is a community interest company formed in May this year with the primary objective of reinstating a regular passenger service on the mothballed railway line between Radstock and Frome using heritage diesel units. There's disillusionment in Radstock over the lack of progress to secure the town's regeneration - railway land is earmarked for redevelopment, and the Trust wants to see some of this land retained for railway use. They argue that a reintroduced passenger service would add value to the overall scheme and make constructive use of the remaining railway heritage, which includes a Brunel engine shed.

The Trust needs to convince the regeneration company that they have widespread support for their reopening plan, and they urge anyone sharing their vision to sign up for membership of their organisation. Following an announcement about the Trust, membership secretary Terry Harris commented: "news of us is capturing the imagination and support of more and more people. This includes members with skills and know-how that can be of enormous use to us when building up our base in Radstock. Everything is going in the right direction and the foundations for success are being laid." Find out more and see how to become involved via the Trust's website [here](#).

We continue with the usual roundup of news items from rail user groups around the UK. I've held a couple over until next month due to a rather large mailbox! As always, I'm very grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins.

Furness Line Action Group – calling on the public to respond to Northern/TPE consultation

The Dept. for Transport issued its consultation document for the new Rail North franchises with responses from organisations and individuals invited up to the closing date of 18th August. FLAG is encouraging its members to send in their comments, especially on the specific questions about remapping services in the North West. They also issued a strongly-worded press release warning of the consequences of transferring TransPennine Express services to the Northern franchise and calling on the public to respond to the consultation. The group will be making its own representations, with the important issues being the retention of through services to Preston and Manchester and the introduction of a Sunday service between Barrow and Whitehaven. Furthermore, FLAG's secretary has made a formal request to be given the opportunity to see and comment on the Invitation to Tender document for the Northern franchise (the ITT pack is due to be issued to bidders in Dec 2014). The group is heartened by the fact that the local MPs and the Local Enterprise Partnership are fully supportive, and there has been much helpful coverage of the issues in the local media.

In April, FLAG representatives had a very constructive meeting with First TransPennine Express managers – they gained a clearer understanding of how the train operator wants to see services develop as well as advice on how to lobby for the group's various aspirations. Representatives from FLAG also attended First TPE's Stakeholder Conference in June – among the group's contributions to the event was a "thinking outside the box" solution to rolling stock shortages: give all your current diesel fleet to the likes of Chiltern Railways and replace it with HSTs displaced from East Coast, split to form 4-car units!

Meanwhile, FLAG continues to be dismayed by the number of Northern train cancellations and has made a formal complaint to the Dept. for Transport and the train operator. They considered the responses received from the two were “unsatisfactory and do not recognise the poor levels of reliability caused by failure to invest in the Northern franchise and rolling stock which cannot cope with demand. We are in grave danger that the new Northern franchise will serve up more of the same...”

At FLAG’s AGM, the Treasurer’s Report prompted a debate on FLAG funding; suggestions included asking community groups for donations, selling newsletters at selected outlets and encouraging those on the newsletter free list to take up membership. We’re told that FLAG’s website is still a “work-in-progress” and they’re hoping to fully launch it in the December newsletter.

Lancaster & Skipton Rail User Group – royal train visits Bentham Line

On the morning of 17th April 2014 a very rare event took place on the Bentham Line. The Royal Train, with Her Majesty the Queen on board, made its way through the beautiful scenery of the Lune, Wenning and Ribble valleys to one of her most important annual engagements: the presentation of Maundy Money at a special service in Blackburn Cathedral. This was her first visit to Blackburn Cathedral ... and LASRUG wonders if it was her first journey on the Bentham Line. They promise a red carpet if she returns and stops off at Bentham station!

As part of LASRUG’s 25th Anniversary celebrations, four of the original committee members joined the present committee for their spring lunch at the Brief Encounter Refreshment Rooms on Carnforth Station. Lunch-time conversations reflected on the ups and downs of the past 25 years and took an optimistic look forward to the next quarter of a century.

The Bentham Line Community Rail Partnership has undertaken one of its biggest projects to date, with the installation of large “Bentham Line” information boards at stations along the line to raise awareness of the work carried out by the CRP, rail user groups and station volunteers, and to highlight attractions served by the route. The CRP issued a press release earlier in July to mark its third anniversary, highlighting the many achievements during that period.

In June, children from Bentham Primary School visited the station as part of a new educational project being developed by the Friends of Bentham Station. Some of the students created their own Bentham Line timetables and learnt how to interpret them, while others enjoyed painting their ideas of scenes ‘Through a Train Widow’. These will be used to create a poster for the new School Art and Garden Area adjacent to the station entrance.

Sat 31 May saw Bentham station bedecked in bunting and flags for the Carnival. Street entertainers and musicians were on hand to greet the morning trains. A miniature train ran back and forth, refreshments were served at the FOBS pop-up Platform Café and an exhibition of local railway artefacts was staged in the station building. LASRUG’s next fund-raising coffee morning will be at Bentham Town Hall on Sat 23 Aug from 10am to 11:30.

Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester line – 175th anniversary at Littleborough

On Friday July 4th the local MP unveiled a plaque at Littleborough station commemorating the 175th anniversary of the public opening of the station and the first section of the Manchester and Leeds Railway. The station platform was decorated with bunting and a local school band played for the large crowd. The event was organised by the Friends of Littleborough Stations and several members of STORM attended.

STORM members used rail services to get to vantage points on the Tour de France route. They report that trains were very busy and were keeping reasonably to time, although delays lengthened as the day progressed.

The petition calling for the reinstatement of a half-hourly train service for Moston station remains open and can be accessed [here](#).

Huddersfield, Penistone & Sheffield Rail Users' Association – HS3 proposal “flawed”

HPSRUA sees fundamental flaws in George Osborne’s proposals for HS3 – a high-speed line across the Pennines. The group believes that any high speed line across the Pennines would be better routed through the old Woodhead formation on to the proposed HS2 line, with a branch to both Sheffield and Leeds. They add: “If the present Huddersfield to Leeds route was to be quadrupled with separate slow and fast tracks, then a new fast Crossrail type of service between northern cities would also be possible.” At HPSRUA’s AGM in May, the manager of Northern Rail said that, in his opinion, extra track and a half-hourly timetable for the Penistone line was a “no-brainer”.

In May, the chairman of the HPSRUA, Peter Marshall addressed the national AGM of Railfuture in Sheffield. He focussed on the difference between grand railway schemes in the UK and modernisation plans for secondary routes, which for ever seem to fall off the list for implementation: “There needs to be a vision for all secondary routes in the country to ensure that they are fit for the 21st century railway being created around us.”

In discussions with the Dept. for Transport and bidders for the East Coast franchise, HPSRUA has been highlighting the benefits of direct trains between Huddersfield and London. Meanwhile, the Gt. North Western Railway Co. has come to an agreement over access rights for their proposed services, which include six return trains a day between London and Huddersfield via Manchester. So there could be two direct lines to the Capital!

HPSRUA is preparing its response to the DfT’s consultation document for the Northern and TransPennine franchises: “A close inspection of the proposals for the Northern franchise does not suggest that great improvements will result ... rather, there is a whiff of cost cutting.” The group is lobbying for direct consultation with the bidding train operators in due course.

The 2-day enhanced service on the Penistone Line for the Tour de France “Grand Départ” went smoothly, according to HPSRUA; volunteers were on hand to direct passengers, many of whom had not travelled on the line before. Annoyingly, the special timetables were not posted at the Metro end of the line and National Rail Enquiries failed to show any trains at all for the day (the group followed this up with NRE).

Paul Salveson comments...

It is estimated that nearly 5 million people turned out to watch le Tour over the weekend. That’s a huge challenge for the railways, especially given the fact that many roads were closed. Lots of people used the train who wouldn’t normally do so and the train operators (Northern and TransPennine Express) had worked long and hard to find ways of meeting the exceptional demand. I would say they rose to the occasion and did an absolutely brilliant job and deserve congratulating.

Staff were friendly and helpful: they deserve a big ‘thank you’ for responding to one of the biggest challenges faced by the railways in the North for many years. My assessment is that they – and their planning and operational colleagues – did very well. Let’s give credit where it is due.

Hope Valley Railway Users' Group – line’s “untapped potential”

Carrying passengers between Sheffield and Manchester, the Hope Valley railway travels through one of the most beautiful parts of the Peak District National Park. Yet it is one of the worst train services in England with trains running just every two hours for much of the day. The Hope Valley Railway Users Group has been striving for some time to improve this service.

Surveys carried out by HVRUG clearly show that the railway is highly valued by residents and tourists alike, and that passenger numbers have been increasing despite the limited service. Data from the Office of the Rail Regulator also shows a 60% increase in passenger numbers in the last ten years. Four of the five Hope Valley stations register a passenger ‘footfall’ of over 60,000 per year, which, according to Transport for Greater Manchester in their Rail Policy 2012 – 2025, justifies the provision

of two trains an hour. However, the DfT's Northern & TPE consultation document promises nothing in the way of improved services and even hints that they could get worse.

In 2012 its survey of Hope Valley residents, found 60% of respondents would use the rail service more, if there was a better timetable. HVRUG believes that this line has untapped potential to attract significantly more visitors to the Peak District, boosting the local economy whilst helping reduce the level of road traffic and parking problems. – *from a story in the Sheffield Telegraph*

Don Valley Railway – passenger service should be a “priced option” in franchise bids

Chris Bell, Company Secretary of the DVR, was another of the guest speakers Railfuture's AGM in Sheffield. In his presentation to an audience that included shadow transport minister Mary Creagh, Chris set out how the Don Valley line was perfectly placed for the introduction of a passenger rail service with commuter potential. At the DVR's own AGM earlier this year, Railfuture Yorkshire Branch Chairman, Chris Hyomes, was among those elected to the Board of Don Valley Railway Ltd.

Tasks for the DVR committee right now include responding to the Northern Rail franchise consultation and preparing a submission for later in the year when the franchise bidding process begins. They want passenger services on the DVR to be included in the franchise specification as a priced option. The group has done a huge amount of research aimed at driving down operating costs, promoting the potential benefits and comparing various service options.

Being a registered charity, the DVR is able to claim tax rebates on donations; the committee is in the process of setting up facilities for supporters to donate cash via Gift Aid. They're also looking at using PayPal as a method of payment for membership fees and donations. (*Anyone with experience of Gift Aid and PayPal may wish to [reply](#) sharing their knowledge of these systems – Ed*).

The DVR meet every first Thursday of the month between 7 and 9pm at the Harlequin Pub, Nursery Street, Sheffield – you are welcome to drop in.

Friends of the Brigg & Lincoln Lines – clean-up could start soon

Work could start soon to clean up “Britain's worst railway station”, Gainsborough Central. It's hoped that Lincoln College, who have a large site in the town, will soon be given the green light to cut down overgrowing trees, bushes and weeds. Sadly, red tape within Network Rail and lack of communication has held up progress - things went from bad to worse when Network Rail fenced off half the platforms without informing either Northern Rail (who are the lease holders) or the two rail groups.

Lincolnshire County Council is in talks with Northern Rail to bring the Duo Ticket offer to Gainsborough Central. At present the offer is only valid from Sheffield Midland to Retford and from Kirton-in-Lindsey to Cleethorpes on the iconic Brigg Line.

Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users' Group – calling for retention of through trains

PENRUG strongly objects to the splitting of the Liverpool-Nottingham-Norwich service at Nottingham, as proposed in the Dept. for Transport's Northern/TransPennine consultation document. In their response, the group says that separating the two parts of this inter-city link would be bad for business, bad for students and bad for tourism; they also think that the split service would cost more to operate. PENRUG has been working hard over the years to help promote the through service and to argue for improved passenger facilities on the route.

There's praise for the recent restoration of Nottingham station, but the writer wonders why only four of the seven platforms have tactile paving to assist blind travellers. Elsewhere we read that

queues are often seen for the toilets at Peterborough station (suggesting the new facilities are inadequate), and that announcements at Norwich for the Liverpool expresses seem to be left until the last minute (why not earlier when the trains are ready to board?).

East Norfolk Transport Users' Association – rolling stock is the number one issue

ENTUA committee members had a useful meeting with Abellio Greater Anglia managers in May. Shortage of rolling stock and the use of single-car Class 153 units on some peak services was the number one issue – AGA gave an assurance that only one off-peak return service would be assigned to a Class 153 from the May timetable change, and that hired-in loco hauled trains would improve resilience to rolling stock shortages. ENTUA wants a later train for passengers visiting shows in Norwich but AGA said that would have to wait for the next franchise (Oct 2016). The group also wants Gt Yarmouth's Vauxhall station manned for longer hours and the closing in of the draughty station concourse, but AGA replied that there are no plans to do either in the current franchise period.

There were, however, a number of developments that both sides could celebrate: the start of a bus link between the station and town centre of Gt Yarmouth, some additional seating at the station, a re-signalling scheme in 2015 for lines east of Norwich, and track improvements at Ely. ENTUA thanked AGA for providing replacement notice boards for the group at Brundall and Lingwood.

Bedford-Bletchley Rail Users' Association – EWRL running 15 months late

BBRUA members are dismayed that the long-awaited East-West Rail Link connecting Bedford and Bletchley back to Oxford is running some 15 months late. Work on electrification between Bedford & Bletchley was also expected to be put back until at least 2020. A major headache is the number of level crossings which need to be either closed or replaced by bridges – there's obviously much work and consultation to do!

The Association is pleased with a recent improvement in the reliability of their train service and the provision of better passenger information screens, but disappointed that the long-promised extension of services to/from Milton Keynes has yet to be realised. Also disappointing is the reversal of plans to divert Marston Vale services from the "Spartan" Platform 6 at Bletchley to Platform 5, which has lift access and more hospitable waiting accommodation.

The new heritage centre with café and shop at Ridgemount station, manned with the support of BBRUA volunteers, is proving to be a success and the ongoing work of the station adoption teams is much appreciated. In May, BBRUA members and friends enjoyed a rail trip to Berkhamstead for a guided historic walk around the town – the verdict was "more of the same please". In June, the association organised a "Great Value Day Out by Train" to Ashford and Canterbury, and then by coach to Tenterden for a ride on the Kent & East Sussex steam railway. A "Railway Ramble" from Lidlington station to Ridgmont station is promised for September and in December, former Network SouthEast Director Chris Green will be the special guest speaker at a pre-Christmas meeting.

Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxton Rail Users' Group – early contact with new operator pays off

Last autumn MS&FRUG met with Govia and other shortlisted bidders for the Thameslink, Southern and Gt Northern franchise to make their aspirations known. They now comment that: "establishing an early relationship clearly paid off as Govia has confirmed to us that they will continue to honour the 50% rail discount for 16-18 year-olds which we negotiated with First Capital Connect back in 2009."

Members of the group have been keeping an eye on works at Shepreth station affecting the car park and station access ramp. Network Rail failed to communicate the extent of the work, so the group is pressing for areas to be made safe and the early completion of a new ramp. Meanwhile residents living near Meldreth station yard are being affected by noise and lorry movements, so an effective communication channel has been set up to improve relationships between householders and the company responsible.

Chesham & District Transport Users' Group – group participates in transport review

Chesham TUG has been invited to participate in a Review of Transport Needs to be undertaken by Bucks County Council – recommendations from the review are due to be published in December. The group will be using the opportunity to press for the reintroduction of semi-fast trains in off-peak hours on the Metropolitan Line and improved connections with Chiltern services. The Met Line and Chiltern Railways operate over a common route into town, and CDTUG thinks this is a classic example of where transport operators should 'co-schedule' routes to make interchange easier.

Recent concerns for the group include poor communication at Chesham station about forthcoming engineering works, and the proposed felling of 50 mature trees alongside the line between Chesham and Chalfont & Latimer without any prior consultation – their press release on the matter describes it as an “act of vandalism”.

Transition Marlborough Transport Group – petition results to be analysed

The group's petition in support of a reopened rail link to the town is now closed. Results will be analysed and a report will be presented to local MP Claire Perry in her new role as Junior Transport Minister.

Claire was at Bedwyn station recently to hear views about proposed services changes on the line to Paddington. Transition Marlborough members went along as did representatives from Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group.

Bexhill Rail Action Group – high speed service plans welcomed

At a Rail Summit on 31st March, Network Rail unveiled proposals to extend high-speed 'Javelin' services via an upgraded Marshlink line to Hastings and Bexhill. Subject to the outcome of a business case study, the scheme would be delivered in Control Period 6 (2019-2022). BRAG says “this is a fantastic project, which rail user groups have pressed hard for, but there remains a lot of work to be done - and at least one General Election between now and then.”

BRAG is unclear how the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise, due to begin in 2015, will impact on services in their area: “no word has yet been received on lengthening the 2-car Ashford trains, and we appear stuck with splitting and joining at Haywards Heath, which adds time and causes overcrowding.”

BRAG's determination to see Bexhill station's staffing levels restored to an adequate level finally bore fruit. An additional member of staff (a “floor-walker”) was recruited by Southern in the spring and she is proving to be a very welcome addition. BRAG has recently agreed with Southern that a sub-group can pursue an “Adopt-a-Station” project at Bexhill with the aim of bringing additional enhancements to the station.

The East Sussex Rail Alliance, an umbrella organisation for rail user groups such as BRAG, has presented a formal submission to the Davies Commission, which is looking into options for airport development in the South East. ESRA's document argues for substantial upgrades to South Coast rail lines in the event of a major expansion at the Gatwick Airport; they support Gatwick's aspiration to tap the employment pools of the South Coast (Eastbourne, Bexhill, and especially Hastings) where deprivation and unemployment of school leavers is significant. The airport is set to grow whether or not it gets the green light for a second runway.

South Hampshire Rail Users' Group – miserable conditions for Portsmouth rail users

Responding to the latest National Passenger Survey, Denis Fryer of South Hampshire Rail Users' Group says passengers using the London Waterloo to Portsmouth route 'often travel in miserable conditions in hard, narrow, cramped seats because of the carriages chosen to serve the route. There are plenty of trains in the Solent area, but the overall service is far from ideal,' he said. 'Southampton to Portsmouth is probably the worst inter-urban service in the south east.' Politicians and business leaders in the area are calling for better rail links; the recently-published report entitled Transforming Solent names rail connectivity as a top priority.

SHRUG also responded to the Great Western franchise consultations, focussing on services from Cardiff to the South Coast via Salisbury. The group considers that the principal issues are capacity, frequency and connectivity, pointing out that the existing stock is very cramped for such a busy, long-distance service. Extra trains are needed on Sunday mornings and the frequency over some sections of the route could be raised to half-hourly. Connectivity between the South Coast and the South West is poor, so the reintroduction of through services such as Brighton-Plymouth should be looked at.

Noting that the Class 442 electric units are to be displaced from Gatwick Express duties, SHRUG hopes to see them returned to Hampshire services, perhaps ending the use of inappropriate outer-suburban Class 450 stock on the Portsmouth line.

Friends of the Lymington-Brockenhurst Line – event raises £200

The group ran sales stall and served teas and coffees at the D-Day commemoration event in June. A creditable total of around £200 was raised, thanks to those who volunteered their time and items for sale. The next event is a trip by train on 6th Sept. to Bradford-on-Avon; the highlight will be a canal-boat ride on the Kennet & Avon Canal.

Tarka Line Association – Devon groups attend the Rail Resilience forum

Three rail user groups (the TRA together with the Avocet Line and Torbay Line groups) were invited to give presentations at the Rail Resilience public forum held in Exeter on 10 April. The well-attended event was hosted by the Devon and Exeter Rail Working Party in response to the severe service disruptions suffered in the winter storms. The TRA's speaker highlighted the problems of wash-outs on the Barnstaple-Exeter line caused by flooding at sites such as Cowley Bridge, but credited Network Rail in having carried out a good deal of work in recent times to maintain the integrity of the track. And flooding wasn't the only problem – in times of snow and ice there have been occasions when the line has been the only link between North Devon and the outside world!

Following publication of the TRA's Strategy document, a meeting was held on 16 May at First Great Western's offices in Exeter to discuss the future of the line. As well as TRA and FGW representatives, officers from Network Rail, the County Council, the Community Rail Partnership and TravelWatch SW were in attendance. Developments at specific stations were discussed, and progress towards a half-hourly service was seen as a key requirement with a target date of December 2016 – this led to a debate about the need for additional rolling stock. A novel idea placed on the table was the conversion of a Class 143 unit or two as cycle carriers for attachment to service trains.

The Great Western franchise consultation in June gave the TRA another opportunity to put across its views. The group strongly supported the notion of a direct award to First Great Western for the sake of stability but also in recognition of the way in which they have strived to improve the service since the nadir of 2006 and in which they have involved user groups.

In a letter reproduced in the TRA's magazine, the occupants of the station house at Portsmouth Arms station take issue with the enthusiasm for Harrington Humps: "Surely with the laying of new track over the past few years the opportunity should have been taken to align the rails at the correct level in relation to the platform ... Instead these ugly bolt-on additions are being installed,

constructed from unsympathetic materials and altering the whole appearance of the stations concerned. Their rural character, that has remained largely unchanged in 160 years, has now been spoilt."

Avocet Line Rail Users' Group – station improvements and the need to identify minimum standards

In the current newsletter, the focus is very much on stations. Exeter Central has had a much-needed makeover and there's a plan afoot to improve Exmouth station (ALRUG is being consulted on the details). Building works are underway at Newcourt, and the new station there should be ready by December. Attention now turns to Polsloe Bridge station, "a sad relic" of what it once was – ALRUG feels that past growth in passenger numbers and a renewed interest from the local community justify some improvements. An audit of all Avocet Line stations has been undertaken with a view to establishing minimum standards and addressing the needs of particular stations.

Train service performance has been poor in recent months with cancellations down to signalling problems or due to the failure of the inadequate number of elderly diesel units to provide a decent service. ALRUG's committee had been in discussion with First Great Western's managers about the issue, and they were invited to Exeter Train Management Depot to experience first hand the problems of keeping the ageing fleet operational. Additional Sunday trains are running on the line this summer, and ALRUG has been counting passengers to encourage the operator in making further steps towards the group's ultimate goal of a half-hourly service, 7 days a week.

ALRUG's committee has been busy attending meetings and putting together its response to the Great Western franchise consultations. "In the period since the last competition, our aspirations have not materially changed. In fact, with the franchise having been effectively at a standstill, depressingly little has happened. Most of what we wrote at that time is still relevant, though the DfT consultation is framed in such a way that we can't just regurgitate the material we produced last time!" The group sees the logic of a second direct award to First Great Western, possibly for a 5-year term, but they pointed out in their response that the arrangement will remove any incentive for innovation and improvement.

The group's outing to Okehampton in June was a great success, although passengers joining at Exmouth were unable to buy tickets due to a combination of ticket office unstaffed and machine out of order. The 3-car unit was so crowded that the conductor was unable to get through and sell tickets, resulting in a horrendous queue at Exeter Central's gateline - a photo captioned "Why are we waiting?" says it all!

...news from Railfuture follows...

RAIL USERS' CONFERENCE, - on 1st November at the University of Westminster, London

Railfuture's autumn conference and RUG Awards ceremony will take place this year at the University of Westminster, New Cavendish Street, London. The conference is entitled: **On Track for Success – the Challenges Ahead.**

Guest speakers include: Transport Minister Baroness Kramer; Head of Capacity Planning at Network Rail, Fiona Dolman; Karen Boswell, the Manager of East Coast; Anna Matthews from Delta Rail; Sharon Hedges of Passenger Focus; Jenni Borg, Head of Smart & Integrated Ticketing at the Dept. for Transport; plus others to be confirmed.

The conference fee is only £27.50 (with 'Early Bird' discount for members up to 31/08/2014), otherwise it's £35. Prices include buffet lunch and conference report. More details and conference booking form [here](#).

RUG AWARDS 2014

Railfuture's third Rail User Group Awards competition remains open for receiving your entries. The closing date is Tuesday 30th September 2014. There are no application forms; the "RUG Awards 2014 nomination guidance notes" are now available to read [here](#). Queries should be addressed to roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk.

The categories for this year's competition are: **Best Campaign; Best Individual Campaigner; Best Website; Best Newsletter; Best New Group** ... and, of course, the **Judges' Special Award**. Prizes will be presented at Railfuture's Rail User Conference in London on 1st November 2014.

PHOTO COMPETITION

Railfuture's photo competition also remains open to receive your entries - details [here](#). The closing date is 30th September 2014.

RAILFUTURE EUROSTAR SURVEY

Railfuture's International Group is asking Eurostar travellers to complete a survey, either by post or online [here](#). The survey period will last for a full year, and will cover journeys made between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015. It's hoped that rail user groups will let their members know about the survey by mentioning it in newsletters etc. – *thanks!*

RAILFUTURE SEVERNSIDE BRANCH

On 5 July, Severnside Branch hosted a well-attended joint meeting with Wessex Branch at Trowbridge to look at items of common interest, most notably issues associated with the Cardiff-Portsmouth, Exeter-Waterloo and Bristol-Weymouth lines – secondary routes all in need of additional capacity and more appropriate rolling stock. At a meeting in Bath earlier in the year, Branch members were given an update on the campaign to reopen Saltford station, and also discussed other reopening schemes in the area: Wellington, Bathampton and Corsham stations and the Portishead line – councillors were in attendance to give the political viewpoint.

The region's railways were the subject of discussions on local radio programmes in May. John Stretton, Railfuture member and Treasurer of Ashchurch, Tewkesbury and District Rail Promotion Group, pressed the case for an hourly service at Ashchurch for Tewkesbury station. Severnside Branch Secretary, Nigel Bray, was interviewed on the subject of car parking at Gloucestershire stations and commented that some of the car parks were victims of their own success because of the massive growth in passengers using the stations.

The Branch is pleased to see that Wendy Thorne, Treasurer of Portishead Railway Group, has been elected to the Railfuture Board. Wendy has lived in Portishead for 30 years and runs her own accountancy business.

RAILFUTURE NORTH WEST

The NW Branch has held joint meetings with their colleagues across the Pennines in Yorkshire Branch to put together their response to the Northern & TransPennine franchise consultations – replacement of the Pacer trains was seen as a key requirement.

A letter reproduced in the NW Branch summer bulletin questions the rail lobby's continual demand for extra car parking spaces at stations: "In view of global warming, health damaging pollution from vehicles and the health benefits of regular exercise, surely we as the rail lobby should be campaigning instead for infrastructure for walking, cycling and the use of public transport by spending on radial safe pedestrian and cycle routes to all our stations with secure cycle parking once there."

Memorial to Clara Zilahi

On 27 June this year, 25 people including several Railfuture stalwarts gathered at Downham Market station to remember the doughty West Norfolk and Fenland railway campaigner, Clara Zilahi. A memorial plaque, provided by Railfuture, was affixed to a replica Great Eastern Railway bench which had been provided as a token of gratitude by First Capital Connect.

Clara was a member of the Railfuture's East Anglian Branch for over 40 years and had served on the Branch committee as well as undertaking the role of Disabilities Officer for the national organisation. She helped set up the Fen Line Users' Association and West Norfolk Public Transport Users' Association, and led the successful campaign for an improved service for Manea station.

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

LOCAL GROWTH FUND AWARDS

As part of its long-term economic plan to secure Britain's future, the government agreed a series of Growth Deals with businesses and local authorities across England. The money will go towards providing support for local businesses to train young people, create thousands of new jobs, build thousands of new homes and start hundreds of infrastructure projects, including transport improvements and superfast broadband networks.

On 7 July, the first £6 billion of local projects has been agreed as the first wave of Growth Deals were announced. This includes the complete allocation of £2 billion from the Local Growth Fund for 2015 to 2016. Also, because the quality of the proposals was so high, commitments are being given for following years for important long-term projects so they can get underway. More details [here](#).

– gov.uk

Andy Long kindly sent me a list of rail projects to be funded, and I've added a few more that I've come across:

- Cornish Sleeper service upgrade
- New West Cornwall parkway station by A30
- Improved Coventry-Nuneaton service; new bay platform at Coventry
- March-Wisbech re-opening engineering study (business case study already completed)
- 12 new trams for Manchester metrolink
- Blackpool Tram extension and Midland Metro extension
- Taunton station upgrade and redevelopment of Chippenham station
- Lincoln Central Station
- Croxley Rail link (LUL- Met. to Watford Junction)
- Money for Hull electrification, subject to study outcome
- Blackburn-Bolton line doubling & improved frequency
- Great Central Railway extension
- New stations at Maghull, Thanet Parkway, Reading Green Park and Worcestershire Parkway
- Cross Bristol rail service - improved frequency
- Extra money granted for Bicester Town level crossing development/replacement with a bridge (Oxford - Marylebone & EWRL); also Bletchley station redevelopment

- Newcastle Central metro station refurbishment
- Study into remodelling of Darlington station
- Support for rail schemes as part of West Yorkshire Plus
- Reopening of the Halton Curve for passenger services
- Develop Wolverhampton interchange and a freight interchange at Cannock

LOCAL SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT FUND AWARDS

On 14 July, Transport Minister Baroness Kramer announced the successful bids for the Local Sustainable Transport Fund 2015 to 2016 revenue funding competition. Almost all eligible local authorities submitted a bid for funding, and 44 were successful. The successful schemes will deliver a range of sustainable transport interventions across England, including enhanced cycling and walking infrastructure, improved bus journeys and better transport interchanges. The successful projects will share over £64 million in revenue funding.

Each project has provided its own matched contribution; the overall total of this matched funding is over £375 million. This includes over £100 million sourced directly from the Local Growth Fund. This means that for every £1 the Department for Transport will invest through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund in 2015 to 2016, local authorities will contribute £5.80 over the 6 years to 2020/2021. For list of successful bids, see [here](#). – *DfT announcement*

LACK OF CLARITY OVER ROLE OF LEPs

Regional growth bodies which have been handed £6 billion of public money “lack direction” and risk creating confusion among businesses, a leading accountancy group has warned. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales said there was a “lack of clarity” over the role of local enterprise partnerships, which have been created to help to devolve power and funding away from Whitehall and towards the regions. A report by the group warned that the remit of LEPs was “too large”, with many of their proposed activities “irrelevant to economic growth and job creation in their local area”.

Local growth deals for the LEPs were announced recently in what the government called a “revolution in the way our economy is run”. However, the assortment of “winners and losers” among England’s 39 LEPs could give rise to a patchwork of business support, according to Clive Lewis, head of enterprise for the ICAEW. Funding deals for this financial year range from £170 million for the Greater Manchester LEP to as little as £9 million for the same body in Cumbria. Mr Lewis said that the future of some LEPs, which are voluntary partnerships between local councils, businesses and academics, was “looking increasingly uncertain” and that those without significant funding may be forced to merge with neighbouring counterparts.

There remains concern that many businesses are unaware of the existence and activities of LEPs, which were created three years ago to replace regional development agencies, set up under the Labour government. While the ICAEW is generally supportive of LEPs, it wants them to be given a consistent set of “core” responsibilities. The government believes that LEPs should have the freedom to tailor their approach to tackle local issues. – *article in The Times spotted by Andy Long*

NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER SURVEY

The latest NRPS from Passenger Focus can be read online [here](#). The main fieldwork for the survey took place between 2 February and 13 April 2014.

REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS HANDLING AND DISABLED PASSENGER ASSISTANCE – have your say

Earlier this month, the Office of Rail Regulation published statements explaining how it will take a new approach to approving, monitoring and enforcing train operators' complaints handling procedures (CHPs) and disabled people's protection policies (DPPPs).

The responsibility for overseeing CHPs and DPPPs of train companies was transferred to ORR from the Department for Transport in October 2013. Since then ORR has been working with train companies, passenger groups and the industry to review how well the current system is working, what improvements may be required, and how best to measure success.

ORR wants to see consistently high standards of passenger care and a culture of continuous improvement. As part of this process ORR is also inviting views on the best ways to measure success and quality of passenger experience when making a complaint or using assistance from operators. This will help the regulator to ensure train companies have the right systems in place to provide the right assistance to every passenger. You can take part in this consultation online [here](#). The closing date is 29 Aug 2014. – ORR announcement

NEW TRANSPORT MINISTERS NAMED

The Prime Minister's summer reshuffle has meant some changes at the Department for Transport. Claire Perry has replaced Stephen Hammond as Parliamentary under secretary. She has been the Conservative Member of Parliament for Devizes since 2010, and was a member of the Justice Select Committee from 2010 to 2011. A further post has also been created at the DfT of minister of state, and John Hayes has been named as the new minister. He has been the Conservative MP for South Holland and The Deepings since 1997.

Other ministers in the DfT have remained in their posts, including transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin and Baroness Susan Kramer. She remains as minister of state as well, representing the Department in the House of Lords. - Railnews

In her first interview since being promoted, Ms Perry vowed to keep fares from rising above inflation until at least 2016. Rail fares on regulated routes, including season tickets, stayed flat in real terms this year after the Chancellor George Osborne scrapped plans to increase prices by one per cent above inflation in his autumn statement. Now Ms Perry wants to see him rule out inflation-busting rises for next year at least and has promised to lobby him. She said she was "very proud" the Government had held train fare rises level with inflation this year, keeping the increase to a 10-year low. – Express.co.uk

COMMUNITY RAIL PLAN FOR EAST SUFFOLK AND THE TYNE VALLEY – have your say

The government is consulting on plans to designate the routes between Ipswich and Felixstowe, Ipswich and Lowestoft and the Tyne Valley Line between Newcastle, Hexham and Carlisle, as community rail services. Community railways aim to provide better value for money, which in turn will support social and economic development in the area. Nineteen rail lines around the country have been designated as community lines since 2005, along with a further 17 services. These include the Wherry Lines services between Norwich, Yarmouth and Lowestoft, which were designated in February 2007, and the Cumbrian Coast Line between Carlisle and Barrow-in-Furness, designated in September 2009.

Although train companies continue to operate the services, they are supported by a Community Rail Partnership, made up of local councils, community groups and other volunteers, to decide how they should be run. Research has shown that for every £1 invested in a Community Rail Partnership, it can bring more than four times that in benefits.

The 6 week consultation runs until 5 September 2014. More details [here](#). – DfT press release

GILSLAND STATION RE-OPENING ON THE CARDS

A campaign has been launched to re-open Gilsland station, where the Carlisle to Newcastle line cuts across Hadrian's Wall between Brampton and Haltwhistle. Supporters have already raised £8,600 for a feasibility study which was published recently. The study concluded that if the station was re-opened, 10,500 rail trips would be made per year by local people, with tourists and visitors adding 15,300 journeys to this total. It also revealed the project could take 5 years and cost up to £2.5m.

The Campaign to Open Gilsland Station (COGS) group is confident that the finance can be raised, with Hexham's MP, the Tyne Valley Rail Users Group, and Northumberland and Cumbria County Councils all behind the project. "There is lots of support in place and the campaign is ramping up. We have set up a [website](#) as a means of informing people and gathering support from the public. We believe the potential benefits to tourism in the area will stand us in good stead when applying for funding, but we have to go through the [Governance for Railway Investment Projects] process step-by-step." - *from an article in FLAG's newsletter*

EAST ANGLIA RAIL CAMPAIGN AIMS TO BUILD ON WORK OF TASK FORCE

The Great Eastern Rail Campaign has just been launched by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership to build on the work of the task force of the region's MPs and business leaders which is seeking major investment. The LEP is hoping to attract public support for the campaign as the Department for Transport starts to look at requirements for the next rail franchise over the next few months.

Key aims of the campaign are to see a significant investment in track infrastructure, get better trains and a higher quality travelling experience and having more capacity with more seats and more carriages. The overall goal is to achieve London to Chelmsford in 25 minutes, Colchester in 40, Ipswich in 60 and Norwich in 90.

The taskforce is due to report to Government in November making the strong economic case for investment in the line. It hopes the GE Rail Campaign will encourage commuters, businesses and all rail users to get behind the cause and sign up via the new website newanglia.co.uk/gerailcampaign and follow the campaign on twitter with #gerailcampaign. - *East Anglian Daily Times (eadt.co.uk)*

TFL's CONTACTLESS PAYMENT SCHEME 'A RECIPE FOR CONFUSION'

Transport for London's announcement that contactless bank cards will be accepted on Tube, DLR and Overground, but not the capital's national rail services, has been met with disappointment from a passenger watchdog. London TravelWatch has said that not accepting contactless cards for National Rail services in London that participate in Oyster PAYG (Pay As You Go) is a 'recipe for confusion' that could result in many thousands of passengers being subject to penalty fares.

From 16th September, passengers will be able to use bank cards with contactless technology, removing the need to top up Oyster balances because fares are charged directly to payment card accounts. - *Rail Professional*

TWO TOGETHER RAILCARD SALES HIT 100,000

At least 100,000 Two Together Railcards have been sold since the project's launch in March, with the initiative being hailed a 'huge hit' by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC).

The Two Together Railcard allows holders to get a third off standard and first class anytime, off-peak and advance fares on train services throughout Great Britain when travelling after 9.30am Monday to Friday, and any time at weekends and on public holidays. - *Rail Technology Magazine*

END OF THE LINE FOR QUIET CARRIAGES ON TRAINS?

They have been a godsend for passengers who crave a peaceful journey – as well as commuters who need to work on the go. But train operators are axing ‘quiet carriages’ – because they are apparently causing rows among passengers. Staff are said to be finding it difficult to mediate between customers when the tranquil haven is spoiled by those who insist on using noisy gadgets, talking loudly, singing or drinking alcohol.

Bosses will now just ask fellow travellers to be nicer to each other – a move that has been described as a victory for jobs. Train operator CrossCountry is scrapping quiet carriages on long distance routes, while First Great Western is converting first class quiet carriages to standard class on its high-speed lines. – *dailymail.co.uk*

STATION ADOPTION TOOLKIT

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) has updated its guidance document aimed at community groups embarking on station adoption. The 2014 version of the 40-page Station Adoption Toolkit can be viewed online [here](#). As well as practical tips, there are plenty of case studies and photographs showing what existing groups have achieved, so well worth taking the time to read.

EVENTS

National & regional rail events are highlighted in **yellow**. Community & environmental events are in **purple**. Railfuture events are in **green**, and rail user group representatives are welcome to attend!

The party conference season is fast approaching. You may wish to set up stall, attend fringe meetings or simply mingle with delegates. The Conservative conference is in Birmingham, Labour in Manchester, the Lib Dems in Glasgow, Plaid Cymru in Llangollen and the SNP in Perth.

Tue 5 Aug [Chesham & District TUG](#) meeting and AGM at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

Tue 5 Aug [SARPA](#) meet at The Sportsman, Newtown from 18:45.

Mon 11 Aug [Bexhill Rail Action Group](#) meet at Hastings Direct, Collington from 19:00

Sat 16 Aug Railfuture London & SE [Kent Division](#) meeting at Tunbridge Wells from 14:00.

Thu 4 Sep Railfuture London & SE, [Sussex & Coastway Division](#) meeting, Worthing, 18:00.

Sat 6 Sep [Railfuture NW](#) meet at the Town Crier pub, Chester, from 1300 (lunch from 12 noon)

Mon 8 Sep [Bexhill Rail Action Group](#) meet at Hastings Direct, Collington from 19:00

Wed 10 Sep Railfuture London & SE [Eastern Division](#) meeting at 18:30.

Thu 11 Sep Network Rail stakeholders’ briefing at Bristol Parkway Training Centre from 11:00. Contact: WesternRouteStudy@networkrail.co.uk .

Sat 13 Sep Derby Etches Park depot open day from 10:00.

Tue 16 Sep [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

Wed 17 Sep Friends of the Barton Line ([FoBL](#))will be at the No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes for 19:00 start.

Wed 17 Sep [Railfuture North East](#) meet at Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle from 19:00. Talk about French light rail systems in the 21st century.

Fri 19 Sep LASRUG AGM at Bentham Town Hall from 19:30. Guest spkr from Steamtown Carnforth.

Mon 22 Sep [European Car-Free Day](#). A chance to promote the alternatives!

Thu 2 Oct [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Awards ceremony at the Scarborough Spa Pavilion, Scarborough.
Thu 2 Oct Railfuture London & SE, [Sussex & Coastway Division](#) meeting from 18:00.
Sat 4 Oct [TravelWatch SouthWest](#) general meeting, College of Arts & Tech, Taunton from 10:30.
Thu 9 Oct [Tarka Rail Assn](#) AGM at the old Barnstaple Town Station (now school annexe) from 18:30.
Sat 11 Oct [ESTA](#) Autumn meeting with guest speakers in the URC Hall, Leiston from 14:00.
Sat 18 Oct [TransWilts Link](#) get-together the Laverton in Westbury from about 10:00. Details tba.
Tue 28 Oct [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.

Sat 1 Nov [Railfuture autumn conference](#) and RUG Awards, Univ of Westminster, London
Wed 5 Nov [ACoRP](#) Station Adoption seminar, ScotRail offices, Waterloo Street, Glasgow
Tue 11 Nov [ACoRP](#) members' autumn seminar for the North of England, held in York.
Fri 14 Nov Suffolk Rail Conference at the County Council offices, Ipswich.
Sat 15 Nov [Railfuture NW](#) meet at the Waldorf pub, Manchester, from 1300 (lunch from 12 noon)
Sat 15 Nov Railfuture London & SE [Kent Division](#) meeting from 14:00.
Tue 18 Nov [ACoRP](#) members' autumn seminar for the South of England, held in London.
Wed 19 Nov [FoBL](#) will be at the Sloop Inn, Barton-u-Humber; 18:00 for 20:00 meeting start.

Tue 9 Dec [Chesham & District TUG](#) meets at Chesham Town Hall from 19:30.
Sat 13 Dec [ESTA](#) Christmas Lunch at the Coach & Horses, Melton from 12:30. Booking essential.
Sun 14 Dec National rail timetable change
Thu 18 Dec [BBRUA](#) meeting at the Summerlin Centre, Woburn Sands. Guest speaker: Chris Green.

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 all the way from Wool in Dorset by

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