



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").

2015 : 35th anniversary year of Railfuture's first-ever national conference of Rail User Groups

We start with the usual roundup of news items from rail user groups around the UK. As always, I'm very grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins. I received more than the usual number in the run up to Christmas, so I've held a few over until the New Year.

LevenMouth Rail Campaign – reopening plan gains further momentum

At a meeting of their Executive Committee earlier this month, Fife Council agreed to engage consultants to refresh the study into reopening the 6-mile branch line to Leven; the results will be fed in to Network Rail's investment programme for Control Period 6 (Apr 2019 to Mar 2024). This news was warmly welcomed by the Levenmouth campaign group.

On a visit to Fife, Paul Tetlaw of Transform Scotland recommended that LMRC representatives should seek a meeting with the new ScotRail franchise operator, Abellio, as soon as possible. He also stressed the importance of not allowing political support to fragment as this would be enormously damaging to LMRC's campaign.

With the petition for line reopening gaining ever more support, LMRC is considering representing the total so far in graphic form, as a train running on a track towards Leven - it gets there when the total reaches 10,000 signatures!

Rail Action Group East of Scotland – new service will be in the next franchise agreement

In a letter to RAGES, Keith Brown, the Scottish Minister for Transport, says that he has "agreed in the ScotRail franchise contract to provide a two-hourly service between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed that will call at Reston and East Linton, recognising the potential benefits that these stations could bring."

The RAGES Chairman welcomed this development, saying: "This is terrific news for our area and will be of huge benefit to a whole range of people and businesses. It must be noted that we could not have achieved this great win for our area without the help and support of our members, MSPs, Councillors, SEStran and East Lothian and Scottish Borders Councils. The RAGES Committee are extremely grateful to Transport Minister Keith Brown and Transport Scotland for agreeing to this new local rail service, with re-opened stations at Reston and East Linton a major step closer."

During a subsequent debate in the Scottish Parliament, several MSPs spoke about the new rail service, and RAGES was praised for their perseverance to obtain their primary aim of the local rail service. It is hoped that the new service will be introduced in December 2016, but there is uncertainty over whether the new stations can be completed by that date.

South East Northumberland Rail User Group – politicians could learn from Scottish experience

SENUG's representative at the First TransPennine Express stakeholder forum in October was impressed with the event and appreciated the candid discussions that took place. The forum also provided the opportunity to raise, once again, the possibility of extending FTPE services to Morpeth.

An article in SENRUG's newsletter about progress with the Borders Railway project in Scotland concludes thus: "Previous Scottish rail reopenings such as Stirling to Alloa, Bathgate to Airdrie and Hamilton to Larkhall have all exceeded initial passenger forecast numbers by a substantial amount. In contrast in the North East of England since 1987 we have had only three rail station re-openings on the Network Rail system: Gateshead Metro Centre, Yarm and very recently James Cook to serve the hospital of the same name on Teesside. I think our politicians need to learn from and implement what is happening to rail travel north of the border."

Copeland Rail Users' Group – *improving your station, but not Seascale!*

A photograph in the newsletter shows an impressive solar-powered information screen, part of the new facilities at Maryport station. Other stations on the line are also due to be upgraded, but CRUG is surprised that Ravenglass is not on the list. A poster at Seascale announcing that "We're improving your station" raised the expectations of local rail users, but hopes were dashed when it was discovered that contractors had put it up by mistake!

Minor changes to the timetable from December have brought some welcome improvements to connections, but CRUG identifies a number of services where there is still scope for improvement.

A contributor to the December edition of CRUG's newsletter ponders on the double standards between Road and Rail. He quotes a news story about a collision between two lorries, which blocked a motorway causing delays for hundreds of motorists: "If railway passengers are delayed in such a way, then compensation is given, but there is no such provision for road users. He argues that this amounts to a massive subsidy to road hauliers.

With Michael Portillo forever singing the praises of his Bradshaw's guide, one CRUG member decided to buy the 2012 reprint ... and discovered several amusing entries about the County of Cumberland. The first that he noticed places Ravenglass squarely on the junction of three rivers, one of which is the Nile! [*That man in the pink jacket will believe anything he's told, so I shouldn't worry!* – Ed].

Furness Line Action Group – *existing services suffering while MPs promote grandiose schemes*

In August, FLAG submitted responses to the DfT's franchise consultation document, which threatened to move Furness Line services from the TransPennine to Northern franchise and place the line's remaining through Manchester services in jeopardy. The two MPs for the area have played a pivotal role in bringing the Cumbria Better Connected manifesto to the attention of the Transport Minister and securing a debate on the future of the Furness Line in the House of Commons. FLAG wants to see rail user groups having a greater influence on decision making, arguing that they have years of experience while personnel in Government, Councils and rail organisations come and go.

Commenting on plans for high speed rail, FLAG says: "These may provide an essential long-term answer to rail's main line capacity problems but it's patently obvious that the short and medium term problems facing rail services, especially in the north of England, are not being addressed. ... It's all too easy for politicians to ride on the 'grandiose scheme bandwagon' instead of committing effort and money to improving existing services and ordering new rolling stock." The group says that cancellations are reaching epidemic proportions to the point where you worry about getting to your destination if you rely on a Northern service, adding "there are far too many examples to print."

In October, FLAG launched a new colour membership application form ready for their stall at the Furness Model Railway Club's exhibition in Barrow. They gained nine new members over the weekend plus two more on the Brief Encounter special from Carnforth to Edinburgh on 25th Oct. We're told that next year's excursion may be steam-hauled to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the film 'Brief Encounter'.

Harrogate Line Supporters' Group – *new service is just what the group had asked for*

The HLSG is delighted that the new Virgin/Stagecoach Franchise for the East Coast Main Line includes seven trains a day each way between Harrogate & London Kings Cross, just as the group had proposed in their detailed submissions to all three bidders and to the Dept. for Transport.

The next steps for the group are to demonstrate the business case for major investment in electrification of the Harrogate Line, and to secure local authority and stakeholder consensus for upgrading the line. The group want to explore the potential synergy with Trans-Pennine 25kV overhead electrification proposals and to identify suitable rolling stock. A more immediate aim is to determine the feasibility and cost of expanding car parking capacity at stations on the line.

Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line – *the next 25 years: a glorious future or gradual decline?*

With the 25th anniversary milestone now past, the group's focus is on the 25 years ahead – the committee points out that the choice between a “glorious future or gradual decline” is largely in their own hands. They've drawn up a prospectus for the next 25 years in the form of a 4-page glossy brochure aimed primarily at decision makers in the rail industry. One aspiration mentioned is the need for tourist-friendly rolling stock of World standard to match the World demand for travel on the line. A sub-committee has been formed to take the plans forward.

Engaging with Government is seen as very important, and the MP for Carlisle has helped the group gain access to the Dept. for Transport at ministerial level: “Once you've seen a minister, doors open and nobody can refuse to see you.” They noticed that ears pricked up at the DfT when they presented their own survey data to prove that some of the services on the line are now profitable. Elsewhere, the group sets out its case for lifting line speeds, illustrating their point with a photo of a superbly-refurbished section of track at Kirkby, clearly capable of much higher speeds than the ruling 60mph.

Support for the Settle-Carlisle line has grown into a huge undertaking: in addition to the Friends group, there is a charitable Trust and the Settle-Carlisle Development Company. The next step is to create a Property Company to manage the existing property portfolio and advise on potential acquisitions. All four organisations will come together under a single Settle-Carlisle Line Association, which has just met for the first time; its remit is to develop strategy, agree budgets and present a united front.

FoSCL members are entitled to purchase a special version of the Dales Railcard regardless of their home postcode. Online orders from the FoSCL Christmas Catalogue are helping to boost funds, and goods can also be purchased from their two station shops: at Settle and Appleby. Christmas events this year included an Open Day at Settle station, a members' Christmas Lunch and a Music & Ale Train featuring carol singing. The group boasts its own troop of Edwardian players who act out true stories about communities along the line for local schools.

Lancaster & Skipton Rail User Group – *more trains needed at times to suit commuters*

LASRUG is bringing to the attention of bidders for the new Northern franchise the urgent need for a better weekday timetable on the Leeds-Lancaster/Morecambe line.

The group says: “There has been no improvement to the service of five daily trains each way since privatisation. We still have no trains at times that allow people to travel to and from work in Lancaster, and the last train from Leeds is 16:39. Despite the poor timings, passenger numbers have grown steadily, and would increase considerably more if the trains made commuting possible to both Lancaster and Leeds/Bradford.”

In other news, we read that better lighting for the footpath and car park at Gargrave station is needed and LASRUG suggests this could be solar powered. Friends of Bentham Station have been

celebrating the winning of two Community Rail awards: first place in the Small Projects category (for their Bloomin' Bentham project) and second place in The Essence of Community Rail Image (for a photo of platform entertainers).

A local artist is offering members the chance to buy three splendid railway prints, with proceeds going to group funds. Subscriptions to the group are now due, and an increase to £7 was approved unanimously at LASRUG's AGM.

And finally, here's an amusing working instruction notice of the Highland Railway from c1920, reproduced in LASRUG's newsletter:

ALL TRAIN CREWS WORKING THE PERTH ASYLUM BRANCH
MUST ENSURE THAT ANY SIGNALS GIVEN TO THEM ARE BY RAILWAY STAFF.

Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester Line (STORM) – lifts v. ramps debated

A discussion in STORM's weekly bulletin about lifts versus ramps for disabled access resulted in the editor coming down firmly in support of ramps - being blind, he finds them far easier to use "and they don't break down!"

As part of the December timetable revision, two timetables for the North West have been combined into one. The resulting leaflet issued by Northern states that it contains "all of our services between Manchester and Todmorden." STORM found this not to be the case – they discovered some serious omissions and persuaded the Company to revise its printed information.

Mid-Cheshire Rail Users' Association – passenger count builds case for extra trains

MCRUA's latest passenger counts will result in 3 years' worth of data for Sept, Oct & Nov to compare. The indications are that passenger numbers are rising at 5% a year in spite of zero increase in service frequency or train length, although punctuality is suffering as a result. However, Northern promises to strengthen services on pre-Christmas Saturdays, and MCRUA anticipates being consulted early in the New Year about the case for increasing the frequency to two trains per hour.

MCRUA's 'Take the Train' leaflets, grant-aided by the Designated Community Rail Development Fund, have proved very popular. However, at £150 for a print run to cover just one station on the line, there's a limit to the number that can be produced. The complete set can be seen on the group's [website](#).

Hartford station has resembled a building site since March, and MCRUA's local representative has expressed dissatisfaction to London Midland over the slow progress and inconvenience for passengers. There's concern about the surface of the car park at Acton Bridge – after heavy rain, parts of it are unusable. The major rebuilding project at Altrincham is progressing well, although MCRUA is disappointed about the length of time it's taking to repair the faulty customer information screens.

In her review of 2014, Community Rail Officer, Sally Buttifant, wonders if the difference made by volunteers is fully appreciated. She then provides a list of the things they've been doing: station adoption, testing rail walks, organising music trains and excursions, creating marketing leaflets like 'Take the Train', passenger counting, monitoring performance, organising meetings, writing newsletters and web pages, etc. etc. ... oh, and "teaching me about the rail world".

Friends of the Barton Line – campaign success: direct service from Cleethorpes to be retained

A new Partnership Officer has been appointed for Community Rail Humber (formerly the Humber Region Rail Development Company) - the FoBL will be sending her the group's wish list and look forward to working with her. FoBL's secretary had represented the group at the recent First TransPennine Express stakeholder conference in Leeds: "it had been a very worthwhile event with

good opportunities for networking.” It’s reported that some of the conference delegates were agitated about the prospect of the Humber region being marginalised by the larger transport authorities in the Rail North consortium.

FoBL has been invited to meet bidders for the TransPennine and Northern franchises and hope that representatives from the companies will attend the group’s January meeting. There’s good news that the direct Cleethorpes-Manchester service is to be retained in the new TPE franchise, something which the group had argued for.

Two Lincolnshire MPs have been reported as arguing for the re-instatement of direct services between London and Cleethorpes/Grimsby, but FoBL thinks they should keep their feet firmly on the ground and seek to address the more immediate concerns of local rail users.

Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association – *pre-empting stakeholder involvement*

SARPA has started its campaign to influence the specification of the new Wales and Border rail franchise by issuing a press release setting out the group’s aspirations. They point out that the franchise changeover point in 2018 provides a real opportunity to influence and secure long term improvements, drawing parallels with the recent award of the new ScotRail franchise to Abellio.

Some of the changes they would like to see are: longer trains, free WiFi, a better timetable with opportunities for commuting at both ends of the line, and improved connections at Shrewsbury. At selected stations, there needs to be improved waiting facilities and extra car-parking provision.

In the medium term, they argue for a new fleet of trains especially suited to their scenic line, and a station reopening programme which examines the possibilities for new stations at Hanwood, Abermule, Carno and Bow St.

Stourbridge Line User Group – *new regional consortium welcomed*

SLUG welcomes the possibility that rail services in the region will come under the control of a “West Midlands Rail” consortium representing all relevant local authorities: “If successful, it will make improvements to the Stourbridge Line more likely to be relevant, as decisions should be more easily based on knowledge of local needs.”

Noting that London Midland is claiming that over 98% of their waste is now recycled, SLUG’s newsletter editor wonders if this includes waste put in bins at stations and on trains. *[I heard a similar claim at a South West Trains stakeholder conference and didn’t get any reply when I asked if this included waste thrown into rubbish bins. Does anyone know the answer? – Ed].*

Under the title “Wheels in Motion”, SLUG’s editor reproduces an abridged account of November’s committee meeting as an indication of the issues discussed ... and of how hard the committee works on behalf of its members! Subjects raised at the meeting include poor coordination of rail-replacement buses, fare anomalies and the lack of an automatic ticket machine at Lye station. It was also noted that ATMs locally will not issue Permit to Travel tickets, tickets for travel from other stations, PlusBus tickets or Group Travel tickets.

In a newsletter supplement, SLUG’s chairman writes: “It was with a little trepidation that I took on board the suggestion to introduce a SLUG Facebook page. Social media is a brave new world to our generation but it wasn’t long before I started to post my own comments. Of course, the Facebook page is open to members and non-members alike, but I really would like ALL of our on-line members to consider joining, as it is they who contribute the most to the Group. Take a look at our page [here](#).”

Cotswold Line Promotion Group – *you want one train/hour? ... why not have two!*

The draft Western Route Study document from Network Rail has considerable implications for the Cotswold Line and the CPLG will be submitting their considered response by the deadline in January: “we haven’t got our hourly service yet but the document talks about 2 trains per hour!”

In the CPLG’s Winter magazine, First Great Western’s new manager for the Cotswold Line tells readers that he’s looking to staff the booking office at Evesham on weekday afternoons and at Charlbury. He’s also considering the introduction of a small booking office at Hanborough. Meanwhile public support is growing for maintaining and improving the opening hours of the unique Travel Centre at Worcester Foregate Street station – the campaign has the backing of CLPG’s President, Lord Faulkner of Worcester. With the rapid growth in passengers using the Cotswold Line, keeping pace with the need for car parking is becoming a serious problem (even recently-extended car parks are often full) and CLPG members are keeping an eye on the situation.

In August, volunteers at Charlbury station organised an event to mark the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War, involving readings and songs both in English and German. The newly-planted poppy garden provided a backdrop for the event, which was attended by nearly 200 residents. Wooden plaques bearing the names of famous battles, such as Passchendaele, are affixed to the railings behind the garden.

Apart from some minor hitches, the group’s charter train to Plymouth was a great success with nearly 400 passengers enjoying a great day out (a select few went on to tour the Laira depot on the edge of the City). However, First Great Western’s programme of converting first class seats on HST units to standard class will cause a problem for future charters because the loss of so many premium fares may render the charters uneconomic. Profits from the Plymouth charter train and other events during 2014 means the Oliver Lovell Memorial Fund now stands at over £11,000 (this includes Oliver’s generous legacy) – the committee is trying to reach a consensus on the best use for this money.

Bedford-Bletchley Rail Users’ Association – *Bedford (and MK) could be bypassed by E-W route*

In November, several members of the Association attended a presentation about progress with the East-West Rail Link project. Following this, there was a meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for EWRL in London, and Richard Crane from BBRUA’s committee went along to represent the Association. At both meetings, Richard asked if the phase 1 Oxford to Bedford rail service would be maintained if an eastern route option towards Cambridge failed to include Bedford. The response was that it’s too early to make a decision on this matter – the BBRUA believes this is wholly unacceptable. The question equally applies to Milton Keynes, which could be bypassed by the route to Cambridge. The Association sees a need to campaign for Bedford to be a central station on the completed E-W route, with Marston Vale services fully integrated.

Network Rail has responded in some detail to the Association’s complaint about redundant track materials being left after engineering works. They say that a shortage of suitable recovery vehicles has been a factor, but a timetable is now being drawn up for removal of all the lineside materials.

The Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership was thrilled to receive two awards for the heritage centre created at Ridgmont Station, one from ACoRP’s Community Rail Awards (for Most Enhanced Station Building) and the other from the CPRE’s Bedfordshire Living Countryside Awards. The Partnership acknowledges the help of BBRUA members and friends who have been “so ably manning the building in our first season.” They’re hoping that BBRUA support will continue into the Christmas season when Santa Specials will run on the line and festive events will take place at Ridgmont Heritage Centre. The Association is looking forward to its own special event at Woburn Sands on 18 Dec, when the former Manager of Network SouthEast, Chris Green, will be the guest speaker.

Bedford Commuters Association – new Class 700 units risk being a disappointment

The BCA has just received the consultation document for the December 2015 timetable from Govia Thameslink Railway. The group is not happy with proposals for the Brighton Main Line, which indicate the present four fast services south of the river will be replaced by two fast and two slow, as this will have an adverse effect on customers travelling to/from Gatwick Airport. Noting that GTR is about to introduce new Class 387/1 trains on the Bedford-Brighton service, the BCA remarks: “One can't help thinking that the interior ambience of the Siemens Class 700 Thameslink units will be even more of a disappointment once we've got used to Class 377s and 387s!”

Much of the BCA's December newsletter is taken up with explaining the service pattern on Thameslink over the course of the next three years during rebuilding works at London Bridge. Recent performance on the route has been “pretty awful”, partly due to drivers away on training in preparation for working over diversionary routes. The BCA has noticed that ticket queues at Bedford station have been getting longer – they've taken this up with GTR and await a reply, at the same time reminding members of the option to purchase tickets in advance to avoid the queues. The group has asked GTR that the January fare increase should be distributed fairly to all users.

A Sustrans information stand is often deployed at Bedford station, and the local Sustrans officer now has a regular column in BCA's newsletter. This month, we learn that the installation of their “Station Links Golden Footprints” trail was completed in September and is helping locals and visitors find the quickest walking route between the bus and railway stations.

Association of Public Transport Users (Hertfordshire) – concerns about timetable and info provision

Like the BCA, APTU has a number of concerns about GTR's draft timetable for December 2015, and will be making its views known. Working together, the two groups have successfully persuaded the new train operator to improve the availability of real time information on its website and to fix a number of very significant shortcomings with the Company's Android/iOS App.

East Surrey Transport Committee – detailed comments on NR's Route Study

The Committee, representing bus and rail users in the South of the borough of Croydon and in North East Surrey, has issued a 5-page response to Network Rail's consultation on the draft Sussex Area Route Plan. They find much to welcome in the document, and have a few comments and suggestions to add of their own.

They argue that the North Downs line, Uckfield Line and Marsh Link line should all be electrified (using the 3rd rail system) to allow them to integrate better into other Southern services. The Committee has suggestions for turnback facilities at Norwood Junction, Coulsdon South, Belmont and Sanderstead, and want to see further flexibility built in to the remodelling plans outlined for Redhill. In addition, they would like better facilities to enable passengers to cross between platforms at Gatwick Airport station.

Brighton is such an important route that the ESTC believes the time has come to construct better diversionary routes to and from Brighton: “We strongly support the reinstatement of the Uckfield to Lewes Link and also the construction of the Arundel Chord. This would allow through services to Brighton and other south coast destinations when there are route blockages between Brighton and Three Bridges.”

In the longer term, the ESTC wants to ensure that there is good interchange at Old Oak Common between HS2 and destinations south of London, via local services to Croydon and longer-distance services to Gatwick and Brighton.

Tonbridge Line Commuters – *freeing up train-running data helps users make informed choice*

There has been some criticism of the decision to grant GoAhead a Direct Award for the Integrated Kent Franchise, but TLC takes the view that their management is in the best position to cope with the extreme disruption during major works at London Bridge. Much of the group's autumn newsletter is taken up with explaining the service pattern during the London Bridge works - their greatest concern is the ability of the reduced late-evening service to cope with passenger numbers, and they've sought to ensure that the trains that do run are formed of at least 8 coaches. They're also looking into ticket inter-availability issues during the service disruptions.

Data now freely available on the *Recent Train Times* website has enabled the group to carry out an analysis of train punctuality for specific services across the morning peak. A table in TLC's newsletter shows that certain departures will get you into Town with a reliability well in excess of 85% but in the middle of the peak period, reliability falls to as low as 62%. The group very much welcomes the freeing up of this information so that commuters can make an informed choice as to the train they catch.

Haslemere Rail Users' Group – *lobbying minister over use of inappropriate trains*

Stakeholder participation in the forthcoming direct award for the South Western rail franchise appears to be on hold. Undeterred, the Haslemere group decided to send a letter to Transport Minister Claire Perry in order to secure a consultation meeting. The group's main complaint concerns the use of inappropriate Class 450 rolling stock with high density seating on the route between Waterloo and Portsmouth: "...overcrowding does not exist on over 96% of Portsmouth services, and then only on a small number of peak services on the short 25 minute leg between Woking and Waterloo." They are seeking a meeting with the minister, attended by local MPs and other interested parties.

...news from Railfuture follows...

RAILFUTURE AGM AND CONFERENCES IN 2015 – *dates for your new diary*

- The AGM of the Railway Development Society Ltd (Railfuture) will be held in **Blackpool** on **Sat 16 May 2015**.
- Railfuture's Summer Conference will take place on **Sat 20 June 2015** in the Town Hall, **Newark**, from 10:45 with speakers representing train operators and local authorities in the area.
- Railfuture's Rail User Conference is on **Sat 7 Nov 2015** at The Mercure Hotel, **Bristol**, just a short walk from Temple Mills station.

Details of all three events are [here](#). Make sure you put these dates in your new diary right away!

RAILFUTURE DISRUPTION SURVEY – *please encourage others to complete the online survey*

The Passenger Group reports that responses have been coming in thick and fast on www.railfuture.org.uk/disruption but they do need more. There has been a great deal of input and interest from other organisations, including Passenger Focus. Rail user groups are asked to encourage their members to complete the online survey when they have disrupted journeys.

RAILFUTURE CROSS-COUNTRY PASSENGER SURVEY – *volunteers needed*

Railfuture is planning to monitor loadings on Cross-Country trains by counting passengers alighting from and boarding trains at several stations in the Midlands, namely: Birmingham Int'l, Bromsgrove, Cheltenham, Coleshill Parkway, Derby, Leamington Spa, Tamworth and Wolverhampton. The main

objective is to have robust data about the passenger loadings to be able to lobby the Dept. for Transport from a position of knowledge for better capacity, particularly when time comes for re-franchising. The exercise will take place next June, and Railfuture is looking for volunteers to help with this important work, even if only for an hour or two. To offer your assistance, or for more details, please contact: steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk

ROLLING STOCK DESIGN PANEL – *remit extended*

It has been decided to extend the remit of Railfuture's Rolling Stock Design panel to take on other rolling stock issues such as strategy for cascades and new orders. Anybody willing to help the panel on rolling stock issues will be welcome: please contact norman.bradbury@railfuture.org.uk

Reports on the InterCity Express and the Hitachi's AT100 and AT200 units have been produced recently. There is still major concern about the Siemens 700 class and their suitability outside of the central metro areas.

HOW TO CONDUCT A PASSENGER COUNT – *guidance document now available*

A colleague told me he intended to conduct a passenger count on his local railway and I promised to write a few notes on how to do it. Well, I got somewhat carried away and ended up writing a complete 8-page guidance document, covering counts both at stations and on trains. You can download the document from the "volunteer activities" page on Railfuture's website [here](#).

If you have experience of conducting passenger counts, please take a look and see if I've made mistakes or left anything out. I would be grateful for any feedback – *thanks!*

RAILFUTURE WESSEX BRANCH – *Route Study authors "working in silos"*

Following the initial release of draft Route Studies from Network Rail, the Wessex Branch found itself with two documents to focus on: the Western Route Study and the one for Wessex (ie services into Waterloo). Branch chairman David Brace has been busy pulling together comments and suggestions from colleagues in preparation for Railfuture's official response.

David was surprised to find a lack of conformity between the two draft studies, both in their ambitions for rail development and in the geographical boundaries of the lines covered – he's listed the disparities in a separate document which runs to two full pages. It would appear that the studies have been put together by teams working in isolation, and anyone involved with commenting on them needs to be aware that they will find conflicting data, particularly in the descriptions of inter-regional services.

These draft route studies are out for consultation: Anglia, South East (Sussex), Western and Wessex.

These draft route studies are expected soon: Welsh and East Midlands.

You can access Network Rail's route studies [here](#).

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA – *press release about forthcoming franchise consultation*

Ahead of the publication of the Dept. for Transport's consultation document about the next Greater Anglia rail franchise, Railfuture's East Anglia branch issued a press release outlining its fundamental demands for the franchise. The subjects covered include: new trains for inter-city and local use, improved service frequencies with later trains in the evening, better facilities at stations and reconnection of Wisbech to the national network. Further details [here](#).

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

RAIL REGULATOR SEEKING VIEWS ON ROLLING STOCK LEASING MARKET

The Office of Rail Regulation is seeking views on the Rolling Stock Leasing Market Investigation Order 2009 put in place by the Competition Commission following its market investigation that finished in the same year. The investigation identified adverse effects on competition in the market due to key market features such as a shortage of alternative rolling stock available to train operating companies when bidding for franchises. The ORR is reviewing the Order so as to seek views on compliance and the Order's efficacy. Learn more about this consultation [here](#).

NEW DATA SHOWS PASSENGER JOURNEYS AT RECORD HIGH

New statistics just published by the Office of Rail Regulation show that the number of passenger journeys on franchised rail services reached 407.7 million between July and September this year, a 4.4% increase on the same quarter last year. This is the highest number of journeys recorded in a quarter since data collection began in 2002-03.

The 'Rail Usage Statistics' show the number of journeys made on the network and the distance travelled, providing an indication of the levels of demand for rail travel in Great Britain. Read the full report [here](#).

EAST ANGLIA RAIL PASSENGER FRANCHISE – *take part in an online survey*

The Department for Transport is seeking your views on future rail services in East Anglia. The Greater Anglia franchise is due to expire in October 2016 and the DfT's Rail Executive anticipates that this will be replaced by a new East Anglia franchise.

It is important that you have your say and provide feedback on what rail services should look like in the next franchise. Your views will inform a franchise specification which is due to be issued to bidders in summer 2015.

Rail services in East Anglia have remained unchanged for many years - this is now an opportunity to revisit these services so they meet passenger and business needs in a region which contributes significantly to the economy. The DfT hopes that passengers, interested members of the public and all stakeholders will take the opportunity to respond to this consultation, which runs from 9 December 2014 to 16 March 2015. One way to take part is to complete the online survey [here](#).

ROUTE SAFEGUARDING FOR CROSSRAIL 2 – *have your say*

Crossrail 2 is a proposed new rail line across central London, running from Tottenham Hale in the north-east to Wimbledon in the south-west. The Dept. for Transport has launched a consultation seeking views on an updated safeguarding direction for the project. Safeguarding is the first stage in the planning process - it enables the Secretary of State for Transport to issue a direction to local planning authorities to protect land needed for long-term infrastructure projects. The consultation closes on 28 January 2015. More information [here](#). – *gov.uk*

LONDON HAS 4 OUT OF 5 OF THE MOST EXPENSIVE AIRPORT TRANSFERS IN EUROPE

London has been named the city with the most expensive airport transfer services in Europe. The capital's four main airports – Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and London Luton – made up four of the top five priciest train journey's from airport to city centre.

The cost of a single standard adult train fare between Heathrow airport and Paddington Station on the Heathrow Express service costs up to £26 if tickets are purchased on board. The cost is £21 if booked online. A flight to Malaga, in Spain, with easyJet costs from £25.99, while Skyscanner offers return flights to Malaga from £39 - the same price as a return ticket for the Heathrow Express.

Stansted was found to be the second most expensive UK airport to reach, with an adult single on the Stansted Express costing up to £23.40. In contrast, travelling to Paris Orly Airport costs just £5.89 for a standard adult ticket, and to reach Madrid and Rome airport costs just £3.92 and £4.40 respectively. According to research by flightright.co.uk, an air passenger compensation company, the cost of taking a family of four on the Heathrow Express can cost £63. – *dailymail.co.uk*

ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS FOR MORE STATIONS AFTER FUNDING BOOST

Transport Minister Baroness Kramer has just announced that 26 railway stations in will receive a share of £60m funding to improve access for passengers. Accessible, step-free access will be provided at each of the stations after the government announced additional funding earlier this month to extend the Access for All programme. Each of the stations will get an accessible route into the station and between each platform, such as via lifts. The 26 stations are...

London and the south east:

Brondesbury
Teddington
Crawley
Palmers Green
Coulston South
Shortlands
Plumstead
Selhurst
Carshalton
Canterbury East
Bexley
Ewell West
Alexandra Palace

East of England:

Tring

Midlands:

Stechford

North west:

Meols
Mills Hill

Scotland:

Kilwinning
Westerton
Kilmarnock

South west:

Totnes
Torquay

Wales:

Treherbert
Taffs Well

Yorkshire and the Humber:

Scunthorpe
Headingley

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ON A DOWNWARD SPIRAL?

Andy Long has just written to us with this stark warning:

“I have been informed by Richard Crane, the Chairman of the Bedford-Bletchley Rail Users’ Association, that Gerard Burgess, the Stakeholder Manager for London Midland, is being made redundant with effect from January 2015 as part of cost-saving measures by Govia (operators of LM). This may be a consequence of the LM franchise-extension direct award by the Dept. for Transport.

“When Stagecoach East Midlands Trains took over Midland MainLine, they made a similar decision to remove their Stakeholder Manager, John Hillman, on cost-saving grounds. The removal of these posts is very unfortunate and perhaps short-sighted on the part of train operators, when they are obliged to deal with rail user groups, local authorities and other important stakeholders within their areas of operation.

“In another move, Govia Thameslink Railway has removed details of RUGs etc. from their timetable booklets from this December’s timetable change. Under the previous First Capital Connect franchise, First Group provided details of all RUGs along the Thameslink Bedford - Brighton route in their Train Times booklet under "Useful contacts". This is a backward step, particularly where some train operators (eg EMT) hold only a token annual stakeholder event to be seen to be ‘going through the motions’. Are customers not important to them?

“I think everyone should be made aware of these changes, with a view to representations being made to restore the status quo and to give assurance to passengers that they are valued.”

SMART TICKETING - CONTACTLESS PAYMENT FOR RAIL

Contactless payment is increasingly being used to pay for low-value items and a replacement for cash. A new report from Passenger Focus explores passengers' views of using it on rail to inform a potential pilot scheme.

PF carried out a series of one-to-one and focus group discussions with both passengers already using smart cards and those who don't. They asked participants about their current usage of, and attitudes towards, ticket purchasing and contactless payment. The findings were that rail passengers see the use of contactless payment cards as a good way of avoiding wasting time queuing at ticket offices or ticket vending machines, having to pay by cash for paper tickets, and potentially enabling them to get better ticket options. You can read the full report [here](#).

FLEXIBLE TICKETING SIGNALS A BETTER DEAL

Rail companies in the South East are being asked by the government to contribute to research into new ways of ticketing, such as better deals for part-time commuters.

Forming part of the government's strategy to give passengers a better deal, operators are being invited to provide details of their plans for flexible ticketing and any barriers they see to their successful implementation. Information gathered from the initiative will be used in a wider research project into the feasibility of rolling out flexible ticketing.

Among the ideas put forward are carnet-style products offering savings on bulk-buying tickets for future journeys. Govia Thameslink and c2c have already committed to introduce flexible season tickets as part of their recent franchise agreements and the government wants to see the remaining operators follow their lead. – *Rail Professional*

GOLD CARD CHANGES

The National Rail Gold Card benefits change on 2 Jan 2015. The most important changes are:

- Child flat fare replaced with 60% discount
- Network Railcard for a partner for £1 replaced with one of many card types for £10
- Gold Card First Class weekend supplements abolished

Full details [here](#).

– *thanks to APTU for spotting this*

LLANGOLLEN RAILWAY EXTENDS TO CORWEN WITH VOLUNTEER EFFORT

After receiving the November edition of Rail User Express, George Jones of the Llangollen Railway Trust replied with these thoughts:

"I note the continued interest in line extensions and reopenings which are proposed, mostly at public expense. In this respect I attach my latest press release about the recent success with extending our line. Even with volunteer labour doing much of the work, the cost of the exercise has been considerable and funding difficult. Rail User Groups should consider how their pet projects might be funded, if they are to be achieved. The ten miles of track from Llangollen to Corwen has taken 40 years from inception, and there is still a bit to go. But if a volunteer organisation hadn't tackled the project it would never have happened."

The press release tells us that in the ten days of operations since the first trains ran on 22nd October, nearly 4000 passengers sampled a ride on the 2.2 mile extension beyond Carrog to Corwen. George adds that "Everyone is pleased with the success of the trains on the extended line. However, the operation has demonstrated the limitations of terminating at the phase 1 station which is without facilities to run an engine around the train. This emphasises the need to proceed to the phase 2 terminal station nearer the town centre - only then will all the advantages of serving Corwen be realised."

ELECTRIFICATION CONFIRMED FOR WINDERMERE

On 28 Nov, Transport Minister Baroness Kramer confirmed £16 million of government funding to electrify the Windermere branch line in Cumbria. The 10 mile line, which runs between Oxenholme Lake District station on the West Coast Main Line and Windermere station in the National Park, will be upgraded to allow electric trains to run on the route. Once completed, the line will form part of a direct electrified route between key destinations in the region, including Kendal, Burneside and Staveley, and Manchester.

The work will be carried out by Network Rail as part of its electrification programme across the North. Network Rail will now develop a detailed plan for the work, which could be completed as early as 2017. Other routes being electrified include Manchester to Liverpool, Preston, Leeds and York, and Preston to Blackpool. – *from a DfT press release*

MACKAY TAKES OVER FROM BROWN AS SCOTTISH TRANSPORT MINISTER

Scotland has a new transport minister following the promotion of Keith Brown into the cabinet as infrastructure, investment and cities secretary. His replacement is Derek Mackay, the Scottish Parliament's Member for Renfrewshire North and West, who becomes Minister for Transport and Islands. Mackay was previously Minister for Local Government and Planning. – *Transport Briefing*

WELSH GOVERNMENT TO SET UP NOT-FOR-PROFIT RAIL COMPANY

The Welsh Government will use its new devolved powers over the Wales and Borders rail franchise to establish a not-for-profit company to run it. Welsh transport minister Edwina Hart told members of the Welsh Assembly's enterprise and business committee, according to the BBC, "I am determined that when we go to the full issue of the franchise we're prepared for a not-for-dividend company to be established. I think that's popular..." – *from a story in Transport Extra*

NEW WEBSITE FOR COMMUNITY RAIL LANCASHIRE

Community Rail Lancashire's new website can be found at the same URL as the old one, namely: www.communityraillancashire.co.uk. The website now combines all the separate line sites and the Ribble Valley Rambler site. The project was funded in part by the Designated Community Rail Development Fund. – *from an item in ACoRP's Train On Line newsletter*

STATION ADOPTERS: "GET READY TO GROW WILD!"

Supported by the Big Lottery Fund and led by the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, Grow Wild is an exciting 4-year programme that will bring people together to sow native wild flowers. Grow Wild has thousands of free seed kits to share so people can transform their local spaces into beautiful, inspiring and colourful wild flower havens.

Station adopters can register today to receive wild flower seeds - there are 120,000 free kits up for grabs and all you need to do to register on behalf of your group is fill in Grow Wild's simple two-minute form at <https://www.growwilduk.com/seed-kit>. Registration closes at midnight on 14 Feb 2015 and the kits will be sent out in late March, just in time for spring sowing.

– *from an item in ACoRP's Train On Line newsletter*

AND FINALLY...

**A
Happy
Christmas**



**...and may all
you wish for
in 2015
come true!**

EVENTS *for the next 2 months*

The events listed here are copied across from the Events listing on Railfuture's website.

Coloured blobs differentiate between types of events...

- National & regional rail events.
- Railfuture events (rail user group representatives are welcome to attend).
- Local Rail User Group events. ■ Events organised by other railway societies.

December

- 20 December 2014 Saturday to 4 January 2015. Sunday. No Thameslink or Southern trains stop at London Bridge. More info: [TP](#)
- 22 December 2014. Monday. "Great Western Electrification Programme". Speaker: Jacqueline Day, Network Rail. Location: Maidenhead, SL6 3AX. 19.15 for 19.30 start. More info: [RCTS](#)
- 25-28 December 2014. Thursday- Sunday. Closure of London Midland main line from London Euston to Hemel Hempstead. More information: Email watford.feedback@londonmidland.com
- Until 28 December 2014. One month closure of Abbey line from Watford to St Albans Abbey. More info: [WJ-StAA](#) Feedback to: watfordfeedback

January

- 5 January 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30. www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk
- 5 January 2015 Monday to January 2018. No Bedford-Brighton Thameslink trains stop at London Bridge. More info: [TP](#)
- 6 January 2015. Tuesday. Safeguarding for part of HS2 Phase 2, Fradley-Crewe route corridor - consultation closes. More info: [HS2-Ph2](#)
- 8 January 2015. Thursday. London and South East regional branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting. 18.00. More info: [Sussex and Coastway](#).
- 9 January 2015. Friday. Draft Western Route Study - consultation closes. More info: [WesternRS](#)
- 12 January 2015. Monday. "Railways since privatisation". Speaker: Bob Breakwell. Location: Ipswich, IP2 8DF. 19.30. More info: [RCTS](#)
- 12 January 2015 Monday to August 2016. Southeastern trains to and from Charing Cross do not stop at London Bridge. More info: [TP](#)
- 13 January 2015. Tuesday. "The Sheffield City Region - lessons learnt and future direction". Speaker: David Hewitt, Sheffield City Region Executive Team. Location: Sheffield Hallam University, S1 2NU. 18.00 for 18.30 start, to 20.30. Booking not required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)
- 13 January 2015. Tuesday. Draft South East Route: Sussex Area Route Study - consultation closes. More info: [SussexRS](#)
- 14 January 2015. Wednesday. London and South East regional branch, Eastern division meeting. 18.30. More info: [Eastern](#).
- 15 January 2015. Thursday. Proposed Essex Thameside c2c December 2015 timetable - consultation closes.
- 19 January 2015. Monday. "The Network South East story". Speaker: Chris Green. Location: Shenfield, CM15 8LB. 19.30. More info: [RCTS](#). Buy the book from the Railfuture shop: [NSE](#)
- 26 January 2015. Monday. "First Hull Trains". Speaker: Keith Doughty, Service Delivery Director. Location: Hull, HU6 7RX. 18.00 for 18.30 start, to 20.00. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)
- 26 January 2015. Monday. "Operating heritage transport in London". Speaker: Andy Barr, TfL. Location: Maidenhead, SL6 3AX. 19.30. More info: [RCTS](#)

- 27 January 2015. Tuesday. National Rail Passenger Survey, Autumn 2014, published. More info: [NRPS](#)
- 28 January 2015. Wednesday. Way Ahead for Northern Infrastructure conference at KPMG, Manchester. 08.30-17.00. More info: [CFC](#)
- 28 January 2015. Wednesday. "An introduction to rail freight". Speaker: Ralph Goldney, MD RailFreight Consulting. Location: Network Rail, The Quadrant, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 1EN. 18.30 for 19.00 start, to 20.30. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)
- 29 January 2015. Thursday. Crossrail 2 safeguarding - consultation closes. More info: [CR2](#)
- 30 January 2015. Friday. Proposed Govia Thameslink Railway Dec 2015 timetable - consultation closes.
- 31 January 2015. Saturday. Yorkshire branch AGM. Priory Street Centre, 15 Priory St, York, YO1 6ET. 14.00.
- Until 31 January 2015. Saturday. Landscape Photographer of the Year exhibition at London Waterloo station. Includes Network Rail's Lines in the Landscape which recognises the best image of the railway. [TAV](#)

February

- 2 February 2015. Monday. Ribble Valley Rail meet at the New Inn, Clitheroe from 19:30. www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk
- 3 February 2015. Tuesday. Draft Anglia Route Study - consultation closes. More info: [AngliaRS](#)
- 3 February 2015. Tuesday. "The Norton Bridge Flyover Project". Speaker: David Lawrence, Engineering Manager, NR Infrastructure Projects. Location: Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2DF. 18.00 for 18.30 start, to 20.30. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)
- 3 February 2015. Tuesday. Seminar "Infrastructure Planning in London". More info: [PFL](#)
- 5 February 2015. Thursday. London & South East branch, Sussex & Coastway division meeting. 18.00. More info: [Sussex and Coastway](#)
- 6 February 2015. Friday. "Northern railways in prospect". Speaker: Paul Salveson. Location: Carnforth, LA5 9LD. 19.30. More info: [RCTS](#)
- 9 February 2015. Monday. UK Air-Rail Update at DLA Piper, London. 08.45-17.00. More info: [waterfront](#)
- 14-16 February 2015. Saturday-Monday. Closure of Abbey line from Watford Junction to St Albans Abbey. Feedback to: [watfordfeedback](#)
- 16 February 2015. Monday. 50th anniversary of publication of "The Development of the Major Railway Trunk Routes". More info: [Beeching-2](#) and [Beeching biog](#)
- 18 February 2015. Wednesday. Draft Wessex Route Study - consultation closes. More info: [WessexRS](#)
- 21-23 February 2015. Saturday-Monday. Closure of Abbey Line from Watford Junction to St Albans Abbey. Feedback to: [watfordfeedback](#)
- 21 February 2015. Saturday. London & South East branch, Kent division meeting. 14.00. More info: [Kent](#)
- 23 February 2015. Monday. "The work of the British Transport Police". Speaker: Bob Burrowes. Location: Maidenhead, SL6 3AX. 19.30. More info: [RCTS](#)
- 26 February 2015. Thursday. "The Croxley rail link". Speaker: Richard Boutal, Major Projects Group Manager, Herts CC. Location: St. Albans, AL1 3ER. 18.00 for 18.30 start, until 20.30. Booking required for this free event. More info: [CILT](#)

For events further than 2 months ahead, see the [Events listing on Railfuture's website](#).

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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