

# RAIL USER EXPRESS



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## Welcome to the Rail User Express.

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For the first time since 2009-10, ORR figures for franchised [Passenger Rail Usage](#) show a fall, but they are open to misinterpretation. For example, the [Dorset Echo](#) story that: "The number of rail passenger journeys using Waterloo-Weymouth trains has fallen by nearly eight per cent". In fact, the figure of 7.9% refers to all SWR services (SWT prior to last August), not specifically to the Weymouth line. Moreover, SWR passenger train kilometres fell by only 1.2%, so its longer distance services might actually have grown, and offset an even larger fall in its suburban services. Also interesting is the marked contrast in the sale of ticket types. Whilst the market share of Advance, Anytime and Off-Peak tickets grew by a total of 40%, that for Season tickets fell by 63.4% .

*Roger Smith*

*We continue with the usual roundup of news items from groups around the UK. Please keep your contributions coming: they are all gratefully received.*

## Friends of the Far North Line

At FoFNL's AGM and Conference in Thurso, Alex Hynes, Managing Director of Abellio ScotRail/Network Rail Alliance, outlined improvements to the Far North Line, including a new push-button system that allows passengers wishing to board at a request stop to communicate directly with the train, obviating the need to prepare to stop on a visual signal. Kirsty Watson, ScotRail Project Manager, shared her experience of projects such as the Borders railway and reopening Airdrie-Bathgate. Alastair Dalton of The Scotsman gave valuable insights into why rail often gets a bad press, and how this could be avoided. Finally, Judith Crow described Flows to the Future, an RSPB initiative at Forsinard Station in the Flow Country. Closure of the request stop at Kildonan Station has since been mooted. The Highland Council passed a motion to oppose any such suggestion. Little-used stations in remote areas attract both walkers and cyclists.

## Friends of the West Highland Lines

The newly formed West Highland Lines Review Group will help to identify improvements to timetables and infrastructure, and to promote investment in services. Scottish Transport Minister Hamsa Yousaf said: "Building on the success of other groups...we are determined to make the most of this important asset for all users, particularly our tourism industry".

Earlier this year, The ScotRail Alliance launched a £400,000 Cycle Fund to improve access and facilities at stations in Scotland. Options to provide more space for bikes included redesigning the storage area in the Class 158 trains planned for the West Highland Lines next year, retaining the Class 156 trains or providing a dedicated bike vehicle. There may be a charge for a guaranteed cycle space. The Class 158 does not currently have gauge clearance, whilst the Class 156 units are undergoing major refurbishment, with brand new seating aligned to the windows.

11 April saw the first test run of four of the new Mark 5 sleeper coaches behind a Class 73 from Glasgow to Arrochar & Tarbet and return. However, Serco, which operates the Caledonian Sleepers, has taken a £30 million hit on its franchise, which has led to delays in the delivery of the new stock. From 2020, it can get the taxpayer to cover 50% of the losses, but may seek to exit the 15-year franchise early. The good news is that, from the start of the franchise, WHL sleeper journeys are up 84%.

### **Levenmouth Rail Campaign**

The East Fife Mail called for an improved cycle/footpath network to encourage tourism, but Levenmouth has major gaps south of the River. A rail connection would facilitate more active travel in the area. Local charity CLEAR has joined LMRC in calling for completion of this missing link, and has launched an Electric Bike project. Levenmouth needs to join other towns in the 21st Century. Its low level of car ownership and poorer health status should be major drivers to move ahead quickly.

### **Rail Action Group, East of Scotland**

On 5 June, Paul Wheelhouse MSP arranged a meeting with Transport Minister, Humza Yousaf MSP on behalf of RAGES and the organisers of the Reston Station Petition. East Berwickshire Council and Transport Scotland were also represented. The petition of over 3400 signatures reflected the level of frustration: residents who had moved to the area on the premise of a new Reston Station had moved away again. Local developers were lacking in confidence, with no transport links for day tourists or holidaymakers.

Paul showed the re-opening time line from RAGES' first campaign to the present day. A letter showed East Linton and Reston Stations opening in December 2016 with total cross-party support. RAGES said that, with no rail service and local filling station prices some 8p/litre higher than in Edinburgh, residents in the lowest average earnings area of Scotland had to provide their own transport. Thus many young people were denied tertiary education, whilst others move out, never to return. Dunbar too has seen a massive influx of new residents. With a further 1500 new houses planned, there too few trains to satisfy the numbers commuting to Edinburgh and beyond. A 21 May passenger count clearly showed the need for more trains.

The Transport Minister was also keen to see trains return; for East Linton and Reston stations to reopen early in Control Period 6 (CP6 - 2019 to 2024), Transport Scotland had to ensure that they were constructed in parallel to the upgrade of Portobello Junction. He would also update RAGES on the outcome of the Edinburgh – Berwick Capacity Study. Paul Wheelhouse MSP stated that on its conclusion, plans for both stations would be made public. Three weeks after the meeting, a re-shuffle saw Michael Matheson MSP take over as Minister for Transport. RAGES will seek to confirm that his predecessor's commitments stand.

### **Cumbrian coast Rail Users' Group**

The introduction of the May timetable did not cause as many problems locally as elsewhere. Contrary to fears that there might not be enough staff for all the trains, they ran on time for the first five days, although there were a few cancellations over Friday-Sunday, and an average of six cancellations and other short workings the following week. The emergency timetable from 4 June did not see the line lose any trains. The new transport hub at Maryport (car park and steps to the platform) has been officially opened.

### **Lakes Line Rail User Group**

Unsurprisingly, the latest newsletter is taken up with the whys and wherefores of the decision by Arriva Trains North to substitute buses for its entire rail service between Oxenholme and Windermere, and how, from 18 June, this came to be supplemented by six return services each day operated by West Coast Railway. The service was free of charge to passengers, the £5,500 daily cost of running the service being met by the DfT. Well done, WCR and all concerned!

### **Lancaster and Skipton Rail User Group**

Although the proposed May timetable could not be implemented in full, several key requirements have been met in the interim timetable: more commuting possibilities, later evening trains and better connections at Carnforth with the Furness line and at Leeds and Lancaster for onward journeys. There are now seven trains in each direction Monday to Saturday and an extra Sunday train each way. Deficiencies include the loss of one through train to Morecambe on Sundays, poorer changes at Lancaster (including the Isle of Man boat train) at certain times of day, and the four hour gap in the morning service from Morecambe to Leeds.

On 25 May, 50 guests gathered at Bentham station for the official launch of the Dementia and Community Rail Project led by the Leeds-Morecambe CRP, which has been developing the first dementia-friendly railway line in Britain. A special train ran from Leeds, complete with a commemorative headboard, forget-me-not signage and project posters, and picked up at Shipley, Keighley and Skipton, including a group of people living with dementia and their supporters who had helped during the development of the project. On arrival at Bentham, Gerald Townson, Chairman of the CRP detailed the positive effects the project is starting to have throughout the rail industry.

The project focuses on four main areas of development: raising staff, volunteer and passenger awareness of dementia, supporting journeys for those living with dementia and their carers, working to create dementia-friendly stations and services, and establishing a range of supporting activities including, on the Bentham Line, dementia-friendly walks from stations. In September, the project will form part of a DfT social inclusion event, and provide an opportunity for civil servants, train operators and southern CRPs to learn more about what is being developed for those with dementia and other hidden disabilities.

### **Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines**

After a new timetable led to Northern Rail cutting 6% of services until the end of July, Ribble Valley MP Nigel Evans demanded answers from its director Dave Brown. The Clitheroe - Rochdale service via Manchester Victoria being one of the worst affected, STORM urges its two MPs to contact the Minister too. Hazel Grove has nearly all the Manchester leaflets, whereas Piccadilly and Oxford Road have none.

The good news is that Northern is due to receive another six Class 170s from ScotRail later this month, which will presumably work the remaining Harrogate line diagrams, possibly with one for crew-training on the Leeds - Southport route. A full electric service between Edinburgh and Glasgow in July has been made possible by ScotRail's rapid introduction of redundant Class 365s pending the fitting of new windscreens to the Class 385 units seemingly now agreed.

[Rail Technology Magazine](#) reports that the Manchester - Preston line via Bolton will close for nine days later this year to hasten much-delayed electrification. Overnight and weekend working will continue until 4 November, but buses will replace trains from 25 August to 2 September. The project was due to complete last December, but the discovery of old mine workings, running sand and varying layers of rock held up the installation of hundreds of masts that carry the power cables. New engineering solutions - steel cylinders filled with concrete - were needed. Only three problem foundations (from a total of 1,659) now remain, with just under 120 masts left to install.

### **Harrogate Line Rail User Group**

Correction: in the June issue of Rail User Express, it was the Harrogate Line Rail User Group not the Supporters Group who negotiated with Peter Myers of Northern Rail to have the train stops at Pannal, Weeton, Headingley and Burley Park re-instated in the Harrogate Line timetable.

Like STORM last month, the Group believes that, before a Penalty Fare scheme is introduced, there should be a ticket machine on every platform at every station, with two machines on busy platforms. The list of stations on the machine is also an issue. If the final destination is not shown, so a change of train is required, Northern's leaflet advises buying a single ticket to the Interchange station, and then another to one's destination, but this could add to the cost of the journey (*and entail a missed connection! – Ed.*)

### **Friends of the Barton Line**

From May, many Barton line services run a few minutes earlier or later, although some Sunday services are up to 10 minutes later. The 06:23 from Habrough to Cleethorpes no longer runs, and the first service from Barton is extended to Cleethorpes. Bus connections at Barton are no longer shown for three of the four Sunday trains. An additional TPE service has filled the Mon-Sat four-hour westbound gap at Habrough, and the Sunday eastbound calls have increased from five to seven.

### **Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users Group**

In the new East Midlands franchise, March will keep its Nottingham, Leicester, Birmingham, Cambridge, Norwich, Ipswich and Stansted Airport services; Thetford will have hourly trains to Cambridge, Nottingham, Peterborough and almost certainly Stansted Airport, but if he can reach agreement with another operator, the Franchising Director intends to withdraw the Liverpool, - Norwich express services after December 2021.

Birmingham to Stansted Airport is not as seasonal as some other routes so "more summer services" would be the lowest of PENRUG's priorities. In university terms, it is important for the timetabled services to meet the high demand on Sundays. NR is at present reluctant to allow any more passenger trains through Ely, so other priorities are somewhat academic, but there are aspirations for an extra morning peak train to Leicester, and for earlier and later trains between the north of Cambridge and Stansted Airport.

### **English Regional Transport Association**

ERTA is forming a Cobbler Line Reopening Committee to press for reopening Bedford-Northampton, with realignments around blockages. Land around Lavendon Road in Olney needs to be protected until the railway, a new station and car parking return to serve a potential catchment population of over 30,000. ERTA also campaigns to reopen the Peak line between Matlock and Buxton via Bakewell and Millers Dale, and so link the East Midlands and Derby to Manchester and the North West. It claims to have 11,000 signatures in support of this aim.

### **Barking and Gospel Oak Rail User Group**

Bombardier delivered the first of 54 new Class 710 trains to the NR test centre at Asfordby in Leicestershire last December, but it has yet to gain type approval to operate on NR tracks. There are said to be problems with the train management software. The train at the TfL 'launch event' at Willesden Depot on 20 June had to be towed there and back. TfL assured BGORUG that the peak service would continue until the electric trains arrived. However, Angel Train Leasing has now reclaimed one to prepare the fleet for service on the West Midlands Railway from November, so the five additional peak-time services can no longer be operated, nor will there be a spare train to replace any that break down, potentially causing 30-minute gaps in the service. Moreover, unless Bombardier obtain type approval for the Class 710 very soon, TfL may not get any into passenger service before the remaining seven diesel trains are withdrawn.

### **Bedford Commuters Association**

No less than 39% of the responses to the East Midlands Franchise Consultation were from Bedford! The main issue was the replacement of all Intercity services at Bedford by St Pancras to Corby trains. Not only would this cause hardship to commuters but, within the life of the franchise, Bedford Midland will be the Eastern terminus of East-West Rail. The proposal was mooted in Q4 of the consultation document. 57% of responses to this question did not agree with 24% agreeing. But despite such a negative response, the DfT has retained its proposal, albeit with one minor concession: 'we are also requiring peak time calls at stations between Leicester and Bedford in the counter peak direction'. However, there is a discrepancy between this statement and the Train Service Requirement. Meanwhile, together with APTU, BCA has met two of the three bidders for the franchise to discuss their aspirations.

### **Hitchin Rail User and Commuter Groups**

A stakeholders meeting was told that, to achieve stability, the Interim timetable from 15 July would be based on the May timetable, with some deletions and no Special Stop Orders. But as HRUG forcefully pointed out, even if it were implemented in full, and every train ran to time, the Hitchin service would be hopelessly inadequate; any partial implementation can only be even worse. Before the May timetable began, stakeholders were advised that lessons would be learnt and changes made from the outset. They surely have been, so why start the process all over again with an inferior service?

GTR claim its station staff "are trained to manage any safety concerns with overcrowding", but there have been instances of passengers being told that a train will call, so surging forward to the edge of the platform, only for the train to run through, as it is already full to capacity. Deferment of the H+54 Cambridge-Brighton service that would have called at Hitchin at H+56 has left gaping holes that simply must be filled in the short term. To replace the 0756, HRUG has suggested stopping one of the two fast services that leave Peterborough at 0705 and 0714. However, with the RDG announcement that there will be no significant changes until May 2019, there is now no end in sight to Hitchin's dangerously low level of service.

At a previous meeting, GTR confirmed that delay repay would apply if a train was on time, but was so overcrowded that it was impossible to board. However, each and every delay had to be the subject of a separate claim.

## **Chesham & District Transport Users' Group**

Trains started using the new signalling system between Hammersmith and Latimer Road on time in June. It is now being extended to Edgware Road, and should be south of Finchley Road by the end of the year. The project is due for completion by 2023. North of Harrow on the Hill, physical signals will be retained, as the line is shared with Chiltern Railways' trains.

TfL is planning step free access for 30 stations at a cost of £200m; Amersham is scheduled for completion by the end of 2019. At Aldgate it is unclear which train is going where: train describers often do not work, and drivers don't set train destinations until just before departure.

## **Windsor Lines Passengers Association**

The "Our Performance" section in SWR's March 2018 Customer Report Summary leaflet makes interesting statistics difficult to interpret. The Public Performance Measure (PPM) for the previous six months, and for the franchise to date, are expressed only as a range of 80% - 85%; actual percentages are given only for four categories of service timeliness. But whereas it would have been sensible to show On Time, Quite Late (up to 15 mins), Very Late, and Cancelled as four mutually exclusive percentages adding up to 100%, there is Right Time, Cancelled And Significantly Late, Up To 15 Minutes Late (which includes Right Time trains) and Cancellations. So to get Significantly (ie very) Late trains, you have to subtract Cancellations from Cancelled and Significantly Late, and to get Quite Late, subtract Right Time from Up To 15 Minutes Late. This yields the useful breakdown of Right Time 54.7%, Quite Late 39.3%, Very Late 0.37%, Cancelled 3.83% - which total just 98.2%. Maybe the missing 1.8% were early!

SWR will soon decide on the internal design of its new Class 701 trains without any public consultation. WLPA emphasised its opposition to lateral seating. Two thirds of the trains will be fixed 10 car formations, which will be fully accessible throughout.

The glut of orders for new trains as many rail companies take advantage of low interest rates could be bad news for Bombardier, currently the only major passenger carriage manufacturer in Britain. It has a full order book now, as do CAF (Spain), Siemens (Germany) and Stadler (Switzerland), all for the British market. But when these are completed, the three Europe based companies can seek orders overseas, whereas Bombardier, unlike previous British railway stock builders, has no export market for its trains.

## **Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group**

On 2 July, the 1707 from Paddington to Bedwyn was one of the new nine-car IET trains, the first time that an IET has called at Bedwyn. Electrification as far as Newbury could have relegated Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn to a diesel shuttle to Newbury, so the Group campaigned long and hard to get the decision reversed. The decision to purchase bi-mode IET trains has saved the day.

## **Tonbridge Line Commuters**

The comment last month on "the addition of an Orpington stop in West Kent services" referred to the draft December 2022 timetable, not the May one. TLC is fighting the proposal, as it believes that it would lead to overcrowding for West Kent passengers. Unsurprisingly, the MP for Orpington – Rail Minister Jo Johnson – supports it. However, TLC does welcome the more positive aspects of the 2022 service, including fast off-peak trains between Tonbridge and London Bridge, and doubling the off-peak services to Ashford.

## RAILFUTURE

*Railfuture welcomes new members, both individual and groups: the more we are, the more effective our campaigns. Join Railfuture [here](#). From the "Membership Types" menu top right, select either the appropriate category of individual or, to affiliate, select "RUG or similar". Read the latest from Railfuture and its Campaigns by clicking on [News and views](#), [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Railfuture consultation responses](#).*



Nominations for Railfuture's seventh RUG Awards are open until Saturday 1 September in nine categories:

- 1 & 2 - Best newsletter - Gold and Silver awards [not available to last year's winners]
- 3 & 4 - Best website - Gold and Silver awards [not available to last year's winners]
- 5 - Best social media promotion
- 6 - Best campaign
- 7 - Best individual RUG campaigner [for Railfuture members only]
- 8 - Best new group
- 9 - Judges' Special Award

Its [website](#) explains how to make a nomination/submission. RUGs and individuals can self-nominate, except in Category 7. A Railfuture Vice-President will visit, offering a photo-opportunity. The Scottish Parliament no less hailed last year's winner of the Gold Award for Best Newsletter, Friends of the Far North Line! An independent Judging Panel, including the Vice-Presidents, will make each award on merit; the Judges' Special Award is at its sole discretion. The awards will be presented at the [annual conference](#) in Reading on Saturday, 10 November. Early bird booking for members is open until 31 August.

The Transportation Research Group (TRG) invites rail users aged 18 and over to take part in a 7-10 minute [questionnaire survey](#) to explore the effectiveness of train occupancy information in encouraging change in passengers' behaviour. Responses will inform the design of an App to help reduce overcrowding.

In a Railfuture [article](#), Ray King reports the Urban Transport Group's conclusion that significant rail expansion is the 'only viable option' for UK cities to achieve economic growth and meet the housing demand, whilst also creating attractive urban centres with less road traffic and better air quality. The report sets out a vision of what a step change in rail provision could mean for passengers and cities - and the obstacles that stand in the way. The Group's report may be downloaded [here](#).

## PASSENGER GROUP

### ORR Consultation Report

Towards the end of last year, the ORR issued a consultation on a review of the Assisted Travel Scheme. It has now published a summary of all the responses, including that from the [Passenger Group](#), together with an [outline](#) of how it intends to take forward the issues identified.

As reported above, the Rail Delivery Group has announced that there will only be minor changes to the timetables of 8 train operating companies in December. Policy Director Ian Brown gives [Railfuture's view](#) of this decision.

### European Passenger Group

The European Passengers Federation wants informed input into its discussions, with independent feedback on the British scene both positive and negative. Dennis Fancett represents the EPG, which has also established senior level liaison with Eurostar on issues of concern to Railfuture members. Amsterdam is seen as the key market, second only to Paris, and Brussels rather than Lille as the key development hub.

It does not intend to provide a German service. Railfuture is urged to promote the use of both Interrail (second class travel by EU citizens) and Eurail (first class travel for anyone), and encourage visitors to Britain to use their passes. The company is investing in smart phone apps, so Railfuture must address the smart phone generation.

## TOC Reports

Railfuture West Midlands has established good working relations with WMT, the new TOC, and the WM Rail Executive. Delegates from RUGs, Local Authorities, County Councils and Airports are updating the current 34 Station Travel Plans and creating 39 new ones. The Commonwealth Games has injected urgency into rebuilding both Perry Barr and University stations. A meeting of the RFWM Secretary and three RUGs with the Lead Engineer of CAF led to a 30mm increase in Class 196 seat spacing. Extending the electrified Cross-City line to Bromsgrove should start on 29 July – a test unit crested the 1 in 37 Lickey Bank at 60mph from a standing start. On the LNWR, Bletchley depot is being reactivated to accommodate the Vivarail Class 230 trains for the Marston Vale line, and a new one built at Duddeston to house the 45 new 110mph five-car Aventras entering service in spring 2021 on the Birmingham-Northampton-Euston and Trent Valley-Liverpool services, as well as the 36 x 90mph three-car Class 730s for the Cross-City line.

With little Cross-Country news, XCT liaison is focused on unmet demand and a vision that concentrates on inter-city services, with local connections left to regionally based TOCs. A two-hourly cycle of Inter-City services is proposed: Plymouth to Leeds, Bournemouth to Manchester one hour; Plymouth to Manchester, Bournemouth to Leeds the next, plus hourly express services including Cardiff to Newcastle and Liverpool to Brighton, with occasional extensions beyond the usual termini also considered.

The Chiltern Railways Passenger Board expressed its concern about fleet reliability, although this has improved this year. CR is focusing on catching defects earlier, although service disruption arising from NR infrastructure and operational issues still dominate. CR has no plans to acquire any additional rolling stock before its 20-year franchise ends in December 2021. However, the May timetable added 1200 seats in the evening peak and strengthened the Oxford service, which continues to grow. A software update later this year will improve the flexibility of the new ticket vending machines installed at every CR station.

At the launch of a Local Plan for Kent Rail with RDG/NR/South Eastern, Chris Fribbins described the impact of the timetable change on passengers in North Kent, when their very reliable half hourly Charing Cross service was handed over to Thameslink. For weeks before there was publicity preparing passengers for the changeover, and to check the new timetable and destinations – but no warning of the ensuing problems.

Arriva Trains Wales timekeeping continues to be very good, especially in the core Cardiff Valleys. This is one of NR's best performing areas, and it will be disappointed to lose maintenance to Amey. Most of the very few cancellations were down to staff shortages on the Cambrian and some in West Wales, and a few for rolling stock availability. A major problem is the late delivery of the bi-mode Class 769 units for the Rhymney line, and thus the release of units for the Chester-Liverpool service, and of Class 150 and 158 units for disability compliance work. Other maintenance problems include a Class 175 undergoing long-term repair, and corrosion rectification on the last but one Class 150 at Crewe. Two Class 143s are at Long Marston for corrosion work, including the four local governments sets; a Class 158 is at Colas Canton for damage repair, as well as a Class 142/143 unit. So it is very difficult for ATW to operate a full service, and some services are short formed. GWR cancellations, short formations and late running have put a further strain on South Wales main line services and station staff.

GWR has been asked to treat Somerset County Cricket fixtures at Taunton as Special Events requiring extra resources. A Railfuture proposal to create a direct Swindon-Southampton Airport service by combining the Swindon-Westbury and the SWR Salisbury-Eastleigh-Romsey services is under serious consideration. The most likely rolling stock formation for the planned Cardiff-Portsmouth service is a three-car Class 166 coupled to a two-car Class 165, the latter running between Cardiff and Westbury only.

West Somerset Railway has identified three markets for a regular service linking it with the main line, and is now working out the likely gap between costs and fares of such a service. GWR is preparing for a regular daily service to Okehampton, reducing the isolation from the network of a large area of North West Devon and North Cornwall. Announcing engineering possessions at less than 12 weeks' notice hamper advance bookings. During blockades at Swindon, posters and leaflets advised Gloucester-London passengers to take a substitute bus to Reading, but local staff suggested an alternative rail route via Bristol Temple Meads.

The first three of SWR's summer Saturday services from Salisbury to Corfe Castle via Yeovil and Weymouth were absolutely full. However, a Havant-Waterloo commuter is critical of the company's Delay Repay: the web form is incredibly slow, and insists on a year/month/day format, which is inconvenient.

## RAILFUTURE NORTHWEST

Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling called Northern leaders to see how services could be improved. Rail Minister Jo Johnson is leading discussion of the issue with Barry White, Chief Executive of Transport for the North (TfN), and Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Manchester. Measures in the plan include:

- Improving driver rostering to get more trains running immediately
- Increasing driver training on new routes to get more services on line as soon as possible
- Additional contingency drivers and management presence at key locations in Manchester
- Extra peak services along the Bolton corridor, including Buckshaw to Manchester Victoria, and Preston to Manchester Oxford Road.

## RAILFUTURE NORTHEAST

Guest speaker at the AGM was Ian Coe, Principal Transport Planner with North East Combined Authority (NECA). He explained how in 2016 NECA had started on a "transport manifesto" for the Metro, local rail, and national rail. The local one called for integrated ticketing with provision for smart payment, the withdrawal of Pacers, development of a regional express network, faster trains, more electrification, new local stations, reopening of disused lines, more Park and Ride facilities, and upgrade freight movement. The national manifesto highlighted increased capacity and better reliability on the ECML, improved long distance connections from market towns in the region, and more and faster trains to Leeds. The public was concerned about integration of different transport modes, and the Transport Plan may well refer to this.

At a Branch meeting in April, Ray Brewis, Project manager for Durham CC described the gestation of the new station for Horden, on the coast Line between Seaham and Hartlepool, planned for spring 2020. As a former construction engineer, Ray was "on the ball" where building and planning matters were concerned, and so was able to stand his ground with NR officials as they worked through a seemingly endless list of problems. The necessary finance, around £10.8m, looks to have been secured via grants from the Local Growth Fund, and £4.4m from each of DfT's New Stations Fund and DCC.

Despite the loss of the VTEC franchise to LNER, concerns about the financial health of both the TPE and Northern franchises, the whole raft of cancellations following the introduction of the May timetable and continuing industrial action on Northern Rail, RFNE urges people to be inspired: flag up the environmental advantages of rail, its ability to move large numbers of people efficiently in and out of busy urban centres, and its excellent safety record. The railway has many advantages over both its road and air competitors. In spite of the not inconsiderable challenges faced by the industry, and the uncertainty (and sometimes the ineptitude) of political decision making in Westminster, rail has a tremendous future.

Last Autumn, Network Rail (NR) mooted various improvements to the ECML and services using it, including a power upgrade north of Doncaster, enhanced junction capacity at York Station, a line speed increase to 140mph between York and Northallerton, upgrading Darlington Station with two additional platforms, provision for longer trains at Newcastle Central, and new freight loops between York and Berwick. RFNE found the suggestions timid and lacking in urgency. Upgrading the Stillington route for passenger use, reinstating the Leamside Line, and a passenger service over the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne were largely shelved. Stopping services north of Newcastle were not adequately addressed, nor were any new stations mooted. Darlington need not be the only "gateway" for Tees Valley, nor even the major one. RFNE suggests creating a four-line route from Northallerton to Ferryhill by upgrading the line via Eaglescliffe, Stockton (a gateway to the old Teesside area) and the Stillington freight line, back to the ECML at Tursdale.

## RAILFUTURE LONDON AND THE SOUTH EAST

A year ago, RFLSE responded to NR's draft Kent Area Route Study consultation by suggesting that the freight-only branch line on the Hoo Peninsula between the Thames and Medway rivers serve passengers on the housing development, whilst a spur towards Strood would allow freight to avoid Gravesend/Dartford and Lewisham without the need to reverse at Hoo Junction. It could also utilise the spare passenger capacity at Strood. Pending the final Kent Area Route Study, the shadow sub-national transport body,

Transport for the South East (TfSE), consulted on its draft Economic Connectivity Review. At its launch in May, TfSE was awarded £1million by the DfT for a transport strategy “to improve connectivity and drive economic growth.” Railfuture argues that Hoo housing development should have a Hoo passenger railway.

In northwest London, the 4-mile/6.4-km Dudding Hill freight line, between Acton Wells on the Richmond Line and a delta junction on the Midland Main Line just north of Cricklewood, also has passenger potential. The Mayor of London’s Transport Strategy 2018 proposes a service from Hounslow in the west to Hendon and West Hampstead via the strategic interchange at Old Oak Common, and passing through Zones 2-5.

Following a deal with Porterbrook Leasing, GWR is adding 19 tri-mode Class 769 trains to its network next spring. Able to run on overhead and third-rail electric lines, as well as under their own power, they will be introduced on routes between Reading and Gatwick, and Reading and Oxford, but could be used anywhere they are needed. RFLSE suggests an Oxford – Gatwick service, which would also provide one of the 3 trains per hour on the North Downs line. The new trains will release a similar number of Turbo trains to the Bristol area, offering the potential for launching new routes through the city.

RFLSE welcomes the significant additional resources that London & Southern Counties Railways Consortium is bringing to bear on developing additional connectivity and capacity north and east of the capital. Railfuture’s working title, [Thameslink 2](#), conveys the core message about cross-London links, whereas the Brighton Main Line requires a change at London Bridge or Victoria. At East Croydon, the new line would link both to the BML and to an alternative route to the coast created by reopening Uckfield – Lewes. RFLSE looks forward to news of its alignment with the DfT’s Market-Led Proposals, with initial submissions by 31 July, and also with TfSE’s Economic Connectivity Review.

## TRAVELWATCH SOUTHWEST

TWSW is a forum for user groups to hear from key rail and local and central government figures. Feedback tends to be limited, but doors may open for follow up meetings, often outside the auspices of TWSW. However, it’s unclear where volunteer/campaign groups can gain the background knowledge novices to public transport need to make the most of the opportunities, so TWSW is offering Master classes twice a year, designed to fill the gap; unfortunately, the first on 2 July was cancelled for lack of demand.

Board member Graham Ellis commends the advert free [Great Western Coffee Shop](#) forum, which is also free to sign up. It has relevant articles, and provides continual feedback for any member who seeks it.

## TRAVELWATCH NORTHWEST

STORM quotes an impassioned letter from TWNW to Transport Minister Jo Johnson MP pleading for the Settle – Carlisle line to be used as a diversionary route between Preston and Carlisle, and accusing him of taking a mainly negative stance driven by cost minimisation and operational convenience. TF research consistently shows that passengers prefer to remain on trains, even if there is a time penalty. However, a Voyager or a loco-hauled Pendolino would take no longer than a bus replacement, with considerably less transfer time, and much better on-board facilities. A single Pendolino would replace no fewer than 18 buses, whilst 5 sets of Voyagers could provide an hourly service; the paths are available. The Franchisee is required to use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that alternative arrangements are fit for purpose, and operated at a similar frequency to the rail service. Replacement coaches meet neither the spirit nor the letter of their agreement when there is a perfectly good alternative rail route available.

## ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS

On 1 July, the East Hampshire and Three Rivers CRPs re-launched the South Downs Rambler rail bus service. Linking two major gateway stations, Winchester and Petersfield, it criss-crosses the South Downs Way, and visits some of Hampshire’s most spectacular landscapes and viewing points, as well as country pubs and tourist attractions. The service operates every Sunday and Bank Holiday to 2 September, and is funded for the 2019 and 2020 seasons as well, thanks to Cross Country Trains.

Scenic Rail Britain is looking for blogs to promote community rail lines across the country, and ACoRP for examples of TOCs working with the Campaign for Real Ale or local pubs/breweries. If your line has special events planned, wants to show off scenery, or works with CAMRA, ACoRP would like to hear from you.

ACoRP is proud to announce the ten shortlisted entries for this year's Community Rail Awards photo competition, sponsored by Porterbrook, with theme "*Community rail in action*".

## CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT

Public transport has the potential to unclog our streets, clean up our air and fight climate change. The Government should be doing all it can to help those who travel by bus or train, so why do we have to struggle with rising fares, dwindling services and timetable chaos? CBT believes that it's time for some passenger power! It urges everyone to take part in the ongoing rail fares consultation (see below), and wants to hear how cuts to bus services, eg to rail stations, are harming the community.

## TRANSPORT FOCUS

Transport Focus has published the Main Report of its spring 2018 [National Rail Passenger Survey](#). The main fieldwork took place between 15 January and 28 March. Grand Central and Heathrow Express with 95%, Merseyrail (92%), Chiltern Railways (90%) and Virgin Trains (89%) achieved the highest ratings for overall satisfaction. The lowest ratings were given to Southern and TfL (69%), Southeastern (75%), Greater Anglia (76%), and Great Northern (78%), although Thameslink showed significant improvement.

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

DfT has opened a consultation on the Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise (link below), and published a Prospectus for potential bidders. The consultation document reviews the current franchise and recent improvements, challenges facing the operator, options for improvement, and its vision for the future. Annex A lists the footfall and service level at every station served by Cross Country. Chris Burton moots a new service from Stansted Airport to Nottingham via Cambridge, Ely, Peterborough, Stamford, Melton Mowbray, Loughborough and East Midlands Parkway, integrating with the Nottingham-Cardiff service.

The DfT has published a [Stakeholder Briefing Document and Consultation Response](#) for the East Midlands Rail Franchise, together with an [Invitation to Tender](#). Peak-time EM services between Bedford, Luton and London St Pancras remain withdrawn until 2020. Passengers travelling from the north to Luton in the peak need to change at Luton Airport, and return on a Thameslink service, but Bedford passengers from the north in the peak have to rely on a coach service from Wellingborough.

On a visit to Moseley in March, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said the DfT would study the proposals for passenger services through Moseley, Hazelwell and Kings Heath stations on the Camp Hill line, which connects Kings Norton to the West Coast Main Line east of Birmingham New Street, and is mostly used by freight trains, but also some Cross Country services. Friends of Kings Heath station held a public meeting on 7 June. Birmingham City Council strongly supports its re-opening although it has no car park, being in a densely urban area. A modal shift to avoid financial penalties for excessive air pollution contributes to the case for local rail in the city.

The Welsh Government has chosen Keolis and Amey to operate the Wales and Borders passenger franchise from October 2018 to 2033. It meets numerous objectives set out in Railfuture Wales' development plan, '[On Track for the 21st Century](#)', but final judgement awaits its timely delivery. Given NR's lack of involvement and the problems with electrification in England, it will be interesting to see if the Valleys work is completed to budget and on time. The significant improvement in Sunday services is something that Railfuture has long called for. The metro proposals make little use of the flexibility of trams to access areas away from the existing route network, and proposals to integrate rail/tram and bus travel are still vague, but such issues are for the future. Meanwhile, let's celebrate what could herald a historic improvement in rail services in Wales over the next five years. The [Railfuture AGM](#) in Cardiff on 18 May 2019 will feature the new franchise and its procurement process.

ORR, the rail regulator, is consulting on PR18, its [draft determination](#) of NR plans for the control period to 2024, based on its eight route-based Strategic Business Plans. The ORR has identified greater scope for NR to benefit passengers and freight users by delivering an additional £1bn of renewals to boost reliability and safety. It continues to engage with stakeholders as it works towards its final determination on 31 October. The ORR is also undertaking a three-stage Inquiry into the implementation of May timetables: gathering evidence, diagnosing what went wrong, and developing recommendations. An interim report in September will be followed by a full report by the end of the year. This inquiry is in addition to that begun in February into why final timetables across the network are being produced just six weeks in advance, rather than twelve: how the issue arose, whether the industry is delivering against its obligations, and whether it is responding to minimise the impact on passengers.

Together, the Rail Delivery Group, which represents train operating companies, and passenger watchdog Transport Focus, have launched a consultation on rationalising the byzantine fares structure (see below). It is not advocating any specific changes at this stage, but seeks to understand the type of system and structure passengers want to see. The aim is to be revenue neutral, so that any changes to some fares would need to be balanced elsewhere; the consultation looks at the possible trade-offs involved. The target date for the final report is “the late autumn”.

Following House of Commons approval of the Airports National Policy Statement authorising the next stage of the process to approve a third runway at London Heathrow Airport, Graham Cross, Chief Executive of Heathrow Southern Railway Limited (HSRL) – the independent venture set up to transform its rail network – commented: “The Government’s engagement process with private sector promoters of a [southern rail link](#) to Heathrow needs to be taken forward to a conclusion with urgency. It is imperative that new rail links to Heathrow are opened as soon as possible to ameliorate existing road congestion and poor air quality, whilst anticipating further growth in passenger numbers associated with the third runway.”

NR and RIBA have launched a [competition](#) seeking new designs for fully accessible footbridges that can be used across Britain’s rail network. They should be innovative, challenge presumptions, raise expectations for the quality of future designs, and have regard to how they might be adapted for use in other settings such as at level crossings. The closing date is Tuesday 18 September 2018.

Meanwhile, the planning authority in Wareham has rejected plans for a footbridge to replace the pedestrian level crossing. However, the [Dorset Echo](#) reports that county’s most misused crossing is the one in Poole High Street, with 36% of the 86 incidents recorded in the last year.

## CONSULTATIONS

- DfT: [Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise](#), closes 30 August.
- RDG/Transport Focus: [Easier Fares Consultation](#), closes 10 September.

Please advise [Roger Blake](#) of any other consultation, eg that of a local Transport Authority.

### *...and finally*

Correction: the story last month regarding a tweet from Thameslink that likened its woeful service to Poundland cooking chocolate ended “but Poundland is now facing administration”. Actually, it is Poundworld that has suffered that fate. My apologies for the confusion and for any embarrassment – Ed.

Awaiting the 10:38 Glasgow Central, four intrepid STORM members and a dog spotted a Liverpool Lime Street Class 319 named 'The Flying Scouseman'.

Less “and finally”; more a new beginning: the Paris Metro authority has granted free travel for 25 years to a baby that was “unexpectedly” born on its RER A commuter line.

## EVENTS

Do please keep your events coming, both to me and to [Roger Blake \(Railfuture\)](#), who maintains the Railfuture [List of Events](#) to attend, and now a [List of Key Dates](#) for consultations, franchise changes, CP6 planning, service alterations for major rail projects etc. As a Calendar of Events embedded in a document may be discarded, and that is a problem if the venue changes from month to month, a stand-alone copy would be very helpful.

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

- Railfuture events (rail user group representatives are cordially invited).
- National & regional rail events.
- Local Group events.

### July

- Saturday 14. Cumbrian Coast Rail Users’ Group, Methodist Church hall, **Seascale**, 1350. (Also 11 August and 8 September).
- Wednesday 18. Friends of the Barton Line AGM, The Sloop, **Barton**, 2000 (also 19 September, 21 November).
- Thursday 19. Magor Action Group On Rail, Golden Lion, **Magor**, 1930 (and the 3rd Thursday every month).

## **August**

- Tuesday 7. Chesham and District Transport Users' Group, Town Hall, **Chesham**, 1930 (also 18 September (followed by the AGM), 23 October, 11 December.)
- Tuesday 28. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Fife College, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 1830 (also 25 September and 30 October).

## **Further Ahead**

- Monday 10 September. Skipton East Lancs Rail Action Partnership, Crown Hotel, **Colne**; (Also 12 November, Herriots Hotel, Skipton; 28 January 2019, Earby, and 11 March, AGM at The Lesser Municipal Hall, Albert Road, Colne).
- 29 September. Railfuture East Anglia, Norwich TBC.
- October. TravelWatch SouthWest AGM. Details TBN.
- 6 October. Railfuture Branches and Groups Day, **Birmingham**, 1030.
- 15 October. Avocet Line Rail Users Group AGM, Globe Hotel, **Topsham**, 1900.
- 16 October. Felixstowe Travel Watch, Salvation Army Church, **Felixstowe**, 1430.
- 20 October. Railfuture Herts and Beds, St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, **St Albans**, 1045.

Disclaimer: unless otherwise indicated, views expressed in Rail User Express are those of the contributing organization, and not necessarily shared by Railfuture.

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