



May 2017

## Welcome to the Rail User Express.

Feel free to forward it to a colleague, or to reproduce items in your own newsletter (quoting sources). For further detail of any of the stories mentioned, consult the relevant website, or come back to [me](#) for the source material. Please say if you no longer wish to receive Rail User Express, or if you know of anyone who would like to be added to the circulation list.

Official announcements and consultations may be on hold during the general election purdah, but that need not prevent you from making your nominations for the **Railfuture Annual RUG Awards** listed on page 6; the Rules are set out on the Railfuture web page, and details of the venue and booking arrangements are on its Conference page. As RUG Liaison Officer, I urge you not to miss this chance to put your group in the limelight - any award would attract local publicity. RUGs contribute to Railfuture's aims in so many ways: not only promoting its campaigns locally, but also gathering intelligence, and monitoring and helping to shape performance. The rooftops want to hear from you!

*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.*

## Levenmouth Rail Campaign

Levenmouth is on the northern limit of the Edinburgh City Region, so if the new City Region concept has any value, the imminent City Deal will promote the Levenmouth rail-link. Brexit may land Edinburgh, "the second most prosperous city outside London", with growing staff shortages, so its economy will need workers, supplies and housing from locations such as Levenmouth for mutual benefit; thus better connections are a priority. As the Scotsman put it: "Organisers of an impressive campaign to re-open a five-mile stretch of mothballed railway...from Thornton to Leven must be wondering what more they have to do to persuade the Scottish Government to reconnect what is described as the largest urban area in Scotland without a train service."

NR already owns the track, so no land acquisition, Act of Parliament or Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) is needed. With Fife Circle services easily extended, three major transport studies completed since 2006, a large population catchment in an area of high deprivation that accommodates industry of national importance, and massive local support - the case is overwhelming. On 1 June at 1100, outside the Scottish Parliament, LMRC will hand Transport Minister, Humza Yousaf a petition with some 12,000 mainly local signatories. Leven should be the easiest transport project to authorise that any Minister has ever had. If rail services cannot be reinstated there, how can they be justified anywhere?

## Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

RAGES has submitted evidence refuting CrossCountry's assertion that low levels of loading justify reducing the 0700 Dunbar to Glasgow service from a 5-car set to a 4-car, and terminating the 0925 Plymouth to Aberdeen service at Edinburgh. Both proposals would lead to overcrowding and massive inconvenience. Nor will the 125 sets that XC is relying on another operator to take over its Edinburgh to Aberdeen, Dundee to Aberdeen and Aberdeen to Edinburgh paths be available until the replacement Class 800 stock has been fully commissioned, and that is nowhere near the 2017 date.

## Community Rail Lancashire

According to the [2016 Annual Report](#) for CRL and its four Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs), the main thrust of its activities during the year has been the expansion of its Education Programme, thanks to a grant from Northern's Seed Corn Fund. There was a real buzz at Accrington, with a class of 30 or so young people in the 'bunker' learning all the dos and don'ts of a railway put across in a positive way. Yet the real excitement was the train ride. For most it was a first time experience, and seeing their environment in a totally new way was a tremendous thrill. To capitalise on this, each pupil got a 'Passport to Safe Rail Travel' to encourage them to take the train again with their family. The event was recognised at the 2016 Community Rail Awards by a First in the Involving Young People category.

## Support The Oldham Rochdale Manchester lines (STORM)

Northern has advised the following fare changes from 21 May:

- Cheap Day Return fares in Greater Manchester will increase by up to 50p, taking the maximum fare to £5.90 – overcoming longstanding regional fare disparity across the network, and making its pricing structure more consistent.
- Certain Advance Purchase fares are amended, with some new products but others removed where there has been a lack of demand.
- The prices of the TfGM managed Greater Manchester (GM) Wayfarer and Concessionary Wayfarer for those over 60 will change. A new GM Child Wayfarer will be half the price of an Adult Wayfarer.
- A number of Anytime Day Single fares within Lancashire and Cumbria have been increased by up to 50p to align them with other SDS fares within Lancashire and Cumbria, but have been reduced where they were above 90% of the Anytime Day Return (SDR) fare.
- A new Advance Purchase on the Day (APOD) product – a franchise commitment - will enable customers on specified routes to buy an AP ticket up to 15 minutes before their journey departs. APOD fares are subject to all the current terms and conditions, with the addition that tickets are only available from the Northern app or website, with fulfilment via mticket.

## Harrogate Line Supporters Group

HLSG is dismayed that the current Northern Rail proposals for extra trains between Leeds and Harrogate from December will not meet the needs of the many businesses, students and residents in Harrogate and north west Leeds. Key stakeholders have not been consulted. The four tph promised was always presumed to be a walk-up service at 15 min intervals, with all trains stopping at every station as on the London Overground. Instead, Northern has proposed two virtually independent services:

- The current half-hourly Leeds-Harrogate-Knaresborough service serving all stations
- A new half-hourly "fast" service between Harrogate, Horsforth and Leeds only - just 6-7 mins faster than the "all stops" service.

What is the point of saving a few minutes for passengers travelling directly between Leeds and Harrogate, whilst ignoring a significant section of the underlying demand by depriving around 35% of the route's users at Burley Park, Headingley, Hornbeam Park and Pannal stations of any benefit from the additional services?

## Aire Valley Rail Users Group

Passenger numbers at the new stations of Apperley Bridge and Kirkstall Forge are well in excess of the projected figures. However, the service pattern is not ideal, being a modification of the existing timetable, with no additional resource. Apperley Bridge is mainly served by Bradford trains, and by Skipton services in the evening; reaching it from Airedale stations normally requires changing trains at Shipley. Kirkstall Forge is served mostly by Ilkley trains, with some peak hour stops in Skipton services; however, most journeys involve travelling into Leeds and back out, with poor connections. Development of the Forge site will drive the need for an improved timetable, but this isn't planned until December 2019, when the line should also benefit from new and longer trains.

In the early evening of 7 June 2016, three passenger trains passed over a section of single line at Baildon, where part of the supporting embankment had been washed away by floodwater, leaving one of the rails unsupported over a length of 3-4 metres. None of the trains derailed and no one was injured.

Members of the public had reported that part of the embankment had been washed away – to the police. Although the messages were relayed to NR, they were not acted upon effectively owing to confusion regarding the nature of the problem and its location; a train crew had reported flooding at a separate location nearby. The Rail Accident Investigation Board made three recommendations to NR relating to:

- Minimising the risk of further washouts at Baildon
- Improving the emergency response to incidents by providing NR with accurate location information
- Improving the communication of safety critical information between incident controllers, signallers and drivers.

### **North Cheshire Rail Users' Group**

All is in place for the reopening of the Halton Curve in December 2018: crossover and signalling at Frodsham and Halton junctions, overhead line installation, the selection of an operator and a timetable. Track renewal will allow for future doubling with minimum disruption and cost. NCRUG is promoting a rapid transit link between Liverpool John Lennon Airport and South Parkway station. Dr Chris Featherstone, systems engineer of the [Heathrow POD](#) gave a presentation to Cllr Liam Robinson and David Jones of Merseytravel, and then at Liverpool Airport to Robin Tudor, its Business Services Manager. Although the current throughput of the airport would not justify the necessary capital expenditure, this could change with the opening of the Halton Curve and the two Runcorn road bridges. Dr Featherstone has since suggested that a feasibility study be undertaken to determine whether the POD could be a cost-effective solution for a quick dedicated link between airport and station.

The University of Chester has assumed Chairmanship of North Cheshire CRP, and hopes to appoint a Community Rail Officer (CRO). An outline presentation has been prepared to enlist local support. What is already a poor service on the Ellesmere Port/Helsby line is being further run down by replacing it with just one Leeds train per day to and from Ellesmere Port instead of Chester. NCRUG welcomes the new service, but not at the expense of the existing service - a minimum requirement of the Franchise, so would this put Northern in breach of its contract? NCRUG made strong representations to Sharon Keith, its West Regional Director, as a first step in a campaign for a service that meets the requirements of this developing area. An hourly service all day between Hooton and Helsby would need just one unit. Then, as more rolling stock becomes available, Northern ought to provide the level of service that the line has long warranted.

### **Shrewsbury to Chester Rail Users Association**

A [written statement](#) to the Welsh Assembly included the following: “We have also been examining options to increase capacity and improve flexibility on the line between Wrexham and Chester and at the stations using the £10m funding announced by the previous Government”; a second announcement listed 12 new stations, including Wrexham North and South, and Deeside Industrial Park (on the Wrexham-Bidston line).

The double track from Saltney Junction to a new Rossett Junction has finally been commissioned. Upgraded level crossings and signalling will allow for 90mph running, building resilience and with opportunities for service improvement. A Wrexham North Parkway station, probably close to the A483 interchange at Rossett would require further redoubling at around £5m/mile, so could this be where the extra £10m comes in? Extending the dual track southwards and from the Gresford A483 bridge south to Rhosddu Junction may be possible with the finance available. The Gresford to Wrexham section would not require any level crossings work, and leave just a couple of miles of track remaining. However, redoubling the whole route would require rebuilding the A483 bridge, and earth stabilisation work on Gresford bank due to historical subsidence issues.

SCRUA continues to stress the need for a 30 min frequency, and has suggested an alternative service: an all station shuttle from Shrewsbury to Crewe via Wrexham and Chester, together with services to Liverpool, Holyhead, Birmingham and Cardiff. For a parkway station to be viable, a rail service more frequent than hourly would be required, particularly if train and bus transfer were involved. SCRUA does not know where a Wrexham South station might be. Possible sites are Johnstown, the Cefn Mawr area, or a parkway in the area of Rhostyllen or the former Bersham Colliery. Either location may take passengers from Wrexham General and Ruabon, so alleviating parking pressures and access issues for buses.

## **Friends of Brigg Line**

Little effort has gone into Lincolnshire train connections. Thus the last Northern service from Cleethorpes to Sheffield (1832) misses the 1835 Lincoln Central to Grimsby Town EMT service by just 4 minutes. It could make the connection by calling additionally at Great Coates, Healing & Stallingborough, or the working timetable and the regulations of staff hours would allow its departure to be put back until 1844.

## **East Suffolk Travellers' Association**

The Arthur Crisp Studio in the refurbished Beccles Station was full for the ESTA public meeting on 18 February. Two years ago, Councillor Graham Elliott gave a presentation on the plans for a cafe, meeting rooms and business facilities in the historic building, so it was fitting that he should now report on what had been achieved and how it had been done. It was now "a welcoming gateway to the town", with three out of four upstairs offices fully occupied and various organisations meeting in the Arthur Crisp Studio or the smaller Ticket Office. A mixture of paid staff and volunteers run the cafe as a social enterprise. A serving hatch overlooking the grass area, and CCTV, had reduced the danger of vandalism, while a real-time information screen in the cafe provided another very useful facility. Projects still outstanding included a taxi hotline for when the cafe was closed, improved drainage, a new shelter on the Lowestoft-bound platform, and making the busy crossroads on the approach to the station safer for pedestrians.

James Steward, Area Customer Services Manager for Greater Anglia, welcomed the fleet of new trains that would from 2019 "transform the region's services". Local trains - still with conductor-guards to sell and check tickets and assist passengers - would be hybrid units formed of at least three coaches, and run on diesel power from Lowestoft to Ipswich, and electric power from there to London. Four through workings a day were envisaged to the capital, with journey times from Ipswich reduced to 61 mins for most of the day. Ipswich - Peterborough would become an hourly service, with many trains starting and finishing at Colchester. Meanwhile heavy overhaul of the Class 170 2-car and 3-car units had begun. Any sets withdrawn could well be moved elsewhere, so the 2-car Class 156 unit "ESTA 1965-2015" could spend its remaining years in Wales or the West Country! Meanwhile, the "short set" of three coaches and a diesel locomotive at either end was expected to stay on the Norwich - Lowestoft/Yarmouth lines until 2019.

There would be new-style ticket vending machines, with Beccles due to have one "in the next few months", and contactless bank cards could soon be used. On platforms "Totems" would combine CCTV with a help point and interactive screen to provide better information at times of engineering work.

## **Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group**

NR is seeking to close or modify 29 level crossings across Cambridgeshire, including 'C04' at Meldreth. It claims that the closures would make the railway safer, improve efficiency and reliability, and facilitate potential future developments for faster and more frequent services. However, their argument makes no sense. On the C04 crossing, there are no signalling controls, indications or interlocking to be unreliable. Nor would closing C04 alone allow faster and more frequent services, as adjacent crossings are being retained. Raising the line speed from 90mph would mean closing all the crossings on this section of line. In the absence of a proposal from a commercial provider, Royston and District Community Transport has offered to provide an early morning-late afternoon shuttle service, starting in September, to and from Meldreth Station. To gauge the strength of demand and cost out the options, RDCT is inviting villages to conduct a household transport needs survey.

For months, reliance on part-time temporary cover has meant that the Meldreth Station booking office is often closed – sometimes for half the week. The RUG has used reports from train users to pressure Govia Thameslink Railway into hiring a permanent member of staff, who has now been recruited, though there are still bureaucratic hurdles. Please continue to let the RUG know when you find the office closed, as it is keeping a log. Email [railusergroup@gmail.com](mailto:railusergroup@gmail.com) or Tweet @MeldrethRUG.

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

BGORUG is grateful that Barking & Dagenham Council has affiliated to the Group, and that Newham Council will too, and hopes that Camden, Haringey and Islington councils will also give it their support in the future.

NR was to announce its plan to complete the outstanding electrification works, including any further closures of the line at “the end of April”, but on the 28th, it advised the London Assembly Transport Committee that “a little more time” was needed to finalise arrangements, so the announcement would now be postponed until after the general election. BGORUG believes that NR’s resources during the summer are now committed to Crossrail, Waterloo and London Bridge. The first 14 of the Class 710/2 trains were due to be shared with Euston – Watford Junction services, but it is looking increasingly likely that the Goblin’s will now be diverted to an alternative London Overground service.

### **English Regional Transport Association**

A booklet “Making a case for a new Northampton-Bedford Rail Link”, ISBN 978-0-9957682-0-8, is available from Richard Pill, ERTA, 24c St Michael's Road, Bedford, MK40 2LT (01234 330090). It costs £5.77, or £52.70 for ten, including UK postage. On 25 May, the Northampton Business Improvement District team is hosting a free [breakfast meeting](#). The ERTA AGM is on Tuesday, 11 July (see Events).

### **Bedford-Bletchley Rail Users Association**

An era came to an end last month when Richard Crane, Chairman of BBRUA since its formation in 1980, stood down together with most long-serving committee members. However the challenges facing the line are as great as ever and a new committee has been formed to take the organisation forward. Current issues are the new rail franchise expected in the autumn, demographic changes associated with industrial development at Ridgmont and Tilbrook near Bow Brickhill, and increasing use by students. East-West Rail will eventually bring an Oxford and Cambridge service, but this must be properly integrated with the local services. And there are always day-to-day problems like space for bicycles and reliability of the trains. Dr Phil Warner, the new Chairman, said "I am looking forward to taking the incredible legacy left by the first generation of BBRUA by working in partnership with the Franchise Holder and the Marston Vale Rail Community Partnership to secure and enhance the line for present and future generations of line users".

### **Hadley Wood Rail User Group**

Hadley Wood’s new accessible entrance will be officially opened at 1500 on Friday 26 May. The Group believes that this will be a first on GTR’s Great Northern route between Welwyn Garden City and Moorgate. And at 1100 on Saturday 7 October, Michael Portillo will unveil a plaque at the station to commemorate Sir Nigel Gresley, who was a resident during the 1920s and 30s.

### **Sudbury & Harrow Road Rail User Group**

RUEx welcomes the newly formed RUG for Sudbury & Harrow Road, the least-used station in London despite a 15 minute journey time into town and a town-centre location with excellent bus interchange, but just four trains each way daily, weekdays only. Those interested in joining/supporting the new group should contact [Renu Kaul](#). Users and potential users of the station are invited to complete a [survey/questionnaire](#) to give their views on the sort of service they would like to see.

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

TfL have advised that, to reduce costs and save the environment, printed timetables will no longer be available at stations. On request, its Customer Services team on 0343 222 1234 will print a copy and send it to a home address. It has also launched a “Please offer me a seat” badge and card to alert other passengers to one’s need. The Mayor has confirmed that step-free access for Amersham station is under review.

### **Alton Line Users' Association**

ALUE is strongly opposed to SWT’s cheap fare restrictions, which disallow the use of super off-peak tickets (which are in fact all other rail companies' normal off-peak tickets) during so-called 'peak periods' on weekends and bank holidays. Also, the time periods differ from those of the weekday cheap tickets, adding unnecessary complication even as fare structures are supposed to be clarified and simplified. SWT’s reply was unsatisfactory. ALUA has communicated these concerns to the Campaign for Better Transport and Transport Focus.

However, from August First Group/MTR will run the franchise for seven years, investing £1.2bn and adding 22,000 extra seats into London Waterloo each morning peak and 30,000 in the evening peak. ALUA understands that there will be direct Farnham to Guildford trains. It also wants the line speeded up: in 2001, the 1034 from Alton took 59 mins into London; now the 1014 takes 73 mins. The 1420 from Waterloo to Alton then took 63 mins; now the 1423 takes 76 minutes - and Sunday services are even slower.

From 1905 to 1957, a passenger service ran between Bentley and Bordon, but the branch closed in 1966. It should now be reopened to serve the rapidly expanding Bordon Eco-Town on former MOD land. Such a proposal was considered in 2009, but the Local Councils seemed to prefer roads instead, doubtless leading to a large increase in the volume of traffic. They need to be much more ambitious.

### **Cotswold Line promotion Group**

In 1978, Pershore was served by just four trains/day, with no day return to London, so the service today is a tribute to almost four decades of dedicated – and ongoing – campaigning, and reopening Honeybourne in 1993 scotched the plan to create two separate branch lines by closing the line between Evesham and Moreton-in-the-Marsh. The priority now is for an hourly service, stopping at Hanborough, Honeybourne and Pershore, but this aim may be compromised by single line working, exacerbated by the opening of Worcestershire Parkway in December. Up to 40 Ascott-under-Wychwood villagers responded to a CLPG survey on a Groupsave fare to Oxford on the 1022 from Moreton, returning on the 1220 or 1420.

Uncertainties regarding both electrification and the performance of Class 800/802 IEP's in diesel mode are proving a nightmare for GWR timetable planners. However, from May, the 0750 from Paddington is extended to Great Malvern, and forms an additional return service at 1122. The 0822 from Paddington to Hereford divides at Moreton instead of Worcester Shrub Hill, with the rear portion returning from Moreton at 1022, replacing the 0950. Welcome as they are, and offering new connections, the new services could pose capacity problems around both Worcester and Malvern, and both Pershore and Honeybourne will lose out. The campaigns for the 0921 Paddington service to call once more at Pershore, and for an extra weekday Ascott-under-Wychwood call go on.

Looking ahead, the campaign to reopen Honeybourne – Stratford has been boosted by the Long Marston airfield development being designated as a garden village. Warwickshire CC has yet to support the project, but funding of an Economic Impact Study as part of the GRIP process is now in place, with CLPG and three neighbouring authorities contributing.

### **East Hampshire Community Rail Partnership**

A new [Station Walks booklet](#) is now available at £3.99. Detailing 15 self-guided walks for all abilities from Rowlands Castle, Petersfield, Liss and Liphook Stations, with detailed information about the surrounding area, history and places of interest, the guide will provide visitors to the South Downs National Park with everything they need to know about accessing beautiful countryside by train and then on foot.

### **Avocet Line Rail Users Group**

The delay in GWR electrification will result in Class 150/2 units not moving to Exeter when intended - but contracts to move existing units away stand! GWR managers are doing what they can: units due to leave in May will now stay until March next year, by which time some 150/2s should have arrived. However, fewer carriages could mean more full and standing trains.

The array of train fares from Exmouth to Paddington amply demonstrates just how complex the system is. Tony Jackson has identified no fewer than 122 - and that's not counting season tickets!

Journey figures increased by 5% in the last year, with the new station at Newcourt achieved 73,000 in its first year to June 2016 and possibly 100,000 this year - valuable evidence to support the case for further investments in line facilities, and better services in general. The new M&S Foodhall in Exmouth puts the station buildings in the shade, and there is no sign of the planned improvements. However, subject to consent, work on a new £40m maintenance depot alongside GWR's existing Olds View facilities at Exeter St David's is due to be completed by mid-2019, in time for the planned fleet changes.

## 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 Campaign updates by clicking on [News and views](#), , [Press releases](#), [Railfuture in the news](#), and [Railfuture submissions](#).*



Railfuture's sixth Rail User Group Annual Awards will be presented at its annual conference in Leicester on Saturday, 4 November in the following 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

The awards will again aim to recognise and reward the various achievements over the past year among the country's 300 RUGs in fulfilling Railfuture's mission: to be the number one advocate for the railway and rail users. The closing date for nominations/submissions is 23.59 on Saturday 2nd September 2017. For details about how to make a nomination, see the [website](#). Early bird booking for members is open until 31 August.

There are no application forms. Just one nomination in any category will be sufficient for the nominated newsletter, website, social media promotion, campaign, individual, or new group to be considered. The awards will not be decided by popular vote but on merit by a panel of independent judges. The same person or group can nominate in more than one category. RUGs and individuals can nominate their own in any category - except for self-nominations in category 7! The Judges' Special Award is at the sole discretion of the judging panel, which we plan to include our Vice-Presidents.

## GENERAL ELECTION

Railfuture's message to parliamentary candidates is that a continued high level of investment in rail is essential to promote economic growth. Britain's railways are the best in the world for safety and passenger growth (despite increasing fares) but for that to continue the new government must: incentivise the rail operators to provide excellent customer service and value-for-money fares; direct Network Rail to get a grip on its costs and expand rail capacity effectively; and plan for rail traffic growth, building realistic business cases for expansion. The 10 key rail policy areas for the 2017 election which Government and the rail industry must deliver for the UK are explained in its [Railfuture Rail Manifesto 2017](#).

## RAILFUTURE NORTH EAST

The Tyne Valley RUG and Community Rail Partnership (CRP) work closely to promote the Newcastle - Carlisle line, and improve services and facilities. A new coffee shop has opened at Hexham station, with a microbrewery to follow. Haltwhistle and Prudhoe stations have seen improvements, and links forged with the operator of the Hadrian's Wall bus. The half hour service between Hexham and Carlisle starting in December will, it is hoped, significantly boost the line's fortunes.

Coastliners RUG formed fifteen years ago seeking to improve services on the line linking three large conurbations: Newcastle (Tyneside), Sunderland (Wearside) and Middlesbrough (Teesside). It has had some success, but there is still only an hourly local link between Middlesbrough and Sunderland (onward to Newcastle covered by a frequent T & W Metro service). Old rolling stock, low line speeds and lack of stations continued to handicap the Middlesbrough to Sunderland leg.

A new, faster hourly “Northern Connect” service linking Carlisle, Newcastle and Middlesbrough is promised from 2019, hopefully via the East Coast Main Line between Newcastle and Ferryhill, and then on the Stillington freight only line to Stockton and Middlesbrough. This route is shorter than the existing coast line and, if properly upgraded, could offer decent top speeds with a resultant reduction in overall journey time. But the aspiration is in NR’s hands. Otherwise, the “Connect” service will have to go via Darlington or, worse still, trundle along the Durham Coast route. The present coast line service must be maintained (and improved!) with the “connect” project providing additional capacity and new travel opportunities. The area’s MPs and local authorities need to get behind this aim.

Transpennine Express (TPE) wants to take over all services between Manchester and Leeds, with a six trains per hour. In 2018 it will start a new direct service of three trains per day between Liverpool and Glasgow, and from late 2019 the hourly Liverpool to Newcastle service will be extended via Morpeth to Edinburgh. TPE have decided to use loco hauled trains on the Liverpool-Scarborough and Manchester Airport-Middlesbrough services, rather than on the Liverpool-Newcastle route.

In 2016 Grand Central (GC) achieved a customer satisfaction figure of 96% compared to the national average of 80%, the highest of any long-distance train operator. GC has operating rights to provide passenger services on the ECML from Sunderland and Bradford Interchange to London Kings Cross until December 2026. From May 2018, it will start a WCML service from London Euston to Blackpool, for which it has access rights of 10 years. The five Class 180s it expects to receive from GWR will allow all its existing HST’s to be withdrawn. GC will also purchase four Pendolino trains for its new West Coast service.

## **RAILFUTURE LONDON AND SOUTH EAST**

At its AGM, the Branch had presentations on rail access to an expanded Heathrow Airport. The Chairman reflected on a difficult year, with major engineering work on both Thameslink and Crossrail, and industrial action timed to make the maximum impact on passengers. He noted that, whereas the new Thameslink timetable would commence in May 2018, Crossrail services would not start until the following December. The Branch has responded to many consultations, and its campaigns have ranged throughout the region.

## **ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIPS**

The DfT's Designated Community Rail Development Fund for 2017-18, administered by ACoRP, opened for applications on 1 April. This year £330,000 is being made available through the fund to English CRPs with designated routes. As in previous years, bids of different amounts will be considered, but bids for more than £10,000 will only be accepted until 31 May. The match-funding requirement for these larger projects has been reduced to 100%. For full criteria and an application form please email [dawn@acorp.uk.com](mailto:dawn@acorp.uk.com).

## **CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSPORT**

The local elections on 4 May were vitally important for transport, from bus services to walking and cycling routes, from rail freight to clean air. The Bus Services Act received Royal Assent on the day Parliament broke up for the election. Lianna Etkind commented: ‘The Act will bring real benefit both to cities and to more rural areas, enabling better integrated transport with simple, smart ticketing, while giving councils new powers to boost bus access and air quality. The Act offers hope to people across the country left isolated by bus funding cuts. Already, local authorities...are looking at how the Act could help them repair their bus networks, working in partnership with operators to create joined-up networks that connect people to jobs, education and healthcare.’

## FELIXSTOWE TRAVEL WATCH

The promise of new trains, and other franchise commitments made by Greater Anglia, offers the best ever chance to get the improvements the line needs: better journey times, reliability, signage, shelters and ticket vending facilities – all of which will improve the reputation and acceptance of public transport in the eyes of the general public.

The TWAO for the Trimley passing loop proposes to close six level crossings and construct a new bridge at Gun Lane. Although less than a mile of new track is required, the paperwork accompanying the Order runs to some 2000 pages! Work is planned to start at the end of this year. When completed in 2019, the scheme will deliver huge benefits for both passenger and freight traffic.

## TRAVELWATCH NORTHWEST

The next TWNW conference on 8 June (details below) will include speakers from Merseyrail, Merseytravel, Stagecoach Merseyside and South Lancashire, Chester and Wirral, and Virgin West Coast. Delegates will also have an opportunity to make a statement up to one minute long on any public transport issue of concern. This will allow 30 minutes of discussion. TWNW wants to continue to offer these events at no charge, but hopes that delegates will make a voluntary donation.

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

We hear many grumbles about rail travel, so let's give credit where it's due. From a letter in the [Telegraph](#):

SIR – Having invited an octogenarian friend to stay for a few days, I went to meet him at Abergavenny station. I saw he had difficulty alighting from the train and was concerned about how the relatively long journey from Guildford had gone. He immediately reassured me, however, and said how much better the trains were than in the days of British Rail. He had been helped at every change of train, and said the staff were smart and kind. He was advised to book for assistance on his return journey, and this we did. An email confirmed the seats booked for him and the assistance he would receive during the changeovers at Newport and Reading. We hear so many complaints from travellers disappointed with the service on trains today. It is nice to be able to extol the service provided on this occasion. Jim Bell.

The DfT has published a [Study into Rail Demand Forecasting](#). Good luck if you can make any sense of it!

The Office of Rail and Road Business Plan sets out its priorities for the coming year. Contributions from the transport industry, consumer groups, Network Rail and Highways England are reflected in its programme of work for 2017. It responds, in particular, to the current concerns of rail users. Consumer needs are at the centre of UK regulators' work; ORR will ensure the views and priorities of consumers are understood and taken on board by those running the rail network.

Although dated March 2017, the [South Eastern Rail Franchise Public Consultation](#) document "Shaping the Future", wasn't circulated until 25 April, and responses are required by 1145 on 23 May. However, it is well worth a read. The contract for the current train service operator expires in December 2018. DfT aims to:

- Create more space for passengers
- Reduce delays by requiring the train operator to form an alliance with NR
- Offer improved compensation arrangements
- Improved customer service, including things such as smarter payment systems
- Require innovative approaches by the rail industry
- Encourage additional private sector investment
- Be open to more radical approaches.

Meanwhile, Transportfocus research on "South Eastern rail franchise: what passengers want" is available in a link from a Transport User Voice newsletter. Passengers placed a strong emphasis on the need to focus on getting the basics right, before considering additional areas that would make travelling on the South Eastern franchise a good experience.

The [East Anglia Franchise Agreement and Train Service Requirement \(TSR\)](#) specifies the minimum number of calls at each station and the times of first and last trains. It consists of:

- Part 1 – General Provisions;
- Part 2 – TSR Tables for Mondays to Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays: TSR1 is applicable from 'Day 1' of the franchise, TSR2 from May 2019; and TSR3 from May 2020 (implementation of any additional services in TSR3 is subject to Greater Anglia securing additional Track Access Rights from NR)
- Part 3 – Stratford, Tottenham and Angel Road ("STAR") Train Service Requirement.

The Crossrail project is now 83 per cent complete, and will shortly achieve a major milestone, as the first of the new trains enters passenger service on the TfL route between Liverpool Street and Shenfield. The Elizabeth line will open in December 2018, and increase central London's rail capacity by 10 per cent when fully operational, serving 40 stations, with up to 24 trains per hour in each direction, giving another 1.5 million people better access to jobs and opportunities. Training of the new workforce is well underway: drivers are familiarising themselves with the new trains and route, while apprentices are gaining experience across the network. Offering apprenticeships and training, Crossrail's Tunnelling and Underground Construction Academy (TUCA) has become part of the TfL family.

According to the [Watford Observer](#), the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has "washed his hands" of the Metropolitan Line Extension from Croxley to Watford Junction: "The project is outside London, so responsibility for delivering it ultimately lies with the government. The Mayor's decision to scrap the garden bridge across the Thames will not free up a penny more from London taxpayers."

## CONSULTATIONS

- [Transport for Wales – Design of Wales and Borders Rail Service including Metro](#), closes 22 May
- [DfT: South Eastern Franchise](#), closes 23 May at 1145.
- [DfT's Heathrow expansion: draft Airports National Policy Statement](#), closes 25 May
- [Improving air quality: options for reducing nitrogen dioxide in towns and cities](#), closes 15 June
- [NR's draft Route Study for Kent Area of South East Route](#), closes Friday 30 June.

Because of the General Election on 8 June, the second round of consultation for East West Rail Western Section Phase 2 has had to be postponed; new dates will be published in due course. In preparation for the second round of consultation, the project (EWR2) must seek to identify everyone who owns and/or has an interest in land that may be affected, so Carter Jonas will be asking the owners listed for confirmation. Where the Land Registry does not hold these details for any plot, unknown ownership notices will be displayed nearby asking the public for any information they may have.

Phase 2 of the consultation on the 2018 Thameslink Timetable will also not be launched until after the election. A convenient date might be Wednesday 14 June, at GTR's annual stakeholder conference.

Please advise [Roger Blake](#) of any other consultation, eg that of a County Council or Unitary Authority.

## *...and finally*

At Watford Junction station at the start of June, as a mark of respect, London Midland will name one of its newest trains after legendary Watford FC manager Graham Taylor. Fitted with a commemorative name plate, the train will serve many of the important places in Graham's career, both on the West Coast main line and in the West Midlands: Watford Junction, Wembley Central, Aston, Wolverhampton, and Lichfield Trent Valley (for St George's Park).

As word gets around about the Brigg Line and its unique services and situation, people are travelling far and wide to visit the line and photo the trains. Gainsborough Central has a new tenant in the form of a cat named "Pacer", who greeted the 1212 arrival from Cleethorpes and Grimsby – he must have smelt the fish!

According to SWT, every tree in the car park at Alton station was cut down not to keep leaves off the line but to save staff having to sweep them up.

On 1 April, the **i** newspaper warned that 'Standing carriages' heralded the return of third class travel. However, it would seem from a report in the [Telegraph](#) that Southern passengers at Haver station were expecting only cattle class!



## EVENTS

Do please keep your events coming in, both to me and to [Roger Blake \(Railfuture\)](#), who maintains the [List of Events](#) on the Railfuture website. A Calendar of Events embedded in a pdf document can get lost, and this is a problem if the location changes from month to month, as I don't normally include that in future events. A copy of your Calendar as a separate document in Word format would therefore be much appreciated.

Blob colour indicates the various types of event:

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

### May

- Saturday 20. Railfuture AGM, **Peterborough** Central Library, PE1 1EX, 1000. Confirmation of attendance requested.
- Thursday 25. Shrewsbury to Chester Rail Users Association AGM, Severn Dee Travel Café, Gobowen Railway Station, 1900.
- Tuesday 30. Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Levenmouth College, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 1830 (and on the final Tuesday of every month through to November 2017).

### June

- Monday 5. ACoRP Seminar for Community Rail Partnerships and Station Adopters, 2 Piccadilly Place, **Manchester** M1 3BG, [click here for details](#).
- Monday 5. Ribble Valley Railway New Inn, **Clitheroe**, 1930. (Also 3 Jul).
- Tuesday 6. ACoRP Seminar for Community Rail Partnerships and Station Adopters, Fujitsu, 22 Baker Street, London W1U 3BW, [click here for details](#)
- Thursday 8. TravelWatch Northwest Conference, Merseytravel, One Mann Island, **Liverpool** L69 3HN, 1030.
- Saturday 10. Copeland Rail Users' Group, Methodist Church Hall, **Seascale**, CA20 1PU, 1350.
- Saturday 17. Railfuture Summer Meeting, The Carriageworks Theatre, Millenium Square, **Leeds**, LS2 3AD, 1045. Booking essential.
- Tuesday 20. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group, **Chesham** Town Hall, 1930 (Also 8 August, 19 September, 24 October and 12 December.)
- Tuesday 20. Hadley Wood Rail User Group, St Paul's Church, EN4 0EN, 2000.
- Friday 23 June. Friends of the Far North Line AGM, Town House, **Inverness**, 1100.

- Saturday 24. Railfuture East Anglia, St Mary at Stoke Church Hall, **Ipswich**, IP2 0QQ
- Saturday 24. Railfuture North West, **Littleborough** Station.

#### Further Ahead

- 9 July. Friends of the Barton Line AGM, Sloop, **Barton**, 1800 for 2000. (Also 20 Sep (No 1 Inn, Cleethorpes) and 15 Nov (Sloop)).
- 11 July. Function Room, The Tavistock Carvery Pub, 117 Tavistock Street, Bedford, MK40 2SB, 1400.
- 29 July. Railfuture Herts and Beds, St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, **St Albans**, 1045 (Also 25 Nov).
- 5 October. ACoRP Community Rail Awards 2017, Roundhouse, Derby, [click here for details](#)
- 16 October. Avocet Line Rail Users Group AGM, Malthoude, **Topsham**, 1900.
- 14 October. ESTA Autumn Meeting, Gannon Rooms, **Saxmundham**, at 14:00.
- 17 October. Felixstowe Travel Watch, Salvation Army Church, Cobbold Rd, **Felixstowe**, IP11 7EL, 1430
- 21 October. Railfuture Branches and Groups Day, **Birmingham**, 1030-1600, venue TBC.
- 4 November. Railfuture Annual RUG Awards, the Curve, 60 Rutland St, Leicester, LE1 1SB, 1000 for 1045.

This bulletin has been sent by Roger Smith, e-mail: [ruglink@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:ruglink@railfuture.org.uk), phone: 01462 815992

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