

Welcome to this edition of Rail User Express.

-updated since first circulated to user groups-

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

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GUEST RAIL USER GROUP OF THE MONTH**Saltburn Line Users Group**[website](#)

Affectionately known as "SLUG", the group was founded in 1995 with a small grant from the Railway Development Society and the assistance of local activists such as Dr. Paul Salveson and Neil Buxton. Initial activities centred around running music trains between Saltburn and Bishop Auckland, and special excursion trains under the banner of Saltburn Raitours (now split off as a separate enterprise). The main aim now is to promote the Darlington-Saltburn branch line and help look after the interest of its users.

Volunteers known as Ambassadors have appeared on Eaglescliffe station (served by Saltburn line trains) each Sunday when the station is unstaffed. Their role is to greet and assist Grand Central passengers, and to advise them in the event of service disruption. SLUG's vice chairman, Frank Maidens, helped the rail company to set up the Ambassador scheme.

In Oct 2012, Saltburn was awarded a trophy for the Best Railway Station in the Region, and in Nov 2012, the floral displays of Saltburn station were awarded the Gold Medal and outright winners of the Tyne and Wear Trophy at the annual 'Northumbria in Bloom' contest.

SLUG meet on the first Tuesday of the month in Saltburn and new members are welcome to attend.

We continue with the usual roundup of news from rail user groups around the UK. I'm grateful to RUGs that send me their magazines and bulletins.

Friends of the West Highland Lines[website](#)

Visitors to Scotland know only too well about the summer midge menace, but we read in the West Highland News that station gardeners are fighting back. A volunteer gardener at Barrhill has found out that the anti-social insect is driven away by the smell of lemon eucalyptus; groups of the plants give out a powerful aroma and midges quickly give up the idea of being trainspotters! Elsewhere, it's reported that two more stations in the Fort William area have just been adopted: Corpach and Banavie.

There's a feature article in the group's magazine about the huge development potential of the West Highland Lines for tourism – inadequate rolling stock and poor publicity are seen as the most significant obstacles. Community rail initiatives are progressing, and there's been an announcement that the Oban route will be getting better services in 2014 using diesel units displaced following electrification of the Glasgow-Cumbernauld route. In other news, we read that First ScotRail is trialling a scheme in the Glasgow area in which passengers affected by severe train disruption can exchange their rail tickets for vouchers for use on First Glasgow buses.

Further tree clearance at strategic points on the West Highland Lines to improve the vista from train windows will take place in 2013, with the local park authority setting aside £10k to fund the operation. The area around Glenfinnan viaduct is the latest to receive attention.

Lastly, there are thanks to Michael Portillo for his enthusiasm about the scenic West Highland Lines during his Great British Railway Journey TV series; his comment was: "Most of the time the programmes use trains as a way to tell a story, but that line [ie the WHL] is the story!"

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

[website](#)

RAGES is pressing for a technical feasibility study to be undertaken into the case for reopening the Haddington rail branch. After discussions with the local authority, it appears that a logical next step would be to gauge local opinion by conducting a poll in the Haddington area.

At a "Meet the Manager" session at Dunbar station, RAGES representatives asked about East Coast's commitment to retaining Dunbar services, and about their strategy for maintaining some form of service in severe weather conditions. A local representative showed examples of community involvement at Dunbar to the train managers, and made the case for better cycle access to the station.

After receiving details of ScotRail's latest "Club 55" ticket offer, RAGES were disappointed to find that East Coast trains from Berwick upon Tweed were now excluded, but CrossCountry services from both Dunbar and Berwick were not. On querying this, it appears that East Coast wanted the Berwick exclusion to apply during half term week only to prevent overcrowding, but ScotRail would not agree to this.

Ribble Valley Rail

[website](#)

The 100th edition of RVR News is an excuse to look back over the 25 or so years since the first issue was published. A retired editor reminisces about the technology of the past: a typewriter, scissors, glue and - bizarrely - a pathology specimen bag! The latter was used, double thickness, to screen a photograph and thereby produce a half-tone image suitable for printing. Back in July 1987 when both the Ribble Valley and Settle & Carlisle lines were threatened with closure, the fledgling group had to charter their own trains between Preston and Clitheroe to prove that a regular service would be popular (there's a photo of Clitheroe's town crier greeting one of the first specials).

A regular service on the Ribble Valley line commenced in May 1994. RVR reports that patronage increased by 20% from 2006/7 to 2011/2. Now there are around 2m journeys annually, with the majority of services full to capacity. The group also notes that 222 scholar season tickets have been issued on the route.

The hugely-successful 2012 Santa Special from Blackburn to Hellifield included goodie bags for the children, mince pies and sherry for adults, and a raffle in aid of charity; local businesses were invited to donate prizes in return for a "Santa Supporter" poster which they could display in their windows. At Hellifield, station volunteers laid on games, a puppet show, carol singing and refreshments. There was a chance to stop off at the Clitheroe Christmas Market on the return journey.

Support the Oldham-Rochdale-Manchester line

[website](#)

After a vital piece of trackwork at Salford Crescent was damaged and Network Rail quoted "several weeks" to obtain a replacement, STORM wonders where the part has to come from: India? China? And after the latest disruption to services on the Rochdale line, STORM asks how much longer will commuters have to put up with such an appalling service? During the 30 months of Metrolink construction, little effort seems to have been made to cater for displaced passengers. One STORM member writes: "We've had enough. Please don't say Metrolink will be here shortly. Who wants to travel by tram at an extra cost, double the journey time and absolutely no chance of getting a seat!"

Noting that the latest National Passenger Survey shows that Northern Rail again scores badly in dealing with delays, STORM offer some basic hints on how the company could improve matters, for example: (i) stations have public address systems and electronic signage – use them! (ii) ensure ticket office staff have access to information so they can advise passengers (iii) make better use of public address systems on trains. As if to prove the point, during recent engineering works there were no notices about the service disruption at one station and the electronic screens at another simply advised that tickets could be obtained from the Northern Rail website!

Aire Valley Rail Users' Group

[website](#)

The editor of AVRUG's January magazine takes the case of a recent passenger fatality in which the rail industry was found to be negligent to argue that we should not expect safety at any cost "otherwise the railways will become ever more expensive and passengers will instead travel by roads – which are far more hazardous."

The group has recently given its views to Metro on its Railplan 7 and to the Dept. for Transport concerning the devolution of franchise management – it expects to be representing the views of its members on a new Northern franchise just as soon as the franchising process is back on track. Top of the group's list of priorities is the need for longer platforms and additional rolling stock to ease overcrowding of peak trains. They're also keen to see improved services on Sundays, and early morning / late evening on weekdays.

In general, trains on the Aire Valley line have kept running through the recent adverse weather, and AVRUG thanks staff who have turned out to work through the difficult conditions. There has been a couple of incidents when the older electric units now used on the line have broken down – and recovery has not been straightforward as they are not compatible with the line's usual '333' units.

Association of Public Transport Users (Herts)

[website](#)

Speculating about the future franchising arrangements for their line, APTU's chairman thinks that an option might be to grant First an extension of the current Thameslink franchise in the form of a management contract (similar to the current Virgin Trains arrangement) and then, after competitive tendering, to award a longer management contract for the combined franchise which would start when the current Southern Franchise ends in 2015.

After the Government's announcement that the Rail Freight Interchange at Radlett is to go ahead, APTU is seeking more information about the project. Tunnels in the area may need to be enlarged with consequent disruptions to passenger services, and when the scheme is completed there may be ongoing problems with line capacity and performance. APTU is taking a similar line over the proposed expansion of Luton Airport: what will be the impact on rail services in the area?

Following lobbying by APTU, a waiting shelter is to be provided on platform 1 at St Albans station, and further seating is to be provided on platforms 1 & 2.

Barking-Gospel Oak Line Users' Group

[website](#)

The main item in BGOLUG's response to the consultation on Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan is the concern that there's no commitment to electrification of their line, although they've learnt since that there may be some good news soon about the matter. The group continues to press decision makers for a positive outcome - they believe that the £90m cost estimate is grossly inflated and that there are possible sources of funding that haven't been considered, such as the Rail Freight Network Fund.

Avocet Line Rail Users' Group

[website](#)

ALRUG has got in early by issuing a press release at the beginning of February, well in advance of the Beeching Report 50th anniversary and carrying the title "Beeching was so wrong".

The story begins: "Figures just revealed show that the Avocet Line, between Exmouth and Exeter, carried a record 1.4 million passengers last year – despite having been on Dr Beeching's list of lines to be closed. The journey figures, prepared for Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership by train operator First Great Western, show an increase during 2012 of 9.7%, well above the national average and

good even for the South West, where rail travel is generally booming. ... Overall the line is 1/3rd better used than five years ago – which just goes to show how badly wrong Dr Beeching got it.”

The group hosted a meeting in Topsham on 25th Feb with the theme: *Beeching – lessons fifty years on*. Well known railway writer Professor Paul Salveson was guest speaker, with Chris Austin OBE in the chair; Chris is a member of both Railfuture and ALRUG, and recently co-authored a book *Holding the Line - how Britain's railways were saved*.

...news from Railfuture follows...

RAILFUTURE SUMMER CONFERENCE IN TAUNTON

Bookings are now open for Railfuture’s summer conference (22 June) on the theme of Future Aspects of Railway Operation. Experts will be talking about community rail schemes and planning for climate/environmental change, and there will be guest speakers from rail campaign groups focussing on their own specific projects: the Portishead Railway Group on line reopening, Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways on creating an effective network for the city, the New Somerset and Dorset Railway on their long-term aim to reopen the S&D, and the Tarka Railway Association on recent problems at Cowley Bridge Junction.

The fee for the conference has been held once again at only £30 (£25 for members booking before the end of April). For further details about the conference please email taunton2013@railfuture.org.uk.

RAILFUTURE COMMENTS ON STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN

Railfuture’s 12-page response to the Office of Rail Regulation’s consultation on Network Rail’s Strategic Business Plan for CP5 was submitted on 18 Feb. Our Policy Group coordinated feedback from Railfuture’s network of specialist groups and regional branches, enabling it to comment in depth on both national issues and on the individual route plans.

RAILFUTURE CONGRATULATES RAIL INDUSTRY ON SAFETY RECORD

To mark the sixth year in a row without a single passenger fatality in the UK, Railfuture issued a press release praising the astonishing run of safety on Britain's railways.

"We congratulate the railway industry and its staff for continuing to run a safe railway for passengers" said spokesman Bruce Williamson. "There have only been two fatal accidents in the last ten years: the Grayrigg derailment in 2007 in which one person died, and at Ufton Nervet in 2004. That one was caused by a suicidal motorist who parked his car on a level crossing waiting for a train to kill him – hardly the railway's fault. In other words, in ten years the rail industry has been responsible for just one passenger fatality – an astonishing and unprecedented run of safety. Of course, one death is one too many, and there is no room for complacency, but it does illustrate how spectacularly safe rail travel is”.

“This is in contrast to the roads; more passengers die on the roads in six hours than have died on Britain's railways in the last six years. There has not been a single fatal accident caused by a train driver since Ladbroke Grove in 1999 – because of better training, tougher recruitment standards for drivers and a new track safety system installed nationwide after Ladbroke Grove.”

FLOODING IN DEVON THE SUBJECT OF A NEW RAILFUTURE STUDY

Following the flooding events in Devon of last November and December, Railfuture’s Devon & Cornwall Branch has published a 16-page study giving observations and recommendations. There are photographs showing the effects of exceptional rainfall, with graphs and statistics to underline the complexity of the problems faced at various locations. Solutions proposed include new stations which could act as more convenient interchanges in the event of route closure, raising specific rail

formations, and developing secondary routes ... as well as the necessary infrastructure to improve water management.

The study will act as a helpful summary for decision makers as the rail industry seeks to implement the measures needed to prevent another collapse of rail services in the South West due to adverse weather. You can read the full report [here](#).

RAILFUTURE LIST OF RAIL AGENTS

The total number of agents selling domestic rail tickets on Railfuture's list to date is 23. [Trevor Garrod](#), who has been compiling the list, says that, although you can buy tickets from station booking offices, on-board train staff (if not too busy), ticket machines or on line, there is still an important role for personal service and that can sometimes be provided by a travel agent or other business selling tickets. Trevor is grateful for the help he's received from Railfuture branches and rail user groups in compiling the list, and would appreciate any further information or comments. Currently, the list looks like this:

AGENCIES: Chester-le-track at Chester-le-Street station; Severn-Dee Travel at Gobowen station; Agencies at Ledbury, Ludlow and Llandrindod Wells stations; St Ives Travel Agency (Cornwall).

OTHER PRIVATELY OPERATED TICKET OFFICES: Bargoed; Pembrey & Burry Port Travel agents; Chepstow agency; Tywyn (Talyllyn Railway) - *to be confirmed*; Ffestiniog Travel, Porthmadog; Milford Haven; Severn Tunnel Junction; Newtown; Pengam; Bishop Auckland.

COUNTY COUNCILS: Lancashire County Council at Carnforth, Clitheroe and Nelson

HERITAGE RAILWAYS: Whitby (North York Moors Railway staff)

SHIPPING COMPANIES: Wight Link at Yarmouth IoW; Red Funnel at West Cowes IoW. Stena Line at Harwich and Holyhead.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

There is quite a number of interesting rail developments in the east of England, as reported in Railfuture East Anglia's newsletter *Raileast*...

- The branch is joining with the business forum in Haverhill in backing the campaign to reopen the line from Cambridge and onwards to Colchester. The next step is to put together funding for an engineering study.
- The branch has submitted its comments on a consultation regarding the proposed new station serving Cambridge Science Park. The County Council has a novel plan to fund the £30m station, using ticket receipts to recoup the cost. They're confident of over 3000 passengers per day.
- Now that the Beccles Loop is in use, there's still work to do promoting the improved service on the East Suffolk Line – and arguing for further improvements such as faster line speeds.
- The branch is pressing train operator Abellio to keep to its franchise commitment of trialling a bus service between Audley End station and Saffron Walden.
- There's concern that some important decisions about infrastructure on the East-West Rail Link have yet to be decided, and Railfuture members are involved in discussions about route options for the eastern section towards Cambridge.

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

The Office of Rail Regulation is due to publish station usage estimates for 2011-12 in March 2013.

MEETING IN PERTH CANCELLED

Passenger Focus has taken the decision to cancel their Perth user group workshop which was due to take place on 21 Mar, mainly due to lack of interest. Other user group workshops around the UK seem to have been well supported and are going ahead as planned. PF has been emailing Scottish groups to let them know, and there will probably be a different event in Scotland later in the year.

THERE'S MERIT IN LOCAL RAIL FRANCHISING...

New research from the Campaign for Better Transport argues that local rail services do better when managed by local authorities rather than the Government. Drawing on the examples of Merseyrail and London Overground, the CBT's [Going Local report](#) shows that local management and accountability can improve local rail services, particularly in terms of passenger numbers, reliability and passenger satisfaction. Services which could be devolved include the North of England rail network, local West Midlands services, Bristol area services and commuter services into London (Transport for London has expressed an interest in taking on such a role).

... BUT GOVERNMENT HAS NO SAY IN HOW COUNCILS SPEND TRANSPORT FUNDS

At least £1.2 billion of £2.2 billion given to councils last year was intended for road repairs and bus services — but the Department for Transport had no say in how the money was spent, according to a report by the Public Accounts Committee. The department fails even to monitor whether the money is spent on transport or to assess the impact of spending cuts on local transport, the Committee said. Despite the apparent short-comings, the Government is planning to devolve more control over how central government funds are spent to the local level.

“We are not convinced that government has thought through the risks of devolving more control over the funding of major transport projects to a local level,” said Margaret Hodge, chair of the Committee. Mrs Hodge said that national transport projects were potentially under threat because of decisions taken by councils who find themselves under “severe financial pressure”. Government grants to local authorities have been cut by 28% in this Parliament. – *article in The Times spotted by Andy Long.*

Writing from Bedfordshire, Andy says: “The unfortunate consequence, in the case of Central Beds, is that the local authority is extremely reluctant to engage on rail matters, to the point where even match-funding of station improvement schemes is ‘verboden’. They are also raiding monies intended for rural bus service support to fund the ever-growing overspend on the guided busway!”

THE NORTH WEST WELCOMES HS2 ANNOUNCEMENT

The North West hugely welcomes the Secretary of State’s announcement on the route of HS2 to the North West. Right from day 1 there has been consensus among businesses, trade unions, civic leaders and MPs that HS2 will benefit the North West and Scotland.

HS2 will address the capacity constraints that face the west coast mainline now and will only get worse if something is not done. This capacity problem affects not just passengers, but freight and ultimately our economy. The Government is primarily committed to generating jobs and growth and to rebalance the economy outside of the South East- HS2 goes a long way to addressing this by connecting people with jobs, cities with cities, and freight with ports and airports. The wider economic benefits are estimated to be £44bn, with 44,000 jobs created.

The cities of Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham will be ‘closer’ together and to London- this has the ‘agglomeration’ benefit of making businesses closer to each other and opens up new job markets. The inclusion of Manchester Airport, a major international airport, as an interchange station, will be widely welcomed; it will ultimately make Manchester a good alternative to Heathrow. – *extract of press release issued by [North West Rail Campaign](#)*

FARES DATABASE AVAILABLE FOR FREE

Transport Minister Norman Baker has announced that rail passengers will be able to access free up-to-date information on the best ticket deals following the publication of comprehensive fare data. The fares database, which had previously only been available under a paid-for licence, can now be accessed for free through the Association for Train Operating Companies' website [here](#) following discussions between the Department for Transport and the trade association.

The publication is in line with the government's push for greater transparency around data, and is necessary for the development of price comparison websites and mobile phone apps for the benefit of customers. Rail passengers in Britain now enjoy access to information on fares and timetables that is unrivalled elsewhere in the world. – *gov.uk*

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS FOR IEP PUBLISHED

The Government has published the technical specification and contracts for the Intercity Express Programme (IEP) with Hitachi's Agility Trains consortium. Read the text [here](#). The £4.5bn deal was finalised last July and the new trains will replace the ageing InterCity 125 fleet. 596 carriages will be built at Newton Aycliffe and are due to enter service on the Great Western Main Line in 2017 and the East Coast Main Line by 2018.

The specifications say that the design of the IEP Units must ensure that they have the flexibility to allow for train formation changes, changes of power source and redeployment throughout their life. It is an essential requirement that the number of different Functional Vehicle Types is minimised and there shall in any event be no more than 13 distinct types. A Bi-mode IEP Unit must be capable of being readily modified to an Electric IEP Unit at a future date by the removal of Self Power Sources from one or more IEP Vehicles. – *Railway Technology Magazine*

NETWORK RAIL NEEDS TO IMPROVE WEATHER DEFENCES

Network Rail needs to do more to stop heavy rain and snow devastating train timetables, says the Office of Rail Regulation. Punctuality on long-distance services has fallen to 88.3 per cent and London and South East services are down to 91.4 per cent, following months of challenging weather conditions. ORR is concerned that the company is losing touch with key performance targets as passengers again suffered poor performance during challenging weather conditions. The ORR will be reviewing whether the company can currently work and plan better, and the Governments' proposed significant investment of £37.5 billion from 2014-19 will enable Network Rail to deliver a railway that can stand up to conditions like heavy rain and snow in the future. – *from ORR press release*

RAIL DELIVERY GROUP BECOMES LIMITED COMPANY

The Rail Delivery Group's leadership of Britain's railways has been reinforced by its formalisation as Rail Delivery Group Limited. At its meeting on 18 February the Rail Delivery Group became a company limited by guarantee with its Members and Directors being drawn from the owners of Britain's passenger Train Operating Companies, Freight Operating Companies and Network Rail. – *from a Rail Delivery Group press release*

THE INFAMOUS VOYAGER PONG – action at last!

"We know from customer feedback that the ambience of the vestibule areas near our train toilets can sometimes be unpleasant. Our Fleet Team have been looking at ways to improve this and will be conducting a three month trial with air fresheners, located in the vestibules and replaced every month during routine maintenance exams. Alongside this, we will be continuing to trial an ozone smoke treatment which is tasked to further remove old smells from bacteria deep within carpet

fibres. We are continuing to implement changes to the toilets themselves, including: improved methods for repair and overhaul of key components; improving the vacuum system and filtration system; and improved methods for cleaning the waste tanks.” – *CrossCountry’s In Focus magazine*

FIND A CAB TO MEET YOUR TRAIN

Traintaxi is a practical tool to help both business and leisure travellers take the train instead of the car, by overcoming one of the main obstacles: information about how to bridge "those final few miles". It is usually unrealistic to expect business people to travel the final leg on local buses, although many are happy to take a taxi to the front door. There’s no problem finding a taxi at larger stations ... but at small stations? Without local knowledge, it would be guesswork. How could you arrange for a taxi to meet you? The Traintaxi website provides you with the necessary details – our database covers all train, metro, tram and underground stations in Britain. - traintaxi.co.uk

PUBLIC TO HAVE SAY ON NORTHERN IRELAND RAILWAY PLANS

A series of public meetings on future Northern Ireland railway investment has been launched by Regional Development Minister Danny Kennedy. Mr Kennedy said “railway investment involves significant capital expenditure with lengthy planning and construction phases. Looking forward over the next 20 years, there is a need to set a strategic direction to determine the priority in which new railway projects are tackled. These public meetings will allow people to find out more about the future role of our railways as part of an integrated and sustainable transport system in Northern Ireland, to put forward their views and ask any questions they may have.” – bbc.co.uk

STALLED RAIL SCHEMES IN WALES 'BETTER VALUE' THAN ROAD EXPENDITURE

Rail schemes which promise strong benefits are stuck in the sidings while the Welsh Government channels transport funding into a road scheme officially classed as “low” value for money. The Welsh Government expects to spend £805m dualling the A465 Heads of the Valleys road by 2020 – despite official figures showing the scheme would provide less than £1.50 of benefits for every £1 spent. At least six stalled rail schemes in Wales have emerged with better results from the same analysis.

Building five new rail stations, including one by the popular museum at St Fagans, for a new rail service between Cardiff and Beddau would provide £2.70 of benefits for every £1 spent. A new station at Bow Street, near Aberystwyth, and trains from Ebbw Vale to Newport also come into the “high” value for money category, but neither features in the Welsh Government’s transport plans for the coming years. However, the Welsh Government said rail investment – unlike roads – is not devolved, and transport expert Prof Stuart Cole said the disconnection prevented Wales from choosing the most cost-effective ways of addressing transport problems. – walesonline.co.uk

SCOTRAIL SAFETY CAMPAIGN

First ScotRail recently announced that an East Lothian schoolgirl’s colourful safety poster will be displayed at 300 stations across Scotland, after she clinched victory in a nationwide competition. Linda Gallacher, ScotRail’s head of customer service delivery and standards, said: “We love Anna’s design and hope customers will too. It perfectly captures the aims of the campaign, by highlighting safety issues in a fun and engaging way.” The poster is being rolled out at stations in Scotland.

ScotRail’s SafeStations campaign follows more than 650 injuries caused by trips, slips and falls at ScotRail stations since April 2009. Although the numbers are steady year-on-year, and the vast majority were minor incidents, ScotRail is determined to urge customers – and especially children – to take extra care.

As well as the poster competition, the SafeStations campaign includes: videos on the train operator’s YouTube channel; ScotRail and British Transport Police safety talks at schools; downloadable safety

education packs, including sheet music, for teachers; and stickers and colouring-in books for children. – *news item from RAGES magazine*

BID FOR WORCESTERSHIRE PARKWAY STATION

Worcestershire County Council is to bid for £7m of government money to go towards the construction of a third railway station in Worcester. A parkway station has been proposed close to junction 7 of the M5. The Conservative-led authority has said it wants Worcestershire Parkway completed by summer 2016 if it is given money from the Government's New Stations Fund. The plans form part of the Worcester Transport Strategy, which requires £200m of investment. – *bbc.co.uk*

TAVISTOCK LINE FEATURES IN PUBLIC EXHIBITION

Plans for hundreds of new homes linked to the reopening of a Devon railway line were the subject of a public exhibition on 22 Feb. The line from Bere Alston to Tavistock was among those axed by Dr Beeching 50 years ago, although there remains a regular service from Bere Alston to Plymouth. Devon County Council wants to reinstate the route to help minimise the impact of traffic from planned development to the south and southwest of Tavistock. A total of 750 new houses are being proposed by Bovis Homes, which is seeking public views on the scheme.

The proposals include building 9km of new single-track railway to link Tavistock to Bere Alston and a new cycleway and footpath from Tavistock to the Bere peninsula. The new line would use the structures, cuttings and embankments left intact when the original line was decommissioned. A new station in the Callington Road area of Tavistock would include facilities for passengers as well as parking, cycle storage and links to local bus services. The existing station at Bere Alston would be upgraded. It is hoped that an hourly service would eventually run between Tavistock and Plymouth. However, the railway can only be developed with the appropriate powers from government, which require a public inquiry. – *Plymouth Herald*

DORSET RAIL SERVICE TO BE RESTORED AFTER 41 YEARS

A regular service between Swanage and Wareham is set to be restored by Spring 2015, 41 years after being axed, thanks to a £1.47m grant from the Government's Coastal Communities Fund. The funding will pay to upgrade track and bridges over a three-mile stretch, and for two 1960s heritage diesel units to be upgraded to mainline running standards. The project will create an estimated 50 jobs in the area.

Peter Sills, chairman of Swanage Railway Company Ltd, said: "We are elated at this tremendous and very historic news because the Swanage Railway has been campaigning to bring back regular trains from Swanage and Corfe Castle to Wareham since 1972 when British Rail controversially axed the service. It took British Rail just seven weeks to lift the seven miles of track between Furzebrook, Corfe Castle and Swanage but 30 long years for the Swanage Railway to relay it."

Trial services are planned for 50 days in 2015 and 90 days in 2016. It is hoped a year-round service will follow. Purbeck District and Dorset County councils have already allocated £3.2m for track and signalling connections at Worgret Junction. A £500,000 level crossing at the Norden Park & Ride site is being funded by BP and Perenco. – *BBC News website*

NEW GROUP FOR HUNGERFORD

Steve Smith of Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group wrote to us with an invitation: "If you use Hungerford Station then [John Willmott](#) would like to hear from you. He's thinking of forming a Rail User Group for Hungerford."

EVENTS

National & regional rail events are highlighted in **yellow**. Community & environmental events are in **purple**. Railfuture events are in **green** – rail user group reps are welcome to attend! Cancelled meetings in **red**.

❖ Why not invite representatives from neighbouring rail user groups along to your meetings to share ideas and experiences?

Mon 11 Mar [Bexhill Rail Action Gp](#) meet at Sackville Hotel, Bexhill from 19:00.

Mon 11 Mar “Beeching 50” lecture at the Science Museum, London with Michael Palin and Lord Adonis focussing on current rail developments and lessons learnt post Beeching. Details [here](#).

11-12 Mar [ACoRP](#)’s annual Designated Community Rail Lines seminar, Southampton

Tue 12 Mar [Passenger Focus](#) “Research & Communication Guidance” workshop at Royal Station Hotel, Neville Street, Newcastle-u-Tyne from 11:00.

Tue 12 Mar [Campaign for Better Transport](#) meet at Oxford Place Methodist Mission, Leeds from 19:30. Guest speaker from First TransPennine

Wed 13 Mar [Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxton RUG](#) AGM at Meldreth Manor School from 19:30.

Wed 13 Mar [Friends of the Barton Line](#) meet at the Sloop Inn, Barton from 20:00.

Wed 13 Mar Railfuture L&SE [Eastern division](#) meet at Stratford from 18:30.

Mar 15-16 [European Passengers’ Federation](#) AGM and Conference in Basel.

Sat 16 Mar [Railfuture Lincolnshire](#) AGM from 11:00 followed by a conference (all welcome) from 13:00 to 17:00, at Cleethorpes Town Hall.

Sat 16 Mar [RVR](#) AGM at Trinity Church Hall, Clitheroe from 14:00

Thu 21 Mar (Passenger Focus workshop at Perth has been cancelled.)

Fri 22 Mar [Marlow-Maidenhead Passengers’ Assn](#) meet at Bourne End Community Centre, Bucks from 19:30

Sat 23 Mar [Yorkshire Branch](#) AGM at the Herriot’s Hotel, Skipton.

Sat 23 Mar [Railfuture Thames Valley Branch](#) AGM in Bicester from 10:30.

Sat 23 Mar Original date for [Railfuture Wessex Branch](#) AGM – *postponed*

Sat 23 Mar [Railfuture Yorkshire Branch](#) meet in Skipton. Speakers on Beeching 50th anniv. theme.

Sat 23 Mar [Friends of Suburban Bristol Rlwys](#) “Beeching 50” rail trip on 13:16 from Temple Meads.

Wed 27 Mar “Beeching 50” lecture focussing on community rail partnerships and opportunities for rail reopenings at the National Railway Museum, York from 18:30. Details [here](#).

Wed 27 Mar 50th Anniversary of the publication of the Beeching Report. Mark the event with your own “reshaping” report!

Tue 2 Apr [Saltburn Line User Group](#) meet at Conservative Club, Balmoral Terrace, Saltburn. The AGM is later this month.

Thu 4 Apr [Don Valley Railway](#) drop-in meeting at the Harlequin pub, Nursery St, Sheffield.

Thu 4 Apr [Bedford-Bletchley RUA](#) AGM at Lidlington with guest speaker.

Thu 4 Apr Railfuture L&SE Sx & [Coastway division](#) meet from 18:00

Sat 6 Apr [Railfuture Scotland](#) AGM and spring meeting at the Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh from 14:00. Speaker: leading transport strategist, Dr George Hazel.

Sat 6 Apr Sesquicentenary event to mark the opening of the line to Cleethorpes at the No 1 pub; [Friends of the Barton Line](#) will have a stall at the event.

Tue 9 Apr [BGOLUG](#) open meeting from 19:00 (speakers from LOROL and others) followed by AGM.

Sat 13 Apr [SARPA](#) meet at The Cambria, Aberystwyth from 11:00.

Mon 15 Apr [ALRUG](#) meet at the Manor Hotel, Exmouth from 19:00.

Sat 20 Apr Railfuture [North West Branch](#) meet at the Golden Pheasant, Plumley from 13:00.

Sat 20 Apr Railfuture [East Mids](#) AGM at Great Central Rlwy's Lovatt House, Loughborough from 13:00. Spkr: Nicky Morgan MP on the Westminster campaign to electrify the Midland Main Line.

Sat 20 Apr [Railfuture London & SE Branch](#) AGM.

Sat 20 Apr [Friends of Settle & Carlisle](#) AGM at Victoria Hall, Kirkgate, Settle from 12:00.

Sat 27 Apr [Bus Users UK](#) AGM in Oxford

Sat 27 Apr Railfuture [W Mids](#) AGM at Carrs Lane Church Centre (opp Moor St Station) from 11:00.

Tue 30 Apr [Saltburn Line User Group](#) AGM at the Conservative Club, Saltburn from 19:00.

30 Apr-2 May [Railtex 2013](#) at Earls Court, London. Showcase of railway products and services.

Sat 4 May [ESTA](#) AGM. Venue to be decided.

Tue 7 May [SARPA](#) meet at Railway Station, Shrewsbury from 17:45.

Tue 7 May [Saltburn Line User Group](#) meet at Conservative Club, Balmoral Terrace, Saltburn.

Wed 8 May [Friends of the Barton Line](#) meet at the Sloop Inn, Barton from 20:00.

Thu 9 May [ACoRP](#) conference "Realising the Potential of Small Stations" at Carrs Lane, Birmingham.

Sat 11 May [Railfuture](#) AGM at the Town Hall, Durham city centre. Bookable lunch: £8.

Sat 18 May [Cotswold Line Promotion Group](#) AGM at the WI Hall, Moreton-in-Marsh from 10:30.

Sat 18 May [PENRUG](#) AGM in Thetford.

Sun 19 May National rail timetable change

Tue 21 May [Felixstowe Travel Watch](#) AGM – details to follow.

Thu 23 May [Edenbridge & District Rail Travellers' Association](#) open AGM at the WI Hall, Edenbridge from 19:00.

Mon 3 Jun [Friends of the Far North Line](#) AGM/conference, Royal British Legion, Thurso from 11:30.

Tue 4 Jun Aylesbury Vale Transport Users Group meet at the Methodist Church Centre, Buckingham Street, Aylesbury from 14:00.

Wed 5 Jun [World Environment Day](#) a global day for positive environmental action.

Sat 8 Jun [Trans Wilts Community Rail Partnership](#) meet at The Laverton, Westbury from 10:45.

Mon 10 Jun [APTU](#) meeting with First Capital Connect at the Friends Meeting House, 7 Upper Latimer Rd, St Albans from 19:30

10-12 Jun [ACoRP](#) members' seminars, by invitation only. 10th York, 11th Wrexham, 12th London.

Tue 11 Jun [FoWHL](#) AGM with lunch at the Commodore Hotel, Helensburgh from 10:45. Guest speaker is Transport Minister Keith Brown.

mid Jun [Green Transport Week](#) *details to be announced*

Sat 15 Jun [Railfuture Yorkshire Branch](#) meeting *details to be announced*

Thu 20 Jun [TravelWatch North West](#) conference, County Hall, Preston from 10:30.

Sat 22 Jun [Railfuture](#) summer conference on future aspects of railway operation at the Albemarle Centre, Taunton. Fee only £30 (£25 for members' bookings before 30 Apr) – includes lunch.

Wed 10 Jul [Friends of the Barton Line](#) meeting & AGM at the Sloop Inn, Barton from 20:00.

Wed 17 Jul [ACoRP](#) station adoption seminar at Gt Minster House, London, by invitation only.

Tue 10 Sep Aylesbury Vale TUG meet at Buckingham Town Council Chamber, Buck'm from 14:00.

Sun 22 Sep [Car Free Day](#). Highlight the positive effects of car free travel.

Fri 27 Sep [ACoRP](#) Community Rail Awards 2012, Llandudno

Tue 1 Oct Railway Development Society (aka Railfuture) 35th anniversary.

Sat 2 Nov [Railfuture](#) conference, Town Hall, Oxford. Fee only £30 (£25 for members booking before 31 Aug).

Sun 8 Dec National rail timetable change

More events on the Railfuture and ACoRP websites.

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This bulletin has been sent by

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