



March 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.

My account last month of Brunel taking the Bristol to Paddington line from concept to completion in just eight years prompted Bryan Burdett to wonder how the UK (and world?) rail systems would look today if Brunel were still alive. Would he already be working on the successor to HS2, viewing the present design as outdated technology that was still using what he termed 'the coal-truck gauge'? Or, faced with Network Rail's (NR) 8-stage Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) process, would he simply have given up and found some other outlet for his talent? Thoughts, anyone?

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.

Rail Action Group for the East of Scotland

Six services/day each way between Edinburgh and North Berwick/Dunbar are currently being operated with six carriages rather than four. The extra capacity has been created by a training programme, running until the end of April, to acquaint Class 380 drivers with longer trains in preparation for the new, faster electric units from December 2018.

Levenmouth Rail Campaign

LMRC eagerly awaits Transport Scotland and Fife Council commissioning a GRIP 3 design, to clarify both timetabling and the costs of the rail infrastructure, and reduce the optimism bias uplift applied to the costing from 50% to 16%. According to Transform Scotland: "communities value new rail links to our cities, and the benefits flow both ways. Among examples of communities that would benefit from such links, where the social benefits should form a key part of the business case, Levenmouth in Fife stands out as a very prominent example. It cannot be right that it is left to local campaigners to lobby for new rail services or routes – a strategic approach which combines local, regional and national needs should be adopted."

Copeland Rail Users Group

Various types of customer information screen are being rolled out across west Cumbria, but passengers are often left none the wiser. At Barrow, a train from Carlisle was delayed, so a northbound train in Platform 1 was signalled forward - but never moved. Eventually, the driver went to find out why, only to discover that his guard was on the delayed southbound train! Also, it would seem that if a train is more than a few minutes late, it disappears from the information system altogether, leaving passengers mystified as to whether it is running late, cancelled, broken down or, if and when it does appear, it will run through without stopping to make up time. The more sophisticated plasma displays are also prone to computer glitches.

The Group is still seeking a volunteer to edit an edition of its newsletter, or to fill the role permanently.

Friends of Settle-Carlisle Line

Needless to say, FoSCL is delighted to see the line through to Carlisle reopening on 31 March, if not before, and is working closely with Northern to attract customers both old and new. The idea of running scheduled services hauled by steam proved an outstanding success, and gained national publicity. The A1 Locomotive Society made *Tornado* available, and the wider railway industry rallied round with crewing, stabling, stock, catering and so much more. On a more mundane point, FoSCL is seeking a permanent base with a shop, office space and a meeting room; none of its stations has the necessary facilities.

Ribble Valley Railway

With the support of Community Rail Lancashire, RVR wants to see the 2304 Manchester Victoria-Blackburn service extended to Clitheroe from May 2018. The new Regional Community and Sustainability Manager, Vicky Cropper, will introduce herself at the AGM (see Events).

Leeds - Morecambe Community Rail Partnership

Northern's Seed Corn Fund will allow the LMCRP to develop the Bentham Line as a 'centre of excellence' in understanding how community rail can help people living with dementia, and their carers and supporters, to have a far better experience of rail travel as a means for tourism. Rail employees, representatives from local tourism and rail groups, and the many volunteers who support the activities on the Bentham Line will receive training in the kind of support this group of passengers needs. For further information, or to become involved, email [Catherine Huddleston](mailto:Catherine.Huddleston@leedscommunityrail.org), or telephone: 07471 941038 / 015242 98940.

Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester Lines (STORM)

Using NR's authoritative Darwin Data Feed, [Raildar](#) has created maps that track train movements across the network in real-time; you can even see them moving. The maps show every platform at stations around the UK, different lines, and connections. Train movements can also be [overlaid](#) onto a Google Map, which you can then navigate and expand in the normal way. Click on a train to see every stop it is due to make, the precise time it stopped at each location (to the second), and the number of minutes it was delayed. Enjoy!

There's much to see at Salford Central, as track is being laid through the disused platforms to serve the Chat Moss and Ordsall Chord lines. The new bridge over the Irwell is the latest piece of the Ordsall Chord to be put in place, and there's a good view of it from the Bolton train. The wires are up along the Windsor link, but between Salford Crescent and Bolton there's little sign of electrification work other than tree felling and the bridge/tunnel works. If electric trains are to run between Manchester and Preston from next December, there's much still to do in the remaining 9 months.

The Northern Weekly Salvo

The Fetch Theatre's opening event on Leominster station was packed! The station is an ideal base; the Town Council leases the space from NR, and sub-lets it to the company. The main line through Fife is being promoted as the Artline, with an open weekend at the end of April at various venues, including an art exhibition at Inverkeithing, a pottery studio in Aberdour signal box, Off The Rails Arthouse artist Leo du Feu at Burntisland Station, the Station Gallery and Studios at Kinghorn, and Kirsty Lorenz at Ladybank. Kirkcaldy Galleries also offers a wide range of art.

Next year sees the 150th anniversary of 'The Heart of Wales Line' from Shrewsbury to Swansea. One idea is for a line-long arts festival: **The Art of Wales Line**? The concept is still embryonic, but a week-long event in summer 2018 could include displays on stations, open studios nearby, and events and artwork on trains. There is a meeting to take the idea forward on Saturday 8 April at The Media Resource Centre, Oxford Street, Llandrindod Wells from 1030 to about 1230. All welcome, but please email [Paul Salveson](mailto:Paul.Salveson@heartofwalesline.org).

An attractive leaflet in both English and Welsh promotes the Heart of Wales Line Trail, which uses existing rights of way along its route from Craven Arms to Llanelli. Copies of the leaflet are available from Rachel at the email address below, but please do consider the Crowd Funding appeal.

- Heart of Wales Line Trail: email rachelzzzyx@gmail.com or telephone 07805 864823
- Crowd Funding at <https://localgiving.org/heartofwaleslinetrail>
- Twitter [@walesrailtrail](https://twitter.com/walesrailtrail), Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/HeartofWalesLineTrail>

Harrogate Line Supporters Group

HLSG favours a new Leeds/Bradford Airport Parkway Station south of the Bramhope tunnel, only a mile away from the Terminal Building in its current location. The new Northern and East Coast Rail franchises will deliver capacity, speed, safety and frequency by 2019: 4 trains per hour all day in each direction between Harrogate and Leeds, plus a new 2-hourly Inter-City Express Harrogate-London service. Slower tram-trains would consume scarce capacity, and create bottlenecks at junctions with the main line, so heavy rail is the more compelling and economically viable option.

A 15 min frequency is the point at which a significant modal shift from road to rail occurs. North-west Leeds currently has very poor access into the City Centre by rail, but some of the most congested roads, whereas Arthington, Bramhope, Cookridge, Pool, and Yeadon would all have easy access to the proposed Airport/Park & Ride Station. Potential users would willingly switch if the total cost of parking and the rail fare were less than the cost of parking in the city centre, thus significantly reducing traffic congestion.

Don Valley Railway

DVR wonders why Sheffield City Region has cut its contribution to local transport services by 5% (or just over £3million) whilst allocating £5million towards a scheme that will mainly benefit London commuters. Realigning the track through Market Harborough, south of Leicester, for electrification will cost £59million, and cut journey times between Sheffield and St Pancras by just 3 minutes. Delivery is not due until 2023, and from 2032 Sheffield-London trips will move to HS2. So Sheffield will marginally benefit for just 9 years. Meanwhile, in 2010 the Don Valley Railway Business Plan for a rail service from Sheffield Victoria, the former Great Central station that closed in 1970, to Stocksbridge and Oughtibridge was costed at £4million. With a return on investment within 10 years, half of a loan £5 million would be repaid by 2023.

Friends of Brigg Line

On a visit to Gainsborough, Ian Prosser, the Chief Inspector of Railways, was given a tour of Lea Road station, where the Sheffield platform and ramp are subsiding, and then Gainsborough Central, where he viewed the safe foot crossing, poorly maintained platforms and surrounding areas - and the £400,000 non-ramp footbridge in a retirement town with a planned retirement village. He praised the efforts of the Brigg Line and the Gainsborough, Retford and Brigg Bus and Rail Groups, but regretted that senior NR management had seen fit to visit. NR thinking needed to be more joined up.

Hard work by both Groups to promote the line is paying off, but alarm bells are ringing. Will it cope in the summer? The Cleethorpes Armed Forces Day could top the 180,000 who visited last year! The timetable needs a tweak: trains that arrive early at a station wait, only then to lose time and so be late at subsequent stations. And whilst the £11.70 adult return fare will take you a fair way, the same fare for the 17 miles from Brigg to Gainsborough Central is £9.10. The £11.70 fare is also valid from Kirton in Lindsay and Brigg to Meadowhall via Barnetby. Get your ticket from the guard, ask for another from Meadowhall into Sheffield for £2.70, and you will save over half the £30.10 cost of a through ticket for this route!

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group

NR has withdrawn its proposal to close the Barrington Rd pedestrian crossing at Foxton, a level crossing in its own right, and is looking at new ways to get all types of traffic safely across its tracks. Meanwhile CEMEX is seeking approval to restore its quarry, using rail to import material. While sound in principle, this merely underlines the urgent need for a solution to the Foxton Level Crossing (*both now and in the long term – Ed.*)

Hitchin Rail User Group

In response to a query to the East-West Rail Consortium regarding its relationship with the new delivery vehicle, HRUG received the following reply: "The Consortium remains unchanged. We have been working with Rob Brighouse to ensure that his recommendations build upon the progress made to date with the project. We share the Secretary of State's desire to ensure that any new structure helps accelerates delivery of the scheme."

Association of Passenger Train Users (Thameslink North)

APTU is concerned as to whether GTR can ramp up Thameslink performance in time for the 2018 timetable, when the need for trains to present at either end of the Core (St Pancras – Blackfriars) on time and in the right order will be absolutely critical. It has suggested five additional metrics that are either not currently kept, or whose impact is either lost in the bulk or significantly understated:

1. Consecutive cancellations in normal service
2. Rate of use of skip stopping (omitting stops to aid recovery times): in the peak, during the day, and when there are extended intervals in the early morning and late evening
3. Number of missed last train connections
4. Failures to complete planned journeys for those requiring assistance
5. Regular lack of ticket issuing facilities, eg at specific stations.

Thameslink has a policy of not running 'sick' units through the Core, where a broken down train that cannot move is so disruptive. APTU agrees with this policy in principle, but is unhappy with the use of Kentish Town; West Hampstead is staffed and has better onward connections, wider 12 carriage platforms and lifts. Thameslink has agreed in respect of 12 car trains, but still uses Kentish Town for 8 car trains. APTU hopes that this will change after a few 'successful' early terminations at West Hampstead.

At APTU's request, GTR is reviewing the timing of the transition from off-peak to peak fares and vice versa against the new Thameslink timetable from 2018. The restriction was originally introduced to manage demand, but capacity is already growing as Class 700 stock progressively enters service, and 2018 will see a further substantial increase. However, any changes would need to be referred to and approved by the DfT, as they retain all GTR fare revenue.

Marches Rail User Alliance, Rail and Bus for Hereford

The Marches line between Hereford and Shrewsbury falls within the Wales and Borders franchise, so the UK Government will be removed from the process. However, the Welsh Cabinet Secretary has stated that he would be willing to take up complaints about the franchise from English MPs in the same way as he does those from Welsh AMs. This agreement needs to be formalised in an established protocol.

As well as addressing service levels and more and better rolling stock, the franchise should not overlook the quality of stations: they are a traveller's first impression of the railway. Working with the respective rail user groups, MRUA has produced a report that lists the improvements needed at Leominster, Ludlow, Craven Arms and Church Stretton to develop the Marches line as a high quality railway. There are a number of common issues: car parking, access for pedestrians and the disabled, platform edge safety, shelters with timetable and local information, and new station buildings. And to build on the growth in rail travel, there is also scope for raising the profile of each of the stations within its town and community.

Meanwhile the West Midlands franchise award is due in June. RBfH is concerned that Herefordshire will remain a backwater at the end of the line, as the West Midlands Combined Authority has more clout and greater resources. However, HCC is on the board of West Midlands Rail Ltd, which will administer the franchise, so it is to be hoped that its member is both knowledgeable and vociferous!

Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group

With electrification stopping at Newbury, Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury were facing a diesel shuttle service, with no direct trains to Reading and Paddington. However, a long campaign has paid off: Bedwyn will be served by bi-modes, running on electric power from Paddington to Newbury and then diesel to Bedwyn. To accommodate the new, longer trains, the siding at Bedwyn Station will need to be extended, and this will involve re-routing the crossing / footpath. NR and GWR are in consultation with Great Bedwyn Parish Council regarding this proposal.

Salisbury to Exeter Rail Users Group

SERUG now embraces every intermediate station between Salisbury and Exeter; it will be formally launched at a tea meeting on 6 April at the Railway Centre, Yeovil Junction Station. Guest speakers include Nigel Harris, the Editor of Rail magazine, Chris Austin, author of "Disconnected", and Chris Loder from South West Trains.

The Group's aims are:

- Waterloo-Yeovil Junction: 2 trains per hour throughout the day, and later evening trains
- Double track between Tisbury and Wilton Junction (just outside Salisbury), and upgraded signalling
- Double track from Yeovil Junction to Crewkerne, with a long ("dynamic") loop at Whimple, to allow increased capacity to Exeter, more resilient working, and development of Devon Metro services
- "Permissive working" at Yeovil Junction, ie splitting and joining trains, to broaden the range of journey opportunities
- New, faster and longer trains to replace the ageing Class 158 and 159s
- More car parking at stations.

South Hampshire Rail Users' Group

The Southern Daily Echo reports that Stagecoach is resisting proposals for a railway bridge at Lymington Town station that would provide safe access to the new Lymington Shores residential development, as it would encroach on the station car park. Meanwhile, NR is consulting on a new station at Welborne, on the northern side of Fareham, where a 6,000-home development is planned. Trains from Waterloo to Portsmouth via Fareham could call within their current journey time.

South West Trains' latest publicity sounds like good news: "Get your weekend mojo back, with our new weekend Super Off-Peak fares...you'll save money whatever your journey." Not so. Unlike the current Super Off-Peak tickets, these new tickets will not be valid all day. Passengers using trains that arrive in London between 0931 and 1159, or depart between 1609 and 1840, will need Off-Peak tickets costing up to 25% more. For non-London journeys, Super Off-Peak tickets will no longer be available on trains departing before 1059. Weekend engineering works, often involving slower journeys and bus replacements, will make these dearer tickets even worse value for money.

Tarka Rail Association

The Spring 2017 edition of TRA's magazine is number 50; number 1 dates back to 1999, but that of its predecessor, the North Devon Railway Line Development Group, to 1978. The current campaign is for an earlier departure and later arrival at Barnstable. The 0700 doesn't get you into London until 1124; an 0530 departure would advance this to 0900. The last train from Paddington to reach Barnstable the same evening is the 1803, but with a train arriving in Barnstable at 2345, you could leave as late as 1945. The return journey at midnight would make the sleeper at Exeter, so you could be in London at 0523. Meanwhile, GWR have agreed a new 0707 service from Crediton that will connect with a train to Paddington that arrives at 1002. *[So could that not start back at Barnstable at about 0612? – Ed.]*

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](#).

PASSENGER GROUP

The Secretary has circulated a paper for discussion at the Group's meeting on 25 March on how Railfuture can best reflect the needs of passengers, and so raise its profile. Possible topics of public interest are fares and seat availability. Also, facilities at stations: defining standards of good practice, and evaluating each station against the appropriate standard. Publicising the results in any of these fields would be good for Railfuture, as well as being helpful to passengers.

The European Passengers' Federation (EPF), to which Railfuture is affiliated, has updated its training document on how the EU functions in respect of rail. For a copy or for further information contact: [Trevor Garrod](#), the EPF President. For planning rail journeys abroad, Christopher Burton commends the website maintained by [The Man in Seat Sixty-One...](#) Who is he, and why does he sit in Seat 61? His name is Mark Smith, and it's all on the About Me web page: "I'm a career railwayman who ran away from Oxford to join the circus (or as we called it in those days, British Rail)..."

The Annual EPF Eurostar meeting was told that the service has been badly affected by the terrorist attacks. Leisure passengers disappeared quickly and are only slowly returning. Plans for a through service from London to Amsterdam are going well. However, Eurostar is concerned about the practical effects of Brexit. At some stations, passengers have to lift heavy luggage for scanning. Some London scanners have lifting gear, but Eurostar has little control over the equipment and security staff in stations elsewhere.

RAILFUTURE YORKSHIRE

At its AGM, Railfuture Chairman Chris Page listed points that he had raised with Rail Minister Paul Maynard: embed customer service in rail culture; recruit more engineers for NR, and improve forecasts of the potential footfall on new and reopened lines. Railfuture also needs more active members, but needs to be a fun activity.

Alan Williams charted the demise of the lines from Whitby to Malton, York and London, and south to Scarborough, and how the Middlesborough line was run down to just four off-peak trains/day. However, footfall last year increased by over 10%, and some services are now overcrowded. The new franchise will see a year-round Sunday service and, from 2019, the early morning service from Whitby restored. The aim now is to restore the service level to 8 trains/day, as it was pre-1991.

Branch Chair Nina Smith discussed the problems with rail franchising, which limit service improvements, whilst a poor relationship with NR leads to poor performance and higher fares. Historic underinvestment has left rolling stock and line infrastructure crying out for more. As well as missing lines such as Skipton-Colne and York-Beverley via Market Weighton, reconnecting Battersby to the East Coast Main Line north of Northallerton would link Whitby to York, whilst a chord at Burscough would open up Southport to through trains from Preston and Carlisle.

In the East Midlands, Nina has proposed hourly services from Leeds to Lincoln via Doncaster and Gainsborough, and from Nottingham or Leicester to Sheffield, Pontefract Baghill and York. Meanwhile, the high level of fares is driving potential rail users onto roads. Friends of Dronfield station, between Chesterfield and Sheffield, are concerned that Northern may introduce parking charges at what used to be a free car park run by North East Derbyshire District Council. Many use the station for short journeys, so charges could drive users away. The Halifax and District Rail Action Group has persuaded Grand Central to extend back to Halifax the Bradford-Leeds service that began in May.

RAILFUTURE EAST MIDLANDS

EMT franchise has been extended by "up to a year" from 4 March 2018. The pre-qualified bidders are: Stagecoach, Arriva and a First/Trenitalia consortium. At a meeting with Stagecoach, Midland Main Line issues dominated, so RFEA has asked for another to discuss rural issues such as overcrowding. The new Sunday timetables from May have generated some heat. The wish for better long distance MML services was achieved at the expense of connections into northbound services at Kettering for passengers from Corby. Nottingham-Grantham and Nottingham-Lincoln will gain earlier Sunday services, although Hykeham, the fastest growing station in the area, is getting a train only every other hour. However, this timetable is only for the short term. RFEA will discuss the December 2017 timetable with EMT later this month. The draft would seem to suggest that Northern thinks it could run the hourly Lincoln - Sheffield service on the same track and at the same time as the existing EMT Lincoln - Leicester service!

RAILFUTURE WEST MIDLANDS

The Branch is chairing a debate to seek the views of candidates for Mayor on transport policies and priorities. It is free and open to all, but admission is by [ticket](#). The event on 6 April should generate wide interest, as many of the Mayor's decisions are likely to impact on neighbouring counties. Questions may be submitted by [email](#), and concern any form of transport, not just rail, but should not be party political.

RAILFUTURE EAST ANGLIA

RFEA wants to see firm dates for schemes to eliminate pinch-points, to improve reliability and unlock timetable options. For example, double tracking Newmarket-Cambridge, Soham-Ely, and Woodbridge-Saxmundham on the East Suffolk line; extra lines on both routes into London Liverpool Street; the reconfiguration of Ely North Junction, and another track across the River Wensum swing bridge at Trowse in Norwich. The DfT High Level Output Specification (HLOS) and Statement of Funds Available (SOFA) for Control Period 6 from 2019-2024, expected around June, will be hugely important.

At a local level, it is setting up a new Rail User Group to serve Whittlesford Parkway and Shelford, and upgrading the existing Community Rail Partnership for Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton. However, the Local Enterprise Partnership that covers Wisbech has stalled at funding the GRIP3 process to establish the cost of reinstating the rail link to March, and thence Ely and Cambridge. One idea is to detach the project from NR and its inordinately expensive GRIP stages, and deliver it as a stand-alone, independently managed scheme (*cf East-West Rail – Ed.*), leaving NR to concentrate on the complex upgrade at Ely. The proposed station on the Addenbrooke's site south of Cambridge might also be privately funded: a report by John Laing Infrastructure states that "Initial feasibility studies are positive."

RAILFUTURE WESSEX

Branch Chair Bruce Duncan shared a special Trans Wilts train from Swindon to Salisbury with Rail Minister Paul Maynard, which stopped at the possible site for the new Wilton Parkway station on the old Wilton North site. The Minister highlighted the role played by the Trans Wilts Community Rail Partnership: with 3,200 volunteers putting in 250,000 hours per year to improve stations, between 2013 and 2015 passenger journeys increased by 25%. GWR MD Mark Hopwood gave a commitment to continue working with Wiltshire County Council and Trans Wilts CRP to improve services with newer stock cascaded from GWR electrification, and hoped that the Trans Wilts Line (TWL) could be extended from Westbury through to Salisbury. Paul Johnson would like to see it extended to Southampton Airport.

TRAVELWATCH NORTHWEST

A TWNW [report](#) "Integration between Rail and Bus at Stations" was based on surveys at 42 medium sized stations in its area. The information available to customers was inconsistent and variable in quality, and particularly poor at Virgin West Coast stations. It urges franchisees and regional transport authorities to maximise its accessibility, standard and appropriateness regarding the availability and location of onward bus services.

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

The DfT has updated its guidance on the [Scope of Rail Interoperability](#). Projects within scope will need authorisation to bring into service new, upgraded or renewed structural subsystems. They will be assessed against relevant Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSIs) and notified national technical rules. TSIs now apply both on and off the Trans-European transport network (TEN). The [Summary Report on the Post Implementation Review of the 2011 Regulations](#) includes the following paragraph:

"On 23 June, the EU referendum took place and the people of the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. Until exit negotiations are concluded, the UK remains a full member of the EU and all the rights and obligations of EU membership remain in force. During this period, The Government will continue to negotiate, implement and apply EU legislation. The outcome of these negotiations will then determine what arrangements apply in relation to EU legislation in future once the UK has left."

The DfT has issued routine updates to the Northern and TransPennine franchises. The following companies have successfully pre-qualified to bid for the East Midlands franchise, to run from November 2018:

- Arriva Rail East Midlands Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Arriva UK Trains Limited
- First Trenitalia East Midlands Rail Limited, a joint venture company wholly owned by First Rail Holdings Limited and Trenitalia UK Limited
- Stagecoach East Midlands Trains Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Stagecoach Transport Holdings Limited.

The DfT has updated the [Chiltern franchise](#). The relevant document would seem to be the new output plan. It has also launched a [consultation](#) on the South Eastern franchise (see below). However, the Telegraph reports that some services may be made standard class only, fewer trains will call at less well-used stations, and the choice of London terminus limited to provide a more reliable service.

On behalf of the DfT, Innovate UK will invest up to £9 million to help grow national and international rail markets. This is a joint initiative with the rail industry under the direction of its technical leadership group, the team responsible for the definition of the future vision for the railways. [Projects](#) lasting up to 12 months must be collaborative, business-led and involve a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME), with clear benefits to business and the impact on UK and international rail. Total project costs should be in the range of £150,000 to £1 million, although projects outside this range would be considered.

The DfT has [responded](#) to the April 2016 NR report on rail links between the south coast and London, which found that NR's proposed upgrade of the Brighton Main Line (BML) could meet passenger demand for over 30 years by increasing the peak service from 36 to 44 trains per hour, or every 85 seconds from East Croydon. However, there was no case for government to reopen lines such as Lewes-Uckfield, or build new ones such as BML2 into central London via Canary Wharf. The DfT accepts these recommendations, and has asked NR to confirm its cost estimate of £1200-£1500 million. However, local authorities and enterprise partnerships could enhance the viability of alternative schemes with further development, and the promoters of BML2 are encouraged to develop their proposals to fund and deliver it privately.

Having acted as interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) since January 2016, Joanna Whittington's permanent appointment has been confirmed following an open competition. Joanna had previously been its Director of Railway Markets and Economics, and an ORR Board member. At the Rail Delivery Group's Annual Conference, she cited the need for innovation to avoid creating a two-tier passenger experience, particularly for customers with disabilities. However technology developed, it must be fully inclusive. Chief Inspector Ian Prosser emphasised the importance of managing the trade offs between capacity, technology and performance, and being honest with the consumer. Difficulties in providing safe systems could be avoided by preferring the tried and tested as well as world leading technology to bespoke solutions.

The ORR has released its [conclusions and revised guidance](#) to NR on its Strategic Business Plan for Control Period 6 (2019-2024), following the public consultation that ended on 23 November 2016.

The Welsh government has updated its [progress](#) on the procurement process for the new Wales and Borders Rail Service and Metro, and launched a public consultation (see below). [Rowland Pittard](#) would appreciate any comments.

The railway from Gobowen to Blodwel via Oswestry closed to passenger service in 1966, and was mothballed 1983, although the track was retained. In 2008, Shropshire County Council acquired the railway land; Cambrian Heritage Railways Ltd was established in 2009, and in 2014, SCC leased the land to them for a period of 50 years. Subject to certain provisions, the Transport Secretary has now made an [Order](#) authorising the transfer from NR to CHRL of the statutory provisions and other rights and liabilities relating to the line, paving the way for its restoration for public use as a community and heritage railway.

Transport for London has confirmed that funding for the [Metropolitan Line Extension](#), aka The Croxley Link, is £50 million short, and construction is on hold. The Mayor is seeking additional funding from the DfT.

The Competition and Markets Authority believes that, with important reforms to protect taxpayers, Government investment, and the franchising market, passengers could benefit from more “open access” (non-franchised) competition. Where possible, the ORR track access charging framework should allow open access operators to contribute both toward fixed costs and to a public service obligation levy, and thus to socially and economically but ultimately unprofitable services. Consultation on the levy closes on 21 April.

The first of 10 Class 88 locos, No 88002 “Prometheus”, recently arrived at the Direct Rail Services Kingmoor depot in Carlisle from Stadler Rail in Spain. Developed from Class 68, Class 88 features both 25kV electric and diesel electric operating modes. The first opportunity to view it will be at the [DRS Charity Open Day](#) at Kingmoor on 22 July.

The 36th edition of Barry Doe’s rail franchise map is now available. Copies may be downloaded from the 'Rail Operators in the British Isles' section of www.barrydoe.co.uk, where links to this and previous editions appear. Anyone may download for any private or commercial use without further permission, courtesy of Great Western Railway, HaCon, nationalrail.com, ScotRail and Severn-Dee Travel.

Funding for buses across England and Wales has been cut by a third since 2010. The Campaign for Better Transport wants to see all local authorities given the full range of powers in the Bus Services Bill, not just those with an elected mayor. Buses are vital to link rural communities to the rail network.

Last month, in regard to the case of Steve Morrissey, who joined the 0738 at Lancaster, but was falsely accused of boarding it at Preston, from where the fare is much higher, I posed the question: *if he had boarded at Preston, why would this have been an offence, as he would have had a valid ticket that covered the journey he actually made?* I am indebted to Barry Doe and Jerry Alderson for the following clarification: it was an Off-Peak ticket, which is available for that train from Lancaster and stations north, but not from Preston. Breaks of journey are normally allowed on Off-Peak tickets, but not in this case.

So how is the innocent passenger to know? When booking an Advance or Off-Peak ticket on the NR Journey Planner, and clicking on the info for the type of ticket, in neither case does it mention any restriction on where you can join the train. If it is necessary to consult the Conditions of Carriage, as it would seem to be, the Journey Planner should make that clear.

Equally confusing is the phrase “any permitted route”. How does one know which routes are permitted between any two of the 2560 stations on the NR network? A list of every possible combination would have over 6 million entries! But some that are allowed might surprise you, as Chris Page points out in his latest [article](#) on the Railfuture website. For instance, it would never occur to me that an “any permitted route” ticket from St Pancras to Sheffield is equally valid from Kings Cross via Doncaster, but so it would seem.

CONSULTATIONS

- [Bus Services Bill: draft regulations and guidance](#) (update), closes **21 March**
- [ORR: Financial Framework for PR18/CP6](#), closes 13 April
- [TfL's Bakerloo line extension - stations, shafts, worksites](#), closes 21 April
- [DfT: The Passenger Rail Public Service Obligation Levy](#), closes 21 April
- [DfT: South Eastern Franchise](#), closes 23 May at 1145.
- [Transport for Wales – Design of Wales and Borders Rail Service including Metro](#), closes 23 May
- [DfT's Heathrow expansion: draft Airports National Policy Statement](#), closes 25 May.

...and finally

Police held a 0054 Great Northern service from King’s Cross to Huntingdon at Potters Bar following a mass brawl that erupted – over bagels. There were no arrests.

On 13 March industrial action took place on the Northern network. Brigg line stations received a poster saying that there would be no services on the line on that day: “Trains may be affected from this station, but a normal service will commence on Tuesday 14th March” – or maybe not, as there’s been no weekday service on that line since 1993!

The FoSCL Journal paid tribute to the late Graham Taylor OBE, who wrote the Forward to Ticket to Dent, extolling the tranquillity of the highest mainline station in England at 1,150 feet above sea level. Now in private ownership, and following a comprehensive restoration and refurbishment, [Dent Station](#), the [Snow Hut / Bunk Barn](#) and [Snow Hut 3](#) are all available for hire - and stopping trains do still call.

To end on a sombre note, the Telegraph [reports](#) the “Titanic of train disasters” in which “more than 600” people died, although [Wikipedia](#) puts the figure at 426. It happened in Italy during WWII and, as with Quintinshill in WWI, news of the disaster was suppressed by the wartime authorities. A grossly overloaded train of 45 freight cars, onto which refugees had climbed illegally, stalled in the mile-long tunnel near Balvano, about 60 miles south-east of Naples, and passengers and engine crews succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning from the two steam locomotives.

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.

I have to preface the list of events this month with an apology. The European Passenger Forum in Rotterdam was not on 17/18 May as stated last month, but 17/18 Mar. The diary entry did point to the EPF website, and anyone who consulted this would have been put right, but unfortunately it's too late if anyone intended to do so nearer the time.

March

- Saturday 18. English Regional Transport Association, The Tavistock, Tavistock St, **Bedford**, MK40 2SB, 1300 for 1400
- Tuesday 21. Rail and Bus for Herefordshire AGM, Merton Hotel, Commercial Road, **Hereford**, 1400
- Thursday 23. Copeland Rail Users' Group, Methodist Church Hall, **Seascale**, CA20 1PU, 1830 for 1900 (AGM with Christian Wolmar and Nigel Harris) (Also 8 Apr, 13 May, 10 Jun, 1350).
- Saturday 25. Railfuture Herts and Beds, St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, **St Albans**, 1045 (Also 29 July, 25 Nov).
- Saturday 25. Railfuture Passenger Group, London, International Hall, Lansdowne Terrace, **London**, WC1N 1AS, 1300.
- Saturday 25. Railfuture North East AGM, Arts Centre, Westgate Road, **Newcastle**, 1400.
- Saturday 25. Ribble Valley Railway AGM, Trinity Church Hall, Parsons Lane, **Clitheroe**, (Also 3 Apr, 8 May, 5 Jun, 3 Jul, all at New Inn, Clitheroe, 1930).
- Wednesday 29, Levenmouth Rail Campaign, Levenmouth Campus, Methilhaven Road, **Buckhaven**, KY8 1EA, 18.30.
- Wednesday 29. East Hampshire CRP, District Council offices, Penns Place, **Petersfield**, 1500.

April

- Saturday 1. Railfuture Yorkshire, Holy Trinity Parish Centre, King St, **Hull**, HU1 2JJ, 1300.
- Saturday 1. Railfuture Wessex AGM, Village Hall, **Brookenhurst**, 1300.
- Saturday 4. Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association, **Newtown**, 1855.
- Tuesday 4. Chesham & District Transport Users' Group, **Chesham** Town Hall, 1930 (Also 16 May, 20 June, 8 August, 19 September, 24 October and 12 December.)
- Thursday 6. Railfuture West Midlands. Mayoral debate, Council House, Victoria Square, **Birmingham** B1 1BB, 1800.
- Thursday 6. Salisbury to Exeter Rail Users Group, **Yeovil** Railway Centre, BA22 9UU, 1630 (tea) for 1700.
- Thursday 6. Capital Rail Action Group, Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, **Edinburgh**, EH1 2JL, 1930 (also 4 May (AGM)).
- Saturday 22. Railfuture Thames Valley AGM, The Hub, Easton Street, **High Wycombe**, HP11 1NJ, 1030.
- Saturday 22. Railfuture West Midlands AGM with Christian Wolmar, Priory Rooms, 40 Bull Street, **Birmingham**, 1400.
- Saturday 22. Railfuture North West, The Golden Pheasant, **Plumley**, 1300. (Also 24 June at Littleborough Station).
- Tuesday 25. Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users' Association AGM, Methodist Church, **Woburn Sands**, 1930.
- Tuesday 29. Friends of Settle-Carlisle Line AGM, Victoria Hall, Kirkgate, **Settle**, 1100 for 1200.

Further Ahead

- 6 May. Peterborough-Ely-Norwich Rail Users Group AGM, Riversdale Centre, **Thetford**, 1030
- 11 May. Tarka Rail Association AGM, Village Hall (next to the station), **Umburleigh**, 1915
- 17 May. Friends of the Barton Line, No 1 Inn, **Cleethorpes**, 1900. (Also the Sloop, **Barton**, 9 July (AGM), 20 Sep (No 1) and 15 Nov (Sloop)).
- 18 May. Edenbridge & District Rail Travellers' Association AGM, WI Hall, **Edenbridge**, 1900 for 1930.
- 20 May. Railfuture AGM, **Peterborough** Central Library, PE1 1EX, 1000. Confirmation of attendance requested.
- 8 June. TravelWatch Northwest, Merseytravel, Liverpool.
- 17 June. Railfuture Summer Meeting, The Carriageworks Theatre, Millenium Square, **Leeds**, LS2 3AD, 1045. Booking essential.
- 23 June. Friends of the Far North Line AGM, Town House, **Inverness**, 1145.
- 24 June. Railfuture East Anglia, St Mary at Stoke Church Hall, **Ipswich**, IP2 0QQ

This bulletin has been sent by...

Roger Smith, Railfuture Rail User Group Liaison Officer, e-mail: ruglink@railfuture.org.uk, phone: 01462 815992

Follow us on Twitter @Railfuture

The Railway Development Society Limited is a (not for profit) Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No. 5011634. Registered Office: 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Suffolk, IP9 2ND.